

Urban Archaeology in Michael Redhill's Toronto Novel *Consolation*

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Tutkielmani käsittelee urbaanin arkeologian tematiikkaa ja arkeologian metaforista sekä käsitteellistä merkitystä kanadalaisessa kaupunkikirjallisuudessa. Tutkimusaineistoni keskiössä on Michael Redhillin Torontoon sijoittuva historiallinen kaupunkiromaani *Consolation* (2006), jota analysoin ensisijaisesti kirjassa esitetyn tarinan ilmentämän tilallisuuden kautta. Romaanin tapahtumat eivät ole ainoastaan sidoksissa tiettyyn aikaan (1857/1997) ja paikkaan (Toronto), kuten kirjallisuudentutkimuksessa on usein tapana ymmärtää, vaan lähtökohtaisesti itse ympäristö tuottaa tilallisia tapahtumaketjuja, jotka ohjaavat kaupunkilaisten tottumuksia, tunteita ja toimintaa eri elämänalueilla.

Romaanin urbaani tila, miljoonakaupunki Ontario-järven rannalla, on havainnollistava esimerkki ajan ja paikan jatkuvasta yhteentörmäyksestä ja muutoksesta, joka on nähtävissä niin todellisen kuin kuvitellun kaupungin kuvassa. Toronton muodonmuutos pienestä rajaseudun kylästä tunnetuksi maailman metropoliksi viimeisen puolentoista vuosisadan aikana viestittää paikan ainutlaatuisesta olemuksesta ja luonteesta, minkä vuoksi tutkimuksessani erittelen ja analysoin myös mielikuvia, jotka nousevat esiin kaupungista kirjoitetussa kirjallisuudessa sekä Torontosta kertovissa dokumentaarisisissa (ei-fiktiivisissä) teksteissä.

Urbaani arkeologia on kirjallisuudentutkimuksessa verrattain uusi käsite, eikä sen käyttö fiktion tarkastelun yhteydessä ole vakiintunutta. Tutkielmassani esittelenkin kokeellisen tavan, jolla tuoda arkeologia ja kirjallisuus lähemmäs toisiaan ja luon tieteenalojen välille yhteyden kirjallisuuskritiikissä. Teoreettisena viitekehysenä käytän kaupunkikirjallisuuden alalla esillä olevia näkemyksiä moniulotteisesta tilasta: siitä miten kaupunkitila nähdään ja koetaan, kuinka paikka ja aika yhdistää, mutta myös erottaa kaupunkilaisia ja miten tila jatkuvasti politisoituu. Tutkielmassani havainnollistuu myös, mitä uutta kaupunkitilan tutkimus arkeologisesta näkökulmasta voi tuoda kaupunkikirjallisuuden muuten vilkkaaseen tutkimuskenttään.

Tutkimusmetodini, Deep Locational Criticism (Jason Finch), korostaa fiktiivisten ja ei-fiktiivisten tekstien teoreettista pohdintaa, mutta tutkimuksen monitieteellisyys ilmenee etenkin romaanin analyysikappaleissa, joissa tekstianalyysi täydentyy tutkimuksen kohteena olevasta kaupungista kerätyn kokemustiedon kautta (haastattelut, havainnot, kartat ja valokuvat). Tämä käytännöllinen tekstin tutkimisen tapa painottaa käsitteen *location* tärkeyttä ja pohjautuu heideggerilaiseen ajatukseen, jonka mukaan oleminen on ennen kaikkea ”olemista *jossain*.”

Analyysini paljastaa, että *Consolation* romaanin monimerkityksellisyys kirkastuu nimenomaan tarinan ”arkeologisen ymmärryksen” kautta ja että arkeologinen historiantutkimus on Toronton kaupungille sekä uhka että mahdollisuus; osa rakennusyrytyksistä ja päättäjistä näkee keskustan arkeologiset kaivaukset ongelmana, kun taas arkeologit, kaupunkihistorioitsijat ja useat kansalaisjärjestöt puoltavat niiden tärkeyttä kaupungin muistille ja kehitykselle. Ennen kaikkea analyysini avaa Toronton ja urbaanin arkeologian monimutkaista suhdetta kirjallisuuden avulla ja havainnollistaa kuinka tärkeässä osassa fiktio on kaupunkia tarkasteltaessa.

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He'd had the instinct, even as a small child,
that the world may be made up of things you cannot see,
people who are gone, knowledge you may not speak of.
And if that was most of it, then the day-to-day was just
skipping along on the surface of an accord,
an agreement about time and place.

(*Consolation* 192)

1 Introduction

Through the study of fiction, non-fiction and practical field research, this thesis sets to explore the dynamic relationship that Toronto has with its urban past. My primary research interest is in studying the thematics of urban archaeology in Michael Redhill's historical city novel *Consolation* (2006) and researching metaphorical and conceptual meanings of urban archaeology in city fiction. By analyzing the novel's storyworld, with a focus on its setting, I aim to show that the themes discussed in it are not only topical in the present discourse on cities in literary urban studies but also have an impact on the way Toronto, as a place, is imagined and perceived. Employing and embracing the notion of urban archaeology throughout the thesis, I argue that this concept is the foundation of *Consolation* and the key in understanding the novel as a whole.

Toronto – as a distinguishable place on a map – has been written about for centuries in letters of fiction and non-fiction, yet the critical study of Toronto and its literature has gained heightened attention and popularity only during the past three decades, along with an increased interest in Canadian literature in general. Literary scholar William Leon Smith traces the histories of how journalists, novelists and critics have treated Toronto in their writings, and notes that “[m]odern literature frequently evokes Toronto,” adding that “[u]rban Canadian literary criticism is a boom area” (153–54). Hence, my thesis contributes to an ever growing number of academic works dealing with Canadian fiction, and aligns itself with urban Canadian literary criticism.

Journalist Chris Michael, in his article “Reading Cities: Books about Toronto” argues similarly of the city’s emerging position in contemporary literature: “Built by immigrants, overshadowed by New York and a bit self-obsessed, Toronto shines in fiction,” continuing that “it is on the page that this still-growing metropolis’s history, vanity and occasional tragedy find their voice.” Accordingly, on the page, in fiction and in uncovering the city’s fascinating urban history through literature is where my research interests lie. The idea of Toronto appearing somewhat “self-obsessed,” and therefore other Canadian and American cities jokingly dismissing the city, has, for a long time, been a common trope in Toronto’s imagery and in popular fiction across North America.¹ This imagery, however, is changing and – as this thesis proves – hating Toronto is starting to get old.

A brief overview of previous research on the city’s literature is in place. The most ambitious work explaining and bringing together the ways in which Toronto has been imagined is Amy Lavender Harris’s ground-breaking *Imagining Toronto* (2010). Harris’s book not only introduces the reader to hundreds of Toronto authors and their works, but also reveals how Toronto has been presented in the literature produced *in* and *of* the city. Harris – a geographer whose work focuses on the cultural significance of place – also subscribes to the notion that Toronto’s voice is most loudly heard on the page and that the city communicates and exposes itself in literature. Thus, the Toronto we know today thrives on the many stories told of it. On the idea of giving the city meaning through stories, Harris writes: “As we navigate the city in restless pursuit of accommodation, commerce and community, we give the city meaning through narrative, through stories that help us chart a course between the concrete, lived city and the city as we understand, fear, remember and dream it” (13). Harris – like a number of urban theorists

¹ Of this see Albert Nerenberg and Rob Spence’s documentary film *Let’s All Hate Toronto*; and Amy Lavender Harris, pp. 17–22. A consumer of visual culture might also remember how Steve Martin’s character (Gavin) in an episode of the TV-series *30 Rock*, (“Gavin Volure,” season 3, episode 4) describes Toronto to a woman (Liz) he wishes would leave New York City with him and escape to Canada. His pitch is: “Toronto is just like New York but without all the stuff!”

before her – makes a distinction between the concrete (lived) city and the (abstract) city of ideas, drawing a theoretical line between the two. My research taps into both: while I analyze Redhill’s fictional text (the world of ideas), I also study the city (the material world) the author has set his narrative in, aiming not to glue one on top of another but establish a meaningful connection between the entities. This is also where the concept of urban archaeology comes in: I will argue that urban archaeology, which is based on material evidence and conceptual interpretation, is the most beneficial way to connect the storyworld and the material world on paper and in practice. The method that my thesis employs is called Deep Locational Criticism (Jason Finch, 2016) and in addition to guiding my textual analysis, the approach – not only allows but – requires me to visit Toronto, the locale under investigation, and to acquire specific knowledge and material from there, making the interpretation of the novel comprehensive and multidisciplinary.

One of the burning questions in my thesis is this: How do we, as readers, imagine cities? In literary urban studies it is understood that when we read city fiction we instinctively map the urban space in our mind and are able to picture the various buildings, streets and characters that the story presents us with, regardless of the genre.² City literature, then, is especially effective in capturing and mediating the daily experiences, sensations and events that occur in any substantial metropolis buzzing with people and life. Think about the popularity of city novels, such as J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) or W. G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz* (2001), and the cityscapes they are able to create within their realm of existence. Do these novels not participate in the way New York City, Brussels, London, Paris and Western Europe are imagined? When one conforms to the idea that city fiction’s most powerful effect lies in the impact it has on the reader, in the fuel that is fed to the reader’s imagination, it becomes easy to realize how reading is often – quite literally – *seeing*. Understanding reading as a performative act of mapping, Christina Ljungberg

² In fiction, Toronto is as much home to middle-class families residing in the well-kept suburbs as it is to vicious neo-Victorian vampires and ghosts haunting the downtown townhouses, to the angry youngsters roaming the city’s dark ravines, and to the attractive but strikingly murderous *nouveau riche* in Forest Hill.

calls the phenomenon of seeing while reading “cognitive mapping proper,” explaining that “[l]ooking at fictional texts as maps that are able to evoke mental cartographies leads us to a new understanding of the *materiality* of texts” (97, italics original). Indeed, this is also what the present thesis does: by focusing on the novel’s materiality I wish to draw attention to the novel as a palimpsest while realizing its standing in the real world. This means that while I fully acknowledge the fictional and aesthetic nature of the book, I am also interested in exploring its “factual nature” and materiality, in addition to the ideas it presents. A vigorous examination of *Consolation* both in theory and in practice will ultimately shed light on how studying urban fiction through a multidisciplinary concept can broaden not only the study of literature, but also our understanding of literature’s effects on reading, imagining and interpreting urban history.

Before explaining what urban archaeology means for the study of the novel in focus, I wish to briefly discuss the context of the narrative as this makes understanding and evaluating its analysis clearer. Firstly, a few words about the novel’s author and publication. Michael Redhill (b. 1966, Maryland, US) is an award-winning Toronto-based novelist, playwright and poet who has published a variety of fiction under his own name as well as a pseudonym.³ Redhill has worked as “an editor, a ghost-writer, an anthologist, a scriptwriter for film and television, and in leaner times, as a waiter, a house-painter, and a bookseller,” and most of his work has been published in Toronto by a Torontonians/Canadian publisher.⁴ *Consolation* is Redhill’s second novel⁵ and it was published in 2006, the same year as Jane Jacobs, Toronto’s most prominent urban activist, passed away. I bring up this connection because on the second last page of his book Redhill dedicates *Consolation* to Jacobs and another Toronto figure, architectural historian

³ A crime fiction series under the pseudonym Inger Ash Wolfe (2008–2015) is attributed to Redhill yet most of his biographies leave out this information. In 2012 Mark Medley interviewed Redhill for *The National Post* and, rather wittily, titled his story “Wolfe Charade: Michael Redhill Comes Clean on His Secret Life” (*TNP*, 29 Aug. 2012).

⁴ Michael Redhill Papers, Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library at the University of Toronto, Canada.

⁵ In November 2017 Redhill was awarded the Giller Prize for his third novel *Bellevue Square* (2017), set in Toronto.

William Dendy. Jacobs's study *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) – which she wrote in New York City before making Toronto her permanent home – has long been a classic in urban studies, while Dendy's first major publication was aptly named *Lost Toronto* (1978).

A novel's dedication page is rarely worthy of dwelling on but in this case, I argue, it makes all the difference. By dedicating the book to Jacobs, a fellow Torontonians who spent most of her life fighting for a livable city, and to Dendy, whose architectural teaching activities included Toronto walking tours, Redhill establishes a connection between fiction and fact, past and present, and imagination and reality. This connection, especially when thinking about my research interests, is significant because on one level it contextualizes the book and on another urges the reader to investigate further, beyond the text. Indeed, the continuous referencing and referring – pointing to another author, another work of art, another place and another time – is what defines Redhill's novel from the beginning to the end. Thus, revealing and resolving key references that help to improve the analysis is another goal and an important part of this thesis.

But, what is the novel *Consolation* all about? Admittedly the most clichéd reply to this is that 'it depends on who you ask.' With *Consolation*, however, this statement proves accurate. One reviewer calls the book "as chilly, profound, and subtle as a cold winter day" (Sallie Barringer), another states it is "an homage to Toronto, from its rough and tumble past to its contemporary civility . . . a thought-provoking read" (*Publisher's Weekly*), while another writes that the book is "perhaps pleasing [only] to native Torontonians" (Allison Block), referring to the novel's excessive detail. True, the book is full of intricate detail and there is a vast amount of local history, a number of historical figures and a variety of actual historical events embedded in it. The novel also consists of *several narratives*, and an answer that describes just one (or two) of them, inevitably leaves the other ones out. On the surface level, when it comes to the structure and layout of the text, Redhill has divided *Consolation* into two separate timelines, the novel's chapters alternating between the years 1855–57 and 1997. Although many reviewers mention the

novel's "two stories" or its "twin narrative," I have identified four plotlines in the book, two in both of the time periods mentioned earlier. These four distinct but intertwining narratives are: the story of (1) how Toronto comes into being and evolves from a rough English town into a metropolitan city; (2) how the apothecary-turned-photographer Jem Hallam immigrates from the UK to Canada in 1855, leaving his family on the other side of the Atlantic and corresponding with them only through letters; (3) how Marianne Hollis, the wife of urban archaeologist/forensic geologist and university professor David Hollis, becomes obsessed with a downtown construction site after her husband's unusual death; and finally (4) how John Lewis, Hollises' son-in-law and privately employed fact-checker for a local playwright, fabricates a story that is ultimately meant to act as a consolation for everyone involved. These four stories, skillfully laid on top of each other, not only mingle in the novel but also lend meaning to one another, which makes describing the overall plot rather challenging.

A couple of reviewers have also commented on the stylistics aspects of the book, critiquing the successfulness of combining the two timelines (the 1850s and 1990s). One notes that Redhill has "created a story that questions what history is . . . but the stories don't always mesh, and readers may find the contemporary tale more compelling than the historical background" (Robin Nesbitt), while another reviewer – stating the exact opposite – writes that "the modern bits are stilted . . . while the historical parts sing" (*The Atlantic*). For the reader who is not familiar with Redhill's novel, I will briefly outline the plot proper of the narrative. The novel opens with a scene in 1997 in which David Hollis, urban archaeologist/forensic geologist and historian, commits suicide by throwing himself in lake Ontario after being ridiculed in the academia and accused of making up an old source on which he has based his recently published monograph. In the monograph David has suggested that buried under the dirt where a new downtown sports arena (Union Arena) is being built, lies an extensive portfolio of photographs of the city of Toronto in 1856. As his source David had cited an old diary which, he claims, reveals

that an unnamed photographer who took the thirteen-plate panorama of Toronto *also* took hundreds of street-level photographs of the young city: “its streets, its parks, its houses and industry, its people” (*Cons*, 27).⁶

The novel’s alternating other half, set in the 1850s, (re)tells how these photographs – the already found panorama and the street-level photos still buried in the ground – were created, and highlights the social, historical and political importance of these images for the city. In the story set in the 19th century, the photographer is identified as Jem Hallam and he is said to have moved to the young city of Toronto from Camden, England, in hope of a more secured life for his family and himself. Hallam corresponds with his family through letters which bring him relief but, as time and the city moves forward, also pain. Along with these two hapless personal histories of David Hollis and Jem Hallam, the reader is told of Marianne Hollis’s obsession with watching the modern construction site (that turns into an archaeological dig) and of John Lewis’s creative attempt to reconcile the past with the present by writing it down. Like John, Marianne sees it her task to establish a connection “between people who are gone, [and the] knowledge you may not speak of” (*Cons*. 192). Marianne’s desire to get a hold of the street images and to *see* the lost Toronto is then why she, still shocked by her husband’s death, makes it her mission to unearth the photographs from the ground on which the new arena is being built. By doing this she aims to restore both the honour of David’s work as well as the glory of old Toronto.

