

Háskóli Íslands
Deild Erlendra Tungumála
Enska

Animal Instincts and the Canadian Beast

*Reflections on Sex, War and Survival in Timothy Findley's
Not Wanted on the Voyage*

Ritgerð til B.A.-prófs

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Leiðbeinandi: Guðrún Björk Guðsteinsdóttir

Maí 2011

Abstract

Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* is a work of Canadian literature which re-tells the Biblical story of Noah and the Ark with the sympathetic viewpoint of creatures, both human and non-human who were, or almost were, left behind and forgotten in the worldly deluge. The revised fable heeds a warning to patriarchal and myopic visions of the world in which diversity and/or dissent is ignored or made obsolete; there is too much varied nature, history and humanity to be lost through ignorance and the abuse of power. Canada's post-colonial heritage and its immigrant character perplex, and perhaps even mystify, any stable definitions or claims to a national identity; its foundations are exceptionally disparate. It could be posited that the multi-cultural and pluri-lingual populace is faced with an identity crisis if no single identity is accorded ultimate agency or citizenship. Yet this pluralistic nature instigates and necessitates such an ambiguous national character in order to not forget or ignore its actual basis. Parallel, Findley's deconstruction of Noah's dominance reveals a diverse society seeking new commonalities as it founds a new world. Through a reflection on his evaluation of primordial themes of sexuality, struggle and survival, I argue that his novel suggests common, if incongruent, humanity to be the paramount groundwork underpinning a healthy society. Canadian identity is perhaps a vague concept, but the hope is that its incorporation of a multitude of dissimilar and ambiguous characteristics is augural of a healthy and progressive nation and literature.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1. The Parallel to Contemporary Society	2
1.1 A Short History; Leading up to the Deconstruction.....	3
1.2 A Deconstructive Parable.....	4
2. Sex in <i>Not Wanted in the Voyage</i>	7
2.1 Feminism and Environmentalism.....	8
2.2 Men Who Are Here and Men Who Are Queer	10
2.3 The Act of Sex, Multiplying and Being Fruitful.....	12
3. A Voyage of Fascism, War and Death	15
3.1 Holocaust: The Story of Not Being Wanted on a Voyage	16
3.2 The Intertextual War	17
3.3 A Gnostic Utopia?.....	20
4. Next Step: Survival	23
4.1 A Loser Goes Out into the Wilderness.....	25
4.2 The Canadian Beast Within, Whimpering... ..	26
4.3 Survival of the Species?	28
Conclusion.....	30
Works Cited.....	31

Introduction

He doesn't want to talk about Canada... There you have the Canadian dilemma in a sentence. Nobody wants to talk about Canada, not even us Canadians. You're right, Paddy. Canada is a bore.

Brian Moore, *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* (qtd. in Atwood 9, original emphasis).

Canada is an immense territory, multi-cultural, pluri-lingual, post-colonial and archaeologically and socially it reveals a rich and complex history. Yet if Brian Moore's proposition rings true, it is nonetheless a country which fails to instil wonder and inspiration and no more so than within its own vast boundaries. That is, nobody wants to talk about it. Canada under such a hypothesis must then occupy a wide-open space of mundane inertia; a people easily forgotten or ignored. The literature of Canada, it could be posited, is a representative voice for such a multi-cultural and pluri-lingual populace in a post-colonial society faced with an identity crisis. It is from such a departure point that I plan to study the themes of hierarchy, neglect, abuse, revolt and survival in Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*. Findley's work is a piece of Canadian literature which re-tells the Biblical story of Noah and the Ark with the sympathetic viewpoint of those creatures, both human and non-human, who were or almost were left behind and forgotten in the worldly deluge. If Canada and its people are so easy to forget and ignore, the question remains as to what exactly is being neglected and why. Findley's revised fable heeds a warning to patriarchal and myopic visions of the world in which diversity and/or dissent is ignored or made obsolete; there is too much varied nature, history and humanity to be lost through ignorance and the abuse of power. This paper proposes that Findley's deconstruction of Noah's world and the resulting quandary to establish and pursue an inclusive, egalitarian and democratic identity reflects the dilemma of contemporary and post-colonial Canadian society.

1. The Parallel to Contemporary Society

The act of comparing the Biblical story of Noah and the Ark to contemporary Canadian society may be construed as incoherent. From a literal perspective, Canada is not an ark comprised of one family and of animals bound to the patriarchal edicts of Yaweh (God) or Noah. Yet if Findley's novel is regarded as a metaphor, a parallel image can be delineated of a construct of various creatures, human and non-human, united under the colonial creed of the United Kingdom. In addition, as Donna Pennee postulates, the study of historical texts can offer relevant insight into history and its lasting influence on the world of today:

[*Not Wanted on the Voyage*] critically reviews an important book and set of values, or a philosophy or world view based on that book, in order to re-examine how it has been deployed in the formation of the Western world and those parts of the world colonized by Western nations (and thus by Western values). . . . [R]evisionist novels necessarily look at the past through the lens of the present, and a significant part of present perspectives is our awareness that texts (such as the Bible) and traditions (such as the supremacy of reason over emotion or of men over women) are constructed . . . in the interests of those in power and sometimes, consciously or not, with the help of the powerless. [The novel] take[s] what is familiar . . . and defamiliarize[s] it . . . in the interests of alerting us to how we may be implicated in the continuance of texts, traditions, or world views that violate, oppress, and devalue, as the Bible does, women, children, animals, and the environment. (*Praying* 14)

According to Pennee, Findley's intentions with the novel surely extrapolate beyond a mere pastiche or parody of the Biblical story of the world. In her reading, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* serves as a modern touchstone from which to evaluate the effect of prior literary heritage upon current literary expression and thus, of modern situations. This metafictional intertextuality implicates the reader(s) of both texts and all of the history that connects them. In the prologue to *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, Findley reminds us of the basic premise to the original fable from *Genesis 7:7*. "And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his son's wives with him into the ark, because of the waters of the flood..." (3). In this opening, it is important to note the obvious hierarchy implied in the order of who entered the ark and when. Clearly, the male contingent is of prime importance and there is no mention, at least not yet, of any of the animals. If this is the order of the world as we are supposed to perceive it, man

comes first, then woman and the animal kingdom is only of tertiary significance if any. However, Findley deconstructs such a simple image and disabuses it from any possible contemporary world or social view. He incorporates the reader by commencing with “EVERYONE KNOWS it wasn’t like that . . . as if there wasn’t any panic – no one being pushed aside [or] trampled – none of the animals howling . . . [t]hey make it sound as if the only people who wanted to get on board were Doctor Noyes and his family. . . . [E]veryone else . . . stood off waving gaily” (3). The explicit capitalization and emphasis that he employs in the opening sentence leaves little doubt as to whom he wishes to incorporate into the history that follows. He continues, “Well. It wasn’t an excursion. It was the end of the world” (3). By exclusion, a new world is being constructed through the abuse of imposed and indoctrinated power. Findley interrogates the reader into admitting a pronounced illogic in the history and heritage of such a divine voyage that Western societies have been willing to believe. Moreover, he denounces and shames the condoning of such an injustice.

1.1 A Short History; Leading up to the Deconstruction

If *Not Wanted on the Voyage* is intended as a deconstructive tool to counter or critique the historical effects and implications of the original story of Noah, it is important to assess the contemporary circumstances which surrounded or instigated the creation of Findley’s novel. “In many cases, the pop treatment of serious subjects appeared flippant to readers, but for the writers this methodology offered a way of freeing various subjects from the unthinking vacuity of cliché” (New 274). With *Not Wanted on the Voyage* as a case in point, such serious subject matter is unquestionably the injustice of a one-sided, hegemonic and totalitarian patriarchy which is content to annihilate dissent from the standard. Parallel, the mid-twentieth century for Canadian literature witnessed the promulgation of a revolt against the status quo. “Ethnicity, region, gender: these three issues stood behind many a resistance movement. All fastened on language as a means of redefining the parameters of power and the character of available history. They marked the literature [of Canada] of the quarter century between 1960 and 1985 . . . shap[ing] the force and direction of political movements” (New 204).

