

“The map is not the landscape”:  
Canadian and other landscapes  
in Jane Urquhart’s novel  
*A Map of Glass* (2005)

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## “The map is not the landscape”: Canadian and other landscapes in Jane Urquhart’s novel *A Map of Glass* (2005)<sup>1</sup>

For the last five years I have been strongly engaged in the research and the teaching of Canadian Literature and Culture, mainly Canadian Literature in English. The fact that the literatures in English are presently studied in their national and geographical contexts is related to the postcolonial paradigm, and, in the case of Canada, explicitly to the emancipation of the country from an identity bound up with the history of the British Commonwealth and more recently, with economical and cultural alliances with the USA.

In my teaching experience, the common reaction of an undergraduate student at the start of a course called “Canadian Literature and Culture” is a blank: no preconceived ideas or items or images seem to appear on the “horizon of expectation around Canada”, except perhaps for the occasional immigrant parent in Toronto or the tranquil assumption that the history and literature of Canada is an extension of English and French Literature. No further comment seems to be required.

This is not the time nor the occasion to explain how Canada and Canadian literature has imposed itself in the last forty years with a sense of identity rooted in the aboriginal cultures and the European colonisation with its peculiar amalgam of Francophone, Anglophone, Allophone languages, religions, and literatures that now are part of the diversity of a multicultural nation called Canada. Neither is it the place to discuss the

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<sup>1</sup> The expression “The map is not the landscape” belongs to the philosopher and scientist Alfred Kozybiski, whose theory in general semantics has inspired a new approach in psychotherapy.

extremely interesting question of transculturalism versus multiculturalism and to go into the peculiar relationship of the cultural identity of separate local and ethnic groups in Canada and the reality of a national belonging. Suffice it to say that to study Canada and Canadian literature sometimes looks like an exercise in imagining ways of life for our present day global predicament in the twenty first century.

There is, however, one common denominator that is inescapable in the discussion of Canadian literature and that is its geography.<sup>2</sup> When thinking of Canada, it is the sheer immensity of the landscape that comes to mind, its frozen wilderness and its resistance to human interference. Landscape haunts Canadian Literature, especially the inexorability with which it assaults the vulnerable individual. It is no coincidence that one of the books that helped to define Canadian Literature is called *Survival*, Margaret Atwood's *Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. (1972). If, according to Atwood the expansive dynamics of the American Literature of the USA may be translated by the metaphor of the "frontier" and the self-sufficiency of English literature by the image of the "island", *Survival* is the word that evokes and haunts all discussions of Canadian Literature.<sup>3</sup>

The haunting of landscape and the way geological formations of the landscape are bound up with the history of the people and the stratifications of mind are recurrent themes in the work of the contemporary Canadian author Jane Urquhart, and obsessively so in her last novel *A Map of Glass* (2005).

Jane Urquhart, born in 1949, is a poet, short story writer, critic, biographer and above all, one of today's most renowned novelists in Canada writing in English. Between 1986 and 2005 she published seven internationally acclaimed novels (*The Whirlpool*, 1986; *Changing Heaven*, 1990; *Away*, 1993; *The Underpainter*, 1997; *The Stone Carvers*, 2001;

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<sup>2</sup> Canada is the second largest country in the world of almost 10 million square km and harbours a small, predominantly urban population of about 34.000 million inhabitants.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Atwood. *Survival. A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: McLelland and Steward, 2004 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1972).

