Aesthetic Mappings of the West by the Palliser and Hind Survey Expeditions, 1857-1859

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By the close of the fifth decade of the nineteenth century both Britons and British subjects in Canada West wanted a more detailed picture of western terrain than had hitherto been made available to the public by the Hudson's Bay Company. This desire arose as the time approached for the fur-trade monopoly to apply to the British parliament for a renewal of its charter: unsurprisingly, Parliament, like the expansionists in Canada West, wanted to know once and for all just what the company was being permitted a monopoly to control; thus, virtually simultaneously in 1857, the parliamentarians and the colonists commissioned survey expeditions of the West. Known today respectively as the Palliser (British) and the Hind (Canadian) surveys, the two expeditions overlapped very little of the country they charted and assessed, but they did coincide in one major respect: their reports indicate that the pervasive schemata of the Sublime and Picturesque, which had governed earlier landscape responses to the West by Britons,[1] extended even to "scientific" descriptions of land. As with British mariners in the Arctic, these eighteenth-century schemata had remained fundamental to the early- and mid-nineteenth century British perception of Britain and the rest of the British empire; indeed, the years 1857-1859 alone witnessed separate invocations of the Sublime to convey the uninhabitability of two monumental regions of present-day Canada. In those years, Francis Leopold M'Clintock set sail in the *Fox* on a voyage that would confirm the grisly truth that the Arctic had swallowed Franklin's voyage of 1845, while John Palliser embarked on the apparent discovery that the West held his notorious triangle of desert waste, as capable as the gelid Arctic archipelago of annihilating the traveller.

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[1] See, for example, Maria Tippett and Douglas Cole, *From Desolation to Splendour: Changing Perceptions of British Columbia Landscape* (Toronto and Vancouver: Clarke Irwin, 1977); "The Limits of the Picturesque in British North America," *Journal of Garden History*, 5:i (1985): 97-110; and "David Thompson's Imaginative Mapping of the Canadian Northwest 1784-1812," *Ariel*, 15:ii (1984): 89-106.

I

John Palliser was an Irish aristocrat who loved to hunt buffalo. He had spent 1847 and 1848 hunting them in the Missouri watershed of the northern United States,[2] and when he set about organizing his famous survey expedition one decade later his initial aim was only to get himself and his gun back to the prairies. But by the time he embarked for North America on 15 May 1857, he was in the employ of various British institutions and was charged with acquainting the British Parliament and citizenry with that unknown portion to the West lying between 49°-53°N. latitude and 100°-115°W. longitude. Captain Palliser was not alone on this venture but neither was he accompanied by fellow sportsmen: his companions included Eugene Bourgeau (1813-1877), a prominent Swiss botanist, James Hector (1834-1907), a Scottish geologist, John W. Sullivan (1836-?), the sextant observer and secretary from the Greenwich Naval School, and, later, Thomas Blakiston (1836-?) the magnetic observer.

Why an aristocratic sportsman should have remained the leader of this scientific survey remains an interesting question that Irene M. Spry addresses in the introduction to *The Papers of the Palliser Expedition 1857-1860* (1968), her outstanding edition of the survey's published reports. With neither the experience of a military or naval explorer, nor the benefit of a fur trader's experience in the region, Palliser nevertheless exhibited the sort of pliable tenacity that, as David Thompson had proved several decades before, was indispensable for survival among the more volatile Indian tribes. As well, notes Spry, he demonstrated unbounded resilience in the face of difficult conditions:

> He had not only survived a solitary winter journey on the prairies [in 1847], but had revelled in it. He took pride in his ability to go fast and far, keeping up with negative voyageurs. He relished the challenge of having to shoot his own dinner or go without it . . . He was prepared to stake his ability as a hunter against hunger and even starvation, his toughness against the harzards and privations of a long journey through a little-known and difficult country.[3]

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[2] See John Palliser, *Solitary Rambles and Adventures of a Hunter in the Prairies* (London: John Murray, 1853); facs. rpt., introd. Hugh A. Dampsey (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969).

[3] *The Papers of the Palliser Expedition 1857-1869*, ed. and introd. Irene M. Spry, *Publications of the Champlain Society* 44 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1986): xli.

While his disposition provided tenacity against arduous travel and inevitable changes of itinerary, his cultural background also fortified a remarkably consistent perception of nature. The British preference for the picturesque landscape——undulating, well-watered parkland of delimited scope and scale, and exhibiting only moderately-sized geographical features——over sublime vertical or horizontal vastness had issued, time and again before 1857, in ecstatic responses to the aspen groves of the North Saskatchewan River valley and more northern parklands, but in nearly complete silence towards the vast, open grasslands in the vicinity of the South Saskatchewan River.[4] It needs to be added that fur traders, despite knowing that huge herds of buffalo thrived on the grasslands, were further persuaded of the grasslands' sublimity by the presence of the violent Blackfoot tribes on them, and were further convinced of their sterility by the paucity of beaver near them. But one of the leading contributors to European responses to the grasslands as sublime was the infrequency of prospect points. The traveller who was trained in eighteen-century landscape appreciation following the edicts of William Gilpin and others, or who was familiar with English topographical poetry, or who, like Austen's Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey,* was anxious to practise the trends of the day, was accustomed to acquiring a point of view from a convenient height of land; from it, a single landscape composition could be composed and man's sense of controlling nature confirmed. The Claude glass, named for the Franco-Italian whose landscape paintings of the Roman campagna helped define landscape appreciation in Britain and, later, in North America, was one of the devices used to provide a frame through which to gain the "correct" view of nature. Another was the *camera obscura,* a tinted mirror which, when the viewer faced it towards the landscape as he turned his back to nature, provided an instant landscape picture.[5] It was just such a device that Merriwether Lewis regretted not having brought

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[4] See F.G. Roe, "Early Opinions on the 'Fertile Belt' of Western Canada," *Historical Review, 27* (1946): 131-49; J. Wreford Watson, "The Role of Illusion in North American Geography: A Note on the Geography of North American Settlement," *The Canadian Geographer/Le Geographe Canadien* XIII, 1 (1969): 1-10; *Prairie Perspectives 2: Selected Papers of the Western Canadian Studies Conferences, 1970, 1971,* ed. and introd. A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen (Toronto and Montreal: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1973); *Images of the Plains: The Role of Human Nature in Settlement,* ed. Brian W. Blouet and Merlin P. Lawson (Lincoln: Nebraska, 1975); D.W. Moodie, "Early British Images of Rupert's Land," in *Canadian Plains Studies 6: Man and Nature on the Prairies,* ed. Richard Allen (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1976): 1-20; Ronald Rees, "Images of the Prairie: Landscape Painting and Perception in the Western Interior of Canada," *The Canadian Geographer/Le Geographe Canadien,* XX (1976): 269-78; Dick Harrison, *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* (Edmonton: Alberta, 1977); Robert Thacker, "The Plains Landscape and Descriptive Technique," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2 (1982): 146-56.

[5] For an able review of eighteenth-century English landscape practices, see the editors' introductory essay in *The Genius of the Place: The English Landscape Garden 1620-1820,* ed. John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis (London: Paul Elek, 1975, 1979). For an account of the *camera obscura* and various other landscape viewing aids of the period, see Leslie Parris, *Landscape in Britain c1750-1850* (London: The Tate Gallery, 1973).

along when he and William Clark found the Great Falls of the Missouri while on his way to the Pacific Ocean in 1804.[6]

Solitary Rambles, John Palliser's narrative of his earlier buffalo hunt on the American Plains, does not include such an expression of regret; it does, however, exhibit a European's common response, filtered through the aesthetic of the Sublime, to the vastness of the prairies. Frequently without a prospect point from which to compose an orderly view of the landscape, Palliser felt that nature controlled his destiny. Time and space overwhelmed him, just as, Coleridge had argued at the beginning of the century, vastness overwhelmed man's capacity to imagine it.[7] "The eye ranges over a sea of short waving grass," wrote Palliser, "without a single intervening object to afford it the accustomed means of estimating relative distance." From noting this perceptual incapacity, he goes on to register its psychological correlative: "I know not when I have felt so forcibly conscious of my own insignificance as when struggling through this immense waste, and feeling as though I were suddenly carried backward into some remote long past age, and as though I were encroaching on the territories of the Mammoth and the Mastodon."[8] While the eye cannot order distance, the mind cannot control time; and yet, one would have expected a scientific survey, such as Palliser's or Hind's, to manage to throw over aesthetic schemata when looking closely at terrain in the West: different taxonomies would assuredly provide different identifications of nature. Few individuals, however, are capable of shedding the perceptual modes of their societies: Christopher Columbus, David Thompson, and Charles Darwin number in those few; the members of Palliser's and Hind's expeditions do not.