In response to the reality of liberationist movements and a burgeoning pluralistic society at this time, many Canadian writers aimed to deconstruct pre-ordained notions of previously disenfranchised or marginalized groups. Canadian society was in the process of a re-evaluation and “[i]n 1969, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism

published Book Four of its report, which dealt with the contribution of other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada” (Dewing 4). This report and its subsequent calls for legislative action galvanized a shift in policy and thus in socially implemented programs and institutions. In the succeeding years, not only were English and French both designated as the equally official languages, but the increasingly multi-cultural composition of the nation was accorded more significance and clout in social and political forums (Dewing 4-5).

In addition, though women’s rights had a longer history of progress dating to the 19th century, many pressing issues were still in contention at this time of social revolution. Preceding the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, “[i]n 1981, 1,300 women met concerned about women’s rights being excluded from the proposed new Charter of Rights. They lobbied Members of Parliament intensively which resulted in the inclusion of women’s rights in Canada’s constitution” (Morris). The plight of women and the recognition of their unique needs was often marginalized or ignored, perhaps only unconsciously, but this time period further grounded the women’s movement with concrete legislations. Society in Canada, as well as the constructs and institutions which conduct it, was experiencing a transformation which heralded a new definition and sense of identity. On par, in 1982 the Canada Act dissolved the colonial legal powers with which Great Britain still officially dominated the legal processes of Canada, and in this same Act, Canada declared its own Constitution and Charter of Rights (Constitutional). However post-colonial, a distinct and independent society was nevertheless officially accorded recognition.

1.2 A Deconstructive Parable

Of course, as *Not Wanted on the Voyage* was published in 1984, it would be non-sense to claim that it was an instrumental work of literature in gathering force for political movements or legislations such as the Canadian Charter of Rights. It could however easily be argued that the mutations in society helped to foster and instigate Findley’s preoccupation with the disintegration of out-dated and unjust social values which infuse his version of the story of the Ark. This critique and deconstruction of social values also parallels the veritably fluid and instable definitions of identity illustrated in the novel. Further, many of his previous works exhibit a similar call to re-evaluate, re-structure and re-tell the stories that define us.

“Findley’s fictions concern fascist impulses in the North American present, therefore, as much as they recreate versions of a European inheritance. They ask about the absences in history, the fictions that societies create in the name of culture and the greater desire for

power” (New 278). As early as in 1970, Findley himself offered that the gestation for *Not Wanted on the Voyage* by far preceded its publication. In *Inside Memory*, a collection of his journal entries, he shares a recurrent rhetorical question following the untimely death of a friend. He asks himself, “*oh, why go on? What are we, that we make ourselves go on?*” (216). Indeed, what are we as a people or more generally, as a race, when the world as we know it has been altered? The basic tenet of attempting to move on, discover new bearings and definitions for the self following any kind of upheaval draws a pertinent relation to the social transformations taking place in Canada. Upheavals, such as social revolution, death and war embody powerful de-stabilizers for the society and the peoples who experience, persist and succeed them. Woodcock lauds Findley’s novel for the “wonder that emerges out of [it], as it does out of any realistic assessment of human history . . . that we *have* survived” (Woodcock 233, original emphasis).

However, the consequent question is why are *we* the chosen or inevitable ones to have survived? An existentialist identity crisis on the part of Findley is therefore part of the foundation for his new version of an old story, much the same as a transforming Canadian identity helped to found a new Canada primed to depart from its colonial and Anglo-centric past. An altered life or view on life calls for an altered society or view on that society. Ultimately, it is a binary relation and dynamic which is created, thus offering plenty of tools for a deconstructivist critique. That is, a reversal or destabilization of the status quo, of previously supported hierarchies, presumed facts or commonly held beliefs. “In the resulting universe there are no absolutes or fixed points, so that the universe we live in is ‘decentred’ or inherently relativistic. Instead of movement or deviation from a known centre, all we have is ‘free play’” (Barry 65). For though such an ironic, post-modern deconstruction is far from a uniquely Canadian theory, Linda Hutcheon maintains that its implications have a highly intrinsic visibility in Canadian culture:

While Canadian culture shows many postmodern signs of a deep suspicion of transcendence and authority, its ironies are still mustered to deconstruct those very things, thus suggesting their continuing ideological power. As women, gays or lesbians, natives, those of “other” races and ethnicities, or simply as Canadians, we often appear to feel the need to deconstruct as the first step to constructing. It is the deployment of irony, among many other strategies, that helps give satire its ability to break up [convention and the status quo]. (39)

The revolutions of feminism, queer, animal and environmental rights and obligations which comprise the ironic, post-modernistic character and effect of *Not Wanted on the Voyage* fall

securely (ironically so) into the free play of deconstructionism. The existence of the novel itself and its rather satirical and critical tone also heralds a material construction representative of a society in limbo.

Despite the patriarchal framework of the plot, a deconstructivist satire is manifested through characters such as Mrs. Noyes who is the gin-guzzling, animal talking voice of feminism with her blind and talking cat Mottyl, and then Lucy, as Lucifer in drag married to Ham as his homo- or transsexual bride. The real world is far more colourful, and humorously so, than the imposed world of Noah and Yaweh. The satire is that Noah, essential ruler of the world, is completely oblivious to the actual personalities of those around him. Literary theorist Northrop Frye comments in *Fables of Identity* that “satire usually takes the point of view of sense: it requires a standard of the normal against which the absurd is to be measured, and, like sense, does not distinguish what is above it from what is below it. Such satire speaks with the voice of the consensus of society, and society can protect itself but cannot surpass itself” (*Fables* 162). There is then an apparent link between satire and deconstruction in that they both call upon an inter-related free-play between the two “standards”, if only to momentarily disable the prevailing power or hierarchy. Pennee extrapolates upon this free-play by suggesting that “[i]f we have credited the Genesis fiction for two thousand years . . . why would we deny *Not Wanted on the Voyage* the same textual power?” (*Moral* 93). It is precisely this erasure of social or historical advantage immanent to one work, ideology or entity that deconstruction and, by default, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* aim to achieve.

2. Sex in *Not Wanted in the Voyage*

Sex from the perspective of a Canadian or in the context of Canadian Literature is likely to sound rather uninteresting if we are to believe that “*Canada is a bore*” (qtd. in Atwood 9, original emphasis). But as previously discussed, perhaps it is worthwhile to suspend preconceived notions of a concept or identity and delve into a territory of free-play between them. In addition to sex, however, the roles of gender and sexuality must also be figured into the equation. In the beginning of the novel, the first suggestion of a discrepant social power between the sexes is shown as Emma is upset and cries, not at the fearsome reality of seeing God himself, but rather that He will see her (9). This suggests that women, in particular girls, seem to have an ingrained fear towards God and his male-oriented hierarchy. None of the boys expressed such a fear. Later, the male dominion over women is made starkly clear as Noah scolds his wife for mentioning God’s name in apparent vain: “[his] rage – more of a performance than a reality – as necessary to keep Mrs. Noyes in her place. Also, to intimidate the other women, lest they follow her example and get out of hand” (13). Men, in particular Yaweh and, by his supposed or imposed divine order, Noah, have the upper hand in all matters and women must not and shall not interfere.

Pennee comments that “[t]hroughout the novel the patriarchy will insist on the rightness of its interpretations and expect them to be accepted without question, as if they were law” (*Praying* 30-31). On the other hand, as Mrs. Noyes returns to her subject position to her husband and begins her apology, she has “a momentary pause while [she] collected herself. The next thing expected of her was appalling to her and though she knew she must say it, it came very hard from her lips and not at all from her heart” (14). For though she duly assumes the role of a woman who is less than a man in Noah’s world, it is clear that she does so with much trepidation thus heralding the beginnings of a desire and need for change. Pennee continues that “[o]ver the course of the novel, Mrs. Noyes will learn to say no, both loudly and repeatedly. But at this point in book one, [she] has already said too much, been reprimanded . . . [and later,] arguing against Ham’s forced participation in the sacrifice, [she] demonstrates that she is very aware of the constructedness and arbitrariness of Noah’s statements” (*Praying* 36).