a *A Map of Glass*, 2005 and recently, in 2010, *Sanctuary Line*.<sup>4</sup> Urquhart is also a widely read novelist: her book *Away*, for instance, remained for 132 weeks on the bestseller list of Canada's newspaper *Globe & Mail*, the longest of any Canadian book ever. One of the reasons that Jane Urquhart is well accepted by the public may be related to the fact that, although employing complex narrative techniques, her books preserve intimations of unity and of the life-giving possibilities of connecting realities. Even when she draws in different narrators as in *A Map of Glass*, the reader is sustained by an embracing lyrical voice, an incantatory cadence, as it were, that reminds one of what the British psychiatrist Donald Winnicott calls a "holding environment" (Phillips, 1988:9). And the reader of Urquhart's novels needs to be held because reading Urquhart means to listen to strange tales of death, loss and madness, to be surprised by startling metaphors and unsettling images, to encounter characters that are eccentric and withdrawn, characters that have "a condition" as is said of the protagonist in *A Map of Glass*. A long voyage through multiple landscapes of obsessive loss awaits the reader of *A Map of Glass*: loss of civilizations, loss of memory, loss of love, loss of landscape, loss of trees and natural resources, loss of language, loss of the integrity of the body, loss of place. "Is there no place left?" (15), a character asks at the beginning of the novel. As I want to suggest, the answer may be found in the writing and reading of the novel itself, in the survival and maintenance of inner space, the space of the imagination.

*A Map of Glass* (2007) is structured in four parts and covers a time span that goes from the nineteenth to the twenty first century. The novel begins with a short introductory text that, at first glance, has a mysterious

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<sup>4</sup> In 1992, *The Whirlpool* was the first Canadian book to win France's prestigious Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger (Best Foreign Book Award). Urquhart's third novel, *Away*, won the 1994 Trillium Book Award and in 1994, Jane Urquhart received the Marian Engel Award for her entire body of work. In 1996 she was named "chevalier" to France's "Ordre des Arts et des Lettres". In the fall of 1997, *The Underpainter*, was published to wide critical acclaim, winning the 1997 Governor General's Award for English Fiction, and becoming a fixture on the national bestseller lists. In 2005, Urquhart was named an Officer of the Order of Canada.

connection with what follows. The rest of the book is then divided in three substantial parts, each with a separate title and introduced by a small landscape photograph. Parts 1, 2 and 4 have an anonymous third person narrator. The central piece, part three, is a first person narrative, told in the voice of Andrew Woodman, the character that dies in the opening section and that plays a substantial part in the whole novel.

The very short opening sequel (4 pages) evokes the mental disintegration, the subsequent acts of forgetting and the death of a character later identified as Andrew Woodman. The novel then continues as a tripartite structure, as if it were a triptych. The first panel, called “The Revelations”, introduces a character called Jerome McNaughton who finds Andrew Woodman’s dead body frozen in a shard of ice; Andrew’s lover, Sylvia goes in search of Jerome to hand him over Andrew’s notebooks.

The central part of the triptych, called “The Bog Commissioners” (144 pages) reveals the contents of Andrew’s notebooks. It is the history of Timber Island, an island between lake and river in the mouth of the St Lawrence River where five generations of Woodman created and subsequently lost an economic empire built on the exportation of wood and the construction of vessels. The ravishing of the forests and the greedy tilting of the land ends in a generalized desertification: the earth turns into sand because of disrespect for the soil.

The last panel of the triptych, “A Map of Glass” (76 pages), returns to twenty first century Toronto, to Sylvia and Jerome. The book finishes with Jerome and his girlfriend Mira reading the ending that Sylvia has written to Andrew’s unfinished story. Sylvia’s text is reproduced in the novel as a first person narrative and thus seems to confirm that her story continues the history of the Woodman settlers and is not a hallucination as Sylvia’s husband, Malcolm, claims.

But the ending leaves the matter undecided, because Sylvia herself suggests that both Andrew’s story and her own may have been a construction of her own imagination:

*All the while I have been talking to you I have been listening for the sound of Andrew’s voice, because they are his stories. But now I have to admit that I have been listening in the way I listened to a stethoscope that belonged to my father. When I was a child, I removed it from my office so many*

*times that eventually.... I was given an instrument of my own for Christmas. I loved the rubber earpieces that shut out the noise of the world. But, even more, I loved the little silver bell at the end of the double hose, a bell I could place against my chest in order to listen to the drum, to the pounding music of my own complicated, fascinating heart. (369)<sup>5</sup>*

The question that Jane Urquhart's novel seems to ask is a question about the validity of imaginary representations and their relation to history and reality. At a certain point in the book, Jerome says "As long as a story is being told, we believe in everything" (132) and, indeed, *A Map of Glass* seems to be a book that creates an imaginary space for survival, an interior bulwark against forgetting, decay and death. In Urquhart's book, history and landscape are preserved through the mapping and remapping that go into the creation of characters, settings, histories and the traces all of these leave on the landscape.