II

After steaming to Isle Royale in Lake Superior and pushing ahead to the fur-trade route by canoe from there, Palliser camped his party above Kakabeka Falls on the "beautifully

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[6] Captain Merriwether Lewis, *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806,* ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland, 1904-05); facs. rpt., 8 vols., introd. Bernard de Voto (New York: Arno, 1969) 2: 149-50.

[7] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria . . . with Aesthetical Essays,* ed. J. Shawcross, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907) II: 309.

[8] Palliser, *Solitary Rambles,* 106,88. This response to grasslands space is echoed in the responses of British mariners to arctic vastness. In particular, Samuel Gurney Cresswell's paintings of the North, executed in the years between Palliser's hunt and survey, present tiny human figures in the corners of paintings. Such a representation followed standard staffage in sublime landscape painting, as initiated by the Italian, Salvator Rosa, and as carried forward in British landscape painting by Robert Cozens. Cresswell's works are discussed in "The Aesthetic Map of the North, 1845-1849," *Arctic* 38:ii (1985): 89-103.

picturesque" Kaministikwia River in mid 1857.[9] By month's end, the brigade had paddled over the height of land and had reached Namakan Lake, just upstream from Rainy Lake, and at the Northwest end of modern-day Quetico Provicial (Ontario) Park. An account, which commences, as the British parliament would have wanted, with a factual estimation of the land's agricultural potential, soon develops at the hand of an aristocrat into a landscape picture of a future estate park:

> The morming was exceedingly beautiful. . . . We halted on the right bank of the [Namakan] river at one of the most lovely spots for agricultural purposes that we have seen on the whole route. There was something in the natural grouping of the trees and shrubs at this place which irresistibly called to mind rural scenes at home, and it was hard to realize the fact that the hand of man had taken no part in producing this effect. We found here the remains of an Indian camp, among which, in a secluded grove, were several coffins raised above the ground upon posts to the height of 5 or 6 feet. . . . Here were fine oaks and ash growing singly and in clumps, as if in grounds laid out by the landscape gardener, land a shrubby growth of underwood interspersed with large willows grew luxuriantly. (73-4)

Were George Vancouver still alive, he might well have thought that Palliser's description had been borrowed from his own remarks about Puget Sound ("we had no reason to imagine that this country had ever been indebted for any of its decorations to the hand of man").[10] So pervasive and enduring was this response to meadows clumped with foliated trees or shrubs that it occurred to Britons travelling fifty-five years apart. Transcending mere agricultural evaluation, this description would have appealed less to Jethro Tull or Adam Bede than to Lancelot "Capability" Brown or William Gilpin. In completing the scene by capturing a ruins motif in the abandoned Indian camp and grave 'yard,' Palliser here appears as a consummate landscape tourist, describing New World terrain in terms that Old World readers could value.

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[9] *The Palliser Papers*, 58. Subsequent references will depend upon this edition and will appear in parentheses in the text. I wish to acknowledge the helpfulness of Spry's editorial remarks, especially, so far as this paper is concerned, her locations on modern maps, of Palliser's routes.

[10] Captain George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean, and Round in which the Coast of North-West America Has Been Carefully Examined and Accurately Surveyed. Undertaken by His Majesty's Command, Principally with a View to Ascertain the Existence of Any Navigable Communication between North Pacific and North Atlantic Oceans; and Performed in the Years 1790, 1791, 1792, 1793, 1794, and 1795, in the Discovery Sloop of War, and Armed Tender Chatham, under the Command of Captain George Vancouver*, 3 vols. (London: G.G. and J. Robinson and J. Edwards, 1798); rpt., ed. W. Kaye Lamb, 4 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1984) 515.

Similar passages constitute the Captain's response to Fort Frances, where narative landscape pictures were made in which "the eye can embrace in one view" the fort, the river, wigwams, and the falls, whose "white waters" are seen "finely contrasting with the deep green of the surrounding woods" (79). Furthermore, the Gilpinian picturesque, less ordered and decorous than the Brownian, was discovered on the Winnipeg River at Rat Portage (modern Kenora, Ontario), where "The scenery . . . is very wild, having all the requisites for grandeur, such as dashing waters, rugged precipices, and variegated foliage" (81). Only by appreciating how strong Palliser's enthusiasm for identifiable landscape is at this stage of his travels can one understand his later prairie descriptions (which appear unaesthetic) as not merely factual reports but comparative silences towards unfamiliar terrain. That his aesthetic response to picturesque landscape precludes any other estimation of northern Ontario terrain will be seen later by Hind's remarks.

The expedition reached Lower Fort Garry on 11 July, and departed two days later on horseback along the main 'road' south to the 49th parallel. This route offered the men their first view of the grasslands: "The country to the west," wrote Palliser baldly, "is dead flat, and the eye rests in that direction on nothing but extensive swamps" (90). Yet, despite their initial feeling that the land was "dead," they discovered that the region teemed with life: the following description of a day's travel north of Pembina, if it indicates no modulation of the initial sublime response, does serve to show that when the surveyors looked at the terrain in proximity and with care, they rather *noticed* wondrous variety than *felt* sublime uniformity:

> After again proceeding on the march we encountered irregular country with many hollows, and traversed by small creeks, thus rendering the road very bad. The heat throughout the day has been excessive, and, towards evening, a cloud of great density appeared in the northwest, and before we could erect our tents a heavy thunder-shower fell. Our encampment afforded excellent feeding for our horses, the grass for some miles around growing far above the knees. Since the shower, millions of insects have infested our tents. . . . Travelling here is more like passing through a tropical country, so numerous and plentiful is insect life. (97)

Viewed or experienced, not from a distant prospect point that lends enchantment, but in proximity, the grasslands focus the traveller's attention, sheltering it from the overwhelming sensation elicited by thoughts of the region. Without doubt, the near-

tropical verdancy in the land truly surprised Palliser and the botanist, Bourgeau. Still, what sustains the men aesthetically is a return to the Picturesque; from tropical safariing, they advanced on 31 July to Pembina Hill, where the undulating land reminded them of Britain: "After dinner our course has been very zig-zag, winding among the mounds and hollows which have been already noticed; but as these now became skirted and clothed with green woods, while the grass which covered the open spaces was in full grain, the landscape assumed a rich brown tint, and reminded us of parks attached to domains in England" (107). Palliser's chief method of landscape identification here, as elsewhere, is associationism, which provides the first aesthetic chartings of modern southwestern Manitoba. This method, first articulated in a philosophical context by Archibald Allison and first advocated as a means of landscape appreciation by Richard Payne Knight, had been employed exclusively and consciously in a description of prairies by Washington Irving, whose *A Tour of the Prairie* (1835) maps American grasslands in terms of Spanish, German, French, and English landscapes that its author had come to know intimately during the seventeen years before his return to the United States.[11]

However, Palliser's narrative plots fewer and fewer features on the aesthetic map as the surveyors proceeded west in terrain that provided fewer associations. On 11 August, James Hector scaled the "gentle swell" of Turtle Mountain, from whose summit "he obtained not only an extensive view to the north, but away to the south and west over American territory, where nothing as far as the eye could reach was to be seen but bare and barren prairie stretching in every direction" (118). The party then continued northward, skirting the open plain at modern Deloraine and Lauder, Man., and crossing the Souris River before riding on 15 August up to Fort Ellice, near the forks of the Qu'Appelle and Assiniboine Rivers. Here, out of the arid "Triangle," the party re-horsed and re-supplied for a variety of side trips to the Moose Mountain district during the second half of August. Then, the reunited survey departed up the Qu'Appelle River valley in early September, and again hit the side of the imaginary Triangle at Squirrel Hill, where the men overlooked the Regina Plain on 14 September.[12] Hector's account of that

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[11] See Edgely W. Todd, "Washington Irving Discovers the Frontiers," *Western Humanities Review* 11 (1957): 29-39.

[12] Palliser's Triangle is the name given to a roughly triangular region of the continent having as its base the 49th parallel, and two sides projecting northeastward from its western end, northwestward from its eastern end, and meeting in the vicinity of the modern Alberta/Saskatchewan border. On a modern map, these sides, beginning at the southwestern angle of the Triangle, cover the following route: north from Del Bonita, Alta., through Spring Coulee, passing east of Fort Macleod, up to Calgary roughly along the line of the provincial highway #2, then, in a northeastward arc passes through Airdrie, crosses the Red Deer River at Tolman, and

day's ride indicates how the sublimity of great expanses of open land, devoid of vertical vegetation, made him anxious, in the same way that it had Samuel Hearne, when he first viewed the sub-artic tundra in 1769:[13]

> Our road during the early part of today was mostly through a country moderately well wooded, over good land, well suited to agricultural purposes, where there were also lakes and hay-producing swamps, but towards evening we began to observe symptoms that showed us that we were again nearing the line of desert country, or northern extension of the North American arid basin. . . . Our course [on 15 Sept.] was due West, and as far as the eye can reach nothing but desolate plains met the view. (138-39)

The geologist's tone of anxiety derives largely from an aesthetic response to the terrain, although other factors are at work to cause the surveyors to restrict their explorations to the edges of the grassland plains—the Triangle—by keeping some semblance of parkland within a few days' ride at all times. Attending the purely aesthetic response are the concerns over Indians and provisions: the bellicose Blackfoot held the grasslands plains and suffered very few intrusions without retaliation; and the survey team could count on no assistance from the Hudson's Bay Company, which, since the abandonment of Chesterfield House in 1800, had maintained no posts in the beaverless Triangle.