Mrs. Noyes is more than capable of interpreting the world around her for herself and often does so in contrast to the interpretations that Noah claims to be facts. She is an independently thinking individual but has been repeatedly denied agency to express or share

her ideas and opinions, especially if refutable by Noah. Perhaps due to violence at the hands of Noah, as is depicted later in the novel, she remains subservient to his commands. Then again, this concretizes the notion that there are other ways of existing in addition to the one and only way upon which Noah insists. By result, in the opening sequences of the novel, Mrs. Noyes is presented as withholding a specific knowledge or experience of a world in which Noah has no command or bearing; a distinctly feminine perspective in contrast to the overt masculine ideals of Noah. She knows, for example, that Noah averts the truth or simply constructs and manipulates it as he sees fit. Upon witnessing a sign presented to her by the Faeries,

She did not dare even think of asking her husband [what it meant]. If Noah were to ask her why she wanted to know such a thing, she would have to tell him the truth [that she was seeing Faeries]. . . . And the truth, as always whenever the Faeries were involved, would be thrown out the window along with Ham's seven stars and the phases of the moon. And she, as always, would be thought a fool. (39-40)

Mrs. Noyes does not tell him about her vision or ask about its significance. This experience or sighting which she shared with her beloved cat Mottyl is then stored within her memory. Both Mrs. Noyes and Mottyl share a remarkable propensity to connect with nature on a far more profound and inter-connected manner than Noah, who views himself as superior to the rest of the world.

2.1 Feminism and Environmentalism

Similar to Mrs. Noyes distinct communion with the Faeries, Mottyl too exhibits the peculiar ability of sensing and integrating her intuitions with the other creatures and the natural world around her. Preceding the impending upheaval of Yaweh's arrival, Mottyl wanders through the forest in hopes of re-connecting to the natural world. "She was interested in hearing the gossip of the wood and eager to hear some news of her acquaintances there. Did they know of Yaweh's impending visit, and if so, what did they make of it?" (42). While Mottyl is perhaps a more intrinsic aspect of the animal kingdom, Mrs. Noyes is indubitably a human character to assume one of the most sympathetic roles towards the animals and thus, a contrary and deconstructive element against the anthropomorphic bias and favour of Noah. As Noah kindles the fire for his mass sacrifice, unwaveringly and without warning,

[Mrs. Noyes] fathomed what it was that was happening here – and the panic this caused turned her legs to stone and her mind to paste and she was frozen before a single piece of knowledge: *all that is happening here is deliberate and the meaning of this fire is the sacrifice of hundreds*. [She thought,] *Noah . . .! Stop!* But . . . [n]othing came of the words – and the only sound was the sound around her of all her cattle – all her sheep – all her horses – all the dogs and all their cries being driven towards cremation in the name of God. (124-25)

She is infuriated by this injustice and wishes to revolt in spite of the apparent honouring of the God which she should revere, but as a woman she is repressed back into her inert place.

For though Mrs. Noyes ultimately stifles her rebellious inclinations and silences the noise within her, her subversive personality is a compellingly discordant tone to Noah's dominance over the world. In tandem with Mottyl's elucidations to represent the natural community of voices and knowledge in the world around her, the two of them as revolutionary personalities accomplish what Dorothy Nielsen calls "an exemplary text of ecofeminism" (Nielsen). She argues:

The term is appropriate because *Not Wanted on the Voyage* fuses environmentalist and feminist themes. Retelling the biblical story of Noah and the ark, it exposes the complicity of patriarchal systems in ecological degradation and it implicitly warns that as long as we think dualistically [and hierarchically], objectifying nature and women along with people of non-dominant races, we doom both ourselves and other life forms. (Nielsen)

Their purpose in the novel is to break down the hegemony which alerts the reader to the destruction occurring under those auspices or doctrines. Pennee offers that "Mottyl's [veneration] for the dead extends also to the living, and arises not so much from a set of rules imposed on behaviour . . . as it does in the human world, as from a recognition of the commonality of experience" (*Praying* 41). They signify a plea for a mutual tolerance and respect while calling for the abolition of a blind and destructive ignorance. According to Nielsen, this interplay of radical femininity and traditionally-held notions of the feminine is a lucrative area of study. She comments:

[E]cofeminist arguments interest [her] precisely because their seemingly self-contradictory combination of a deconstruction of gender oppositions with a celebration of all that has been despised as "feminine" has radical potential. It allows us to reclaim the strengths of traditional "feminine" values at the same time that we reject limiting categories of "woman." Findley's novel, along with

many ecofeminist texts, rejects these static gender notions most forcefully by its ecological view of the human subject as physically interconnected with non-human nature. (Nielsen)

Consequently, the preconceived roles of women and of femininity are far more complex than what Noah and a partisan, patriarchal world view would surmise and allow.

2.2 Men Who Are Here and Men Who Are Queer

Although the biased doctrines portrayed in the fable are decidedly male-oriented, it would be false to assume that the category of the male is then a stable and perpetually favoured identity. On the contrary, men as a general group are far from uniform. Noah's own son Ham is far from a replica of Noah's destructive version of maleness. When commanded by his father to sacrifice one of the family's lambs for Yaweh, he struggled to adopt his father's disregard for the creature's unique life. Following his own close encounter with death due to a severe illness at youth he "emerg[ed] with a love of life so great that he could not bear to kill" (25).

However, as he inevitably must adhere to the patriarchal order of his father and Yaweh's honour, he finally does sacrifice the lamb but only by intentionally harming himself in the process as well (27). Ham's own values which are naturally also male run in opposition to the dominant male values of his society. His only redemptive escape from the actions he was ordained to commit was to implicate himself fully and thereby partially sacrifice his own blood alongside that of the lamb. Ham's actions poignantly address the notion that men can indeed be sympathetic to life and the natural world around them.

David Jefferess suggests:

Ham wilfully subverts his father's order and the attitudinal expectations of the culture of war. . . . [He] finds the world and all of its inhabitants, animate and inanimate, a wonder. . . . While Ham does not disobey his father, he asserts his individual moral principles and willingly suffers injury. His self-mutilation is a symbolic act that links him with the natural world and underscores the moral injustice of the ritual. (142-43)

Noah's patriarchy is a form of masculinity which is slowly decaying as its subjects become increasingly divergent.

The most blatantly divergent character is the transsexual character Lucy who, underneath her feminine guise, is in fact the male angel Lucifer descendant from Yaweh. Not only does she trouble male identity with her fluid ability and desire to appear as a woman but

preceding the whole fable of the Ark, Lucy/Lucifer had questioned the absolute dominion of her patriarch Yaweh and was consequently disowned and ignored from the ranks of heaven. As her brother angel Michael Archangelis points out, Lucy/Lucifer was exceedingly quixotic during her time in heaven. ““All you ever said was *why?* Why this and why that and why everything. How dare you. How *dare* you”” (108, original emphasis). Clearly, the heaven of Yaweh and the world of Noah are rather fascist in that thought, opinion and action are to be prescribed by a figure that assumes ultimate power by which must be unquestionably abided.

Plus, Lucy’s marriage to Ham is an anomaly which perplexes the wilful adherents of the patriarchy. Michael criticizes and condemns Lucifer’s impending marriage to another man to which Lucifer nonchalantly responds, ““So what”” (107). Michael continues, ““But you *are* [a] male”” after Lucy peculiarly stops him from saying “*man*” (107, original emphasis). She responds ““I like dressing up . . . I always have. You know that. Me as the Pope – me as the King. Why not? It’s harmless enough”” (107). Findley’s reconstruction of gender roles demands the disillusionment of such power structures and the “harmless” parody of her character underlines this. She is symbolic of a deconstructionist free-player who is unafraid to scramble and blur the lines between masculine and feminine, angel and human, papal or royal dominion and that of mere games. “The role [Lucifer] has accepted is to pose the alternative vision (hence his appearance as a woman in opposition to the paternalistic regime of Yahweh and Noah), to foster and sustain the spirit that questions and rebels” (Woodcock 237).