That reality can only be recorded through mappings/representations of various sizes and provenience explains the reason why the title of the book has been chosen in order to establish a connection with the American land artist Robert Smithson whose words are quoted as an epigraph to the novel:

*By drawing a diagram, a ground plan of a house, a street plan to the location of a site, or a topographic map, one draws a 'logical two dimensional picture'. A 'logical picture' differs from a natural or realistic picture in that it rarely looks like the thing it stands for. Robert Smithson, *The Collected Writings*. (Urquhart, 2006)*

The allusions to Robert Smithson are frequent in the novel, beginning with the title that is also the title of one of Smithson's installations of 1969, "A Map of Glass". In Smithson's work, "A Map of Broken Glass" was originally sketched as "A Map of Broken Clear Glass (Atlantis)" and finally installed in a site with the title: "Hypothetical Continent. Map

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<sup>5</sup> All quotations taken from *The Map of Glass* belong to the Bloomsbury Edition of 2006.

of *Broken Glass: Atlantis*.<sup>6</sup> Smithson's work is a construction made of shards of broken glass, heaped one upon the other in a seemingly random manner. It is this work of Smithson that Jerome recalls in the novel, while he prepares his own land artwork:

*Jerome stood at the end of the ice, thinking of Robert Smithson's Map of Broken Glass, about how the legendary Smithson had transported pieces of glass to the New Jersey site he had chosen, had heaped them into a haphazard shape, then waited for the sun to come out so that the structure would leap into vitality he knew existed when broken glass combined with piercing light. Smithson had been mostly concerned with mirrors at the time and yet he had chosen glass rather than mirrors, as if he had decided to exclude rather than to reflect the natural world. According to something Jerome had read, however, Smithson had come to believe the glass structure he had created was shaped like the drowned continent of Atlantis. Perhaps this explained his need to use material that would suggest the transparency of water. But Jerome was drawn to the brilliance and feeling of danger in the piece: the shattering of experience and the sense that one cannot play with life without being cut, injured. (18)*

The description of the structure of pieces of glass "leaping into vitality" under the influence of the sun is an apt description of Urquhart's novel in which the broken fragments of the past "come to life" under the light of the imagination. What seems to matter, then, is not the question whether the imaginary construct bears a resemblance to the past (verisimilitude), but that it brings the past to life by keeping in motion the workings of the mind. This is what the characters need, for both, Sylvia and Jerome, "exclude" the world, entrenched as they are in their own selves. Sylvia suffers from "a condition": she is withdrawn, cannot suffer change or read people's faces. Jerome, on the other hand, is described as "a hermit in winter". Ever since his father's violent alcoholism and death, he has isolated himself in a place full of anger. A poster of the painting of his patron saint,

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<sup>6</sup> [http:// www.robertsmithson.com](http://www.robertsmithson.com). Accessed 20 March 2010.

St Jerome, hangs in his studio. It is a painting by the Flemish artist of the sixteenth century, Joachim Patinir, who is known as the pioneer of landscape painting as a genre and whom Dürer called “Der gute Landschaftmaler”.<sup>7</sup> Like St Jerome, his namesake lives in the wilderness. And just as Saint Jerome is accompanied by a lion, Jerome tames a wild cat whom he calls Swimmer because “of the soundless fluidity of the animal’s movements” (27).