Aware of all these factors, Palliser nevertheless had his mandate to survey along the international border. He "had hoped," notes Spry, "to press on to the forks of the Red Deer River and South Saskatchewan, but the men's alarm at going farther into hostile Indian country and the lateness of the season decided him to turn north for Fort Carlton on the north branch" (lxviii). Thus, the riders wested only as far as modern Riverhurst Ferry (on Lake Diefenbaker, above the Elbow of the South Saskatchewan) before veering north to reach the parkland at Carlton House on 8 October.

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comes to nearer the Battle River than Veldt, at which point the line continues roughly eastward, through Lakesend and Provost, crossing the Alberta/Saskatchewan border at Macklin, Sask., before beginning another gradual arc, now to the southeast, passing just to the south of Biggar and Tessier. The line then veers northeast to a point midway between Allan Hills and South Allan, before resuming a southeastern course along the top of Last Mountain Lake, through Fort Qu'Appelle and Indian Head, and skirting the western and southern sides of Moose Mountain. At Carlyle, Sask., it again turns east, crossing the Saskatchewan/Manitoba border at Antler, Sask., and Sinclair, Man., thence southeast again at Reston, continuing through Lauder, and terminating at the 49th parallel near Metigoshe, to the west of Turtle Mountain.

[13] Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wale's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772* (1795), ed. and introd. Richard Glover (Toronto: MacMillan, 1958) 2, 4. See "Samuel Hearne and the Landscapes of Discovery," *Canadian Literature* 103 (1984): 29.

While Palliser departed from Montreal on 11 October in order to determine on a strategy and to obtain his orders for the following summer's survey, Hector took charge of the wintering party. He disliked life at the Hudson's Bay company post. Offended by drunken and violent Indians, he spent much of the intervening months away from the fort on three trips——to the Thickwook Hills in the late autumn, to Fort Edmonton and Rocky Mountain House in the winter, and to Fort Pitt in the spring. But, like most Britons who had written about them, he delighted in the environs of Carlton House since they lay in the parkland portion of the North Saskatchewan valley. One example of this delight is his description of a grouse-shooting excursion to the west of the fort on 13 October: "The country along both sides of the Saskatchewan in this part of its course, when back from the river bank, forms exceedingly rich pasturage, abounding in vetches, and interspersed with small lakes and clumps of aspen poplar. The distribution of wood is most beautiful, resembling that of a home park . . . ." (175-76). The mere act of shooting grouse surely sponsors certain familiar landscape associations for the geologist; coupled with his relief at being once in wooded areas whose short grass can resemble a lawn, these associations form a mental landscape commensurate with "home."

From mid-January until mid-July 1858, Hector came to know every one of the nearly six hundred miles of the North Saskatchewan River between Rocky Mountain House and Carlton House. He considered the most attractive springtime view in the parkland to be the site of the present-day battlefords, the same sight by which Rev. Robert Terrill Rundle had been allured in 1840:[14] "There are many beautiful spots, and the scenery in early spring, when the poplars were unfolding their bright green foliage, was exquisite. The most beautiful part of the river is near the mouth of the Battle River" (228). Habitation is a clear possibility in this parkland region where aesthetic pleasures abound; indeed, it was only the parkland which Palliser and his men came to recommend for settlement by Britons. In his summation to the secretary in 1860, Palliser described it as "a partially wooded country, abounding in lakes and rich natural pasturage, in some parts rivalling the finest park scenery of our own country" (538). Of course, implicit in this response is a certain social message: if the landscape resembles parkland, those fortunate to farm it may live like those Englishmen possessed of such parkland in their own country. Moreover, the farming of it appeared to involve no more than tending Eden. The Swiss bo-

[14] Rev. Robert Terrill Rundle, *The Rundle Journals 1840-1848*, ed. Hugh A. Dempsey, introd. and notes Gerald M. Hutchinson, Historical Society of Alberta 1 (Calgary: Alberta Records Publications Board of the Historical Society of Alberta, and Glenbow Institute, 1977): 42.

tanist, Eugene Bourgeau, proclaimed a similarly emphatic view in estimating the parkland's agricultural potential:

> Mais il ne reste à appeler l'attention du Gouvernment Anglais sur les avantage qu'il y aurait à établir des centres agricoles dans les vastes plaines des Terres Ruperts et particulièrement dans le Saskatchewan aux environs du fort Carlton. . . . Là pour mettre la terre en culture, il n'y aurait absolument qu'à labourer, *sans defrichement prealable,* les prairies offrent des paturage naturels aussi favorables pour l'élevage de nombreux tropeaux si elles avaient été crées artificiellement. (588-89)

In the botanist's view, the land requires only stewardship to produce abundantly. Soil conditions appear beyond his consideration at this time as he joins the ranks of those who stressed the dichotomy between the worthlessness of the grasslands and the wonderfulness of the parklands. The factual, scientific survey was beginning only to reinforce the previously-drawn aesthetic dichotomy of the Prairies.

III

Palliser rejoined the expedition from Montreal in July 1858, as it proceeded up and down the top of the Triangle (near the modern Alberta/Saskatchewan border at Macklin). On 1 July, south of Manitou Lake, below the North Saskatchewan River, John Sullivan was fascinated by the variety in the country straddling the Triangle line:

> The scenery in the neighbourhood of the Wiguatinon [coulee] is very beautiful and diversified. Fine bluffs of wood and open glades, hills with bold outlines, rising sometimes 450 feet above the level of the valley, abrupt escarpments of white chalky strata with ferruginous streaks, desolate wastes of blown sand, and beautiful lakes with clear limpid water, are all combined within a small compass in this neighbourhood. There are a few spots where the soil is rich, but as a rule this region is barren and desolate. (239)

As Sullivan views it, landscape diversity is a thrilling prospect at this juncture of 'waste' and plenty, and the thrill is heightened by the scale of the presentation——"within a small compass"——because the diversity can thereby be viewed at a single glance as an oasis in a region generally "barren and de-

solate." But such spectacles occur infrequently during the summer of 1858. Sullivan captures the sentiments of all the Britons when he states on 23 July, in response to his first view of the Rocky Mountains from the site of the present-day Hillsdown, Alberta, that, "Great excitement prevailed among our party at this sudden and unexpected sight, and we all looked to the Rocky Mountains as the long desired object which was to relieve us from the monotony of prairie life" (254).

On 30 July, the surveyors reached Slaughter Camp, north of modern Calgary and near Irricana, Alta. From there, Hector rode west into the mountains up to Bow River valley while Palliser travelled straight down to the international border near the Waterton Lakes, and then back up to Old Bow fort, in the Bow River valley at Stoney Indian Park. For his part, Palliser found the valley and the river an aesthetic delight: its falls (today beneath the Banff Centre and Banff Springs Hotel) "like the whole surrounding scene, were wild and beautiful" (266), while the "beautiful little prairie" at the base of Cascade Mountain provided picturesque relief from sheer verticality, as it still does today for many motorists passing it at the Banff airstrip. On 18 October, Palliser began to explore the Kananaskis/Palliser Rivers mountain pass, whose sublime gloom had evoked scenes from Milton's Hell for George Simpson in 1841.[15] He reached the Kootenay River on 26 august and followed it south, making a transmontane ride through North Kootenay Pass in early September. His impressive seven-week circuit concluded when he rode into Fort Edmonton on 20 September.

As a geologist, Hector relished the opportunity to surround himself with mountains. Travelling westward from Slaughter Camp on 6 August, he found "the snow of the mountains in the foreground, sharply lined by projecting ledges of rock . . . quite exhilarating, after the dreary monotony of the arid plains" (287). With the peaks marking the landscape's background, he found the 'picture' of his encampment's site worthy of the name "Dream Hill": "Our camp was in a most picturesque position surrounded by well timbered hills except to the west, in which direction a level plain seemed to sweep up to the base of the mountains" (287-88). In the foothills, where the mountains do not yet tower over the viewer but do close the background of a landscape, picturesque variety abounds; but where the neatly enclosed views break into vistas of the great mountain range the Sublime is felt, for the traveller is powerfully impressed with a sense that he is witnessing the continent's great geographical

[15] Sir George Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World during the Years 1841 and 1842*, 2 vols. (London: H. Colburn, 1847) I: 124.

event: the meeting of the horizontal Sublime of the grasslands with the vertical Sublime of the Rockies——the floor and the wall of North America.