Further, a large part of the novel is devoted to discussing the significance of documents and documenting, and common to the four distinct but intertwining stories is action and re-action: Toronto’s rapid growth and progress through immigration and innovation, Jem Hallam’s struggle to adjust to the new city and find meaningful work, Marianne’s fight over what she sees fair, and

⁶ The panoramic images (which the City Archives preserves) actually exist and are the earliest known photographic views of Toronto, taken by Armstrong, Beere and Hime in either late 1856 or early 1857. The 25 black and white photographs were commissioned by the City and their purpose was to promote Toronto’s selection as the capital of the Province of Canada – a decision made by the Queen in England. Toronto lost to Ottawa but the early photographs offer a unique glimpse into the city’s urban history (the City of Toronto Archives). In his novel Redhill plays with the idea of there being *another*, more extensive, set of images, taken from ground-level and being buried in the soil.

John's need to feel important and involved through writing about the things he witnesses. It is significant to note that all of these stories draw most of their action from their surroundings and setting, which is the city. When studied as a whole, then, the novel can be approached from a number of perspectives. Many of the themes covered in *Consolation*, I argue and aim to show, are topical issues in urban studies today. The theme of urban planning surfaces whenever Hallam⁷ (in 1855–57) or Marianne (in 1997) is confronted with city officials and whenever the novel's characters engage in philosophical discussions on what has changed in Toronto over time: what the city has altered, rebuilt and lost. Creative destruction, construction and the city growing 'upward' are recurring topics that are addressed when the talk turns to Marianne's consuming hobby – monitoring the downtown excavation – and the destiny of the forgotten portfolio. In addition, employment and housing, which tie all of the characters to Toronto, figure in the novel in the form of difficulties to find and maintain one or the other. As a result, power relations, city planning, employment, housing, urban resources in the form of water and land, as well as Toronto's changing role in the global scale permeate all four narratives and have substantial effects on the lives of Torontonians in the nineteenth and the twentieth century.

One way to analyze the stratified themes that *Consolation* covers, a way to see through the thick layers of meaning, is to introduce the notion of urban archaeology to its study. In fact, it is the narrator who, already in the first chapter of the book, brings up the concept and gives the reader hints of what urban archaeology means for the characters in the novel. It is mentioned that the university professor David Hollis, who is a main character despite him dying early in the book, had “spent his working life teaching ‘forensic geology’ – a field he'd invented that combined landforms with sleuthing” (*Cons.* 11). It is also stated that David's great interests included taking “students out to local fields or caves with little hammers and corked phials of sulphuric acid to hunt down specimens and take note of various topographical events” (*ibid.*).

⁷ In the novel Jem Hallam is mainly referred to by his last name, which is what I follow from now on in this thesis.

What becomes clear only much later, is that it is ultimately through David's profession – through urban archaeology – that the reader learns (1) the history of Toronto, (2) the history of Hallam and the lost portfolio, (3) the history of Marianne's civic battle, and (4) the history of John's talent for writing. These are the four stories that make up a whole, the novel, and are held together by archaeology. Hence, according to my reading and interpretation, urban archaeology, even on the intra-textual level, is the single most important metaphor through which the reader is told *the story of Toronto* and its people.

In this thesis the notion of urban archaeology is employed in a twofold way and it shows in how the primary text is approached and discussed in theory, and in the methodological practice applied to its study. Jason Finch, defining archaeology in his study on literature and place, writes that archaeology is a “research activity which excavates the material culture of the past, layer by layer, revealing the build-up of meaning on one point” and adds a telling remark: “[i]nsufficiently used so far to rethink the relationship between literature, space and time” (192). A literary-archaeological approach, then, “works to reveal the barriers or junctions in the record left on one physical spot,” (ibid.) which is what this study explores. I also wish to highlight that the thesis at hand is an in-depth literary analysis, and although my method has allowed me to travel to the location in focus to do field research, I have not attempted to mimic the work of archaeologists or natural scientists. Thus, a reader who wishes to learn about specific landforms in Toronto, about the topographical events of the early city, or about Toronto's post-industrial archaeological finds, is kindly redirected to browse works published in anthropology and earth sciences.⁸

My academic objective in this thesis is to gain valuable insight on the chosen topic using existing ideas and theories in literary urban studies, while employing and experimenting with a new cross-disciplinary method, thus combining theory with practice. As mentioned earlier, this

⁸ Fascinating works can also be found in the departments of Architecture. Of this, see e.g. Alexander Chan's Master's Thesis *Sympathetic Landscapes: An Aesthetics for the Leslie Street Spit* in which Chan discusses lakefilling, dredging, contamination, ecology and the industrialization of the Toronto waterfront.

practical approach to studying texts is called Deep Locational Criticism and it forms the methodological background for my research. The method and its implications are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.3, but worthy of noting here is that the approach encourages the use of photography in literary analysis, which I have embraced. Hence, in the analysis part of this thesis, the reader will find photographs which support, comment on and complete the literary analysis and, hopefully, make the reading experience more interesting. Other important elements of the chosen method are note-taking, free associating and documenting the experience of reading which in traditional literary analysis are too often ignored, quickly dismissed or not discussed at all. In this thesis, then, methodology – the *how* – is opened up and made visible, and the process of analyzing a city novel is demythologized.

The thesis is divided into four chapters which converse with each other and build on one another. This Introduction is followed by a chapter in which I discuss literary urban studies and present the theoretical and methodological foundation for the study. After that, two analysis chapters follow in which I analyze my research material and demonstrate, with textual and visual examples, how the notion of urban archaeology is the key concept in understanding the novel as a whole. The concluding chapter brings together the thesis and its findings, and offers suggestions for further study. Keeping in mind what Harris said of imagining cities – that stories help us chart a course between the material and immaterial city – I hope that my analysis of *Consolation* will chart a course between urban Toronto and urban archaeology, between the city that is imagined and the city that is excavated. I also hope that this study sheds light on texts that might otherwise have been left buried in the darkness.

Reality was a dirty little city
on the verge of becoming a dirtier,
larger city or being returned
ignominiously to forest.

(*Consolation* 46)

2 Re-searching the City

In this chapter the theoretical and methodological foundation for the thesis are laid out. Through a variety of relevant theories in literary urban studies, the first subchapter traces the history of the Spatial Turn and explores what analyzing a city novel means, charting its distinctive features. The second subchapter elaborates on how urban archaeology has previously been discussed and defined, and suggests how it can be used in analyzing city fiction. Introducing Deep Locational Criticism to the thesis, the third subchapter shows how this non-traditional literary-critical method allows the researcher to go beyond the text, and how the multidisciplinary nature of the approach complements the study of the novel. Finally, the fourth subchapter elaborates on the ways in which Toronto has been imagined and the urban experience theorized in contemporary texts of fiction and non-fiction. Keeping my distance from a single comprehensive Theory that reveals what a city *really* is, I present a number of perspectives on how the city is understood in literary urban studies today. Subscribing to the idea of the city being a diverse entity that points to many different directions, I wish to emphasize its function as a place, setting, and a presence.

2.1 Analyzing a City Novel

There is a good chance that walking into any local library or bookstore with the aim of finding a novel that is about city results in having an abundance of titles to choose from, the publishing year of the books spanning a hundred years and more, depending on the collection available. City literature is undeniably in vogue. The fact that readers around the world have embraced urban

fiction means that also literary scholars have picked up on studying cities. Indeed, cities – large and small, real and unreal, utopic and dystopic – are of growing interest to literary scholars, and fascinating studies have been conducted on individual cities as well as on authors writing about particular places.⁹ In this sense, researching *Consolation* connects to the already established literary tradition of studying texts that are set in a particular urban setting, the city. It is important to realize, however, that although city writing dates back many centuries, studying literature *through the spatial lens* is a much more recent development. Accordingly, in today’s language departments students are offered classes that deal with urban issues, discuss literary landscapes, dwell on utopic and dystopic futures, and talk about the shape and the image of the city, but this can be seen as a rather new development.¹⁰

Writing about the reassertion of space in literary studies, Robert T. Tally Jr. notes that while the nineteenth century was “dominated by a discourse of time, history, and teleological development and a modernist aesthetic of the early twentieth century enshrined the temporal dimension . . . matters of geography, topography, or spatiality played a subordinate role in critical scholarship and teaching” (1). That is to say that well before the concepts of ‘space and place’ gained heightened focus in the humanities, it was ‘time’ that occupied the scholarly limelight. In the first half of the twentieth century paying attention to the place where a novel was set was not a crucial component of literary analysis, and the spatial background was, rather literally, left in the background: “In the great works of realism and modernism, at least in the most influential scholarship devoted to them . . . geography and a sense of place were in many cases relegated to a secondary status” (ibid.). This thinking, however, began to change when studying popular culture and the effects it had on ordinary people’s lives became popular during the 1970s and 1980s.

⁹ Of this with an emphasis on New York City see Salmela; on London Finch (2011); and on Helsinki Ameen (2013).

¹⁰ The University of Tampere in Finland, for example, organizes classes like “Literature and Urban Space,” “The City as a Narrative: Tale of Two Cities,” and “Space, City and Literature,” but all of these classes have been added to the curriculum only in the late 2000s, denoting that teaching the city novel is a relatively new phenomenon.

When the Cultural Turn was revising the humanities across the globe, the study of literature also went through a paradigm shift. The intellectual movement concerned with place and space came to be called the Spatial Turn and it properly took off after scholars in different fields began to address spatial matters with academic credibility: “By the early 1990s, it seemed that a good deal of the most important work being done in the humanities and social sciences was, in some way or another, tied to matters of space, place, and mapping” (Tally Jr., 2). As a result, the number of theories on urban space in literature grew, and space began to replace time, as it were.

Jason Finch in his article “Modern Urban Theory and the Study of Literature,” writes that in the twentieth century “the city was theorized as never before . . . [t]hinking about cities became professionalized” (27). Discussing the work and influence of dozens of city scholars from the mid-nineteenth and the later twentieth century – including Louis Wirth, Le Corbusier, Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, Henry Lefebvre, David Harvey and Edward Soja – Finch mentions the two fields in which city theory moved forward most significantly: planning and urban studies. These are also the fields where much of today’s *literary* urban studies draws from, the many theories of city planning and urban studies proving useful for how to read and analyze literature. Although academic departments devoted to the urban phenomena started to appear only after the year 1950 – the necessity of these departments having grown immensely since – it seems evident that the urban discourse had already established itself before literary scholars fully attuned to it. Yet this should not be seen as a disadvantage: one of the valuable aspects of literature is that it can be applied to study a number of phenomena, *the city* being merely one of them. The interest towards spatiality in contemporary literary research is embraced widely and the perspectives through which the city is studied are remarkably diverse.¹¹

¹¹ The year 2017 proved a particularly prolific time for anyone interested in literary urban studies, since no fewer than two comprehensive opuses on the topic were published: *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space* and *The Palgrave Handbook of Literature and the City*. Both of these comprehensive volumes, which total 80 articles, speak for the noticeable enthusiasm towards things spatial in the academia and beyond.

But what does it mean to analyze a city novel, and how to tease out the meanings in a work of fiction set in a city? For Andrew Thacker, who has written widely about what literary criticism can learn from geography and spatial theory, to “think geographically about literary and cultural texts means to understand them in material locations, *locations that can and should be examined historically* and with an *awareness of how diverse spaces can reflect, produce or resist forms of power*” (33 emphases added). In other words, thinking geographically about texts is to pay attention to their materiality and to include in their analysis the history of the location in focus. Following Thacker’s theorization, this is also what I have done in relation to my research material. Indeed, to read and analyze a novel which draws most of its action from its material surroundings – the physical location it vividly portrays – is to consider both, its spatial and temporal dimensions, as well as to acknowledge how the space reflects, produces and resists different forms of power. Also Finch, whose article focuses on urban theorists and ideas that have affected city planning, notes that ‘writing back’ is one of the things literature is capable of doing:

Since 2000, the idea that a specialist could shape the future of human social organization in the way that she/he thinks best has come to seem more ludicrous than in the later twentieth century, when the supposed utopias of Corbusian vertical housing developments were brought into being in many parts of the world and then derided as dystopian. *Literary works can write back against top-down planning*, though this is not to say that top-down planning is worthless. (38, emphasis added)

The idea of literature aiming to dismantle unjust power structures is, of course, not new, and the quote above clearly echoes postcolonial theory and Saidian thinking, but the idea that a work of fiction – a city novel – can resist unjust planning simply by discussing it and make the reader re-think *their* position in the chain of city hierarchy, is an important point to be made. Also the fact that modern city planning is shifting its focus from having entirely specialist-centered projects to involving more ordinary members of the community is relevant for the analysis of a city novel in which individual characters resist and fight city officials and decisions they consider unjust.

The theories developed by Edward Said (1935–2003) have had an enormous impact not only on spatial literary studies but also on geography,¹² and his influential essay collection *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) is still an important read for anyone interested in spatial matters. In the second chapter “Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories,” Said defines some central concepts for his study and writes: “As I shall be using the term, ‘imperialism’ means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; ‘colonialism’, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (8). Although Said focuses on Western empires extending their power over (distant) colonies, his theorization can also be applied to thinking about the city, its centre and peripheries – the former ‘ruling’ the latter. *Consolation* comments on the different peripheries of the city only in passing, since the reader is told little of the Hollises’ life in the suburbs, for instance, but the postcolonialist dimension of the book arises from the fact that the novel is a *Canadian* novel, making a postcolonial reading of it possible, if not likely.

Hardly a secret, Canada’s journey from a rough British colony to one of the wealthiest industrialized nations in global economy has been riddled with tensions relating to matters of geography, language, territory and identity, many of which still persist.¹³ The cultural similarity and geographical proximity to the United States, a colonial past with France, and the tight relationship with England and the United Kingdom makes Canada’s history, as a sovereign country, complex and unique. The topics discussed in *Consolation* address many of the historical and national issues still under debate in Canada, which makes it, I argue, a Canadian city novel.

¹² Of Said’s “imaginative geographies,” see Marc Brosseau’s article “In, of, out, with, and through.”

¹³ The year 2017 marked the 150th anniversary of the Canadian Confederation (officially formed in 1867), and events celebrating “Canada 150” (with a distinctive logo and typeface) were promoted across the land by the Canadian Government. On the webpage devoted to the sesquicentennial people were urged to “Celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation! Commemorate events, celebrate accomplishments and honour individuals who have helped shape Canada as we know it today” (*Canada.ca*). Although the Government aimed to accommodate for all, the “Resistance150” movement was quickly formed to boycott the celebrations, remind the public of the serious problems Indigenous Peoples have faced in Canada within the past 150 years and raise awareness on the issues they continue to suffer from. Of this, see Jackie Dunham (*CTV News.ca*, June 27, 2017); Dakshana Bascaramurty (*The Globe and Mail* June 30, 2017); and @Resistance150 and #Resistance150 on *Twitter* (tweets, Jan.–Dec. 2017).