Furthermore, Wendy Pearson suggests that since the beginning of time, Yaweh and Dr. Noyes have had no concept of a world not subjugated to their will and therefore non-hierarchical (115). The advent of rebellion amongst the various characters symbolizes a harbinger for change. Pearson further develops her argument:

Given this typically postmodernist stratagem, the reader recognizes that Lucy is both right and wrong. On one level, it is indeed harmless for her to be a man dressing as a woman, harmless at least to Ham, Mrs. Noyes, Mottyl and almost all of the others. What Lucy chooses to disregard . . . is that her gender-bending . . . is not harmless to the rigidity of Yaweh’s, and hence of Noyes’s, gender hierarchies. Its very ambiguity, its androgynous refusal to speak one way or the other damages merely by being. [She can] deconstruct part of the system and – with luck – it will destabilize the whole of it. (124)

A new world which mimics a sense of equality with Yaweh and Noah’s is in construction. If a camp, cross-dressing, homosexual and playful character can originate from Yaweh himself, Noah is indeed in contention against a viable threat to his power.

2.3 *The Act of Sex, Multiplying and Being Fruitful*

The natural question from a hetero-centric perspective, in regards to Lucy and Ham's marriage, which Michael is compelled to ask, is how Lucy plans to cope with Ham's eventual desire to consummate the marriage claiming that "[i]t won't be harmless if he beds you. Human beings do that, you know'" (108). The hierarchies of binary relation expound in the novel as Michael's statements illustrate not only an aversion towards a male-male sexual relation, but also the incoherency of a male-angel relationship in which angels ought to assume a higher ground. Continuing with a satire of such arbitrary ideals, Findley has Lucy respond through a smile that she "do[es]n't think that's any of [Michael's] business but, if [he] wants to know, [she]'ll make it up as [she] go[es] along'" (108). The innuendo being rather tangible, Lucy is again illustrated as a powerful anti-thesis to patriarchal, hetero-centric bias and power. Quite effectively, she "exploit[s] the instability and incoherence of sex/gender/sexuality categories in order to destabilize the system of binary logic upon which a variety of patriarchal and imperialist structures of power and authority are founded" (Lamont). She signifies that perhaps angels can have sex, even with humans, and perhaps sex does not need to be procreative. Symbolically, she asks why not?

Sex is a recurrent theme and preoccupation for many of the characters in the novel. After Ham and Lucy's marriage, despite being married himself, "Japeth was furiously jealous. He surmised, quite correctly, that in his brother's union, there would be no pause between joy of marriage and the joys of the marriage bed. And why should Ham, who had never so much as looked at a woman or even mentioned a woman's name, have such good luck? It wasn't fair" (119). Japeth's jealousy seemingly has little to do with a desire to procreate but rather simply to get lucky in the marriage bed.

[B]oiling over with youth, [he] could think of nothing but sex. Every day, he put on and took off his swords and knives, his greaves, his breastplate and his helmet – and every day, as he caught his armoured image in his shield, he would stop – amazed at the beauty of his reflected blue limbs and, before he could stop himself, his organ would rise into his hand and demand attention. (232)

Sex is depicted as akin to a battlefield with nascent homo-erotic tendencies. It "becomes possible to recognize a camp sensibility not only within Lucy but also within her/his seeming antithesis, Japeth. Indeed, it appears that Japeth and Lucy – in their respective self-stylings as hypermasculine and hyperfeminine – occupy opposite poles on the camp continuum"

(Dickinson 135). Lucy, as a male dressed into female form, and Japeth, unable to perform sexual duties of a man, seem to act as satirical anomalies who in no way match up with the ideal man of Noah's perceived world. Considering how different Lucy is in appearance, Japeth's jealousy of Ham's ability to enjoy sexuality could also be interpreted as a curiosity towards queer sexuality or at least dissatisfaction with the heterosexual role he is failing in.

These descriptions of homosocial desire at the outset of *Not Wanted on the Voyage* are part of a larger discursive continuum that includes a specific instance of homosexual panic toward the end of the text: in cutting off the Unicorn's horn (the instrument used by Noah to rape Emma), Japeth is able to displace symbolically the "castration" enacted upon him . . . and thereby reaffirm his masculinity and virility. (Dickinson 136).

The rape of Emma with the unicorn's horn was Noah's response to Japeth's inability to penetrate her apparent tightness and thus consummate their marriage (264-65). The thought never occurred to Noah, or he was careless, that perhaps Emma, a girl of twelve years, was not interested in sexual relations with Japeth. Furthermore, during her bathing with Hannah, there was some indication that Emma had lesbian inclinations which likely compounded upon her lack of desire for Japeth (261). Emma's wishes were inconsequential which relegates sexuality to the realm and jurisdiction of men, in particular Noah, if he so wished. It is the duty of women to be willing and prepared to participate in sexual relations with men.

Procreation is a prominent theme in the novel depicted almost as a necessary machine-like function to feed into patriarchy. Mrs. Noyes, being many centuries old, had somehow superhumanly given birth to far more than just Shem, Ham and Japeth who were the sole survivors (169). Mottyl as well had passed through numerous heats and produced many litters from which Noah robbed and conducted heartless experiments for unspecified reasons. That which was born into his world was expected to conform to his demands or subject itself to his whims. "Noah is the chief villain, with his murderous intolerance, inflexible cruelty, his 'experiments' on Mottyl's kittens – deliberately like something out of Dachau – his intransigence, hypocrisy, venality, and misogyny. And he finds [and seeks out] followers" (Ingham). In terms of followers, it is interesting to note how Noah was determined to cancel out any reminiscent admission that he and Mrs. Noyes had also conceived an ape-child, Japeth's twin, who was subsequently killed. She euthanized her child as was the social custom at the time (149). In the new world to which Noah aims to direct his family and descendants, there is no position for creatures such as Japeth's ape-twin, or Emma's ape-sister Lotte to join them as they are deemed as less than human, therefore too low on the hierarchy. Following

Mrs. Noyes' attempt to save Lotte and acquire her access onto the Ark, Japeth feels no remorse in carrying out Noah's orders to exterminate her. "After all – he'd only killed an ape. And an ape was only an animal. Nothing human" (170). There is no place in the patriarchy for evidence of its connection to less-than-human creatures.

As postulated earlier, an inter-connected relation to the animal kingdom seems to be a pronouncedly feminine ideal as is suggested through such relations exhibited by Mrs. Noyes and Mottyl. Perhaps a parallel line can be delineated between Noah's patriarchy and the evolution of man from the animal. Pennee suggests that "Noah can never admit that he fathered an ape, twin to Japeth, because this would undermine the patriarchy's belief in its superiority and control over mankind. When Mrs. Noyes speaks of it now after eighteen years of enforced silence, the living evidence – Lotte – is immediately destroyed" (*Praying* 52). The male must distinguish itself from the feminine connection to the material and animalistic world and define itself by its superior intellect and rationality. Even Mottyl's heats are construed as a "dreary" curse or nuisance of which, as a female, *she* must accept as *her* nature (Findley *Not Wanted* 45, my emphasis). They are akin to a cyclical curse of material inclination, a constant reminder of the female connection to the natural world as oppose to divine and intellectual aspirations which direct the inclinations of the male. Men are inclined to direct and acquire power while women are subjugated by a material need to conceive and give birth.

Moreover, the fluke births of ape-children that regularly take place lay claim to an inherent randomness which characterizes this connection to the natural world that the female species maintains. Women are privy to random, divergent behaviours of which Noah aims to abolish. "Mrs. Noyes's efforts to save Lotte are part of a transformation she undergoes in book two: shaking off civilized behaviour and becoming increasingly animal-like, living a life alternative to that dictated by Noah Noyes" (Pennee *Praying* 53). Dr. Noah Noyes demands no noise or objection to his ordination. He is increasingly guarded and discriminatory, saying no or yes, as to who shall gain access onto his Ark and passage into the new world and society following the Flood. Noah is assuming a dictatorship and "[i]n this vein . . . Findley once sa[id] that the essence of fascism is saying 'No' to life" (Ingham). Unsuspecting to Dr. Noyes, his fascistic, destructive actions are running counter-productive to procreation and regeneration, which will surely be necessary once the deluge has ceased.