Hector crossed the mountains first at Vermilion Pass, and then he proceeded up the Kootenay and down the Beaverfoot Rivers to the Kicking Horse River, whose Pass he discovered at the end of August, and where the violent and nearly fatal accident with his mount gave the river and pass the names they bear today.[16] But his true Victorian geologist's love for, rather than a Romantic's enthralled dread of, mountains kept him in their shadows for another month. Once the Stony Indians, relations of Nimrod, Hector's hunter, had supervised the geologist's convalescence, the twenty-four-year-old travelled north up the Bow River valley, discovering the Bow Pass, through which the modern Banff-Jasper highway runs. He named Mount Murchison, Lyell Glacier, and Mount Forbes after those senior and prominent Victorian geologists whom he revered, and then continued north to the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River, returning to Fort Edmonton on 7 October. But even fierce winter weather could not keep Hector away from the mountains; he was among them again in January 1859, when he composed a picture of Jasper House in the frame of a single paragraph:

> Jasper House is beautifylly situated on an open plain, about six miles in extent, within the first range of the mountains. As the valley makes a bend above and below, it appears to be completely encircled by mountains, which rise from 4,000 to 5,000 feet, with bold craggy outlines; the little group of buildings which form the "fort" have been constructed, in keeping with their picturesque situation, after the Swiss style, with overhanging roods and trellised porticos. (369)

A foreground humanized by the fort, a middle plain, and background mountains furnish in 1859 as readily composable a landscape picture as Jasper House had four decades before for another Scottish landscape enthusiast, the Astorian, Alexander Ross.[17] In addition, the European motif in the cabin design

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[16] Esther Fraser notes that, after a distinguished career in New Zealand, Hector returned to North America in 1903 and saw the pass with, by then, a railway running through it. (*The Canadian Rockies: Early Travels and Explorations* [Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969] 80.) For a valuable modern guide to Hector's transmontane routes, see Bruce Haig, *Following Hstoric Trails: James Hector, Explorer* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, for The Alberta Historical Resources foundation, 1983).

[17] *The Fur Hunters of the Far West: A Narrative of Adventures in the Oregon and Rocky Mountains*, 2 vols. (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1855) II: 201-02.

agrees favourably with the geologist's sense of what is artistically in "keeping" in an integrated landscape view.

IV

The survey's last season, 1859, opened in May with a regretted departure from the parklands around Fort Edmonton. As ever, crossing into the Triangle's grasslands marked an occasion of aesthetic lament (397). Loneliness compounded lamentation, for in 1859 Palliser, Sullivan, and Hector usually surveyed apart from one another; Bourgeau had returned to Europe to study plant life in the Russian Caucasus, while Blakiston, prevented from canoeing down the South Saskatchewan by Palliser, who feared for his life in the middle of the Triangle, had resigned and voyaged to Asia where he charted the Yangtze River.

Mid-June saw the expedition struggling down the Red Deer River valley near the prsent-day Dinosaur Provincial Park, where Palliser found "a wretched soil everywhere; the horses miserably off for grass" (411). But he persisted, passing through the Badlands and coming far into the Triangle. He reached the confluence of the Red Deer and the South Saskatchewan on a blistering 18 July, but was still nearly two hundred miles shy of Riverhurst Ferry, the most westerly point reached in 1857. Of great significance is the landscape that Palliser chose to describe from the forks of the rivers. It was not an imaginative landscape projection of the uncharted centre of the Triangle, a stretching gaze eastward; instead, he turned his back to the east and described the views up the two rivers (412). Palliser loathed the country.[18] Quite simply, he practised an aesthetic of elision in response to the grasslands, and his Triangle remains the notorious symbol of such an aesthetic: it demarcates for the society he represented those tracts that he confidently asserted were uncultivable, unsettleable, and inhospitable. Generally, the Triangle corresponds, of course, to what is known today as the fertile breadbasket of Canada. But the stark simplicity of Palliser's narrative style in an entry for 20 July may be seen as a mimesis of the exhaustion of his perceptual resilience in the face of diffi-

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[18] Augustus J. Thibido, a native of Kingston, Canada West, travelled up the South Saskatchewan River valley and across an obscure Indian mountain pass north of the South Kootenay Pass later in the same year (1859) that Palliser surveyed to the forks of the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan. He shared Palliser's scorn for the middle of the Triangle, though perhaps with more merit, for he had passed through it. On 3 September, two days' ride upriver from the Elbow, Thibido found "the scenery on this river . . . very strange, wild looking, an appearance peculiar to this Western country." And the next day, he wrote: "Great Bluffs & broken country towards the river, horrid country, no grass, bad water, sand and blue clay for soil, trees, cherry bushes and scrub ash." ("Diary of Dr. Augustus J. Thibido of the Northwest Exploring Expedition, 1859," ed. and introd. Howard S. Brode, *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 31 [1940]: 309, 310.)

cult prairie travel: "Continued our journey [due north of modern Medicine Hat]; found the ground very much broken, and the travelling very severe for the horses. Soil worthless. Found a human skull on the plain. . . . We camped on a swamp, where we killed several snakes" (414).

The expedition travelled in the short-grassland prairie because its orders included a survey of the international border. After resting at the oasis of the "arid" country—Cypress Hills—at the close of July, Palliser was satisfied with, and exhausted from his travels in the Triangle, as well as tired of placating marauding Indians. He turned his survey round to the west long before covering the base of the Triangle over to Moose and Turtle Mountains. Almost immediately, aesthetic appreciations began again to flow from pens: Hector rejoiced at his arrival on 13 August at the banks of the Bow River, at a point near the southern city limits of present-day Calgary:

> We started at noon to-day; . . . At the same time the whole camp started, and as the long straggling train of [Stony Indian] men, women, and children, ditto the loaded horses and dreags *[travois]*, wound up the zigzag trail that leads from this pretty little valley to the level of the plain above, the scene was very picturesque. . . . The pasture is now very fine everywhere, and timber plentiful in many places, as we have now entered the belt of fine country that skirts the base of the mountains. (423-33)

The view, including a humanized foreground, gradations of elevation in the prospect, vertical vegetation offering shade as well as signposts for expediting the judgement of distance, and (at this point in its course and at this time of year) a meandering river, seems to welcome Hector back to aesthetically associative topography.

The view cheered Hector noticeably as he set out to find other mountain routes, to discover Popestone Pass, and to survey David Thompson's Howse Pass. In September, he turned into a dead end at the Purcell Mountains, whose egress would not be discovered until Rogers Pass and Albert Canyon were opened by railway surveyors more than a decade later. Hector's only alternative so late in the season lay in ascending the Columbia River and crossing to the Kootenay Rive at Canal Flats. From there, he proceeded along the nominal fur-trade route, first established by Thompson in 1811, to Fort Colvile on the lower Columbia and below the international border, where he rendezvoused with Palliser and Sullivan, and with members of

the British Boundary Commission who had been cutting the boundary line inland from the Pacific Ocean. He arrived in haste and exhaustion on 23 October, but would have welcomed a week's repose in the valley of the upper Columbia near Canal Flats (B.C.), near where Sir George Simpson rejoiced at the sight of a "fine park" eighteen years before[19] (and which was scorched by fire during the summer of 1985):

> The open appearance of the country was very pleasant to us, and even seemed to put new life into the horses. The ground was dusty, and the bunch-grass is more sparse than turf, but in other respects it was like riding through the open glades of a deer park, and if we had only been supplied with a sufficiency of good food at the time, there are few spots in the country that would have left a pleasanter impression than the upper part of lthe Columbia Valley. (458)

Rather than staying with Hector, Palliser and Sullivan had struck west from Cypress Hills, and could not quickly enough get shot of the "arid prairie, so level as to be devoid of any points by which we could continue our direction unvaried" (471). They crossed Oldman River near the modern town of Diamond City on 8 August, and crossed the Rockies by the North Kootenay Pass in the third week of the month. Like Hector, Palliser was searching for a route that penetrated the Purcell Range north of the 49th parallel, but the Kootenay Indians counselled him against wasting his time. In view of the advice, Palliser decided to descend to Fort Colvile and resupply there for an effort northeastward or northwestward. Limited success was achieved. Sullivan discovered the Moyie River route to Kootenay River by way of present-day Cranbrook, B.C., while Palliser found accessible trails north of the international border as far west as today's Grand Forks, B.C. Near that site he met Lieutenant Henry Spencer Palmer of the Royal Engineers, and, soon after, the contingent of the British Boundary Commission. His massive survey had reached an exhausted conclusion in an obscure mountain valley, near another that had been likened by a boundary engineer to the "happy valley of Rasselas."[20] Palliser and his

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[19] *Narrative of a Journey Round the World* I: 129. For a contemporary picturesque visual rendition of Canal Flats, see Capt. Henry James Warre, *Sketches in North America and the Oregon Territory, by Captain H. Warre, A.D.C. to the Late Commander of the Forces* (London: Dickinson and Co., 1848) Pl. 10; rpt. in *Overland to Oregon in 1845: Impressions of a Journey across North America by H.J. Warre*, ed. and introd. Madeleine Major-Frégeau (Ottawa: Public Archives Canada, Information Canada, 1976) Pl. 24.