Fluidity, flow, life is what Jerome longs for, encapsulated as he is in his grief and unable to alter the picture of the hated dead father that he carries in his memory. In a dream of Jerome, however, it is the father himself who longs for change in an anticipatory movement that announces the shift in perspective of Jerome’s memories that will occur in the novel. Again, Jerome’s dream of his father is connected to Smithson’s *Map of Broken Glass*:

*... it was his father, not Andrew Woodman, that he found trapped in the ice near the docks of Timber Island, trapped but still alive. On his ravaged face was an expression of such tenderness that Jerome reached forward to touch the frost-covered face. But when his fingers made contact with his father’s cheek, the whole head fragmented, collapsing into a confusion of thin transparent pieces on a flat surface, and suddenly he was looking at Smithson’s Map of Broken Glass. Each shard reflected something he remembered about his father: a signet ring, a belt buckle, a dark green package of cigarettes, an eye, a cufflink, the back of his hand, and Jerome knew that his father was broken, smashed, ... In the dream this was satisfying rather than distressing. In the dream it seemed that the alteration in his father was what he had wanted all along. (144-145)*

The alteration that Jerome’s father seems to want in the dream may be the alteration that both Sylvia and Jerome long for. The two characters have installed themselves in unyielding positions and have become immobilized, Sylvia frozen in her “condition”, Jerome fixed in the intransigent picture of

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<sup>7</sup> en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joachim\_Patinir. Accessed 18 March 2010.

his alcoholic father. As long as they keep themselves isolated from change, they feel protected. But they also fend themselves off from the mobility inherent in life and experience vitality as the destruction of a familiar pattern and not as a potentiality for what is new. They therefore see life not as a promise, in anticipation driven by desire, but are forced to look upon it as an inevitable falling off, a going backwards, “*an exercise in forgetting*”. The expression is repeated twice in the text, once in speaking of Jerome, once in Sylvia’s direct speech.

In Jerome’s case, the expression is used when he arrives on Timber Island to create his land art, an art made in the snow and on the land “to document a series of natural environments” (11). Jerome thinks of himself not as an artist but as a chronicler, someone who explores nature in order to “mark the moment of metamorphosis, when something has changed from what it had been in the past” (11). Remembering the ingenious campfires his father used, he now sees their ignition as “*the burning of history of the country in miniature, a sort of exercise of forgetting first the Native peoples and then the settlers, whose arrival had been the demise of these peoples, settlers in whose blood was carried the potential for his own existence*”(15)<sup>8</sup>.

Three hundred pages later, Sylvia will express a similar idea and take up the idea of life as an exercise in forgetting, a gradual deletion of the spaces and the persons that make up the landscape of life:

*Perhaps, Jerome, all life is an exercise in forgetting*<sup>9</sup>. Think of how our childhood fades as we walk into adulthood, how it recedes and diminishes like a coastline from the deck of an oceanliner. First the small details disappear, then the specifics of built spaces, then the hills fall below the horizon one by one. People we have been close to, people who die, are removed from our minds feature by feature until there is only a fragment left behind, a glance, the shine of their hair, a few episodes, sometimes traumatic, sometimes tender, I have not been close to many people, Jerome, but I know that once they

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<sup>8</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>9</sup> Emphasis mine.

*leave us they become unsubstantial, and no matter how we try we cannot hold them, we cannot reconstruct. The dead don't answer when we call them. The dead are not our friends.* (367)

It is no coincidence that the two characters who uphold the central part of the triptych, the part that chronicles the history of the settlers, think of life in terms of forgetting, decaying, dying. One could say that both Sylvia and Jerome exist as tombs for their lost ones. Sylvia carries her dead lover in the safety of her untouched and untouchable person, as if she were pregnant of a dead body. Jerome is immobilized by the anger with which he guards his father's memory. To give themselves over to movement — to history — would imply the loss of what they are most keen to safeguard: their image of the dead they watch over.

Yet at the end, after having gone through the history of their forebears both Sylvia and Jerome are changed: Sylvia is able to imagine a different relationship with her husband, Malcolm, while Jerome discovers love for a death father he thought he hated. Through reading and speaking, through commerce with words, through time shared and taken out from the rest of their lives in order to listen to one another, Sylvia and Jerome have drawn a map — fragile as glass perhaps, but not powerless — of the landscape where they and their dead may live.