Marta Dvorak, who has studied Canadian literary production and its patterns, writes that “[w]riters in Canada, like those in other settler societies such as Australia, New Zealand, or the United States, have had to raise questions about authenticity, namely the suitability of employing inherited or imported literary and artistic forms *for a new environment and experience*” (155, emphasis added). In addition, Faye Hammill has noted that the “Canadian preoccupation with categories of identity, together with its complex history of conquest, settlement and colonisation, irresistibly invite a reading of its literature in post-colonial terms, even as these factors make such reading projects awkward and challenging” (28). In other words, there are certain risks and downsides in categorizing any novel particularly ‘Canadian’, which I am aware of, noting the words “awkward and challenging” above. These downsides often deal with the question of *to whom* exactly is the role of the “subject” and the “master” assigned – the common Canadian options being the French, the English, or the Indigenous people – and who does the assigning. Because my position as a literary student is to analyze fiction, I have granted this power to the text and looked at what it mediates of the matter. *Consolation*, in fact, mentions all three Canadian groups and embraces the country’s diversity, despite some minor pitfalls.

Elaborating on the history of critical literary geography, Thacker also argues that it is possible to “distinguish between two broad, and often overlapping, approaches informing new literary geographies since the end of the twentieth century” (29). The first one, he writes, “builds upon the work of cultural geographers and spatial theorists of modernism and modernity, such as Henry Lefebvre, Walter Benjamin, David Harvey, Michel de Certeau, and Michel Foucault,” while the second tendency, “often influenced by postcolonial studies or world literary studies, frames literary texts within global geographies and the spaces of the transnational movement of literature” (29). It is useful to point out, then, that although *Consolation* discusses (post)colonial topics, my thesis follows the first approach and benefits especially from the work of cultural geographers and spatial theorists of modernity.

To find out what some of the defining features of city novels are, let us next explore what distinguishes them from other literary texts and see what they have to say about cities. Although one might expect to find a number of theories that explain and argue what a city novel is, strikingly few exist. This is surprising especially when taking into consideration the increased interest towards spatial literary studies from the 1970s onwards and the number of monographs, articles and anthologies published in the field since. However, if we acknowledge that literary scholars are generally reluctant to define even the word *city*, which results in studies that build on the assumption that “there is no single definition of the ‘city,’”¹⁴ it becomes easy to see why the terminology is not fully established for the city novel either.

An early pioneer tackling the problem of the city novel was Blanche Gelfant who was among the first to discuss and define some central concepts in the field. In her book-length study *The American City Novel* (1954) Gelfant suggests a typology consisting of three categories into which most of the city novels (published by then, presumably) can be divided, basing her triad on how the texts treat the city. Gelfant argues:

Through literary practice, if not through theory, three forms of the city novel have emerged: *the ‘portrait’ study*, which reveals the city through a single character, usually a country youth first discovering the city as a place and manner of life; *the ‘synoptic study’*, a novel without a hero, which reveals the total city immediately as a personality in itself; and *the ‘ecological’ study*, which focuses upon one small spatial unit such as a neighborhood or city block and explores in detail the manner of life identified with this place. (11, emphases added)

This division is especially useful as it manages to theorize the city novel by placing the (fictional) inhabitants of the city, the citizens, in the centre of it. Approached from human scale perspective,

¹⁴ Of this see, for example, *Urban Imaginaries: Locating the Modern City* in which the editors Alev Çinar and Thomas Bender write: “Motivated by these questions that challenge the notion of a city as a unified and contained thing, the body of work gathered here builds on the assumption that there is no single definition of the “city.” The city, we are suggesting, at least metaphorically, speaks back to the disciplines, and what it says depends on where the city is and what aspects of city life are being examined . . . Of course, assuming that there are as many “cities” as there are urbanites and analysts is reductionist in its own way” (xvii).

the connections and differences between the three categories are perhaps easiest to understand if (1) the portrait study is followed by (2) the ecological study, and as the third, broadest of them, we place (3) the synoptic study, differing slightly from the order in the quoted passage (Gelfant uses both orders in her book). In the portrait novel, the events and experiences taking place in the city are mediated through a single protagonist, one main character, and his/her story is usually told through a first person narrative. Typical for this type of city novel is the protagonist's development from a novice, stranger, newcomer or complete failure to a prosperous individual (or vice versa) in a metropolis that either hinders or furthers the progress. An example of a well-known portrait novel is, as the title says, James Joyce's *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1916), in which the passionate adventures of Stephen Dedalus in the early twentieth century Dublin are described in eloquent detail. The ecological novel, then, instead of following a single protagonist, focuses on depicting a larger community whose members are tied together by a number of common qualities, be it the area or neighbourhood they live in, work/unemployment, ethnic/linguistic background or a common interest (art, political view, or action, for instance). As a result, essential for this type of city novel is that a community has been formed around some joint issue and that this 'ecology' is maintained by the values and mindset that its members share. A fitting example of an ecological novel is Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) as well as V.S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street* (1959), both published shortly after Gelfant's influential study. Lastly, in the synoptic novel, which can be understood as the broadest category when it comes to thinking about the city in human scale, the protagonist is the city itself. Gelfant calls the synoptic novel an all-inclusive form that

presents the complex pattern of city life – its contrasting and contiguous social worlds (the ironic union of gold coast and slum, of gangland and bohemia, of Harlem and Chinatown), its multifarious scenes, its rapid tempos and changing seasons, its tenuous system of social relationships, meetings, and separations, and *its total impacts as a place and atmosphere upon the modern sensibility*. (14, emphasis added)

Following Gelfant's typology, *Consolation* is best understood in terms of the synoptic novel, for the book not only depicts Toronto's growth from a town into a metropolis but also highlights its individual character, unique features, and the city's sense of self. The novel's form and unifying theme – urban archaeology – orders and condenses the massive material of city life, thus showing 'its total impacts as a place and atmosphere' upon the characters that the city involves.

Christophe Den Tandt is another literary scholar who has theorized the city novel, focusing on the development of the urban sublime, "the cities as objects of fascination and terror" (127). Den Tandt argues that our fascination with buildings and metropolitan sprawls is due to the fact that they "serve as material tokens for principles that defy objectification," adding that "the sublime metropolis gestures toward a social fabric perceived as a tangle of indeterminate masses and forces" (128). He also explains that "city novels developed according to writers' efforts to manage the spectacle of sublimity" (129) and that these novels rely on sublime rhetoric. In his article Den Tandt does not, however, define what city novels are and he seems to use the phrases "city novels," "city fiction" and "urban novels" interchangeably, making it difficult to extract a clear definition for the city novel as a genre. Nevertheless, Den Tandt observes:

As urban novels equate the mysteries of the metropolis with life itself, they avail themselves of a mapping tool endowed with flexible fuzziness and the capability to picture their object either as fascinating or repellent. Thus, *any enigmatic aspect of the city may stand for various manifestations of life energies.* (131, emphasis added)

Now, this idea of the city novel acting as a mapping tool able to depict its object as fascinating or repellent is useful for the analysis of *Consolation* because in it urban archaeology, along with the city itself, is both abhorred and glorified. Hardship, struggle and misfortune are a recurrent theme in the novel which, simultaneously, embraces the city for its resources and celebrates the glory of old Toronto. Multiple acts of burying, digging, excavating and concealing are also described in

the narrative and thus, following Den Tandt, urban archaeology is the main enigmatic aspect of the city that stands for manifestation of life energies in this particular narrative.

The most insightful definition for the city novel in this thesis is found in Lieven Ameel's article "The City Novel: Measuring Referential, Spatial, Linguistic, and Temporal Distances" in which Ameel details characteristics typical for city novels and proposes that

the city novel is characterized by a measuring of *distances*: distances in space, of course, but also distances between literary and actual locations; distances protagonists or communities cover, and distances felt by the protagonist(s) when confronted by the depth of personal memories and shared histories. (233)

Drawing on Burton Pike and Georges Rodenbach, Ameel understands the urban environment as "an active presence," and argues that "what makes a city novel is the degree to which the plot developments are energized by the urban environment itself" (234). Following Daniel Acke's characterization of the city novel as a genre, Ameel also explains that "in the city novel, the city reveals and facilitates the potential of the [human] character, while simultaneously, the character enables the city to reveal and fulfill its potential" (ibid). This defines also *Consolation*: it is the urban environment that ultimately produces the chains of events that guide, determine and define the habits, feelings and actions of the novel's characters, the fictional people living and working in the city. And, of course, the city, as a distinct location and setting, is affected by the things that take place in it, by the actions taken for or against it. This, I argue, makes *Consolation* a rather typical city novel.

Theorizing city literature through the concept of the many distances found in novels, Ameel also points out that "the relationship is not only between city and character," because city novels also include "the two-directional influence between city and plot, city and language, and city and temporal depth." Hence, as an approach to close read and study the relationships between the "thematized city and the structural elements in the city novel's storyworld" (234),

Ameel suggests that we think of them (these reciprocal relationships) in terms of distances while analyzing their application and effects in the city novel under scrutiny. Of what distinguishes city novels from other kind of novels, he writes:

All literature, of course, is concerned to a degree with describing and thematizing distances. But the characteristics of the city – its simultaneity, diversity and densification – entail that in the city novel, questions of distances will be addressed with a singular urgency. (234)

Accordingly, the definition that Ameel argues for can be summarized in that there are four kinds of distances whose thematization and treatment are characteristic particularly for the city novel: referential, spatial, linguistic, and temporal distances (234). All four distances are evoked also in *Consolation* whose themes highlight mostly referential, spatial and temporal distances.

While ‘referential distances’ reveal to the reader the constructedness of the literary cityworld and its varying correlation to the physically existing city, ‘spatial distances’ include not only distances traversed between geographical locations in the narrated city but also moral and social distances between ideas and people inhabiting the imagined city. A city novel’s ‘linguistic distances’, on the other hand, refer to the language employed by the characters, their ability to understand each other, and language’s power to include, exclude and divide citizens into groups. Lastly, the “most complex and fleeting distances measured and negotiated in the city novel” are ‘temporal distances’ (237). This is because the city always bares traces of the past while informing also its future, hence wrapping the city itself in temporal layers of meaning. Indeed, Ameel writes that “The interplay between possible futures is acted out between literary characters, but *when set in a historical past, the city novel gains further meaning by what the reader knows to be concealed behind the storyworld’s temporal horizon*” (238, emphasis added). *Consolation* takes advantage of this and plays with the smallest of details of what the reader already “factually” knows. The novel also questions our understanding of the city’s urban history

by emphasizing that what is forgotten or hidden about the past, cannot be known in the present. Finally, discussing temporal distances and drawing on ideas put forward by Sigmund Freud and Edward Soja, Ameel notes that “It is commonplace to regard the city as a palimpsestic repository of multiple memories not dissimilar to an archaeological site” (238). Let us then turn our attention to urban archaeology and the city’s ability to bury, conceal, excavate and reveal things.

2.2 Urban Archaeology: Digging out the Foundation

“An interest in origins may be a very early aspect of human consciousness,” argues Kevin Greene in *Archaeology: An Introduction*, continuing that “[t]he possibility that the phenomenon of death led to reflections on afterlife or rebirth amongst early prehistoric peoples is suggested by burial sites” (9). Origins, consciousness, death, (re)birth, burial, and site are all thematic keywords that can be applied to the study of *Consolation*, yet rather than a novel about reflections on afterlife, the book is an expedition into “beforelife” – how the city of Toronto, over time, came to bury its origins. The symbolic opening of the novel depicts the unusual death of an archaeologist and triggers a chain of events that leads to an examination of his life’s work, eventually revealing to the reader how the archaeologist’s story coincides with the city’s (hi)story. Hadas Elber-Aviram, in her excellent article on urban fantasy and archaeology, notes:

The palimpsestic model of the city discovered by urban archaeologists such as Schliemann and Evans has inspired the multilayered cityscapes of many urban fantasy narratives. These narratives cast their protagonists into the symbolic role of archaeologists who descend into the urban underworld to recover the city’s forgotten past. Important work has been done on the representation of archaeology in popular culture, but scholars have yet to comprehensively discuss the thematic links between urban archaeology and urban fantasy. (1, emphases added)

I would argue further: scholars have yet to comprehensively discuss the thematic links between urban archaeology and city literature at large. Elber-Aviram writes that the urban fantasy novel is “defined by its predominant interest in the concrete, tangible details of the city, and the way in which these details cohere to form a larger narrative of the city’s past.” She continues that “Therefore *the core trait that marks urban fantasy out from similar genres* also strongly links it *with urban archaeology*, as both the literary genre and the archaeological field share an intense concern with the city’s material history” (2, emphases added). However, urban *fantasy* is not the only genre that is predominantly interested in the concrete, tangible details of the city and its material history – a large number of realistic city novels also share this interest. *Consolation*, a city novel that is a combination of realistic and historical fiction, is a case in point.¹⁵ But before elaborating on the thematic relationship between urban archaeology and the city novel, I wish to briefly address another closely related question that arises: what relevance, if any, does urban archaeology have with literary research?

Post-industrial urban archaeology bases its analysis and interpretation of the past on the *material evidence* discovered and gathered in the city. Literary research, however, is based on *textual evidence*, drawing its conclusions from interpreting texts (and their contexts). These two approaches might initially seem oppositional to each other, but they have much in common. Firstly, both academic fields examine objects once created and produced by humans.¹⁶ Secondly, through the analytical study of artifacts (be it a utility article or a written document) researchers in both fields aim to gain an understanding of what the object mediates about its subject, the surrounding culture or the culture it communicates, and its form. Both also aim to understand its relevance in a historical sense. Thirdly, as long as the evidence presented is sound and its

¹⁵ Other realistic, contemporary novels discussing archaeology and its power to transform places are, for example, W.G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz* (2001) and Teju Cole’s *Open City* (2011). Sarah Moss’s *Cold Earth* (2009), on the other hand, deals with archaeology and burial sites in a remote, peripheral location away from the city, and discusses the psychological effects that field work (of excavating, digging and examining human remains) has on archaeologists.

¹⁶ The word “objects” here refers to any material evidence found, and includes also human remains (e.g. bones).

treatment tenable, there are no ‘right’ answers to the more complex questions that the artifact proposes. As Greene writes of the nature of archaeological evidence: “It takes a certain amount of courage to accept that there are no ‘right’ answers, and that all interpretations are based upon assumptions of varying probability, never certainty” (8). This is not dissimilar to literary research which works on a similar principle and entails a range of theories whose credibility is capable of being shifted. It is also worthy of noting that throughout history, archaeologists have gained important (even vital) information from studying texts,¹⁷ and there are a number of benefits that also literary scholars can adopt from studying the basics of urban archaeology. Gaining a sense of place, visiting burial sites and ruins, seeing the three-dimensional city grid, inspecting buildings, photographing locations, realizing distances, and observing the city’s material conditions are just a few cross disciplinary notions that seem to require physical presence in order for the researcher to deepen their understanding of the urban environment as an active presence.¹⁸

Further, keeping in mind Thacker’s idea of thinking literary texts in terms of their material locations that should be examined with an awareness of their historical background, it seems only beneficial to discuss the novel through the notion of urban archaeology. I am not alone in thinking this: Harris, in *Imagining Toronto*, titles one of her subchapters “Archaeologies of Memory” and argues that the buried city images that are significant for the plot in *Consolation* “embody tensions between development and destruction that have resulted in the methodical obliteration of entire eras of Toronto’s civic history, tensions that seem rooted in a peculiar ambivalence about the city’s origins” (35). Intriguingly, also here an interest in “origins” is the

¹⁷ This is sometimes referred to as ‘paper archaeology’. Clarisse Coulomb writes that although antiquarians were primarily interested in written documents, “by the eighteenth century, this ‘paper archaeology’ was in steep decline: material proof had replaced textual proof and archaeology was now preferred to the criticism of written sources” (3).