[20] Lieut. Charles William Wilson, Mapping the Frontier: Charles Wilson's Diary of the Survey of the 49th Parallel, 1858-1862, While Secretary of the British Boundary Commission, ed. and introd. George F.G. Stanley (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970) 110.

surveyors had filled the topographical map of western Canada with almost an infinity of details in addition to the Palliser Triangle; the aesthetic map they had left virtually unchanged. Not before George Mercer Dawson (1849-1901), a Canadian from Pictou, Nova Scotia whose cultural rearing may not have included British aesthetic modes of perception, worked for the North American Boundary Commission in the 1880s were the agricultural possibilities of the grasslands assessed from other schematic/taxonomic perspectives than those of the Sublime and the picturesque.

V

As noteworthy as Palliser's account for its display of the pervasiveness of British conventions lof landscape perception is the account of the Canadian exploring expedition of the near West, written by the leader, Henry Youle Hind (1823-1908), and entitled *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858* (1860). A native of Nottingham England, Hind was professor of chemistry and biology at Trinity College, Toronto. Like Palliser, whose preliminary reports would be known to him before his *Narrative* was completed, he understood his appointment to be a survey of the "physical aspect of the country."[21] Even so, and despite his scientific background, Hind opens the narrative with a description of nature based upon an aesthetic schema—the Sublime—rather than a scientific taxonomy. Clearly, Hind intended that a narrative prepared for a public readership follow the generical demands of travel literature. In this respect, his intention differed not at all from those of British mariners exploring the Arctic for the missing Franklin expedition.

Steaming up Lake Superior on 23 July 1857, six weeks behind Palliser's survey, which by that time was following the Red River valley south from Fort Garry, Hind points out like a guide on a landscape tour the beauty of the scenery, and then pauses to consider the sky whose "extreme beauty and singularity" make it a "spectacle" (I, 9, 10) of the sort so steadfastly sought

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[21] *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1860); facs. rpt., introd. Roy St. George Stubbs, two vols. in one (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1971) I: viii. Subsequent references will depend upon this edition and will appear in parentheses in the text. It ought to be mentioned that Spry's edition of the Palliser papers is of the survey's final reports, most of the field books not having survived; thus, although he was in the field before Hind, Palliser, whose final report did not appear before 1863, had the benefit of Hind's published account during the preparation of a final edition. Ironically, however, Hind had had recourse to Palliser's *PreliminaryReports* while compiling his *Narrative* in 1859. These matters are discussed thoroughly and astutely by John Warkentin in "The Desert goes North," in *Images of the Plains* (see note 4 [on page 26] for full citation) 149-63.

by the British landscape enthusiast. As Doug Owram has argued in *Promise of Eden* (1981), it is worthwhile considering Hind's response in the light of his sponsors' interest in showing the West as potentially an edenic region for settlement.[22] Such preliminary descriptions as that of the Lake Superior sky deploy landscape descriptions, in part, to lure the prospective immigrant from his homeland. Before being published, Hind's narrative was presented to both houses of the British parliament and then published strategically in London, even though Canadian expansionists sponsored the surveys. When one remembers that Sir George Simpson would appear during the same year before the parliament committee which was hearing the application for a renewal of the Hudson's Bay Company charter to govern the west and to keep it from being settled, the virtues of such publishing strategy grow clear.

Because his party travelled the Fort William-to-Fort Garry route six weeks later than Palliser's or the normal fur-trade brigades, Hind perceives summer landscapes where most previous travellers saw only a springtime flood. This difference is most emphatic in his description of Kakabeka Falls:

> The scenery of the Grand Falls is extremely beautiful. The river precipitates its yellowish-brown water over a sharp ledge into a narrow and profound gorge. The plateau above the portage cliff, and nearly on a level with the summit of the falls, is covered with a profusion of blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, pigeon cherry, and various flowering plants, among which the bluebell was most conspicuous. On the left side of the falls a loose talus is covered with wild mint and grasses which grow luxuriantly under the spray. Beautiful rainbows of very intense colour are continually projected on this talus, when the position of the sun and the clearness of the sky is favourable. (I, 36)

Interspersed among more scientific, factual assessments of the falls, this passage, besides showing a biologist's or geologist's greater interest in specific detail, exhibits a diminution of emotional effect——usually noted by earlier travellers, including Paul Kane[23]——and greater interest in a composition of the scene's

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[22] *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West 1856-1900* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1981) chps. 1-3.

[23] *Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America from Canada to Vancouver's Island and Oregon through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territory and Back Again* (London: Longman, Brown, Longmans and Roberts, 1859); rev. ed., ed. John W. Garvin, introd. Lawrence J. Burpee (Toronto: Radisson Society of Canada, 1925); facs. rpt of rev. ed., introd. J.G. MacGregor (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1968; 1974) 34, 322.

colour (the river water, the fruit and flowering plants, and the rainbow). Beauty, not sublimity, is the overriding effect of the landscape in the lower water levels of early August.

Hind demonstrates his keen awareness of the subtle nuances that can distinguish aesthetic categories when he explores the terrain around a portage on the Little Dog River late in the month:

> The great falls of Little Dog River are surprisingly beautiful. The difference in level between Little and Great Dog Lake is 347 feet, which is descended by the foaming torrent in six successive leaps. The course of the canoe route lies some distance to the right of the falls, hence the reason why they have not been described by former travellers in these regions. In picturesque beauty they far surpass Ka-ka-beka, and would probably take rank with the most charming an attractive falls on the continent. They have not the grandeur of the Silver Falls on the Winnipeg, nor do they approach Niagara in magnificence or sublimity, but their extraordinary height, and the broken surface they present, impart to them singular and beautiful peculiarities. The strange aspect they must possess in winter, when fringed with masses of frozen spray, would probably be unrivalled; and in spring, when the feeding lake is from three to four feet higher than during the summer months, their augmented volume would give them an appearance of magnitude which is lost when the waters are low, in consequence of the succession of ledges of rock over which they leap being partially screened by the foliage of overhanging trees. (I, 41-42)

Even for a scientist, the aesthetic schemata remain the paramount ones by which to identify a river falls. Neither rising to a sufficient size to be grand nor inducing a sufficiently intense effect in low water level to be sublime, these little-known falls are picturesque because of their "broken surface," which appears all the more picturesque when the *coulisses* of summer foliage contain the scene and focus the view. John Fleming (1836-1876), a colonial land surveyor and draughtsman as well as the expedition's artist, appears to have concurred with Hind. Following in the long tradition of surveyor-artists that began in Canada with Thomas Davies, Fleming produced a picturesque rendition, entitled "Great Falls on Little Dog River" (facing I, 42; courtesy Bruce Peel Special Collections Library, The University of Alberta). Although the foliage is not made to perform the

framing function accorded by Hind, the river in the Fifeshire Scot's picture breaks into sections whose effect——neither chaotic nor artificial——achieves an impressive sense of the sort of *concordia discors,* or harmonized variety, that the writings of William Gilpin and such precursors of the Picturesque as Pope had prescribed. The river breaks easily into three cascades: the foreground and background *étapes* run at similar angles from right to left, while the middle-ground *étape* resists them, meeting them at approximately the same acute angle. Such organization controls the scene without depriving it of its ruggedness, thereby achieving the quintessence of the Picturesque.[24]

When he reached the Winnipeg River on 28 August, Hind found it aesthetically as exhilarating as Nicholas Garry and many others had before him:[25]

> The pencil of a skilful artist may succeed in conveying an impression of beauty and grandeur which belong to the cascades and rapids of the Winnipeg, but neither sketch nor language can portray the astonishing variety they present under different aspects; in the grey dawn of morning, or rose-coloured by the setting sun, or flashing in the brightness of the noon day, or silvered by the soft light of the moon. (I, 107)