The dead may not be our friends, as Sylvia says, but the novel as a whole claims that it is up to the living to remain friends with the dead, to honour not so much their absence, but to honour them *as* absence. *A Map of Glass* shows that one can come to life by speaking of the dead, create inner space by recording their disappearance, and thus remember by evoking forgetting. If a topographical map cannot adequately represent the reality it stands for, as Smithson claims, neither can a written text because it always remains a work that represents what is NOT there. On the other hand, and precisely because language — as representation — is always already founded upon an absence, it also becomes the privileged way to map absence, to make absence visible, to trace its various configurations in the gaps and fissures of the tapestry of words.

*A Map of Glass* begins with a celebration of loss, a lyrical evocation of the disappearance of inner space, the deletion of words and memory, the forgetting of names, the obliteration of a sense of self, a loss of everything. This is a four page prelude, a kind of lyrical fugue on the theme of loss, which, in its apparently inchoate form contains the intricate structure and the themes of the novel. It introduces “an older man walking in winter” (1) surrounded by shards of sounds and words drifting in and out of his disintegrating memory like flakes of the snow in the landscape. Before succumbing to the cold, the man pronounces the words: “I have lost everything” (5). The narrator comments: “And there is nobody there, to hear his voice, nobody at all” (6).

The tripartite text that follows constitutes an implicit response to the narrator’s comment: for every reader of the novel will come to hear the voice of “the one that lost everything” and come to know his loss through the many traces and witnesses recorded in the text. Multilayered fragments and splinters of all sizes and shapes will be heaped up to tell the story of Andrew Woodman, the man who forgot who he was, but whose own written words will be saved and disclosed (“revealed”) by the woman whom he was able to touch.

This woman is Sylvia whose name is associated in the text with the woods and thus, by extension with the name Woodman. Sylvia and Andrew Woodman seem predestined to meet by virtue of their names.<sup>10</sup>

Sylvia shows signs of what seems to be a mental illness, always referred to by the expression “the condition”: she is withdrawn, resistant to change, cannot bear to be touched, and concentrates on objects or enumerations in order to escape the unpredictability of people. She is cared for and loved by her husband Malcolm who respects Sylvia’s wish not to be touched and goes and lives with his wife in her parental home in order not to change her “familiar landscape”, the frame that guarantees her security and sense of self. Never is Sylvia’s “condition” referred to by a

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<sup>10</sup> There is an allegorical quality to the novel. The text itself reflects on the names of the characters and of places, thus inviting the reader to do the same. Is Jerome McNought linked to the emptiness (nought/nothing) that inhabits him?

medical term.<sup>11</sup> And yet, medical terms are mentioned in the novel as possible maps of the body. For instance, when Sylvia reads the scientific titles of her husband's medical books, she thinks of them in terms of maps of the sick body:

*Clinical Gastroenterology, Pathological Basis of Disease, An Index of Differential Diagnosis, Medical Mycology, The Metabolic Basis of Inherited Disease, Principals of Surgery.* She went to sleep comforted by the thought that someone, anyone, had taken the trouble to attend to a tragic alteration of the body, as if they had wanted to **draw a map of its regions, then explore its territories.** (315-316)<sup>12</sup>

Sylvia's husband will later dismiss Andrew Woodman as "the Alzheimer patient" (353) and with three words destroy the full dimension of the "man walking in winter" who the reader feels to have known intimately in the musical piece of loss of the first pages. Malcolm will also explain away Sylvia's love for the dead man as a product of "hallucinatory imagination", fuelled by too much reading.

In the novel, Malcolm is drawn as a caring and loving husband of a mentally ill woman. But he is also presented as entrenched in the (good) opinion he has of himself and of his diagnosis of his wife's condition. In the end, Sylvia feels responsible for the image her husband nurtures of herself and senses that to dare "not to have a condition" (as her blind friend Julia claims she has not) could destroy his balance. Thus Urquhart opposes scientific labels to imaginary constructs to confront the issue of naming and categorizing as forms of "mapping" that may not only be highly reductive of the complexity of a person but may serve intricate relations of power and ownership.