3. A Voyage of Fascism, War and Death

A fascist leader such as Noah accords himself with the ability to literally dictate to his people the customs, attitudes and conventions which will underline his society. As demonstrated earlier, Noah's attitude is of abhorrence to dissent and the custom which he employs is annihilation. Celebrated queer theorist and war critic Judith Butler comments on an elementary relation between sexuality and combat, saying that "[her] work shifted . . . from sexuality and gender to the politics of war, but they're really linked by the question of whose lives count. And when we think about targeted populations and civilians who lose their lives . . . [she] think[s] that queer people should have solidarity with those populations whose lives are not considered liveable" (McCann). She asks questions such as "[w]hose deaths matter? . . . Why are some deaths grievable but others not?" (McCann).

On a similar note, in *Fables of Identity* Northrop Frye reflects on Rousseau's premise which proposes that much of "human culture and civilization has in fact been perverse in direction, full of inequalities cause by aggression which have blotted out the true form of human community" (163). Noah himself substantiates this aggression when he advocates Japeth's murder of the Unicorn. He proclaims that "[e]very man must exact his vengeance how and where he sees fit. The objects of vengeance have no importance. It is only the act of vengeance itself that matters, since it delineates the man . . . he had acted as the arm of God" (266). Clearly, Dr. Noyes subscribes to violence and destruction as commendable and civilized qualities of the distinguished male. His war mentality permeates the novel, "kindness is wasteful at the best of times, but in times like these [such as the destruction of life and the world] – it is criminal" (205).

Again, a tendency for people and certain power structures to dictate, ignore, silence and even extinguish others is harshly criticized by Findley. He "consistently spoke for the silenced [and] those who [were] often viewed as unimportant by the 'real' world: children, animals, women, and crazies of all kinds" (Kruk). Statements such as Noah's in regards to kindness can only be read ironically and with repugnance.

Not Wanted on the Voyage refuses to accept history's version of Noah and the Ark as it so clearly privileges a select few and ignores the truth.

Findley looks at the truth behind the colourful children's books and the carefully carved wooden arks, visible in toy shop windows across the country, with their neat arrays of zoological heterosexuality: ram and ewe, lion and

lioness, goose and gander, up the ramp they go, two by two... one of the earliest lessons for the young Christian or Jew in the naturalized necessity of distinct gender roles and of heterosexuality. *Not Wanted on the Voyage* reminds us that, however charming the image of the ark and its animals may seem in a dehistoricized cultural setting, it is not an innocent one. Findley's irony is thus two-fold here, revealing both the holocaust itself and the nature of the hierarchical and largely male power structure that makes it possible. (Pearson 117)

3.1 Holocaust: The Story of Not Being Wanted on a Voyage

The ark is methodically composed of a hetero-centric male/female binarity, yet the hierarchies are presented as far more complex. Animals occupy the deepest and darkest depths at the bottom of the ark and all of the other creatures stack up onto each other in an ascending order according to Yaweh's edicts, leading up to the private quarters of Noah at the very top.

By placing Noah, as patriarch and dictator, along with his band of followers, Shem, Hannah, and Japeth on the upper deck, and Mrs. Noyes, Ham, Lucy, Emma, and the animals, or cargo of the voyage, in the lower decks, Findley constructs an us/them, good/evil, rebel/oppressor binary, an ideological presumption foundational to the culture of war and the study of oppression and colonialism. The patriarchal structure of the deluge story depends on members of a community fulfilling their roles within the "story" of the society. (Jefferess 142)

The two discrete entities, the upper deck and the lower deck, as mythological truths are at a head. Each faction wants to tell and/or create different stories for their world and the tension in the ark is substantial as the oppressed grow exponentially enraged and resentful of their antagonistic status.

Indeed, at the level of the text, the ark, with its seemingly endless depths of animals crowded together and starving in perpetual darkness, is easily equated with a concentration camp, Noah's blazing funeral pyre with Nazi ovens. Similarly, the barring of the fairies from the ark, and their consequent drowning, refigure allegorically the fate of many homosexuals during the Holocaust. (Dickinson 130)

The image of the concentration camp is one of the most atrocious evocations of abuse of power, genocide and a cruel hierarchy that contemporary history tells us. The act of treating other people and creatures as literally disposable and to condone less than humane conditions in which to survive, such as is offered on the lower decks of the ark, is thus a brutally fascist story to tell.

Although, Northrop Frye comments on how hierarchy exhibits an almost mythological, timeless existence as though it has always played a role in our stories. He posits that there are:

[T]wo points of particular significance in poetic symbolism. One is the point, usually the top of a mountain just below the moon, where the upper world and this one come into alignment, where we look up to the heavenly world and down on the turning cycle of nature. The other is the point, usually in a mysterious labyrinthine cave, where the lower world and this one come into alignment, where we look down to a world of pain and up to the turning cycle of nature. (*Fables* 59)

Noah and his privileged entourage maintain their positions atop, next to Godliness and looking down towards their fellow creatures. The inverse is true for the lower decks of the ark as they must feel the weight of others' privilege upon their shoulders and only be allowed the most distant grasp, and thus connection, to a higher or more meaningful way of life. In other words, their lives are not as valuable.

3.2 *The Intertextual War*

With Noah's version of the story having given itself the clear advantage for his patriarchy to succeed and conquer its dissidents, the humanist and liberalist versions of the story are compelled to attempt a reversal or balancing out of the injustice. However, Findley is careful to not take ownership of the reader's impressions which, it could be argued, would constitute a form of textual fascism. He does not necessarily want to impress an advantage for the more feminine or anti-patriarchal faction. The stories and their implications are not to be interpreted to such a simplistic and dichotomous end. Both Noah and Lucy embody and represent the power struggle between the two separate factions yet, on par with a deconstruction of the binary opposites, this struggle or exchange comes to symbolize the free-play between two de-centred poles. Donna Pennee maintains that:

Noah is looking for scholastic debate, someone to “differ” with as in someone to argue with, so that his rational superiority can be demonstrated and proven. Lucy, however, isn’t looking for anything to do with the rational mind; she is looking for difference in skin colour and erotic preference, in mythical properties and life forms, in anything and anyone that defies the unillogical, misogynist, heterosexist, anthropocentric world view of the patriarchy. The point . . . is that when all world views are constructions, as Noah’s and Lucy’s are shown to be, we must choose among them, and hopefully choose the least violent and exclusionary texts we can find. (*Moral* 92)

If they clearly exploit and borrow from the other in order to construct their own apparently unique world view, they inevitably implicate the other in their proper view. That is to say, if Noah never had anyone to argue with, he would never come to the realization that perhaps he could be construed as the rational and superior faction.

Similarly, Lucy would likely never have a notion of difference and diversity if there were no force to impose a standard. Therefore, neither faction exhibits an essential stability which supports a deconstructive reading. “[T]he meanings words [or concepts] have can never be guaranteed one hundred per cent pure. Thus, words are always ‘contaminated’ by their opposites – you can’t define *night* without reference to *day*, or *good* without reference to *evil*” (Barry 62, original emphasis).

Furthermore, “[i]t is after the death of the Lady, however, who dies of sorrow following the death of her mate the Unicorn, that those confined to the lower decks resolve to revolt. Lucy, having shed her guise as a woman, plans, and takes command of, the revolt. Echoing the militaristic, ordered preparations for the Flood, Lucy and her army prepare for war” (Jefferess 146). This battle seems to signify Lucy’s faction’s manifesto to defend the natural world of the animals as the careless deaths of the Unicorns, and their subsequent extinction, pushes her faction to its breaking point. “The human wars of *Not Wanted on the Voyage* lack this flexible relationship between hunter and hunted, and much of the novel, as a result, rests on this glaring contrast between natural and human warfare” (York 120). The lower faction’s sudden call to revolt against their suppressor runs rather counter however to their anti-destructionist inclinations which again herald the instability of any notion of essentialism.

The notion that there is some element of fascism, some part of what must seem a monstrous evil, which is also present in most of us, which is even *attractive*, can be more than a little disconcerting – and demonstrates that Findley’s view

of fascism is far from simplistic. There is no easy (and uninteresting) division into good and evil. . . . The issue is not exactly cloudy – the reader seldom has much doubt as to where the author’s sympathies and values lie – but it is undeniably complex. (Ingham, original emphasis)

As the two textualities compete for significance, the narration continues to complicate the competition as “the situation between the two factions might have been called a draw” (Findley *Not Wanted* 348). It follows logically that a battle between two forces which are decidedly implicated in or contaminated by one another ends as futile. Their purposes were too permeated by each other and “without battle, there could be no decisive victory” (Findley *Not Wanted* 348).