But this estimation of "the wildest and most picturesque scenery (I, 106), in which landscape variety is adduced, is qualified by the description Hind gives four days later, on 1 September, when he sheds the schemata of the landscape enthusiast and, as Palliser infrequently did, dons the point of view of the prospective emigrant whom his sponsors hoped to lure west: "The general surface was either bare, and so smooth and polished as to make walking dangerous, or else thickly covered with cariboo moss and tripe de roche. . . . Until we arrived at Islington Mission, the general features of the country maintained an appearance of hopeless sterility, and inhospitable seclusion" (I, 10). This account marks a new awareness of the landscape that is consonant with his mandate to determine the character of the region. Hind appears comfortable with two responses to the land, one that relishes its aesthetic prospects, and another that discounts its prospects for settlement. Thus, the distinction be-

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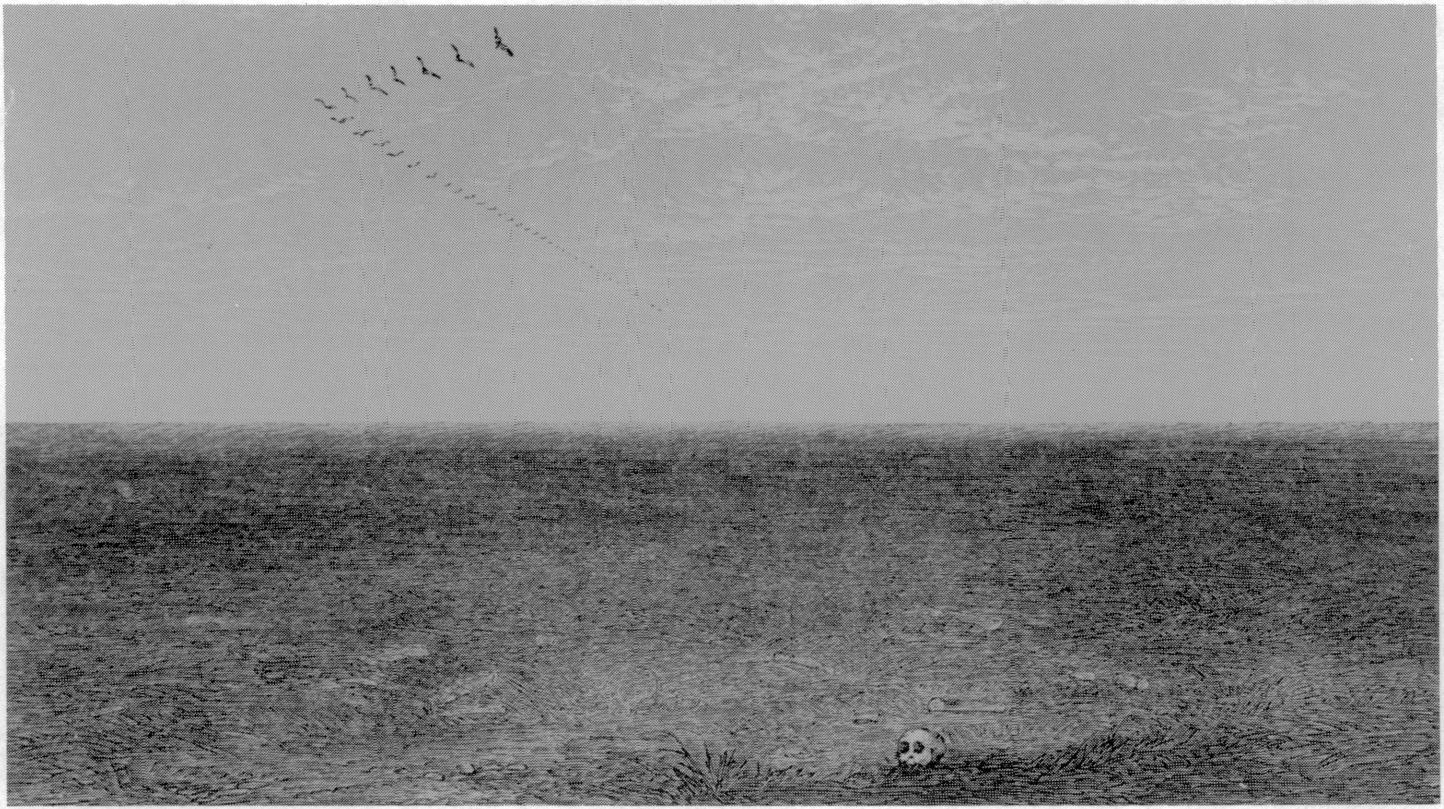
[24] It is the same broken appearance of the landscape at Sturgeon Lake, reached late in August, that strikes Hind equally as picturesque (I: 68-9).

[25] "Diary of Nicholas Garry, Deputy-Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1822-1835. A Detailed Narrative of his Travels in the Northwest Territories of British North America in 1821," ed. Francis N.A. Garry and Sir John Bourinot, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada,* 2d. ser., vol. VI, sec. ii (1900): 73-204. The aesthetic dimension of Bishop David Anderson's response to Winnipeg River valley is considered in "Bishop Anderson's Landscape Tour by Canoe across Northern Ontario in 1852," *Northward Journal* 34 (Spring 1985): 5-22.

Great Falls on Little Dog River
John Fleming, 1857



The Prairie Looking West
Humphry Lloyd Hime, 1858

tween visiting or touring a region and residing in it is made for the first time; and high time too, for the great danger in deploying the Picturesque was to imply that the land was therefore ideal for residence by humans, since the epitome of picturesque landscape in England were the Home Counties. Hind, at last, reminds his reader that he is travelling through the granitic splendour of the Canadian Shield, where rock, water, and a few bushels of soil could seem agreeably picturesque but not agreeably habitable. And yet, while Hind here demonstrates a perspicacity for distinctions between a terrain's aesthetic properties, which might attract the "skilful artist" when "rose-coloured by the setting sun," and its cultivable qualities, which ought not to provoke emigration by British farmers to sterility, such perspicacity does not stay with him once he encounters the grasslands and parklands of the west. In particular, he too would err in his underestimation of the grasslands as a northern extension of the Great American Desert, and in his overestimation, based upon aesthetic schemata, of the prospects for the North Saskatchewan River valley.

Once the expedition arrived at Fort Garry, various members surveyed different routes east from the Red River valley. (Work farther west was confined to the following year, 1858.) Hind travelled in the Red River valley, finding none of the "irregular" details noted by Palliser a few months earlier, but only "ordinary aspect of sameness and immensity" (I, 134). In a passage that both seems to gloss over the fact of a permanent agricultural community at Red River dating from the Selkirk colony, and shows none of the discrimination between aesthetic and geographical qualities noted in his descriptions of the Winnipeg River, he details various aspects of sublimity in a scene,

> open[ing] upon the right which discloses on the one hand the white houses and cottages of the inhabitants, with their barns, haystacks, and cattle yards, grouped at short distances from one another, and stretching away in a thin vanishing line to the south; while on the other hand, a boundless, treeless ocean of grass, seemingly a perfect level, meets the horizon in the west. . . .
>
> The vast ocean of level prairie which lies to the west of Red River must be seen in its extraordinary aspects, before it can be rightly valued and understood in reference to its future occupation by an energetic and civilised race, able to improve its vast capabilities and appreciate its marvellous beauties. It must be seen at sunrise, when the boundless plain suddenly flashes with rose-coloured light, as the first rays

> of the sun sparkle in the dew on the long rich grass, gently stirred by the unfailing morning breeze. It must be seen at noon-day, when refraction swells into the forms of distant hill ranges the ancient beaches and ridges of Lake Winnipeg, which mark its former extension; when each willow bush is magnified into a grove, each distant clump of aspen, not seen before, into wide forests, and the outline of wooded river banks, far beyond unassisted vision, rise into view. It must be seen at sunset, when, just as the huge ball of fire is dipping below the horizon, he throws a flood of red light, indescribably magnificent, upon the illimitable waving green, the colours blending and separating with the gentle roll of the long grass in the evening breeze, and seemingly magnified towards the horizon into the distant heaving swell of a parti-coloured sea. It must be seen, too, by moonlight, when the summits of low green grass waves are tipped with silver, and the stars in the west disappear suddenly as they blaze, thirty, fifty, or seventy miles away; when the fire reaches clumps of aspen, and the forked tips of the flames, magnified by refraction, flash and quiver in the horizon, and the reflected lights from rolling clouds of smoke above tell of the havoc which is raging below.
>
> These are some of the scenes which must be witnessed and felt before the mind forms a true conception of the Red River prairies in that unrelieved immensity which belongs to them in common with the ocean, but which, unlike the ever-changing and unstable sea, seem to promise a bountiful recompense to millions of our fellow-men. (I, 134-35)