¹⁸ As an answer to the question “When does a novel become a full-fledged city novel?” Ameal writes that “to the point is the observation, made by Burton Pike, that in city literature the image of the city is ‘a presence and not simply a setting’. In the preface to one of the greatest turn-of-the-twentieth-century city novels, *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892), the Belgian symbolist Georges Rodenbach gives a similar view of the literary city, repeating first the argument of the city-as-character, but then moving on to emphasize *the urban environment as an active presence.*” (234, emphasis added)

phrase that surfaces when literary *and* literal Toronto are discussed and analyzed. What is more, stating that the city is bound to landscape and treating its narratives cartographical, Harris calls Toronto writers “archaeologists of memory,” arguing that

Toronto’s writers are *archaeologists of memory*, *dredging* the city’s subterranean layers for fragments that flesh out the city’s contemporary *form* and give shape to its present-day preoccupations and ambitions. It is through these *fragments* that the city reveals itself: the angle of light between buildings, an overheard conversation, the *memory* of water flowing beneath pavement. (38, emphases added)

Harris employs language that is not only metaphorical but also metonymic. To her Toronto authors do not act like archaeologists of memory but they *are* that; their writings do not discuss but *dredge* the city’s subterranean layers in order to reveal the contemporary city’s *form*; and the city does not reveal itself at once but through *fragments*, glimpses of buildings, conversations and *memories* produced by the people living in the city. By “travelling downward,” Harris writes, is how we make our way into “the city within city.” With this she means that in order to discuss the buried city – which literature and archaeology are particularly good at doing – we must turn our attention to the ground below. Harris continues: “Only then, once we have pressed our hands into limestone layers and listened to the earth speak, will we be able to regain our bearings and travel upward, blinking as we emerge from subterranean shadow into the illuminated grid of the city’s streets” (38). Harris’s extended metaphor should not be read literally but understood as a call for literary researchers to study Toronto and its authors through the lens of urban archaeology.

Another example of the way in which archaeological practice works and connects to imagination and dialogue (which are vital for city literature to work) is something that Jens Fog Jensen, a Danish archaeologist who travelled to the Arctic with nine others in 2012 to do research on the first people in Greenland, has said.¹⁹ Upon finding markers of play tents on the ground

¹⁹ A film documentary *Expedition to the End of the World* follows the research group’s journey in the Arctic, depicting the field work of seven scientists and three artists.

denoting an old children's playground, Fog Jensen states: "You can imagine all the happy times and fun here. We interpret the visible signs. But *in your mind you imagine a dialogue*. But strictly speaking these things don't say anything at all. *We make them talk*. But we have to admit that the dead remain silent" (emphases added). Interestingly, then, to Harris, who is an urban geographer by profession, studying Toronto and the city's literature means focusing on its subterranean level and "listening to the earth speak," while to Fog Jensen, who specializes in northernmost ruins, practicing archaeological research is imagining dialogue and "making them [dead things] talk".

To return to the thematic connection between city novels and urban archaeology: this relationship evidently exists but, as Elber-Aviram argued about archaeology and urban fantasy, it has not been properly theorized. It is not unusual, however, to regard the city as a palimpsestic creation that conceals memories and resembles an archaeological site, as mentioned earlier. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud proposes that a clash between the individual mind and the surrounding society is created due to desires that the mind has to suppress by the rule of law. Accordingly, aiming to theorize how the mind retains memories Freud argues that "in mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish," continuing that "[l]et us try to grasp what this assumption involves by taking an analogy from another field" (69). Turning then to archaeology, he briefly outlines the pivotal moments in the history of the Eternal City (Rome), and makes an analogy between memories preserved in the human consciousness and the traces of the past still visible in the modern city:

It is hardly necessary to remark that all these *remains of ancient Rome are found dovetailed into the jumble of a great metropolis* which has grown up in the last few centuries since the Renaissance. There is certainly not a little that is ancient *still buried in the soil of the city or beneath its modern buildings*. This is the manner in which the past is preserved in historical sites like Rome. (5, emphases added)

This analogous relationship between a person's memory and a city's memory is significant, not only because it allows us to understand the city in terms of build-up material and layers, but also because it gives history a vertical dimension that is grounded in location. Of Freud's fascination with Schliemann, a nineteenth-century amateur archaeologist (whose excavation methods were later criticised), John M. Ganim has noted: "Freud was influenced by Heinrich Schliemann's peeling back the layers of Troy as a metaphor for the unconscious" (381). The layered city, then, acts as a metaphor for the psyche but is also an uncanny reminder of the eras and peoples past. *Consolation*, revealing to the reader the buried and heavily layered city under the modern one, works on the uncanny principles of discovery and recovery.

Indeed, both literature and the discoveries of archaeology have potential to be uncanny. Freud's definition reads: "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (220), which Den Tandt's theorization of the urban sublime echoes. Freud, who was fascinated by concepts such as *fantasy* and *memory*, understood the human psyche as being capable of concealing and repressing things, and in addition to turning to archaeology, he employed literature to illustrate the return of the repressed. Jeremy Tambling, who specializes in literary theory and applies Freud's thinking to analyzing texts, has argued: "Literature's essence . . . is that it has no essence. Its precise words turn out to be not quite what is meant to be said, because language condenses and displaces. If so, *things are hidden inside other things*, and mean something slightly different from what they seem to mean (13, emphasis added). Hence, words on a page – of a city novel, for instance – defer meaning and inevitably refer to other things, some of which are left unsaid. Because repressed meanings are always a potential in the text, it becomes the work of the reader to fill in the gaps, to put flesh on the bones on the page, as it were. Archaeologists face a similar kind of problem when interpreting finds because although objects and signs are visible and readable (making it possible to determine facts from artifacts), they remain silent.

Consequently, reading *Consolation* in Freudian terms is possible and has been done. William Leon Smith, in his fascinating doctorate thesis (2012) which “seeks to re-place Toronto in contemporary discussions of Canadian literature,” approaches Redhill’s novel through the concept of the uncanny and emphasizes the uniqueness of Toronto “in its material location and symbolic resonance” (1). Smith writes:

Consolation provides several instances of what Freud sees as indicative of the uncanny: doubles, repetitions, hauntings, returns, omnipotent thoughts and overlaying of the homely and unhomely. Exploring the benefits of individual perception, the shaping of collective memory, and challenging notions of consolation, Redhill’s novel suggests yet another side to Freud’s notoriously malleable concept of the ‘uncanny.’ (48)

Smith’s analysis of the novel is thorough and detailed, yet urban archaeology, as a concept, is barely touched upon. This, nevertheless, makes sense if we take into account that his main focus in the chapter discussing Redhill’s novel is on the *uncanny photographs* and on the gothic nature of Victorian-era Toronto. Concerning the purpose of this thesis, however, it is interesting what Smith (albeit in passing) writes about the site under which the lost photographs lie buried:

The construction site of the new arena sits as a perfect crossroads to the themes in the novel, where commercial interests require a certain amount of excavation but only so much as allows further building work. *This site’s dual role*, both construction site and potential excavation dig, *sets a tone for the novel as a whole*. (61, emphases added)

Indeed, it is the paradoxical nature of the site and its “potential” – a perfect crossroads to the themes in the novel – which makes urban archaeology a fitting concept for studying the narrative.

Richard Lehan²⁰ argues that the discoveries of Schliemann (1822–90), which fascinated Freud and his contemporaries, “fueled an interest in the old mythology as well as a belief in the relevance of the archaeological layering of time. The interest in archaeology found an important

²⁰ Lehan’s *City in Literature* (1998) was one of the first comprehensive studies that theorized the city in literature, and its influence on literary urban studies is notable still today.

complement in the literary use of landscapes, particularly urban landscapes” (79). Using selected works from writers such as Gustave Flaubert, T.S. Eliot and James Joyce as his examples, Lehan shows how archaeology and the discovery of layered cities surfaced in modernist literature and how the history of a city could be discussed symbolically through the ground it was founded on. This is also what Harris means with “travelling downward” to get to the city within a city, while calling contemporary Toronto authors (like Redhill) archaeologists of memory. As remarkable as Lehan’s observation of the modernists’ use of “an archaeology of history” is, he does not attempt to further define (literary) archaeology nor does he analyze its theoretical implications.²¹

The most insightful theorization and guiding definition for urban archaeology in this thesis, then, comes from Michael McClelland, a Toronto architect and author specializing in heritage conservation, heritage planning and urban design. McClelland argues:

Urban archaeology is a process that allows us to imagine the past in a very concrete way. And *that imagining*, even based on the smallest of artifacts, *offers opportunities to visualize and understand a built environment once considered lost*. Sometimes, as has been frequently the case in Toronto, artifacts such as old foundation walls, piers or drains (such as under the North Market of the St. Lawrence Market) have turned up on construction sites. The task of saving and incorporating these discoveries in new buildings can pose significant technical, financial, and political challenges. But what if we develop new approaches for surfacing archaeological objects that are known to lie beneath existing public spaces? (emphases added)

This definition starts McClelland’s intriguing article “A Modest Proposal: An Archeology Park for Downtown Toronto” in which he rather boldly, despite the title, proposes that Toronto should introduce a new method for surfacing and displaying archaeological finds discovered in the city: an open-area park devoted to urban archaeology.²² It is also interesting that McClelland defines

²¹ In *Literary Modernism and Beyond: The Extended Vision and the Realms of the Text* (2012) Lehan again mentions the influence archaeology had on the modernists and their work, but does not elaborate on the concept.

²² By calling his serious idea “A Modest Proposal,” McClelland refers to Jonathan Swift’s 1729 essay by the same name, creating thus an underlying connection between literature and archaeology and revealing that words – like the thick layers of soil – are capable of hiding things.

and explains urban archaeology – which he considers a process – through our ability to imagine, visualize and understand a built environment, because these are the same means that city novels rely and depend on: the reader’s ability to engage in a complex process of cognitive mapping that involves seeing the urban environment.

Accordingly, Alison O’Byrne, writing about our ability to picture ourselves and others in a modern metropole, argues that “the city is a place to see and in which to be seen” (57). The idea of the city being a spectacle and the inhabitants of the city active spectators in it, is a common theorization in literary urban studies today, and the practice of characters observing the city dates back centuries.²³ In this sense, writing about a city is to give it a *place* in the reader’s imagination, and reading about a city is to form an image of it – to map the text in one’s head. The most prominent difference between imagining urban fiction and imagining the pursuit of urban archaeology is, of course, that while urban fiction fulfills itself in the realm of imagination, urban archaeology reaches beyond it, making its processes and applications much more concrete. In simpler terms, urban archaeology uses imagination as *a starting point* for concrete things that are expected to follow – like an excavation, a building, or a park – but urban fiction (and its analysis) is comfortable in staying in the abstract world of ideas. Deep Locational Criticism, however, combines these and “puts places in the centre of investigation and reconstructs whole worlds so that texts are merely a starting point” (Finch, 111). In addition, of imagining urban fantasy Elber-Aviram writes: “imaginative creativity and archaeological methodology are both needed to construct a convincing portrait of the fantastic city whose flights of fancy find anchor in scrupulous details of material urban history” (2). The same can be argued about realistic city novels; imaginative creativity and archaeological methodology are both needed to construct a convincing portrait of the ‘realistic city’ whose fights of justice, rather, surface upon excavations that are able to reveal subterranean tensions prevailing in the metropolis.

²³ Of this, see Alison O’Byrne; Catherine Nesci; Elizabeth Wilson; and Edgar Allan Poe.

McClelland's theorization and article is fascinating for other reasons as well. In order to illustrate why modern Toronto needs an area devoted to archaeology, he takes "the case of the local St. James Park," located at 120 King Street East in an area known today as Old Town Toronto (often referred to simply as "old Toronto") and recounts how the modern park, which is named after the nearest cathedral, came into being. By the 1970s, the City had bought (from businesses and private owners) the buildings that stood on the land where a new green ground was to be built. Gradually the city ordered the old buildings to be demolished and, as McClelland writes, even though the need for a public park in that area was real, "the rationale for the demolitions wasn't just about creating a new public space, the antiquated buildings were seen as havens for the evils of urban blight." Here McClelland seems to be referring to the same tensions between development and destruction that Harris sees are the result of the methodical obliteration of entire eras of Toronto's civic history. McClelland then depicts the neighbourhood as it would have appeared 170 years ago, basing his interpretation on existing street maps, photographs, city archives, and other publically available documents:

If you walked King East in the 1850s, this stretch bustled with enterprises – clothiers, drapers, bootmakers, harness makers, gas fitters, and grocers. On Adelaide, one would have found the rectory for St. James, while at the corner of Jarvis and Adelaide was the business of John Nasmith, baker. A Scottish immigrant, Nasmith founded a bread and biscuit bakery that stayed in this location well into the 20th century. In the steeply banked terrain that ran north and east of St James was the crowded cemetery that still remains intact under the church property.

Coincidentally, this is the same area and neighbourhood in which Redhill has set the historical part of *Consolation*: King Street East, Toronto's most prosperous street a century and a half ago, is where most of the novel's action in the years of 1855–57 takes place. Hallam's apothecary and later photography studio is located "at the sign of the mortar, No. 81 King Street East," (*Cons.* 47) and it is *here* that Hallam does business, lives, goes to church and socializes with others.

What is then most remarkable is that the location that McClelland imagines for the purposes of advocating the modern uses of urban archaeology in the concrete (real/lived) city, corresponds to the one that the reader of *Consolation* is urged to imagine when s/he is confronted with the abstract city of the novel. In a sense, both of these imaginings aim to recreate the past. In his article, McClelland also writes: “All of this block’s history is not lost. *Its remnants*, in the form of foundations, road patterns, and artifacts, *remain buried* beneath St. James Park” (emphases added). Indeed, parts of the history of the neighbourhood might be buried, but it does not yet signal that it is lost. I would then readily add that the remnants of old Toronto can also be found in literature – in palimpsestic novels such as *Consolation*, along with a number of other city novels and texts of urban fiction that focus on (re)discovering the city’s rich urban history.²⁴

Therefore, whereas the city novel uses archaeology as a locational metaphor through which to discover and discuss the past of the buried city, urban archaeology and its many implications – in their most concrete form – act as a valuable means through which to reveal, contextualize and teach the city’s history to the public. Again, common to both approaches is that they try to grasp the city by focusing on ‘history from below’ while exploring subterranean layers and the stuff that cities are made of. As McClelland writes about the neighbourhood of Old Town: “consider the possibility of re-conceptualizing this park *so that it exposes* some of the area’s 19th century mercantile *history* – an archaeological park, or a kind of Pompeii in downtown Toronto, where the *artifacts would be made visible* to residents and visitors alike” (emphases added). Noting that this radical approach to public space “is not new, as there are many precedents internationally,” McClelland ends his article by emphasizing that what Toronto needs is not another conflict over land use but a reconciliation of the values that prevail in the city: “The point is that urban archaeology doesn’t need to foster conflict between competing uses.

²⁴ One of the most well-known Toronto novels that deals with the city’s past while recreating its own version of a people’s history is Michael Ondaatje’s *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987) which is set in the city in the 1930s. In the media Redhill has often voiced that Ondaatje’s work has been an inspiration to him as an author writing about Toronto.

Sometimes, if we think creatively about all of our archaeological assets, it's possible to find other ways to use them to celebrate and acknowledge the buried history of the city."