Nonetheless, by the end of the novel as per the original Biblical story, Noah is seemingly re-established or depicted as the commander of his ark. So it could be argued that the patriarchy has indeed come out as the winner and idealistically superior for the new world to come. Though peculiarly, Noah shares the edict which had supposedly been passed on from Yaweh (he had actually died before any edict was given) which states “the promise that there would never be another flood; the decree that all should go forth and multiply upon the face of the earth; and that everything that lived and breathed and moved had been delivered into their hands – *forever*” (351, original emphasis). The edict could be read as a continuation of hetero-centric and patriarchal priorities but it is nevertheless curious to consider the tenets of it and their implications. There will never be another destructive flood. Everyone who has survived the passage shall go forth and multiply which can easily be interpreted as permission to multiply their ideals as well, not necessarily just an edict to procreate. Of particular note, Noah claims that all living things are under the jurisdiction of *their*, as oppose to *his*, hands. This is a rather ambiguous statement which could be deciphered to mean many conflicting commandments. This could be an inclusionary and democratic statement according each living creature agency over themselves with their own hands. Perhaps Noah only refers to the non-human creatures and that they are now under the shared command of all humans, not just under his own hand. Or perhaps it is a statement suggesting a new world community in which all creatures take care of each other. “The real revolutionary and freeing act has been the staging of a revolt which does not reproduce the tyrannies of the ruling order. The natural and human worlds have, if only for a fleeting moment, found freedom together” (York 121). In any case, Noah’s edict in Findley’s version “exposes the futility of violence in trying to create an alternative to tyranny and domination” (Jefferess 147). A war of ambiguous factions can only close in further ambiguity.

3.3 A Gnostic Utopia?

Findley asks his reader to imagine history differently, if only ambiguously. His story heralds a stark contrast to an archaic and undeniably patriarchal story:

To the extent that postdiluvial diasporas and post-Holocaust nationalisms function in Findley's text as potential allegories for the processes of colonization and decolonization, their effect, as with most allegories, is thus principally rhetorical, identifying narrative closure or end time as something to be resisted rather than consecrated. With his temporally disjunctive rewriting of the traditional Genesis story, Findley offers an ironic postcolonial, postnational twist to an old myth – re-creation as simulacrum – at the same time as he exposes the potential beginnings of a new one – difference as sameness (e.g., as encapsulated in the national metaphors of Canadian pluralism and multiculturalism). (Dickinson 132-33)

Could these “potential beginnings of a new one” symbolize or reflect a hope on the part of Findley that the burgeoning post-colonial and pluralistic society in Canada will succeed as an exemplary egalitarian model? Does he hope for such a utopian model to succeed the colonial model in which a separate entity exerted jurisdiction over another? However, “[u]topias are ideal societies that do not and perhaps cannot exist; they are literary experiments that may or may not be intended as models for our own societies. They are thus goals to be aspired to, but are often seen as neither possible nor even desirable” (Weiss 230).

Nevertheless, “[f]or over a century, Canadian authors . . . have portrayed strange societies that are distant from us in space and time, yet reflect our own. [They] have created fantastic communities in order to examine contemporary political, moral, social, and religious questions” (Weiss 230). If Findley's society, following the post-diluvian upheaval, is gauged as a metaphor for the post-colonial and pluralistic Canada, how is one to read or interpret the ambiguity of the conclusion to *Not Wanted on the Voyage*? Lorraine York suggests that “Findley moves from showing the need for this dual response to history to embodying that response, implicitly, in his texts: we must heed the wars of the past, but we also desperately need to imagine the wars of the future” (104). Far from any proposition of a utopia in gestation, and if the metaphor is appropriate, Frye states that “[w]hat is interesting . . . is that when a metaphorical tradition conflicts with the metonymic need for conceptual and moral models, it is the tradition that has to give way” (*Great Code* 11). The tradition of a colonial

and Anglo-centric Canada must be forfeited much the same as many of the patriarchal tenets of Noah's perceived world must inevitably disintegrate upon the death of Yaweh.

Additionally, God/Yaweh was indeed revealed to be less than the God or ultimate and divine superiority which had been implied from the beginning. "Mottyl, for all her literal blindness, discerns – that Yaweh is [but] human. . . . [Her] second revelation – that Yaweh, in the carriage with the 'crown of flies', is dying, is, in fact, dead" (Pearson 119). In the narrative, we are told "[w]as it only she – and Yaweh – who could tell the meaning of the crown of flies?" (112). Mottyl's perceptions reveal the dissolving and obsolete dominion of Yaweh as God as he is an imposter or no more than a fabricated entity. Above and beyond the natural destruction of the Flood, the social foundations of the world have been utterly deconstructed and preconceived notions of them are henceforth completely instable.

According to Gnostic traditions, "[a] cruel, vengeful, and tyrannical deity, Jehovah or Yahweh, could not be the true God . . . they concluded that the physical world was evil, and the creation of an evil being, the Demiurge [who] bears a remarkable resemblance to Yahweh . . . of *Not Wanted on the Voyage*. Far from being the true God, the Demiurge is the product of a 'Fall' due to a crisis in the divine realm" (Woodcock 235). The fictitious nature of the story and its progression from such a fake and fabled base or originator heightens the textual tensions and deconstructive interplays between both the original and Findley's re-telling. It becomes exceedingly difficult to comprehend where the story is supposed to begin and utterly impossible to fathom where it will end. Yaweh cancels himself out from all implication even "though he is in fact the creator of the imperfect world that rebels against his tyranny. . . . [He is] a pseudo-divine imposter, a representative or embodiment of the forces of darkness [the Demiurge]" (Woodcock 235). For though he is credited as the creator, following his death, his initial role is annulled in the construction of the new world without him. "[N]o perfect being could hate anyone or anything without ceasing to be a perfect being" (Frye *Great Code* 11). Two imperfections surely do not make one, therefore Yaweh has invalidated himself.

This deconstruction creates a precarious and mystical background for the story of Noah and the ark and thus for Creation; that is, the creation of the histories of the past, the present and the future. Nothing is stable or essential. Parallel, perhaps the death of Yaweh could symbolize the re-instatement of a pluralistic, Gnostic tradition. They were indeed "never an organized or united church or community" (Woodcock 235). On the contrary, they represented a form of a multi-cultural or theological pluralism, drawing sources from Iranian, Egyptian, Ortho-Pythagorean as well as Christian sources which "recognized [and respected] the startling differences of tone and spirit between the New and the Old Testaments"

(Woodcock 235). The unifying factor of the Gnostics was their exchange of varying doctrines, again similar to a post-structural or deconstructivist free-play in which no single notion necessarily assumes ultimate significance over another. With the influence of the imposter and malevolently-inclined Yaweh nullified, the reality of an inclusionary, if unstable, voyage for the new world is re-established.

The parallels to Canadian multi-culturalism are manifold. The British colonial character which was imposed on Canada was never anything but arbitrary. Canada was originally peopled by Aboriginal populations that had no concept of the cartographic boundaries that are known today which was then followed by a temporary colonization by France. Therefore, there have been various entities to assume dominion and prime agency, akin to the dubious nature of Yaweh's or Noah's ownership of the world in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, but none can claim essential permanence. As the true or more varied character of Canada became evermore differentiated from British origins and supremacy, the affiliation necessitated a re-evaluation akin to a deconstruction. Consequently, the only appropriate resolution was the pluralistic exchange or unstable free-play on the voyage into the future of which multi-culturalism personifies, parallel to a relatively Gnostic turn of events at the end of Findley's novel.

4. Next Step: Survival

Both the world in *Not Wanted on the Voyage* and the new Canada following the fissure from a colonial institutionalization are at a crossroads to determine a new identity. In the very least, both must learn how to continue to survive in new worlds following the upheaval or refiguring of the old ones.