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<sup>11</sup> Sylvia's symptoms do very much call to mind stereotypes associated to the syndrome of autism, but the word is never used in the text. In almost all Urquhart's novels strange characters appear who share a reluctance to enter the order of "common" sense or commonly shared habits and ways of action. It would be very interesting to study the author's work from the point of view of the "outsiders" that inhabit them and of the "outsider art" they often produce.

<sup>12</sup> Italics in the book, emphasis mine.

Sylvia is a typical Urquhart character, a character resistant to change because it refuses the categorizations imposed upon her by others. Therefore and paradoxically she becomes herself an agent of chance.<sup>13</sup> In a sense, all Urquhart's novels deal with the refusal or rejection of familiar labels and the need for new ways of speaking in the face of new and overwhelming experiences. In her books, the necessity for a novel language is linked to the experience of the Canadian landscape and the way its sheer otherness invites "deterritorialization" (Goldman, 2005:102) and wipes out the traditional languages coming from the European continent, especially the British Isles and the USA. Change, movement, the essence of life, Urquhart's books suggests, come about through an intrinsic relationship between the "alterations of the body" and the alterations of the landscape" that must find a new language to be made real. To inhabit the new world, the "common sense" and "established metaphors" of the old world must be re-shaped and find new forms to come into existence.

In *A Map of Glass*, the change is brought about through a series of mappings and re-mappings that show that naming and being named cannot be avoided, that they are necessary to life, because — as Sylvia says — "*there is always, always a condition*" (359). One never escapes being categorized. Yet, as the psychotherapist Alfred Kozybiski famously remarked in words that echo those of Smithson, "the map is not the landscape", reminding that words and things do not necessary coincide and that some realities may change by invention of new and better stories

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. *The Whirlpool*, the *Underpainter*, *The Stonecarvers*... In her first novel, *The Whirlpool*, set in Canada of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is said that no daffodils are to be found in the Canadian landscape, a clear allusion to how the perception of language in the English world is shaped by the nineteenth-century Romantic Poetry and how inadequate this poetry is to describe the new world. In the *Whirlpool*, the incapacity to embrace new ways of seeing and speaking will lead to the death of one of the characters and to the disappearance of the Browning-obsessed female protagonist who walks away from the confinement of a ritualized domestic life and disappears into the wild Canadian landscape. Interesting enough, it is also a small, strange boy who becomes the agent of liberation for another character, Maud. Refusing to speak, treating words like sonorous objects without meaning, the boy imposes his own, peculiar order on his mother's world and thus liberates her of what she comes to recognize as an obsession with death.

to describe them. Interesting enough, the book that describes the psychiatric methods based on Kozybiski's theories, bears as epigraph a quote from Jorge Luis Borges about representations and reality: "A good book changes the outlook on reality. No book is a mirror of reality but something that is accrued to reality" (Lefevere de Ten Hove, 2000: 9). Making a map leaves its trace on the landscape and changes it.