Somewhat more pessimistically and alluding to Toronto's alleged need to feel worthy globally rather than just locally, Michael Redhill, in an interview in which he discusses the significance and implications of his novel for the city of Toronto, has said: "You don't know what's worth celebrating until somebody from another culture says hey that's good, and now you can pay attention to it" (Smith, *Torontos* 228). Here Redhill refers to *Consolation* going almost unnoticed in Toronto when it came out and to its subsequent life after it was long-listed for the Man Booker Prize, a prominent literary award in British culture. When asked about a collective memory of Toronto, which *Consolation* thematizes, Redhill returns the question and states:

Do you think the average Torontonian has a sense of where we exist on a timeline? When you go to Europe you have a really strong sense in Rome and Paris. People walk around in more than one time period. Partly that is just *maintaining the physical presence of the past*. It's the only way you can do it. The people are gone. The only way you can do it is through maintaining the physical legacy and whatever efforts the modern municipality does to say stop and tell you what it is. Then you can feel like you're part of a chain of events. It happens more and more now in Toronto. They are getting better at it. There's still not enough of *the original city* left behind that you can make that connection. You have to work too hard as the individual citizen, *to imagine what was there*, because it's either gone or it's covered up. (232, emphases added).

Contextualizing and focusing on the buried city under the modern one, McClelland and Redhill both turn to archaeology to make an analogy – like Freud earlier – between the city and the mind. They both also express their concern over heritage preservation in Toronto and argue for the maintenance of the *physical* presence of the past. Thus, gaining a sense of the city and a sense of "where we exist on a timeline" requires understanding the city's origins and the citizens' role in it; to walk around in more than one time period and to feel "like you're part of a chain of events" is to acknowledge the people that inhabited the place centuries earlier and, without resorting to nostalgia, respect the legacy they left in the city.

Although Toronto has not yet articulated plans on executing McClelland's proposal,²⁵ the City – especially after 2000 – has introduced plans and projects that celebrate heritage.²⁶ One of the most significant early documents discussing the city's archaeological legacy is an interim report published in 2004: "A Master Plan of Archaeological Resources for the City of Toronto."²⁷ In the executive summary of the 40-page report it is written that the city "has a cultural history which begins approximately 11,000 years ago and continues to the present," and that

[t]he archaeological sites that are *the physical remains* of this lengthy settlement history *represent a fragile and non-renewable cultural legacy*. Protecting these sites has become especially important in southern Ontario, where landscape change has been occurring at an ever increasing rate since 1950, resulting in *extensive losses* to the non-renewable archaeological record. The most effective means of protecting those sites that remain is through adoption of planning and management guidelines that are informed by both the known distribution and character of sites and by assessment of *the potential location of additional sites that have yet to be discovered*. (iii, emphases added)

The report not only acknowledges the frailness of the city's physical remains but also admits the "extensive losses to the non-renewable archaeological record" that Harris, McClelland and Redhill discuss in their work. The primary objective of the plan – which reads like a study – is to "prepare an innovative management tool that will assist the City in making informed planning decisions regarding archaeological resource conservation early in the development review process, and in planning capital projects on City-owned land" (3). In addition, in the foreword to the report, William Woodworth Raweno:kwas, who teaches native culture and architecture in Toronto, writes that "In order to heal our relationships with one another, with the Mother Earth,

²⁵ The article was published on 16 Oct. 2017 in *Spacing Toronto*. The magazine, which devotes separate sections for Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, Montreal and Ottawa, uncovers "the joys, obstacles and politics of Canada's big cities by cutting through the cynicism that often pervades any discussion about urban issues," while pushing readers "to think critically about how they can shape the public spaces that surround their everyday lives" (*Spacing.ca*).

²⁶ The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and The Ontario Archaeological Society (OAS) are useful sources from where citizens can gain information on the many archaeological sites and projects in the city.

²⁷ Another important document is the Ontario Heritage Act (enacted in 1975 and amended in 2005), which features a four-stage guide for archaeological assessment in the province (*Standards and Guidelines*). The City is also currently in the process of preparing an updated and more detailed Master Plan of archaeological resources within the City.

and indeed with Creation itself, we must begin in earnest the work of remembering. The Archaeological Master Plan is the framework and guide for such an endeavour” (1).²⁸ Calling the plan “an innovative effort to restore our city to its proper context in time,” Raweno:kwas emphasizes that new development and construction should not be done at the expense of the land that he considers sacred (the foreword begins with: “All land is sacred.”).

A city novel like *Consolation*, then, engages in the important *work of remembering*: reconstructing the past in its own terms it writes back against top-down planning and, indeed, makes the reader re-think their position in the chain of city hierarchy. Historian John Tosh writes that “[a]ll societies look to their collective memories for consolation and inspiration” (4), and argues that a shared interpretation of the events and experiences of the past is definitive for any social grouping. Accordingly, addressing Torontonians’ collective identity, *Consolation* recounts the (his)story of the city through multiple acts of digging, excavating and burying, drawing attention to its materiality and ability to create and erase history. Evoking the palimpsestic model of the city, the novel also problematizes storytelling and questions the role of official history against history from below. Let us next turn our attention to how to study the novel’s setting best.

2.3 Dating the Past: Deep Locational Criticism

City novels are geographically located, situated in space, and researching them requires noting their locatedness. More than just noting it, the thesis at hand employs a new method for studying the city novel and its geographical locale: Deep Locational Criticism. This approach, developed by Jason Finch (2016), is a practice and *an activity* that helps literary scholars “to discuss

²⁸ Raweno:kwas is also the author of the first chapter in the book *Bones of the Ancestors: The Archaeology and Osteobiography of the Moatfield Ossuary* (2003), which presents and discusses finds from the Moatfield site (located directly north of Old Town) where human remains were accidentally discovered in 1997. The site, evidently an old cemetery, and its study offer a glimpse into the lives of Iroquoians from the 13th Century.

changing understandings of particular places with workers in historical, geographical and archaeological studies” (3). Accordingly, Deep Locational Criticism connects the analytical study of literature to fields that are capable of benefitting it and is fundamentally multidisciplinary. Although understood here as a scholarly method, it should be noted that the activity is not exclusive to academic research: “also associations that aim to protect and nurture particular places could benefit from Deep Locational techniques” (3). In addition to opening up literary research to other disciplines, the approach is useful for studying *Consolation* because the novel’s intra-textual arrangement is in constant dialogue with its extra-textual reference. As Finch argues: “A literary text . . . cannot help referring to actual realities of place, but also participates in the construction of imaginative places” (5). Thus, like other literary texts written about the city, Redhill’s novel contributes to how its extra-textual referent, the city of Toronto, is imagined.²⁹

The terminology used in Deep Locational Criticism is rooted in literary urban studies, or literary geography, but its practices owe much to cultural studies, sociology and philosophy. Methodically Deep Locational Criticism encourages visits to the location under investigation and benefits from existing (and self-constructed) maps and visual images. In this sense, the method

involves a move away from a literary scholarship focused on authors and words and towards *a literary geography more concerned with imaginative places themselves*. This has consequences for the boundaries between academic disciplines. Here, human geography, place philosophy, archaeology, visual studies and urban history all meet literature. (190, emphasis added)

It is also good to keep in mind what Juha Ridanpää has argued, namely: “humans are simply unable to understand spatial layers and their connections to society and the environment without imagination” (187). That is to say that the realms of fiction and fact constantly overlap, and our ability to imagine is the base for understanding society. Indeed, the objective of Deep Locational

²⁹ Of this, see Harris, especially pp. 13–32 and 295–302.

Criticism is *not* to try to distinguish fact from fiction which, for a long time, “was the essential motive for geographers interested in literature,” as Ridanpää writes (187). Rather, the starting point for Deep Locational Criticism is, as Finch explains, “to put an imaginative place at the centre, and then to ask which materials need to be read or examined in order to understand that place” (5). Thus, it is a different thing to close read a novel in its own terms, than to merely evaluate how ‘realistically’ it depicts its subject. Deep Locational Criticism is interested in approaching the place in a practical way, and the method readily recognizes the fictitiousness of literary texts that discuss an existing city. As Barbara Piatti has observed: “Every setting, every geographical notion that appears in fiction has evidently a fictitious state (although there are, in many cases, references towards real-world counterparts)” (186). Deep Locational Criticism agrees with this. In fact, its key tool is the notion of *imaginative place* which, Finch argues, is

a conceptualization of place which combines the actual (what in fact is experienced in some way, whether physical, textual or somehow virtual) and the imagined, the deduced, the posited: what is garnered from tales and assumptions. The imagined must in some way also be experienced: what can you imagine without evidence? (29)

Consequently, a Deep Locational Critic understands the imaginative place “as a combination of the actual or empirically describable and the fictive or fictitious” (30).³⁰

Leaning to other relevant disciplines and putting the imaginative place at the centre, the method also embraces *a ground-level* topographic view of place and considers as its key source “work on different visual cultures, such as documentary photography” (5). Accordingly, a student practicing Deep Locational Criticism could, for instance, turn to sources that explain the history of the city that the literary text discusses; refer to maps of the city and its neighbourhoods; study what archaeological issues might be connected to the site(s) that the novel alludes to; look at photographs taken of the place where the novel is set at different time periods; as well as visit the

³⁰ Ridanpää’s wording of the same idea is: “Imagination is not a counterpart to facts, but ‘fact’ together with ‘fiction’ are abstractions between which the human imagination slides and which allow things to become meaningful” (187).

novel's locale and document its physical presence. This is exactly what the present study does: it deepens the analysis of the novel and its intra-textual world (or *storyworld*) by taking into account the world outside it, bringing into the analysis the novel's extra-textual place. In order to explore the relationship between urban archaeology and the city depicted in *Consolation*, it seems only practical to examine a variety of other material in order to understand that place.

Before elaborating on how this other material in the thesis has been gathered using Finch's method, it is necessary to address another scholar and criticism closely linked to it: Bertrand Westphal's geocriticism. Robert T. Tally Jr., who has translated Westphal's study *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Places* from French into English (2011), writes that Westphal "has long advocated a 'geocentered' approach to literature and cultural studies, which would allow a particular place to serve as the focal point for a variety of critical practices," (ix) and that "using classical myth, modern fiction, historical works [and] tourist brochures," Westphal, in his previous work, has aimed at forming "a pluralistic image of the place" under investigation (x).

Thus, although Deep Locational Criticism is a radical and non-traditional literary method, it has its (close) predecessors. In the Glossary of Terms to his book *Deep Locational Criticism: Imaginative Place in Literary Research and Teaching*, Finch writes that when it comes to putting place at the centre of the analysis and examining additional material related to it, "geocriticism and Deep Locational Criticism are alike" (199). Westphal himself argues: "As long as one accepts the principle of a geocentered approach [spatial referent being the basis for the analysis], one is free to employ a methodology that allows the space to be seen from a new angle, an angle that resituates the whole field" (113).

Both approaches to texts understand the referentiality of fiction and its power to transform places in a similar fashion, and they both aim to reveal how literature interacts with the world that it depicts and discusses. As methods, geocriticism and Deep Locational Criticism not only recognize the researcher's position and locatedness (as much as the fiction's), but also see

the organization of space and our being in it as a social event, something that fluctuates and is never fixed. A kind of inevitable and even desired open-endedness defines both approaches. It is also interesting what Tally Jr. writes of Westphal's influential study:

This book does not once and forever provide a definitive answer to the question, "What is Geocriticism?" *Geocriticism* surveys a territory, speculates about others, suggests possible paths to take, and argues in favor of certain practices and against others, all while peregrinating around multiple discourses of space, place, and literature. In a world in which fiction may be as reliable as any form of understanding the world, what grounds do we have for analysis? What methods can we use to make sense of things? (xi-xii)

In a sense, then, it is possible to see Deep Locational Criticism as stemming from geocriticism, or drawing on it, but rather than a subcategory of geocriticism, I see Deep Locational Criticism as the most accessible practical approach to texts available. Whereas Westphal's study includes sophisticated literary theory and reads like a long *essay* (he has divided his book into five chapters: the first three define its central concepts and the last two explain their implications), Finch's study (of eight chapters) is a detailed *guide* to the practice, providing much needed theoretical background but offering the reader more advice on how to be a deep locational critic. In other words, both critics emphasize the practicality of their approaches to literary research, but while Westphal concentrates on theorizing geocriticism, Finch provides more concrete examples on how to proceed to study place and location. In addition, Finch's study is aimed at literary students, scholars and workers in allied fields and he emphasizes that *Deep Locational Criticism* is not a book about "Theory". Finally, if research is always about making choices and having (articulated and unarticulated) biases, then it should already be clear that, as a practical approach to texts, Deep Locational Criticism is the preferred method for the purpose of the thesis.³¹

³¹ An interesting comparison and theoretical debate could also be drawn even from the names of these two criticisms, *Geocriticism* emphasizing 'the earth' and *Deep Locational Criticism* 'the depth of a location'. Although fascinating, comparative analysis between similar, contrasting or competing criticisms is not in the scope of this thesis.

A set of working principles defines Deep Locational Criticism and next, the four most important ones for this study are summarized. The first one is moving inside and outside texts; unlike in traditional literary analysis, stepping outside the text is encouraged.³² This, however, does not mean that the spatial arrangements found within texts are somehow less important, as they are vital in guiding the research from the beginning. The method then allows, and in many cases requires, the researcher to visit the location under scrutiny and while there, acquire empirical evidence that improves the interpretation of the literary text. Secondly, the approach embraces Heideggerian understanding of place and realizes existence as “founded in interactive and interdependent relations” between a human being and its environment, thus subscribing to the idea that “To be . . . is to be *somewhere*” (18, emphasis added).³³ Because people unavoidably have particular, unique and individual place experiences, instead of undermining or ignoring them in research that connects a literary text to a location, their usefulness should be recognized. In Deep Locational Criticism ‘place’ includes the imagined and the experienced, and the term *location* is also preferred for its “broad understanding of place, or of space as constructed and experienced, so as to avoid confusion with the definition of place in which it is intrinsically connected to belonging, tradition and deep engagement with one special somewhere” (27).³⁴ Thirdly, the approach benefits from the notions of scale, limits and technologies and, hence “operates by zooming in and out in the manner of a piece of online mapping software such as Google Maps or a traveller arriving somewhere and leaving: *via a scaled viewpoint*” (22, emphasis added). This goes together with what many urban theorists have argued about our

³² David Cooper writes that just like geographers draw upon archival strategies typical to textual scholars, “literary critics might display a willingness to step outside the library in an attempt to understand the material contexts for a loco-specific poem, novel or play” (135). Deep Locational Criticism strongly encourages this.

³³ For an extensive discussion on “the problem of place” and the influence of the philosophers Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and Jeff Malpas (1958–) on Deep Locational Criticism, see Finch pp. 11–21; on the debate on “place versus space,” see pp. 8–10. For place theory and literary perspectives on place, see Eric Prieto’s article “Phenomenology, Place, and The Spatial Turn.”

³⁴ For a discussion on “the case for location,” see Finch pp. 27–31; and A– Z Glossary of Terms p. 205.

experience in and of the city: trying to capture the city in its totality is futile, for the city reveals its form to its inhabitants and visitors only in fragments, as Harris argued earlier. Fourthly, a ground-level topographic view defines Deep Locational Criticism, and its objective is a “dissecting survey” rather than a synoptic view. Thus, the primary principles of the method are:

an oscillation between the narrative insides and the located outsides of literary texts, a focus on interdependence and interactivity, the attempt to establish a poetics of scale, and an approach to literary and non-literary places that is topographic or local rather than synoptic, symbolic, or top-down. (39–40)

Finch also writes that the method “involves a heuristic assertion of locatedness over a text’s other qualities – a place-first approach – and an effort to open up binary oppositions into triads and other structures” (40). As a result, the approach is based on a triad of methodologies, and the crucial elements to pay attention to when practicing Deep Location Criticism are: (1) the spatial arrangements found within texts, (2) the text’s reference to the outside world, and (3) a situated researcher’s personal experiences of place (32). These are the principles and methodologies that I have followed when researching the Toronto found in Michael Redhill’s *Consolation*.