Here is the epitome of the sublime in landscape description as well as in literary style: sentences building upon each other in an incantatory mimesis of the distance, the refraction-produced crescendo of natural growth, and the raging inflammation of the land. Visual splendour is undeniably the aesthetic character of the passage, but the sense of transport that it induces can hardly, despite what Hind claims, impart to a prospective settler a great desire to emigrate; indeed, one is hard-pressed not to attribute to Hind a wonderfully ironical posturing. At any rate, in the context of the entire *Narrative,* this passage's apparent enthusiasm for the habitable prospects of the grasslands is surely qualified if not eclipsed by the accompanying chromoxylograph of a photograph by Humphry Lloyd Hime (1833-1903), starkly entitled

"The Prairie looking West"[26] (facing I, 135; courtesy Bruce Peel Special Collections Library, The University of Alberta). Its blankness, together with the presence of the skull and bones, provides a bleak prospect, as sublime in its starkness as Hind's prose is in its floridness, a prospect, moreover, that echoes forward to Hind's own response——untinged by expansionist propagandism——to the grasslands once he launches his survey onto them in 1858.[27]

VI

During the three months of the 1858 survey, Hind's team was divided into two parties. Simon James Dawson (1820-1902), a Scottish-born civil engineer, conducted his survey north from Portage la Prairie. Hind, after coming up from Toronto on 29 April, explored to the south, to the west up the Qu'Appelle River valley, and to the northwest as far as the South Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Rivers. After leaving Red River on 15 June, his division, including fourteen men, six Red River carts, and fifteen horses, travelled up the Little Souris River, below present-day Brandon, Man. He had James Austin Dickson as his surveyor and engineer, John Fleming as assistant surveyor and draughtsman, and Hime as photographer. They travelled through a country whose "general character is that of sterility" (I, 285), and arrived on 27 June at the last of the Blue Hills, near modern Margaret, Man. There, they looked out into Palliser's Triangle at "one of the most sublime and grand spectacles of its kind . . . a boundless level prairie on the opposite side of the river, one hundred and fifty feet below us, of a rich, dark-green colour, without a tree or shrub to vary its uniform level" (I, 291). Conventional response to uniformity appears to preclude investigation of the

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[26] This photograph was made by Hime in 1858, not 1857. He was not part of the 1857 expedition, but was hired the following year because, in the words of R. Huyda, Hind "felt that photography could provide a most accurate and faithful record of places and things." (R. Huyda, "Exploration Photographer: Humphry Lloyd Hime and the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858 [accompanied by slides]," *Papers Read before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Transactions*, ed. Linda McDowell, ser. III, no. 30 [1973-1974]: 46.) The picture that appears as "The Prairie looking West" in Hind's narrative is included as "The Prairie looking west, September-October, 1858" in R. Huyda, *Camera in the Interior, 1858: H.L. Hime, Photographer* the *Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition* (Toronto: Coach House, 1975) Pl. 44. Besides the tremendous difficulty encountered by Hime in taking and developing pictures in the open air, he did not manage to capture any landscape photographs expressive of a sense of depth. Indeed, Hime's subjects are seldom landscapes, partly because the camera did not represent them picturesquely, partly because the expedition seldom stopped long enough in the daytime for a picture to be made (two hours were needed for one exposure), and when it did, the weather often did not cooperate in the notoriously wet summers of 1857 and 1858, plaguing the men with sudden thunderstorms in the summer of 1858, and partly because Hime had contracted "with Mr. McKay, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Illustrated London News*, to publish a series of sketches and photographs to be made of HBC Forts, Indians and scenery" in that order ("Exploration photographer" 48).

[27] The stages of Hind's response to the grasslands are difficult to delineate, although it is clear that his reading, once he returned to Toronto, turned him more strongly towards the equation of grassland with desert. Many details of the evolution of Hind's response are provided by Warkentin in "The Desert goes North," in *Images of the Plains* (see 4 [on page 26] for full citation) 152-55.

contradiction that sterility can somehow support the life of a "rich, dark-green" prairie. By the time that Hind had followed the Souris down to the international border and then returned north to Fort Ellice, as Palliser had done the previous August, he was prepared to declare the worthlessness of all the land between the 49th and 51st parallels: "There can be little doubt that the sterility of the Great Prairie between the Qu'Appelle and the 49th parallel is owing to the small quantity of dew and rain, and the occurrence of fires" (I, 317).

Hind determined on a survey of the Qu'Appelle valley, since an increased presence of trees to its north suggested it as a frontier between dry and more humid areas. At Qu'Appelle Mission (modern Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask.) he delighted in the view of the moderately sized Fishing Lakes and the diversified topography:

> The Qu'appelle Mission is situated between the second and third Fishing Lakes. The situation is beautiful, and the country on all sides of a very novel and peculiar character. Here the Qu'appelle valley is 1¼ miles broad and 250 feet deep. On the south a vast level prairie extends to the Indian Head Hills, fertile, inviting, but treeless; towards the north the country is studded with groves of aspen over a light and sometimes gravelly soil. Most beautiful and attractive, however, are the lakes, four in number, which from the rich store of fish they contain, are well named the Fishing Lakes. A belt of timber fringes their sides at the foot of the steep hills they wash, for they fill the entire breadth of the valley. Ancient elm trees with long and drooping branches bend over their waters; the ash-leaved maple acquires dimensions not seen since leaving the Red River, and the Me-sas-ka-to-mi-na (la Poire) (*Amelanchier Canadensis*) is no longer a bush, but a tree eighteen to twenty feet high, and loaded with the most luscious fruit. (I, 321)

Lakes moderate in size, full of fish and ranged by wooded shores provide him with a reasonable facsimile of an English landscape, the sort of prospect that elicited an aesthetic response and a catalogue of plants whenever he encountered it. Moreover, though he concedes the fertility of the grassland to the south of the valley, it is clear that, as far as he is concerned, the land of plenty lies in the river valley and the aspen groves to the north. Hind was sufficiently taken with the valley to order a complete survey of it by Dickson.

Meanwhile, Hind surveyed the valley up to the Elbow of the South Saskatchewan River and then paddled downstream into the parkland of the Saskatchewan. His narrative records an almost instant delight to be *off* the grasslands and *in* the parkland, which he judges "good country, well fitted for settlement" (I, 391), and where he no longer feels space so intensely. On the grasslands, as Palliser had put it in *Solitary Rambles,* or as Yorke Edwards has stated, "one feels so conspicuous. There is no shelter from the space. The whole world seems to be looking. The scale of things seems to have changed."[28] One summer after Hind's survey, in 1859, the Earl of Southesk would image the sense of vulnerability most poignantly among the early journalists: "It is strange to find oneself on an apparently flat disc of grass, nothing but grass meeting the plain horizon-line all around. One feels as if crawling about in view of high Heaven on a circular table punched out from the world and stuck on a spike."[29] Such an observation may help to clarify the Puritan streak in twentieth-century prairie fiction——if one is so much closer to God and his wrathful judgements, can one afford to depart from the straight and narrow?——but its value to the immediate context lies in its demonstration of how perceptually and even spiritually disorienting most Britons found the grasslands.

Like most Britons in another respect, Hind finds that his need for the Picturesque is met by the reappearance of wooded groves and vertical vegetation farther downriver (north). That the parkland was initially known, by David Thompson and others, as the "fertile belt," throws into relief a judgemental designation, due in part to aesthetic perception, of parkland as "good country." But unlike Palliser, Hector, and Bourgeau, Hind is willing to classify the grades of parkland terrain with even more apparent discrimination: thus, "the 14th [August 1858] brought us to a better country, still undulating, yet containing many beautiful lakelets fringed with aspens" (I, 411). Here is land that allows for the practice of conventional landscape appreciation: the Organization of landforms into pictures. Such a possibility helps to reaffirm the nineteenth-century imperial Briton's belief——all but annihilated on the grasslands——that he could exert an order over the external world, could perceive a harmonious relation with it. Hope for the establishment of picturesque English villages nestled in a hill-and-dale topography is

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[28] York Edwards, "Man and the Prairie Landscape," *Canadian Audobon* 23.4 (Sept.-Dec. 1970): 111.

