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### Abstract

*Belonging and Homelessness in 'Post-Modern' Alberta Literature: Community at the Limits of Discourse* addresses the role of literature in establishing community, building "home," but also in revealing the persistence of excess beyond apparently universal mythic structures. In performing this exploration, it reads Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said* ; Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* ; Aritha van Herk's *Places Far From Ellesmere* ; and Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* within a framework drawing on the theories of George Grant, Ian Angus, Jean-Luc Nancy, and others. It raises questions of place, space, history, community, indigeneity, story, and silence, maintaining that texts' particular answers to these questions move from the concerns of a particular place to touch upon an excessive, universal, silent alterity. Revealing this excess without appropriating it suggests an ethic of respect allowing communication between the self and the other, while disrupting such binaries.

Focusing on "post-modern" "Alberta" literature, *Belonging and Homelessness* worries the process of categorization while recognizing the necessity of categories for the purposes of communication. It suggests that "Alberta" be understood to signify a contested, constructed intersection of various aspects of particularity, which enable one way for us to say "we," to perform the sharing of community. While some responses to modernity's home-building projects have been to attempt to embrace homelessness, nomadism, "virtual" community, or cosmopolitanism, this project maintains that such attempts are not simply liberating, but also potentially homogenizing, and that a defence of what Grant calls "one's own" is necessary for whatever good is available to us. Writing in Alberta, even writing that has been classified as "post-modern," performs this defence. However, this defence can easily slide into parochialism. Literature is necessary to the task of interrupting mythic representations of community as natural and permanent, that community is a category with fixed content. This project seeks to speak toward the silence surrounding four Alberta novels, but also to show how these novels offer a different story of belonging by recognizing that the stories of this place are both necessary and contingent, and always involve both productivity and excess.