Next I will offer an overview, a brief report of the application of Deep Locational Criticism in the thesis at hand. What follows is my interpretation of how the method can be used in studying a city novel, and I am bound to use the first singular “I” in the following paragraphs, since the objective is to explain what I – in the role of a student and deep locational critic – have done in order to acquire and understand the research material. Perhaps the reader already noted that I have titled this subchapter as “Dating the Past: Deep Locational Criticism,” wishing to draw attention to the *activity* itself. While to archaeologists “dating the past” quite literally means organizing archaeological evidence based on its age, to literary scholars “dating the past” quite metaphorically sounds like trying to get to know it. My half-serious point here aims to prove that scholars interpret the things they read, hear, see and experience differently depending on their

background and perspective. Thus, coming from a certain place inside and outside the academia (or in Heideggerian terms “being somewhere”) has a significant effect on our understanding of phenomena whose research is not tied to a single discipline. The city, as mentioned earlier, is one of them, and place experiences, by default, are unique and individual.

My research on *Consolation* started by close-reading the novel. With a pen in hand I started to highlight parts of the text that I considered relevant for its study (at this point my intention was to take note of interesting and unclear ideas that surfaced in the narrative). I wrote in the novel’s margins questions that arose during the reading process. Next to a line discussing ‘forensic geology’ I wrote: “Is this different from archaeology?”, next to a passage in which John Lewis recounts his childhood: “Why does no one seem to have a good time in Toronto?”, and next to a scene that discusses halted construction: “What’s a transfer order?”, to name but a few. Similarly, incomplete remarks and statements written in the margins include: “Note arrival in Toronto harbour here, scents and sounds at street level”; “Word of mouth vs. word of letters”; “Futuristic!”; “This is a Canadian joke”; “Pictures will tell they were there once”; “Panorama”; “Different sorts of digging”; “Ennis’s deformed body (cf. David’s)”; “Like modern day Google Maps”; “The city changing people’s identities”; “Survival”; “Descending into another Toronto in his dreams”; and “Letters conceal time, are stagnant, slow” to illustrate bits of the documented thought-process and free association that was evoked while reading the book.

I was also actively mapping the novel in my head. Naming numerous existing streets in Toronto, the text makes it relatively easy to *see* the city it depicts.³⁵ Opening with a scene at the lakeshore at the Hanlan’s Point ferry dock, moving then to a hotel room overlooking a downtown construction site, mentioning historical events set on 225 Richmond Street, 121 Spadina, and the

³⁵ The details of this mapping vary between readers and depend on what they already know of the city, whether they have been to the city and whether they even pay attention to the map that the narrative charts (it is possible to read novels and ignore the streets and areas that the text mentions). Indeed, Eric Bulson writes that novelistic spaces “take shape gradually and their mimetic intensity is determined, in large part, by each reader’s sociocultural register, literary background, and direct or indirect familiarity with the various geographic and cartographic representations of places” (108). Bulson also argues that “getting lost” is an alternative reading strategy and experience.

southeast corner of York and King Streets, the novel – already in the first chapter – “mobilizes” the reader as much as its characters. The map in *Consolation*, naturally, expands and becomes more detailed as the story unfolds. I also took note of the numerous place names, topographic and cartographic elements that the novel mentions, highlighting them in the text while trying to imagine what they might have looked like in the 1850s and in the 1990s: the lake, Brown’s Wharf, Harbour Light Hotel, the Old Post Office, Rossin House, Jewell & Clow’s, the American hotel at the bottom of Young Street, the site of the burial (great unkempt field at Younge and Bloor), Riverdale, 5th floor of the Toronto’s central reference library, a car wash near King Street and Parliament. All of these spots (and more), the spatial arrangements found within the text, were locations that I was asked to imagine in the city that the novel laid out before me.

Further, by now the text’s reference to the outside world was clear: the Toronto portrayed in *Consolation* bore an uncanny resemblance to the Toronto in the physical world. After deciding to study the concept of urban archaeology in the novel, I set out to read as much as I could about the city and its archaeological past. Books about Toronto’s urban development and the city’s literary history were not difficult to find; John Sewell’s *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning*, Eric Arthur’s *Toronto: No Mean City*, Jane Jacobs’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Richard Harris’s *Unplanned Suburbs*, Margaret Atwood’s *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, Amy Harris’s *Imagining Toronto*, and Nick Mount’s *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York* were books I took home and studied. The more non-fiction I read next to Redhill’s fiction, the more I seemed to understand the ‘story’ of the city. I also studied textbooks on history and urban archaeology: John Tosh’s *The Pursuit of History*, Kevin Greene’s *Archaeology: An Introduction*, Michel Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and articles published in *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail* were among texts that helped me make sense of the city’s relationship with its past and present.

Finally, I made arrangements to visit Toronto.³⁶ Having visited the city a decade earlier (in my youth and early adulthood), I was able to plan the research trip with knowledge on how to get around in the area and who to ask for further information. Next, I contacted academic and city institutions that provided access to the places and documents that the novel discusses, explored the virtual map of the city online, bought notebooks, secured a camera for the trip, and made arrangements for my stay of 10 days. A few months later, on an April afternoon, I arrived in Toronto. With a note book in hand and a camera hanging over my neck, I set to explore the city. Putting all my senses to work I aimed to get *a sense* of the physical place. The city had changed enormously since my last visit, and stepping out of the train at Union Station I found myself lost before having even emerged “from the subterranean shadow into the illuminated grid of the city’s streets,” to borrow Harris’s words. This was because the Toronto train station, whose history goes back to the year 1858, was undergoing major construction and expansion. Indeed, my research trip on urban archaeology and the city novel began by arriving in the middle of a construction site. Rather than being frustrated, however, I kept in mind Eric Bulson’s ideas and considered getting lost in the work site an experience, a strategy and a success in its own terms.

As days went on, I started to feel familiar with the three-dimensional city grid. I wrote down my impressions, inspected old buildings, photographed locations, walked around and looked around, explored the map and its referents, realized distances between neighbourhoods, and observed archaeological sites. Institutions that I visited include: The University of Toronto and its Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library (120 St. George St), Toronto Public Library (100 Queen St W), The Toronto City Hall (Nathan Phillips Square), The City of Toronto Archives (255 Spadina Ave) and St. Lawrence Market Gallery (95 Front St E). Discussing the history and characteristics of the city with specialists in archiving, literature, visual arts, information services and education, I was able to broaden my knowledge on what has changed in Toronto over time:

³⁶ Between Toronto and the Northern European city in which I lived was 6,500 kilometers and the Atlantic Ocean.

what the city has altered, rebuilt and lost (not unlike the fictional characters in Redhill's novel). In the many discussions with professionals, I learned that: the interest in Toronto and its past is on the rise and Toronto is rediscovering its history,³⁷ the importance of archaeological assessment and excavation for the city is starting to be recognized in education and arts,³⁸ and that teaching and reading city literature is a valuable means through which to make sense of the urban environment in Toronto.³⁹ I also visited and photographed two archaeological/construction sites. The first one of these is the site of "Building 2" at St. Lawrence Market (estimated to be finished in 2020) of which the City writes on its website (under 'Archaeology'):

The North St. Lawrence Market is about to undergo a major rebuild. As part of that process, *the citizens of Toronto will have a rare opportunity to look into the City's past as the building site undergoes a major archaeological dig.* The exhibit will use archaeological finds from the site along with historical maps, art works, photographs, and artifacts to tell the story of North America's longest-running continually operating food market, established 1803. (emphasis added)

At the time of my visit the dig was still open and the view from the second floor window at the St. Lawrence Market Gallery toward the site was impressive. The public exhibition of the items found had, however, finished just weeks earlier and changed to "Settling in Toronto: The Quest for Freedom, Opportunity and Identity" which I explored after getting a lesson on the city's history (with an enthusiastic class of middle schoolers). The second site I visited is the 'Courthouse site dig' near Dundas St. W and University Ave (no construction end date given)

³⁷ At the City Archives – which displays the earliest known photographic views of Toronto at its entrance – I met and discussed Redhill's novel with an Educator who, by request, teaches the book to the public. During our discussion she said that "the archives is busier than it's ever been" and that "there is a new kind of neighbourhood pride in the city." (Interview with Jessica Ehrenworth, 27 Apr. 2017.)

³⁸ The Gallery Clerk at St. Lawrence Market Gallery – a visual arts gallery which gives lessons on the city's history to school classes and others interested – discussed with me some on-going and finished archaeological sites in the city, and said that "the times have changed since that novel," referring to the hopelessness that the novel mediates when it comes to preserving old buildings and sites in the city. (Interview with Jacquie Gardner, 26 Apr. 2017.)

³⁹ I sat down for a discussion with Karina Vernon – University of Toronto professor whose research project "Urban Memory: History, Amnesia and Writing in the Canadian City" explores urban 'renewal' and the effects of gentrification on collective memory in Canada – and she expressed that classes on regional and urban Canadian fiction are popular among students at the University of Toronto. (Interview with Karina Vernon, 27 Apr. 2017.)

where the New Toronto Courthouse is being built. The site is located right downtown, in the middle of busy streets, shops, skyscrapers and restaurants, and not far from Nathan Phillips Square and The City Hall which houses the site's archaeological finds to which the public has free access. Megan Dolski, interviewing one of the archaeologists working at the dig, writes of the excavation's significance to the city:

A joint statement issued by the city and Infrastructure Ontario – who are collaborating on the rotating exhibits – said the downtown archaeological dig gives an “unprecedented level of insight” into Toronto's past, because of the massive quantity and quality of what was found there. “This is like the archaeological signature of everyday folk, which is quite rare in archaeology across North America, but is *extremely rare in archaeology both in the city of Toronto and in Ontario*,” said Holly Martelle, principal archaeologist at Timmins Martelle Heritage Consultants, who worked on the dig. The area was once a largely immigrant neighbourhood that was once called “the Ward” or St. John's Ward. The exhibit “tells the story both of ordinary lives in the Ward as well as reflecting on the black experience in Toronto going back to the 1850s and later,” said Wayne Reeves, chief curator of City of Toronto Museums. (*The Star*, 25 Feb. 2017)

Indeed, these two sites represent rare cases of urban planning in Toronto that put place first and focus on archaeological heritage conservation along with unearthing people's history. Both sites, with photographic evidence, are further elaborated on in the analysis part of this thesis.

During my research trip I took around 350 photographs, filled two notebooks, read numerous tourist brochures and magazines, scribbled on three identical street maps of Toronto tracking my paths around the city's neighbourhoods, and had fascinating conversations with locals who were willing to share their stories and experiences of the city. After returning from the trip, I organized my research material (textual and visual) based on time, date, location and topic. But as mentioned earlier, research is always about making choices, and going through this ‘other material’ I have had to make choices on what to include in the analysis and what to leave out. As a result, selective glimpses and fragments of the trip is what the reader will find in the chapters that analyze the novel and its imaginative place.

2.4 Imagining and Experiencing Toronto

Much has already been said about the notions of imagination and experience in the thesis. Hence, this section is kept short and it builds on what has previously been argued about imagination and reality, urban archaeology's use of imagination, imaginative place, reading as an experience, and experiencing the past as well as the city. In the following pages the focus is on how Toronto, as a distinct location, has been presented in contemporary texts of fiction and non-fiction.

A picture of a shiny TTC streetcar in Canadian colours of red and white with the majestic CN-tower looming in the background on Queen Street West is the cover image through which the *Official Toronto Visitor Guide* introduces the city to its reader.⁴⁰ The Guide reads: "Toronto is a sophisticated, cosmopolitan city with fun and enlightening things happening around every corner," continuing that "You'll find ethnic enclaves with the delicious food and fascinating culture that goes with them, and uniquely Canadian experiences too" (1). Tourist brochures – like other materials produced to promote a city – showcase exciting experiences, and are known for emphasizing the "best" the place has to offer, highlighting its amazing qualities. Making no exception, the Guide, together with the city's tourism page online, contributes to imagining Toronto in superlative terms.⁴¹ Noteworthy in the quote above is its description of the city in personified adjectives and the contrast that it creates between experiences gained from ethnic enclaves and experiences that are "uniquely Canadian".

Further, printed on the cover of *Consolation* (in the Little, Brown and Company edition) the reader finds a similar visualization: in an antiques framed picture of the city, its most popular shorthand rises towards the sky in the background, while at the front cars speed on the Gardiner

⁴⁰ *The Official Toronto Visitor Guide 2016*, distributed by the Toronto Tourist Information Centre.

⁴¹ The city's introductory text (under 'Tourism') teems with superlatives: "Welcoming over 40 million visitors annually, Toronto is *the leading* tourism destination in Canada. This bold, dynamic city offers *superb* attractions, music and events backed by *the best* convention and sports facilities in Canada" (emphases added).

Expressway leading to the metropolis. Both of these cover images communicate that Toronto is a busy and prominent city constantly on the move, attracting people from near and far. The difference between the contents of these two publications is, of course, that the Guide – even if it employs mostly superlatives – is expected to portray the city in realistic terms, whereas the novel’s use of its cover image is understood as a stepping stone to the fictional story it is about to narrate. However, displaying an actual photograph of Toronto on the cover of the novel connects the material city to the imagined and, as is the case with *Consolation*, blurs the lines between the concrete and the abstract worlds, which comes to define the novel from cover to cover.

Toronto is often referred to as ‘the immigrant city’ due to having a long history of attracting workers from around the world and presenting itself as a safe haven. Batia Boe Stolar, who has written about the image of the immigrant city, notes that “[l]iterary representations of the city, like historical photographs, tend by their very nature to capture an aspect of the city and freeze it in a particular moment in time,” and that literature “mythologizes the city it represents” (122). Stolar stresses that cities go through constant change and, drawing on Edward Soja’s *Postmetropolis*, she argues that “the postmetropolitan city is defined by its heterogeneity” (ibid.). As a result, a recurring image of Toronto, both in fiction and in non-fiction, is that it is not just a multicultural city, but the mosaic of all mosaics. Of this Amy Harris writes:

Among Torontonians there is a widely held but inaccurate belief that the United Nations has formally declared Toronto the most multicultural city in the world. It is a statement that is repeated in newspaper accounts, government reports, mayoral speeches and even the City’s promotional literature. (190)

Explaining where the urban legend (which is starting to lose its glory) originates from, Harris states what geographer Michael Doucet has noted: the persistence of the belief is the result of Toronto wanting to achieve “world class” standing in the eyes of other cities. Harris, on the other hand, believes that the story is more complicated and that the myth, in fact, arises from internal

forces, arguing that “Toronto is a city in search of its own creation myth” (191). In a sense, then, the fictional story conjured up in Redhill’s novel fulfills this need by offering its own, partly mythologized version of how the modern city came into being and how it has changed over time.

Another image of Toronto is that the city is not particularly interesting to artists or visitors and that the “good stuff” resides somewhere else, like in New York City, Chicago, or Montreal. This (usually) friendly city rivalry is visible in Toronto literature which, as critics have recently argued, has witnessed decades of scholarly neglect, resulting in the city suffering from a kind of cultural amnesia. Of this Harris writes: “Perhaps so little attention has been paid to Toronto literature because of a curious belief that it does not actually exist” (15). Harris, whose 2010 book was the first comprehensive study written on the city’s literary stance, is right in that beliefs dominate how the general public perceives Toronto, and that literature is a useful way to explore these assumptions.⁴² As a cure for the amnesia, Harris suggests that “[w]e might begin by acknowledging that the truest representations of Toronto are found not in official plans, tourism campaigns or corporate bids for ‘world class’ status but rather in the unflinching commitment of writers to imagining Toronto as it is and might become” (31). As a literature student, it is very tempting to agree with this wholly, but the stumbling block in the argument is that it elevates literature to the highest throne from where the “truest images” are projected. Also, plans, campaigns and brochures – despite their commercial value – are *written by people*, usually locals, who engage in and are part of the imagining process, never outside it.