In a *Map of Glass*, all characters, however fugitive or secondary, are engaged in the making of maps. Some maps are drawn on parchment like the maps of the bogs that Joseph Woodman was commissioned to investigate in Ireland; Annabelle, his daughter, has a "book of relics, her splinter book" (205) in which she keeps remnants of floors, vessels, floors, wooden constructions, and trees, "all dated, identified, and catalogued" (205). Jerome, the landscape artist, makes markings on the snow and removes with pick or hands everything that has accumulated in its contours thus revealing layers of ice "like strata on a rock face" (20)<sup>14</sup>. Sylvia makes tactile maps for her blind friend Julia. She uses everyday materials: buttons, silver paper, "colorful ribbons and scraps" of fabrics (352) to enable her friend to see landscapes, itineraries and places. Andrew, the "historical geographer" (77), "studies geological phenomena and traces of human activity that were left behind on the surface of the earth" (68). It is perhaps Andrew's ability to read the geological formations underlying surface structures that allow him to walk through the barriers that entrench Sylvia and to touch her. Andrew compares Sylvia to an anthropological or archaeological discovery (325) because she is "emplaced", "intact", "preserved" into the soil by generations of fixedness: (325). Embracing Sylvia thus becomes bringing into life landscapes that do not want to give themselves over to change, that wish to remain intact. Sylvia's "emplacement", what her husband Malcolm calls her "condition" may thus be read as a refusal to be part in the greedy destruction and exploration of the Canadian landscape, a guardian of the landscape that "is disappearing" (343), a preserver, in her own body, of history because, "she knew the histories of the old settlers as well as she knew her own body" (37).

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<sup>14</sup> Hence the title of the first part of the triptych: "The Revelations".

On the other hand, Sylvia's need to tell someone of her love for Andrew, to speak the dead one into life so to say, also shows how unbearable a position of emplacement is, how the flow of life is inseparable from movement and chance. Living, *A Map of Glass*, seems to say, implies the risk of trust, of engaging in conversation, in work, in creation. All elements of life, all people and objects and items leave traces on the landscape: to observe those traces and to re-arrange them in a never ending remapping is the work of the settler, the artist and the lover. Life is not an exercise in forgetting, it is an exercise in rearranging, opening space for death and destruction, for the wounds caused by shards of glass, for the transparency that, illuminated by the imagination, makes "the structure leap into vitality".

One wonders what kind of aesthetic such a life work requires. One of the possibilities is Smithson's *Map of Broken Glass*, an installation that emphasizes the sharpness that cannot be thought away, the shards that refuse to melt and unify the dissonant parts and yet does not inhibit the vital flow of light. Another is Urquhart's *A Map of Glass*, a book that speaks of dissonance, but clearly privileges fluidity and, in an almost titanic structure, celebrates the transforming power of the imagination in bringing back the past to renewed life. Both forms point to the possibility of other configurations and beckon us to draw the map of our own geographies and thus to engage in and honour life.

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[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joachim\\_Patinir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joachim_Patinir)

**ABSTRACT**

The title of Jane Urquhart's novel of 2005, *A Map of Glass*, is borrowed in an acknowledged gesture to the landscape artist Robert Smithson, in particular his installation *A Map of Broken Glass*. The novel is also broken up and structured as a series of narratives set in different times and spaces but all evoking multiple landscapes of loss: loss of civilizations, loss of generations of settlers, loss of memory, loss of love, loss of trees and natural resources, loss of language, loss of the integrity of the body, loss of place. At the same time that the remnants of loss are mapped out, however, new landscapes emerge and are des-covered in the telling and reading of narrative itself which thus presents itself as the privileged landscape of memory that guarantees the maintenance of inner space, the space of the imagination.

**KEYWORDS**

Memory– Landscape-Map-Art-History/Canada.

**RESUMO**

O título do romance de Jane Urquhart, *A Map of Glass*, de 2005, foi emprestado do artista paisagista Robert Smithson como forma de reconhecimento do seu trabalho, em particular da sua instalação *A Map of Broken Glass*. A estrutura do romance também se encontra desfragmentada numa série de narrativas que se desenrolam em diferentes espaços e tempos, embora evocando sempre múltiplas paisagens de perda: perda de civilizações, perda de gerações de colonos, perda de memória, perda de amor, perda das florestas e recursos naturais, perda da linguagem, perda da integridade do corpo humano, perda de lugar. Todavia, ao mesmo tempo que os remanescentes da perda são delineados, outras paisagens emergem e são des-cobertas através da escrita e leitura da própria narrativa que, desta forma, apresenta-se como o espaço privilegiado da memória que garante a subsistência do espaço interior: o espaço da imaginação.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Memória, paisagem, mapa, arte, História/Canadá.

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