[29] Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains: A Diary and Narrative of Travel, Sport, and Adventure, during a Journey through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territories, in 1859 and 1860, by the Earl of Southesk K.T., F.R.G.S. (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1875); facs. rpt., introd. Lewis G. Thomas (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969) 26-7.

rejuvenated, and reaches its apogee with Hind's encounter of "land of the *best* quality" (I, 412) (emphasis added) in the Touchwood Hills of modern Saskatchewan, like Palliser's Namakan River or Vancouver's Puget Sound, another apparently natural English landscape park:

> In journeying from the lumpy Hill we crossed three "belts of woods," as the Indian guide termed them, before arriving at the great prairie west of the Touchwood Hills. These belts, which consist of groves of small aspen following a low gravelly ridge about a mile broad, and having a north-east and south-west direction, are separated by prairie valleys which sustain in their parts a good soil and fine pasturage. . . . There are many delightful spots in the belts, the herbage is clean as a well shaven lawn, the clumps of aspen are neatly rounded as if by art, and, where little lakes alive with water-fowl abound, the scenery is very charming, and appears to be the result of taste and skill, rather than the natural features of a wild and almost uninhabited country. (I, 411-12)

Seduced by the darling perceptual illusion rather than alerted to such facts as the percentage of gravel in the soil, the scientist finds it difficult to believe that the scene has not been landscaped by a "Capability" Brown. He goes on confidently and expansionistically to assert of the "romantic" (I, 413), "delightful," and "picturesque" (I, 421) country that it will soon be home to thousands: "The Greater and Lesser Touchwood Hills, the Pheasant Hill, and the File Hill, all appear to be rich, humid tracts, which will become important centres when civilization in conjunction with population reaches these solitudes" (I, 422). He might as well have added Grongar's Hill, Strawberry Hill, and the names of many English landscape estates.[30]

Though it would seem difficult, James Austin Dickson manages to provide an even bolder illusion from a park landscape. Hind had sent him down the Qu'Appelle River valley to Fort El-

[30] Ironically, many of these specific landscapes appear as Indian reservations on modern maps, or, where they were not chosen by Indians, as recently-legislated national and provincial parks. Why aesthetically pleasant tracts did not become what Hind predicted for them appears to have been the result of commerce having conquered aesthetics in the late nineteenth century. Wooded, or partially wooded terrain caught the Picturesque eye, perhaps, but not the land speculator's. Once it was determined that the grasslands could sustain grain crops, land that was already cleared (i.e. bare) suddenly rose in commercial value while picturesquely wooded terrain fell in esteem. Deemed valueless extra work by immigrants, parkland was thus left to Indian tribes. Only in the mid-twentieth century, with the establishment of a variety of parks in parkland (as against only one in the grasslands), has the Picturesque resumed a value in the regional determination of land use.

lice in July, and this 'excursion' had provoked the surveyor/engineer to consider the valley as a mecca for tourism:

> As I stood upon the summit of the bluff, looking down upon the glittering lake 300 feet below, and across the boundless plains, no living thing in view, no sound of life anywhere, I thought of the time to come when will be seen passing swiftly along distant horizon the white cloud of a locomotive on its way from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and when the valley will resound with the merry voices of those who have come from the busy banks of the Red River to see the beautiful lakes on the Qu'appelle. (373)

Judging, it would appear, Crooked Lake at about the same distance from Fort Garry as the town of Kendal and the English Lake District are from the busy banks of the Thames, Dickinson devises what amounts to an entry in a future guide book of the Canadian West.

VII

The last members of the Hind's survey detachment arrived at Fort Garry on 15 September 1858. Meanwhile, Simon James Dawson, who had proceeded north from Fort Garry in May, surveyed and reported on the prairie region between Lake Winnipeg and the Assiniboine River in a series of letters to the Provisional Secretary of the Canada West Legislature. His expansionist sentiments are spelled out most clearly in his accompanying map of the territory between Lake Superior and the forks of the Saskatchewan River, over which he stamps the name C A N A D A.

One instance in particular may serve at this point of the discussion to illustrate how Dawson employs British landscape aesthetics to identify the lands that he surveyed. Under the heading of "appearance of country," he chooses the most picturesque landscape to represent the entire region from the international border up to the Saskatchewan River. In a purported "extract from a journal I kept," he forms an idyllic picture of present and future scenes along the Swan River, from Swan Lake to Fort Pelly, in modern Manitoba, during the week of 7-13 June 1858:

> As we passed through Swan Lake, the sun was setting behind a range of hills which rose over a low wooded country to the west. To the south the blue outline of the Duck Mountain was just dis-

> cernible on the verge of the horizon; while we, in our tiny craft, were gliding on through woody islands, rich in the first green drapery of summer. . . . This morning [10 June] we were awakened by a regular serenade from the birds; the woods here are positively alive with them. . . . As we proceed the country becomes still more open; and to judge by the progress of the vegetation, and the black mould thrown up in countless hillocks by the moles, the soil must be very rich. . . . To-day we saw some elk, but failed to get a shot; we also saw numerous bear tracks, but saw none of those interesting animals. The weather continues clear and fine. . . . [11 June] We pass through a beautiful country, presenting about an equal extent of weedland and prairie. As we proceed [overland to Fort Pelly], the openings become larger, and the wood less frequent. . . . The weather today was delightful, and the appearance of the country so pleasing, that we wandered too far, and, being unable to rejoin our party, had to sleep supperless without covering. . . . [12 June] Rejoin the party. . . . Such a country as we have passed through to-day I have never before seen in a state of nature. The beautiful green of the rolling prairie, the trees rising in isolated groves, looking at a distance as if laid out by the hand of art, and the blue hills bounding the prospect, presented a picture pleasing in itself and highly interesting when considered in relation to the future. It required no great effort of the imagination in weary travellers to see civilization advancing in a region so admirably prepared by nature for its development, to picture herds of domestic cattle roaming over plains still deeply furrowed with the tracks of the buffalo, which with the hunters who pursued them had disappeared forever; or to plant cottages among groves which seemed but to want them, with the stir of existence, to give the whole the appearance of a highly cultivated country.[31]

Only after this passage does Dawson proceed in his legislative report to discuss geology, climate, the successes of the Red River Settlement on the grasslands, and the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly of the west. A sunset view with blue hills for a background—motifs readily traceable by the reader of the day to Claude Lorrain's paintings of the Roman Campagna—initiate his aesthetic report on the Swan River val-

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[31] *Report on the Exploration of the Country between Lake Superior and the Red River Settlement, and between the Latter Place and the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan by S.J. Dawson, Esquire* (Toronto: John Lovell, by order of the Legislative Assembly, 1859) 15-16.

ley, a report that develops into a pastoral dream vision, floating its expansionism-minded reader through "the first green drapery of summer." Having engaged the landscape enthusiast, Dawson proceeds to entice the prospective farmer by describing the rich colour and by implying the rich quality of the soil (allowing moles to carry out his soil analysis for him), while completely disregarding any consideration of, for example, the length of growing season in a region only one hundred miles south of The Pas. Thereafter, overtures are made to the sportsman-minded reader by references to elk and bear, and all three sorts of emigrants——landscape enthusiast, farmer, and sportsman——are serenaded by descriptions of "clear and fine" weather, as well, the reader infers, as insect-free spring days and nights. Artifice, in the form of the picturesque landscape estate or a landscape painting, arises to depict parkland scenery, just as it does for the Palliser expedition farther west in the parkland during the same week, and just as it would for Hind in the Touchwood Hills three months later. The customary leap of logic from "picturesque" to "fertile" carries the reader to the conclusion that only "the industry of man"[32] is wanting to render this Swan River, a river actually full of swans and meandering through the North American estate of a gentleman capable of sharing and realizing the benefits of such prospects.

Once again, the parkland is championed as a picturesque Eden, already possessed of aesthtic perfection (at least in the second week of June 1858) and awaiting only modest exertions by civilized white men in order to epitomize agricultural perfection. Thus, had two aesthetic schemata——the Picturesque and the Sublime——come of age in the West in order to dichotomize the vast region into a desert and a paradise. (It may well be argued that a similar use of the Picturesque in travel literature and guide books about the eastern half of the continent had seduced the Moodies and so many other Britons into emigration; be that as it may.) To be sure, the Sublime and the Picturesque would continue to serve to discourage grasslands settlement and encourage parkland settlement in the West: while Palliser and Hector, Hind and Dawson were exploiting their power in the near-West, propagandists for the settlement of Vancouver Island and British Columbia were about to deploy these two aesthetic schemata in the far-West. Subsequently, the grasslands and parkland had to brace for the copious pens of the various British sportsmen and the bombastic onslaught of William Francis Butler. In the face of such relentless perception of landscape in terms of British aesthetic conventions, it is a wonder that Sand-

[32] *Report* 24.

ford Fleming's recommendation that the railway be built through the parkland was ignored. Only an Ottawa overrun by Scottish thrift had, it seems, the fortitude to ignore the weight of landscape judgement; by insisting that the railway be constructed along the shortest possible route, Ottawa inadvertently opened the grasslands to settlement and agriculture, and the aesthetic map of the West to ongoing charting and re-interpretation.

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