I would then argue that rather than concern ourselves with trying to answer which representations of Toronto are the truest, most believable or closest to ‘reality’ (as this results in a paradox), we should acknowledge that in the city there exists a multitude of texts, images and

⁴² William Leon Smith has since argued that “Canadian literary criticism has often operated under the assumption that Toronto is largely to be addressed as the symbolic power centre,” (5) and that “literary criticism engaged in approaching the subjective geographies of feminism, multiculturalism and postcolonialism has underpinned most approaches to literary depictions of Toronto . . . each approach is however based on a notion of marginalization or otherness which sets up a powerful myth of an otherwise underexamined central Toronto” (Smith, “You Might” 9).

media that depict it for a multitude of purposes. Television programs, films, newspaper articles, games, interactive platforms, as well as music, theatre, dance and visual arts are other, highly beneficial and important cultural phenomena through which to study how Toronto is imagined. Hence, it is only due to the nature and scope of the thesis that literary representations are focused on, and the reader should keep in mind that this does not mean that the images found in literature are more enlightened than representations in any other media produced in the city.

Indeed, more to the point is Harris's argument – towards the end of her book – that the city's inhabitants are part of the image it reflects and the narrative it tells: "We need to pay attention to the city's stories because we, too, are part of the narrative. We engage actively in imagining Toronto *whenever we move through its streets and experience* how boring, bigoted, violent, ugly, peaceful, powerful, glittering and beautiful it is" (299, emphasis added). In addition to reading and writing, then, moving and feeling in Toronto are important means through which to experience the city. Similarly to what Redhill says about wishing to walk around in more than one time period and *feeling* like he is part of a chain of events in Toronto, Elayne Tobin – a literary critic writing about the material architecture of a particular block on West 10th Street in New York City – states that "[t]he past artistic life of this single block colors its whole identity for me as a reader and thinker, as a walker and resident" (273).⁴³ It is interesting here that Tobin discusses the block's 'identity' and its history in connection to her feelings and experiences about the place as a *walker* and *resident*. Tobin, however, argues that little of the block's literary history is capable of being experienced due to the lack of physical markers and lost struggles between private property and the public good: "this is history only told in books and blogs, not a history fully experienced in the flâneur-like stroll through the streets of the Village" (276). The same

⁴³ In her article "On This Spot: Materialism, Memory, and the Politics of Absence in Greenwich Village," Tobin elaborates on the history of "one of the most significant artistic and literary blocks in the United States," and criticizes "the lack of physical markers pointing to this bohemian past, a past which should necessarily be a part of our present" (273). The block Tobin discusses is on West 10th Street, between the 5th and 6th Avenue.

goes for significant literary areas in Toronto. When asked about memorialization and the idea of putting up plaques that tell of a block's (literary) history, Redhill says: "I like that . . . it's important for people who live in a place to know that it not only existed before they got there as a physical place with empirical data attached to it but that it lives in the imaginations of the people who lived there or live there." At the end of his answer Redhill adds: "Let people see the city as it has been imagined by their artists and their historians" (232). Consequently, for many critics and writers 'imagining and experiencing' the city are so intertwined that thinking of them as different sides of the same coin is more than justified: heads representing the stories told of the city, tails the experiences gained in the city.

Finally, in the foreword to Eric Arthur's *Toronto: No Mean City* (1964), which uncovers the architectural history of the early city (from 1790s to 1890s), W.L. Gordon writes that in researching Toronto's material past Arthur has given insight into the characters inhabiting the city, and notes that Torontonians "have been noted for their drive, energy, and ambition, for a materialistic urge to get ahead. In the process [of building the city] they found some time to create some things that were handsome, even beautiful" (ix). Gordon's reserved compliment of Toronto being handsome, even beautiful, reflects the (old) belief that the city is ugly, making the statement sound comical some fifty years after it was written. It is also worthy of noting that already the title of Arthur's book aims to deconstruct the persistent urban legend that Toronto is a *mean* city. Indeed, fifty years in any city's urban history is a relatively long time, a hundred and fifty so long that many would argue it has become a different city altogether. Thus, rather than clinging to uncritical myths, misbeliefs or outdated imagery, we ought to study Toronto by trying to understand its urban history. Reading the city's literature and dating the city's past is one way of doing this: only when we know where Toronto has been can we start making sophisticated guesses at – not where it might be heading but – what the city means for the *characters* inhabiting it, in the most literal and literary sense of the word.

There was . . . a science to determining how time passes.
Human beings interrupt the natural cycles of growth and decay with
their communities and their structures, but they don't stop those cycles.
Rather, the processes continue, like river water flowing around a stone.
Except the river water is made of cities and buildings, and the stone is
pushed underground and lost forever. Unless.

(*Consolation* 12)

3 City Relationships

The city is made up of networks, connections and relationships visible to anyone who chooses to see them. Whether fictional or real, natural or man-made, these networks steer the actions of the people living in the city, and have an effect on how the city is constructed, presented and thought about. In this chapter some of the key city relationships found in *Consolation* are analyzed, the thoughts and actions of the main characters discussed, and urban archaeology portrayed not only as a useful way to talk about history, but also as an act of resistance, and as the material and conceptual foundation which the novel's stories build upon.

Studying the representation of space and place in literary texts calls for a materialist and historicist emphasis, and our understanding of a novel can greatly depend on our conception of the spatial arrangements found within the text. *Consolation*, above all, is a novel about Toronto and Torontonians, about the city and the citizens inhabiting it. As argued in the theory section, *Consolation* is a rather typical city novel and a distinctively Canadian novel, dealing with issues related to national identity, city origins, local politics, history, and cultural and social memory. Thematizing a number of topics under debate in urban studies today, the novel writes back against top-down planning, confronts and questions many of the decisions made by the City, and gives voice both to *locals* and the *locale*. The narrative can be understood as a synoptic novel in which urban archaeology is the city's main enigmatic aspect that stands for manifestation of life energies, causing some of the characters to glorify and some to abhor it. Essential for the novel's storyworld are also the many distances found in it: referential, spatial and temporal distances are

evoked throughout the narrative, giving insight not only into the fictionalized locations and the drastically transformed cityscape but also to the morale of the novel's main characters.

The first subchapter of this section focuses on David Hollis's relentless fascination to uncover the city's past through history and archaeology, while battling with a severe physical illness (Lou Gehrig's) that paralyzes his body, revealing thus the limits that the ground and the body pose to him. The second subchapter elaborates on Marianne Hollis's obsession with the modern construction site and looks into the complicated relationship between archaeology, the city and the individual. The third and final subchapter studies the buried city under the modern one and explores Jem Hallam's struggles to survive in the young city of Toronto. In addition to textual examples, this analysis section benefits from photographs taken in Toronto (all photos are mine). Thus, in the following pages the reader will find images that complement the textual analysis in places where their use is relevant. As literary critic Hana Wirth-Nesher writes: "The metropolis is rendered legible . . . by multiple acts of the imagination; it is constantly invented and reinvented" (9). What follows, then, is a representation of the city and the novel's locale as it is fictionalized, imagined and experienced by its author and its reader.

3.1 The Ground and the Body as the Limit

David Hollis, a local historian, urban archaeologist and forensic geologist, has been studying Toronto half of his life and all of his career. Teaching "Introduction to Landforms" at the University of Toronto as a young man in 1964 he meets Marianne, whom he marries and has two daughters with. Of the family's subsequent life in the suburbs the reader learns only a little, for the emphasis is mostly on David's later career and work: attempting to recreate the past by digging up any objects and documents that help him form a clearer picture of how the city began and manifested itself a century and a half earlier. David is particularly interested in establishing a

connection between the past generations and the people of the present, which shows in how he thinks about his work, archaeology as a science and geology's meaning to his students whom he takes out to local fields in order to form this connection:

Abandoned cemeteries presented fascinating opportunities for in situ casework: he'd ask them [his students] to determine the year of the last burial by comparing different stages of gravestone erosion and making calculations . . . Standing there, among the living, he felt the beautiful and numinous relationship of his young students to the community of these dead, whose last official moment they'd teased out of the silent witnesses to their lives. The forest that those people had built their houses and coffins out of now gave testament by counting out the hours and years *since*. (*Cons.* 12, italics original)

The historical continuum and the unseen relationship between the living and the dead intrigues David and, as the novel unfolds, it becomes evident that because of his work – having learnt and internalized much of the city's past – he is able to walk around in more than just one time period, and see time not as a linear but vertical phenomenon, best discoverable in the subterranean layers of the city. As his wife puts it: “the thought that *another time was under the one we live in* was moving to him. Because it's a kind of company for us, all of us marooned here in the present” (323, emphasis added). Aiming to get to this ‘another time’, travelling downward to get to the city within city, David studies the layers of the earth and carefully investigates both the material evidence he discovers underground as well as the textual evidence that supports his finds. In much more metaphorical terms, one might say that he listens to the ground and lets the dead things talk. In this ambitious pursuit and while executing his grandiose plan on revealing the next major discovery for the city, however, David faces insurmountable obstacles – one of them an unstoppable physical illness – that gain meaning especially after his death.

While still alive, the early phases of the city (the 1830s and after) are of special interest to David. He is, nevertheless, both frustrated and bothered by the fact that although there are documents and evidence that can be analyzed in order to form a picture of the past, the process is

in large part guessing and making assumptions of “varying probability, never certainty,” as Greene suggested previously of the nature of archaeological interpretation. In many parts of the monograph he has recently published, David pays respect to past generations, emphasizing that “Men and women who were not our fathers and mothers brought us into this world. They made this city before us” (26). He then goes on to present specific evidence he has discovered in the city (photographs, locations, drawings) and, in his study, presents the past as an uninterrupted current of events that began in history and flows through the present. Yet as mentioned, uncertainty, and the ambiguity that inevitably revolves around interpreting the evidence, makes David restless and he realizes that the further back he tries to go in history, the thinner his proofs get, making some of his interpretations nearly arbitrary. Thus, in the monograph he writes:

We are only faintly aware of the city they [the men and women who built it] lived in – it is just an intuition, a movement in the corner of the eye. Of that city which must have stunk of horses and offal and pine oils and roasted fowl, of that air that rang with the cries of newsboys and the sounds of boots on hollow walkways and hooves on stone. But a hint of it is all we have. (27)

Although the quote above is metaphorical and somewhat nostalgic in its description of the early city, the idea of an absence and lack of the original city is easy to connect to the actual “methodical obliteration of entire eras of Toronto’s civic history,” that Harris has argued makes it difficult for many to see the historicity of Toronto both in “real” life and in the fiction produced of the city. What is interesting here is that when David writes about Toronto in the 1850s, he refers not only to how it looked like (its visual qualities) but also to what the city *smelled* and *sounded* like. Indeed, describing the city through activating the character’s (and symbolically also the reader’s) many senses, or highlighting the city’s polysensory properties, is characteristic for city novels and it occurs repeatedly in *Consolation*, especially in the discussions between David and his son-in-law, John Lewis, with whom David becomes close after being diagnosed with Lou

Gehrig's disease. Somewhat emblematic, and rather grim, is that the disease paralyzing David's body and numbing his senses, along with his approaching death, is what helps to create a reciprocal relationship between the two. Teaching his son-in-law (and again, symbolically also the reader) the history of the city, passing on to John all the knowledge David has acquired during his life, becomes a common pastime for them and their friendship much resembles the relationship David has with his students.

In the passage where the two men have been driving, then stopped at "the tail end of a forgotten street" (106), and climbed up a hill overlooking the city, "a desolate place with the sound of cars sweeping by in both directions" (107), they share a drink and begin to talk about what life might have been like in the nineteenth century. While on top of the hill, David points out landmarks, among them an old burial ground: "That was the edge of town for sixty years – the necropolis is right behind those trees" (107), and later, sitting down on a strip of grass, expresses his frustration about the City favouring war history over people's history:

[David to John] 'What do you imagine *the average person* thought about? Back then?' 'Probably what we think about now,' said John. 'Food. Work. Sex.' David considered that for a moment, shaking his head a little, although John thought it might have been a tremor. 'Maybe it's a mistake to think they were like us. We have no idea, really. What they were like when they were alone, how their shoes *felt* on their feet. How food *tasted* to them. *No one cares about this*. They want a list of wars and casualties, big numbers, historical roll call.' (108, emphases added)

Here two more senses are evoked, touch and taste, completing thus the palette of the five senses that people are capable of experiencing the city with. Much like what Gelfant said about the city presenting its impacts as a place upon the modern sensibility, the characters in *Consolation*, in the present as well as in the past, are depicted as *average* men and women who live, work and love in the city that either hinders or furthers their personal goals. What is also noteworthy in the quoted passage is that David's wish, his desire to know what people were like back then, is partly

a paradox, since it is nearly impossible to know how their shoes *felt* on their feet, or how food *tasted* to them – unless somebody wrote about it, unless there is proof. It is possible, however, that the City brings forward these stories, embraces people’s history and teaches it in schools, not instead of ‘official’ history (from the top-down), but alongside it. Only in this way, David thinks, can the present and the future generations gain an understanding of where they exist in the timeline, respect the legacy of the original city and, most importantly, see the complex social, commercial, ecological and cultural relationships that prevail in the metropolis.

Further, of David’s professional merits it is mentioned that “He’d also written a textbook on forensic geology and topography that was the standard in many American schools (and as a result was coming into use in Canada)” (13). The side note in brackets can be read as a joke about the relationship between Canada and the US, or the underdog attitude of Canada when contrasted with its Southern neighbour, since David is a Canadian author but Canadian schools have only started using his textbook after its success has been proved in the States, after the US has ‘accepted’ it. Similarly to what Redhill argued about the city not knowing “what’s worth celebrating until somebody from another culture says hey that’s good, and now you can pay attention to it,” the novel pokes fun at Canada as a country, but especially at Toronto for not knowing what to do with its archaeological heritage: “You find a three-week-old potato chip in Montreal, they raise a velvet rope around it and have a minute of silence. But here, no” (205). What is reasonable to keep in mind, however, is that the “present” year in the novel is 1997, denoting a time when Archaeological Master Plans were not even on the preparation stage, existing legislation was improperly employed, and economic growth and benefit – on many levels of city government – were seen as total opposites to ecological growth and benefit.

In addition to advocating for people’s history and alluding to the friendly rivalry that existed between fast-growing North American cities in the 1850s (Montreal, Buffalo and Albany are mentioned), the novel thematizes urban planning, which is depicted as something that the city

officials do behind closed doors and have no real knowledge of or interest in. The harsh priorities of top authorities, when it comes to new development, old buildings and respecting the ground on which the city is being built, are revealed in passages that suggest conflict and quarreling:

They'd started gutting the old post office in June but had spent the rest of the summer *wrangling* with the municipal government, *fighting* with the National Hockey League, the National Basketball Association, the neighborhood associations, the seeming swarms of local citizens' groups and area historians, all of whom wanted their say, and who were finally dispatched with reassurances that the local ecology (crushed Tetra Paks, rotting blankets and parkas, pigeons) would be respected and any finds of interest turned over to the correct authorities. If she [Marianne] had learned anything from her husband's life work, however, it was *not to trust the promises of developers*. That bed of dirt was nothing more than landfill honeycombed with a century's debris, but it had been of great interest to David Hollis. (11, emphases added)

It is worthy of nothing that the land on which the sports arena (Union Arena) is being built has become so politicized, the interests of the various groups and associations so impossible to fulfill, that – as Marianne predicts and the reader later learns – before even getting to the building phase, the City has already given up on trying to do things the correct way; when parts of an old boat are found at the site, the officials lie and use persuading tactics on anyone wishing to learn more about the discovery. Thus, the relationship between the City and the construction companies is so tight that the developers' interests categorically surpass the interests of the local citizens' groups.