[T]hrough the incorporation of new peoples, the generation of other meanings, and the formation of local sites of resistance in relation to the central body politic[,] [new nations] have from the beginning been in the process of inscribing a much different national narrative, one whose temporal and spatial reconfiguration of boundaries is at once antinational, postnational, and transnational in dimension. (Dickinson 126)

The new nation states are geared towards a multiplicity of definitions which lean towards a rather enigmatic and often inconsistent blend of categories. Lucy/Lucifer, arguably the most post-structural or deconstructive element of the novel, continues to destabilize any concrete notion of place and a foundation for identity as she laments:

Where I was born, the trees were always in the sun. And I left that place because it was intolerant of rain. Now, we are here in a place where there are no trees and there is only rain. And I intend to leave this place – it is intolerant of light. Somewhere – there must be somewhere where darkness and light are reconciled. So I am starting a *rumour*, here and now, of yet another world. I don't know when it will present itself – I don't know where it will be. But – as with all those other worlds now past – when it is ready, I intend to go there. (284, my emphasis)

Contradictorily, her idealism runs counter to an inclusionary liberalism which her character had come to symbolize in the novel. “This is precisely the scandal of Lucy’s transvestism in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*. [She] crosses not just sexual borderlines but also national [and idealistic] ones” (Dickinson 128).

The binary relativity with which she perceives the world ironically betrays her principles. “While she desires an idyllic ‘other world’, Lucy is unable to conceive of a ‘culture of peace’ as a lived space, a performative alternative to the hierarchical, violent, and enemy-dependent culture of war. . . . [She] accepts the us/them dichotomy imposed by the dominant order and seeks victory over an adversary, conceiving of victory as the destruction

of the enemy/other” (Jefferess 146). Yet, the novel as a composite construction of binary power relations and the interplay between them, does not concur with Lucy’s ideal vision. “*Not Wanted on the Voyage* does not provide a vision of the ‘promised land’ of which Lucy spreads rumours. It is not a utopian novel. In fact, . . . it illuminates the misguided appeal of other worlds, of utopia, of peace as a place or a time that will develop and for which we may patiently wait” (Jefferess 153). Where then have they arrived if not to a better or worse place but rather somewhere obscure and in between? In many respects, Findley’s work or at least the lives within the story could be seen as quite anti-climactic, or even thwarted and vague.

The question remains as to whether or not Findley’s characters have fallen victim to a pathetic destiny of failure; that is, a failure to actually change their world for some idealized notion of a better one. Also, do these motifs or questions have parallels or even repercussions in Canadian society and identity? Fellow Canadian author Margaret Atwood studies and critiques recurrent themes in Canadian literature in her book *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* and, not surprisingly, themes of victimization and failure fare prominently in her deconstruction of the Canadian psyche. She notes that:

[in] “immigrant” fiction [from Canada,] [t]he characters don’t think they are coming to a promised land; as a rule they come to get away from bad conditions somewhere else, but they are not travelling *towards* anything. . . . Canada does pretend to offer a promise: . . . a chance to exploit her; but this promise is seldom kept, at least in fiction. . . . [E]xploiters become the exploited, as they join the swelling ranks of Canadian victims. (151, original emphasis)

Often the newcomers will maintain distance from their new reality until the weight of disappointment represses them into subjugated victimhood. “Emotionally they remain tourists. . . . They make no real contact with the country, nor do they seem to expect anything from it. . . . Reciprocally they make little impact on those who witness the limp spectacle of their failure” (Atwood 150-51). She continues that “Canada stands always ready not only to manufacture and export failure but to attract it and provide for it an appropriate setting” (157).

In a noteworthy coincidence, she describes a character named Noah in *Son of a Smaller Hero* by Mordecai Richler who is “[s]tuck between the two horns of [a] dilemma – stay with the ethnic minority and be stifled [or] assimilate and lose your soul [and] he gives up trying to make it in Canada” (156). Not wanting his community “to dictate to him the terms of his life . . . [he constructs] a private Ark, which will preserve him against the Canadian Deluge in which the rest of his family will drown. . . . To move beyond failure is to

go someplace else” (156-57). Richler’s Noah seems to relate to Findley’s Lucy in that the significant parallel can be drawn between the two characters who feel the need to escape the disappointment of the places in which they find themselves.

4.1 A Loser Goes Out into the Wilderness

The image of Noah, and the entourage of his family sailing through the indefinite sea of the Flood, is remarkably akin to the vast wilderness of Canada which greeted the very first explorers and settlers. Alongside the cargo of animals, they represent a kind of primordial microcosm from which the rest of society or the world shall flourish and multiply. As illustrated in Findley’s narrative, the original purpose of Yaweh’s edict was to cleanse away dissent, start the world anew and re-establish his order. Atwood observes that “[e]xploration” is a recurring motif in Canadian literature, for reasons that [she] believes are not unconnected with the ‘Where is here’ dilemma” (114) but, that rather pathetically, it tends to be “[e]xploration that doesn’t ‘find’ anything” or it is “[d]oomed... [and] the explorers find death” (115). As the fable of Noah and his family comes to a close and they are left with a rather ambiguous future, it is clear that *Not Wanted on the Voyage* reproduces some of Atwood’s proposed epic failure motif in Canadian literature.

It could be postulated that there is something in the Canadian mentality which drives this attraction to stories of a borderline futility and lacklustre grandeur. Atwood suggests that “the terrain being explored is . . . the Canadian state of mind; again, nothing is found” (117). The gaping wilderness perpetually open to interpretation and development serves as a mirror for the psyche of a people who seem almost uncultivated or at least unsure of who they are; a society that has yet to fully understand where and what it is or what will become of it. In the worst case scenarios, what they become is just inconsequential and forgettable or they are “doomed” to death. The wilderness and the unknown are scary places and Atwood comments on another Canadian motif of the garrison, a term originally coined by Northrop Frye to describe the character who builds a fortress around himself to escape from a volatile reality outside. This character “constructs his garrison . . . a shell for himself: outside the walls are the hostile forces” (Atwood 94). This mentality corresponds to Noah on the upper deck of his Ark where he can keep dissent or volatility at a distance. The Ark serves as a barricade against the unforgiving nature around them but also dividing the various factions on board. “[It] carr[ies] a microcosm of the society that has created it, from the rich on the upper decks to the [dissenters and animals] in the steerage. It is human civilization in miniature, setting out

to conquer [Nature]; but instead of saving its passengers from the Flood it drowns them in it” (Atwood 58-59). Thereon, these characters become victims by the world or people around them, or worse, by means of their ignorance or blindness to their situation and inability to act upon it. Or perhaps they “can define the problem but . . . [have no hope of ever] solv[ing] it” (Atwood 96).

Unafraid to risk insult and completely dissect these hypothetical themes of Canadian literature and psyche, Atwood further expounds upon this mentality and interplay between victimization and utter failure which permeates it. She describes five elementary positions of the victim mentality in order to attempt to understand the interplay and exchanges between them. Though, ever so Canadian and ambivalent, these positions are of course rarely if ever, stable, secure and certain of themselves. One character can indeed embody or exhibit aspects of more than one position and move between them. On a rudimentary level they are follows:

Position One: To deny that you are a victim

Position Two: To acknowledge [victimhood], but [see it] as an act of Fate

Position Three: To acknowledge [victimhood] but to [fight against it]

Position Four: To be a creative non-victim. [No need for victor/victim games].

(There may be a Position Five, for mystics). (36-39)

In a discussion on victims in a story such as Noah and the Ark or *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, one must never forget the countless animals annihilated and deemed as expendable excesses. Part of this interplay of the victim positions extends to them, especially with their personified qualities, as per Mottyl. “If animals in literature are always symbols, and if Canadian animal stories present animals as victims, what trait in our national psyche do [they] symbolize?” (Atwood 75). A tenacious and blind feline repeatedly harmed by her oppressors, yet who perseveres with remarkable intelligence and intuition, does indeed evoke the possibility of a symbolic purpose. Through Mottyl, Findley conceivably calls for a communion with Canadian nature and wilderness and the knowledge which it can impart. This wilderness of the Canadian landscape is to be the home of the society re-defining its identity.

4.2 The Canadian Beast Within, Whimpering...

Findley himself, when still developing his ideas for *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, experienced a rather uncanny occurrence with a friend’s blind cat named ‘Mottle’. She lay at his leg watching him and he “could sense her instinctive knowledge of [him] as a creature. . . . [He

was] *her fellow animal*. [They] have a relationship that is as complex . . . as any [he] could ever have with another human being – and this thought made [him] see that [their] relationship is also, therefore, complex to [him]” (*Inside* 223, original emphasis). He further philosophizes that “[a]s human beings, we have forgotten how to play our role in the dimension. Why? How can it be that Mottle is so utterly herself – when with all [his own] human intellect – [he] so often fail[s] *to be [him]self at all?*” (*Inside* 224, original emphasis). Findley’s realized complicity with the animal exhibits significant parallels to the various victim positions postulated by Atwood.

In addition, she theorizes that “[v]ery rarely is an animal liked or disliked [or idealized] for itself alone; it is chosen for its symbolic anthropomorphic values” (Atwood 79). This is an interesting hypothesis in light of the symbolism assigned to the Unicorn in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*. The Unicorn, originally depicted as a seemingly mystical animal, was placed into both a victor/victim role simultaneously as he was forced to rape Emma with his horn and was then murdered by Japeth (264-73). Evidently, the Unicorn was revered into symbolic status for its horn which is similar to a phallus. In Findley’s narrative, it was forced into victimizing Emma by the humans around it as a demonstration of the power of patriarchy, but consequently dies, thus suffering victimhood by its own actions.

Appropriate to Atwood’s victim positions, it could be postulated that humans manage to exist across the spectrum of the first three positions as they so often “*deny*” their animal nature, then realize it, and consequently aim to change or conquer such instincts. She extrapolates upon such an interplay: “there comes a point at which seeing yourself as a victimized animal – naming your condition, as the crucial step from the ignorance of Position One through the knowledge of Position Two to the self-respect of Position Three – can become the *need* to see yourself as a victimized animal, and at that point you will be locked into Position Two, unable to go any further” (81, original emphasis). Perhaps humanity, or Canadians and their literature rather, are doomed to victimhood with no escape. The symbolic use of animals and their imposed subjugation to humanity offers a fitting metaphor for this fear in the Canadian literary psyche. The mystical Position Five, which Atwood only alludes to, likely shares a parallel with the animal kingdom itself. As with Findley’s friend’s cat Mottle, her cognition of creaturehood and existence essentially transcended that of Findley’s own, as though she had perhaps transcended the creative non-victimhood of Position Four. She had no concept of victim roles or a need for such concepts.

Further, the symbolic significance of the Unicorn in *Not Wanted on the Voyage* is also that of a creature beyond the concepts of victor/victim, but is then subjugated only by

humanity's faulted vice. For the Canadian literary psyche, perhaps this is analogous to the perceived inevitable failure to ever live up to notions of what, where and who Canadians are or hope to be, thus perpetuating a victimhood with little or no escape. There is a failure to establish a stable selfhood and Canadians then cancel out or ignore that which they assume they will never embody.

4.3 *Survival of the Species?*

If the Canadian literary sphere incessantly repeats this tradition of self-pity and destruction, then what is there to imagine of the next generation? What will it reproduce? "Where, then, do babies come from? Usually out of thin air, with little to explain their genesis. The Great Canadian Baby is a literary institution; it could in some cases be termed Baby Ex Machina, since it is lowered at the end of the book to solve problems for the characters which they obviously can't solve for themselves" (Atwood 207). Moreover, "[c]ancer of the womb, exhausting miscarriages and deaths in childbirth abound . . . [as well as] characters who try to produce babies and fail" (208). The appropriate corollary to this in *Not Wanted on the Voyage* is of course the stillborn birth of Hannah and Noah's ape baby. Ostensibly, the denial and repression of their true animal heritage and the subsequent victimizing of the world around them construed the dénouement of the fable as a dead-end. They will never have any hope of reproducing fruitfully and the stillborn hybrid child is a symbol of their failure and sterility. "This obsession with death is not very cheering, but neither is it precisely morbid; it is simply an image which reflects a state of soul. . . . It is also an image of ultimate sterility and powerlessness, the final result of being a victim" (Atwood 224). Themes of ambiguity and a destabilized or deconstructed essentialism seem to flourish within the Canadian literary sphere and its characters appear too unstable for reproduction.

There are apparent obstacles hindering the natural progression and promulgation of new generations, which depicts the future as evermore ambiguous. Perhaps this reflects an underlying sentiment in the Canadian psyche that the society is still under scrutiny and has yet to prove and substantiate its own identity. In a similar manner, Atwood discusses the work *Nobody Owns th [sic] Earth* by Bill Bissett and how the title "predicts a world that will be not 'international' but post-national, in which people will live on the earth with love both for it and for each other" (243). Nonetheless, Bissett's work "recognize[s] the fact that we do not yet live in this world, and if we assume too soon that [this time] has arrived we will simply end up as victims again, owned by people who do not even admit the possibility of a non-

‘owned’ Earth. . . . [B]ut the potential for social redemption is present [in] the image at the beginning . . . in which ‘a whole peopul’ [sic] is seen ‘moving / together’” (Atwood 243).

Atwood’s reading of Bissett’s work evinces a co-extensive relation to a post-colonial reading of Findley’s work as well. In *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, there is the ever-oppressive danger of re-victimization, especially as Mrs. Noyes tries to teach one of her young lambs to sing again in the conclusion of the novel and says, “what better song to learn at the beginning [of the new world] than *Lamb of God?*” (345, original emphasis). In doing so, she is clearly reverting to an indoctrination of prior victimhood. Yet, perhaps as a sign of hope, the sheep no longer understands her language following the Flood as it sings instead “[o]nly baaa. The sheep would never sing again” (348, original emphasis). Although Mrs. Noyes exhibits or attempts this reversion, perhaps the new generation of sheep can symbolize a new identity which will inhabit the new world as it avoids further subjugation.

Canadian literature is undeniably sombre and negative . . . both a reflection and a chosen definition of the national sensibility. . . . But in that literature there are elements which, although rooted in this negativity, transcend it – the collective hero, the halting but authentic break-throughs made by characters who are almost hopelessly trapped, the moments of affirmation that neither deny the negative ground nor succumb to it. These elements are not numerous, but they gain their significance from their very scarcity: thus, in Canadian literature, a character who does much more than survive stands out almost as an anomaly. . . . [W]hat can result is a “jail-break,” an escape from our old habits of looking at things, and a “re-creation,” a new way of seeing, experiencing and imaging – or imagining – which we ourselves have helped to shape. (Atwood 245-46)

Mrs. Noyes, though a victim, has nevertheless learned such “a new way of seeing” by the end of the novel. “She prayed. But not to the absent God. Never, never again to the absent God, but to the absent clouds, she prayed. And to the empty sky. She prayed for rain” (352). Her world view can now incorporate a different kind of imagination, or “rumour” (282) of a different world as per Lucy, as she learns to say to “[n]o!” (352) and thus, survive and surpass the older, traditional and abusive system from before.

Conclusion

Ambiguity or non-essentialism is perhaps a defining characteristic of Canadian literary expression which inevitably co-extends to tendencies rooted in a (albeit loosely appropriated) 'national' psyche. The story of *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, with Noah and his family losing their footing in the old world and ways of thought and sailing blindly into an unpredictable future, evokes the plight of any post-colonial society. Such societies are victimized by a recurrent loss or confusion of identity and struggle with the dilemma of establishing new ones. "And you, are you still here / tilting in this stranded ark / blind and seeing the dark" (Findley *Inside* 220). This excerpt from Phyllis Webb's poem *Leaning*, which was instrumental in helping Findley consolidate the theme and direction of his novel, captures concomitantly the Canadian animal in its unpredictable wilderness. It implicates the reader in the present moment, here and now, as an animal, cautiously ambivalent in unknown surroundings yet nevertheless retaining the ability to "see" both, or all, sides, despite being in "the dark". Through the use of animal symbolism and a re-telling of an archaic text, Findley's novel offers a material artefact to substantiate and elucidate a history that is in the making. He tells the story of the people and creatures who were almost forgotten, but without them, we ourselves would never have arrived where we are, wherever that may be and wherever such stories may take us.

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