To the City's displeasure, however, it appears that David's bold theory on a boat – and in it the portfolio of photographs of the early city – being buried underground proves accurate. The spot on which the foundation of the new arena is being dug is located at the *original* 1850s shoreline, which has since receded over half a kilometer (1/3 mile) due to landfilling, one of the major techniques that has allowed Toronto to grow over the past two centuries: "Landfill pushed everything forward. Buildings erupted out of it like weeds. The city, walking on water." (4). In addition to Redhill's novel, official city documents, photographs, as well as articles written about the topic, explain and show how Toronto grew from a frontier town into a metropolis with a vast

and impressive waterfront. In many of these documents, lake-filling is mentioned as one of the key factors that transformed the city and its economy:

In the 1850s, a massive campaign of lake-filling was undertaken to expand the shore land south to the Esplanade. For the next hundred years, the shore was extended farther and farther south. *The original shoreline was north of today's rail corridor, and Front Street was built along the edge of the shoreline.* The filling continued until the 1950s when the modern shoreline was achieved. (Waterfront Toronto, emphasis added)

While the technique has proved efficient for the city to acquire new land which it can build and capitalize on (as is the case also elsewhere), the procedure has been criticized for its negative impacts on the local ecology and culture, especially after building the Gardiner Expressway, a major highway cutting through the city (visible as the thinner yellow line on the map below). Highlighted in this map of the Toronto Waterfront (Fig. 1) is Front Street which once denoted the shoreline and edge of town. The landmass south to it is landfill, created within the past 170 years.

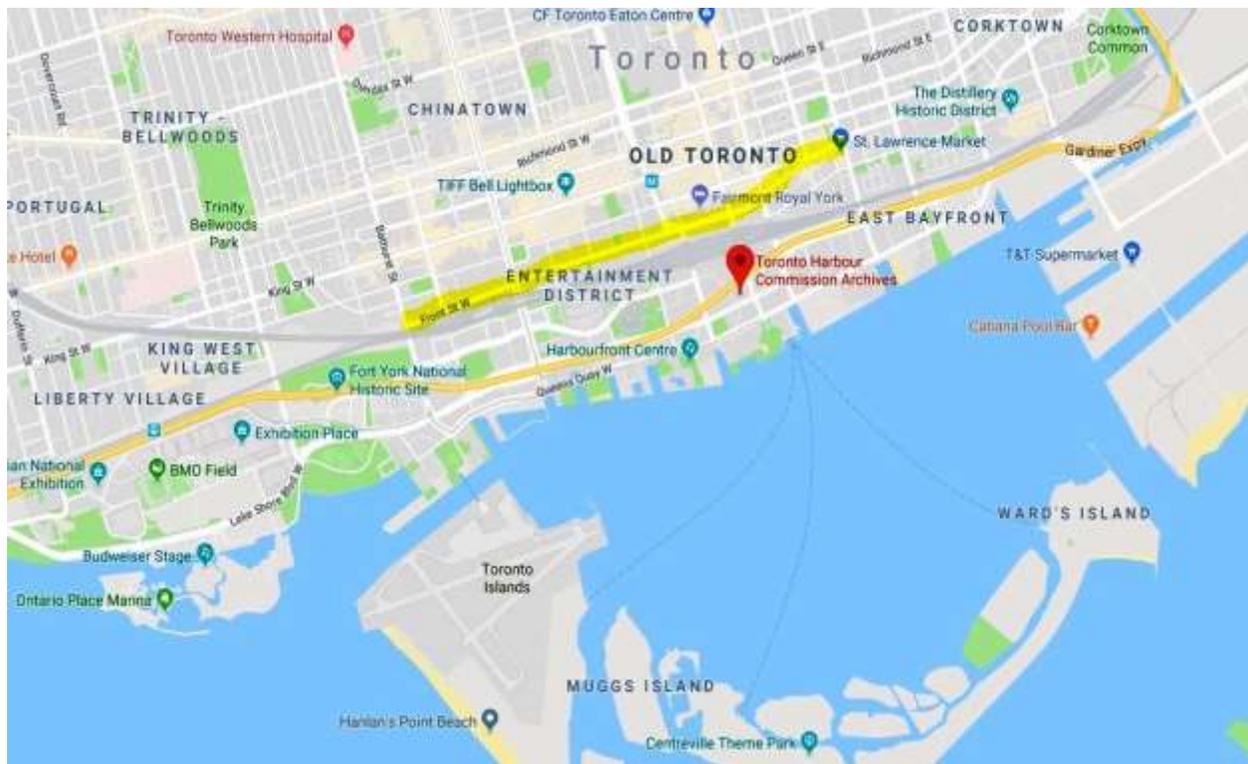


Fig. 1. The Toronto Waterfront, *Google Maps*, <https://goo.gl/maps/An73cjRnket>, 2 Feb. 2018.

What is fascinating about the history of landfilling in Toronto is that although it has been studied and written about widely in environmental and urban studies, this history is not well known among the public. Gary Miedema, the former associate director at Heritage Toronto, says: “People are shocked and amazed when they learn how far out the shoreline has been extended over the years . . . [h]owever, it’s not just tourists, it’s also Torontonians that are confused as to why Front St. is called Front St.” (Marc Ellison, *the Star*, 26 June 2013). Front Street, of course, is called that because it was one of the first original streets in the city (or town that became a city in 1834) and closest to the water when the street was first laid out in 1796. What is more, the city has a long history of archaeological evidence, mostly old wharf walls, surfacing whenever new construction is conducted near the 1850s shoreline which today is one of the most valuable locations downtown.

David Robertson, who is the primary Project Archaeologist with Archaeological Services Inc. (ASI, the city’s closest partner in archaeological matters) and who was called in to inspect a wharf wall found in the summer of 2013 at a construction site at 90 Harbour St. (directly left of the Toronto Harbour Commission Archives pinned on the map), describes wharfs as a somewhat common find in the city: “I’ve seriously lost count of how many of these we’ve uncovered . . . I’ve probably come across two to three of them a year over the last nine years.” (ibid.) Yet it is this very idea – the *potential* and assumed high likelihood of there being not only a wharf but also a boat with a valuable cargo buried in the dirt downtown – that the narrative of *Consolation* plays with. Miedema, interviewed for the same newspaper article as Robertson, sees the waterfront’s transformation from a working harbour to a tightly built area of skyscrapers and condominiums as drastic: “it does say something about the incredible ingenuity of human beings and their ability to entirely change the environment in which they live and work, for good and bad.” Rather tellingly, he adds: “the discovery of this old wharf wall is a nice reminder of the *incredible story* behind the changing shoreline of the city” (ibid., emphasis added).

Accordingly, when John and David go for another drive, this time towards the lakeshore, David recounts stories about the city's history with landfill and its changing shoreline:

Now David was telling him (again) that the land they were on had been built on garbage. All through the end of the previous century, they'd trucked soil and stone and unwanted building materials down past Front Street and dumped it into the lake, and the city had pushed forward onto it, as if it were walking onto a bridge as it was being built. (190)

Spending most of his waking time thinking about the boat and the treasure in it, David talks about it also to his wife: "The box [of photographs] isn't in the water, Marianne. The steamer was close to the shore when it went down and the city's filled that area in long since . . . It's in landfill. It's buried in the dirt somewhere close to where the old wharves were" (30). Marianne, who finds it difficult to distinguish this alleged new set of images from the already (and actually) found photographs (known in the city as the Toronto panorama of 1856), is initially not convinced of her husband's theory and, concerned about his health, starts doubting whether David is still – two years after being diagnosed with the severe disease – able to make credible scientific claims. The conversation between the two continues:

[Mar.] 'But doesn't the panorama exist, David? You've shown it to me in a book . . . ' 'For Christ's sake, Marianne! I'm not talking about the *panorama*! What I'm talking about is other pictures taken by the same man, hundreds of other pictures, all intimate pictures of Toronto – stores and houses and people and streets and signs! And if it's the same man, then the original plates for the panorama are down there as well.' His eyes were bright and glassy. 'This is the mother lode.' (31, italics original)

Calling the buried portfolio "the mother lode" says much about how David himself sees the significance of archaeology to the city but, to his disappointment, the academia or even Marianne and his two daughters are not particularly interested in this newest revelation while he is alive. In addition, at this point in the narrative David is already described as having many symptoms that make walking and eating difficult for him, and he is taking medication multiple times a day.

What is emblematic, however, is that the condition that David suffers from (a severe motor neuron disease) does not affect his ability to think but, rather, destroys his physical being.

Without reading too much symbolism into David's paralyzing condition, it is fair to say that the slow but certain deterioration of his body resembles how he sees the fate of old Toronto: its buildings having been allowed to dilapidate and be demolished, and the remnants of its streets, parks and people buried, their stories forgotten. Thus, the limits that the ground poses for David's work – the difficulties ranging from getting excavation permits to soil destroying evidence through natural decay – correspond to the physical limits that his body pose for him. David is slowly dying and his time in Toronto and on earth is running out. The approaching death and declining health devastate the archaeologist and he seems both anxious and hopeless about the destiny of his life's work. Discouraged about the academia not taking his monograph or theory seriously (he is ridiculed on campus), David abandons all hope and decides to commit suicide by throwing himself in Lake Ontario. On a ferry that takes passengers "to a buggy, unkempt part of the Toronto Islands" (3, the Islands and ferry routes are visible in Fig.1), David takes one last look at the mainland and reflects on the city's rich history that unfolds before his eyes:

He can see the whole city now, a crystalline shape glowing on the shoreline where once had been nothing but forest and swamp. After that, the fires of local tribes, the creaking forts of the French, the garrisons and dirt roads and yellow-bricked churches of the English and the Scots. It's overwhelming only if you try to take it all in at once, he thinks, if you try to see it whole. Otherwise, just a simple progression in time. Not that far away in the past at all, even – the mechanisms that make it seem to be are simple ones. Just a change in materials, a shift in fashion. (5)

Minutes later, while "the city [is] pitching up gently and subsiding . . . water moving under the boat, [and] the peaceful sound of water lapping the hull" (5), David disappears into the water.

It is this suicide scene that actually begins the novel, the many flashbacks, anecdotes and memories about David and his work surfacing through other characters and their conversations

only after his death. Intriguingly, Amy Harris, who mentions *Consolation* in her study *Imagining Toronto*, sees the historian's death by drowning as "a metaphor not only for the suffocating progress of his disease but also of the city's submersion of its own history" (62). Of the lakeshore itself, Harris writes: "in the literary imagination it is the lakeshore where the city has its most meaningful encounters with mortality," adding that the Toronto waterfront has acted as a setting for suicides as well as for criminals hoping to abandon the evidence of their crimes, while at times it has also served as a site of memorial ritual. Thus, departure defines the place in the city's literature. Below (Fig. 2) is a photograph of Toronto's contemporary shoreline, taken just past the place where ferries to Toronto Islands leave from. Lake Ontario is seen on the left with parts of the Islands in the horizon, and the Southern edge of downtown Toronto is on the right.



Fig. 2. Toronto's contemporary shoreline, Waterfront Trail, looking west, 29 Apr. 2017.

David's suicide by the waterfront thus conforms to the city's literary tradition of imagining the lakeshore as a threshold of death, and it represents the scientist's wish to depart from the world on his own terms rather than fading away or letting his diseased body decide the time of his death. It is also symbolic that in order to die, David performs the act of leaving thrice: first by journeying from their home in the suburbs to the city centre, then boarding the passenger ferry towards the Toronto Islands and finally, stepping down from the edge of the ferry into the deep blue lake. This, along with other evidence that his family discovers later, proves that his death was not accidental – that David's passing was as deliberate as the shoreline's withdrawal.

3.2 Urban Struggles: The City, the Individual, and Archaeology

Whereas David's tragic death is marked with his *departure* from the city, Marianne Hollis is introduced to the reader through the notion of *arrival*: just days after David's body is "dredged out of the lake" (13), she gathers up "her copy of his damning monograph, a maquette of the city in 1856 that one of his students had made . . . a tower of photocopied newspaper pages . . . some blankets and pillows" and calls two cabs "to bring it all downtown" (13–14). Indeed, arriving in the city centre – usually in the harbour or the train station – is a common conceptualization in city literature and denotes not only the beginning of something new in the life of the character experiencing it, but most often marks also the beginning of the narrative. This is the case also with *Consolation*; the novel includes a prologue after which the narrative proper begins, as Marianne's cab takes her to a hotel in the harbour. The arrival is traditionally described as a shock – "the shock of arrival" being a common trope in many city novels – but interestingly, Marianne's state of shock does not stem from moving from the periphery to the city centre (or from a small town to a metropolis) but from the fact that her husband is dead. As the story unfolds, it becomes evident that Marianne's pressing need to leave the house in the suburbs and

move into the downtown hotel corresponds to her wish to start the process of mourning and to distance herself from the things that surround her. Hence, rather than focusing on Marianne leaving the suburbs, the narrative makes a point of introducing her through the notion of arrival.

That said, out of all the characters in the novel, Marianne Hollis is probably the most complex and difficult to characterize because it seems that the things she does often appear irrational to the people around her. To illustrate, when the reader first encounters Marianne, she has just arrived in the Harbour Light Hotel, requested a “northwest corner room on the thirty-third floor” (13), unpacked her belongings and scattered skins of fresh clementines under the bed and along the wide window ledges in order to make the room feel (or rather, smell) like home. Bringing with her two boxes of personal items from the house she shared with David, Marianne insists on being left alone and tells the rest of her family not to contact her. Marianne’s daughter, Bridget, however, is upset with her mother and phones the hotel, calling her stunt nothing but a “spectacle” (9) and Marianne a “madwoman” (15). Needless to say, the relationship between the mother and the daughter is stormy and the communication between the two characters is minimal.

What is fascinating about Marianne’s desire to withdraw into solitude is that she decides to do it in a place that is literally and metaphorically *in between* a multitude of things. Located between the lake and the downtown skyscrapers, the tall and sturdy hotel (built on landfill) stands as the metaphorical barrier between water and land, and reaching towards the sky, the panoramic room on the thirty-third floor gives out the impression of Marianne being somewhere in between the ground and the sky – her physical location thus emphasizing the detachment she feels on the inside. According to a theorization by Michel Foucault (“Of Other Spaces”), the hotel room, as a constructed and cultural space, can be understood as a counter-site, as a kind of heterotopia, “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (25). Thus, the room 3347 in which Marianne resides is perhaps best understood as a heterotopia of crisis (owing to its occupant’s emotional state) and interpreted as an exclusive,

liminal space that is simultaneously individual and generic, both private and public, and at the same time cozy and clinical. Above all, as a site of protection – capable of being locked and unlocked – the hotel room acts as a safe space and represents the freedom of being undisturbed.

Of the room and the woman occupying it, the novel states: “in this space that was, temporarily, hers alone . . . there was nothing but Marianne, Marianne detached from the grid of her life and her mind pointing down into the dirt like the head of a shovel.” (114). The metaphor of Marianne’s *mind* pointing down into the dirt and the simile of it being *like the head of a shovel* are descriptive of the reasons for why Marianne has booked the room in the first place. Shocked by David’s suicide, she has decided to prove – to herself, her family and the entire city – that the theory of the sunken boat and its cargo is valid, and that the archaeologist did not die in vain. Determined to do this, Marianne starts to spend her days reading about the city’s history and observing a construction site of a sports arena (visible from the window in her room), believing that the dirt being dug hides the remnants of the boat as well as the 1850s images of old Toronto:

Through the room’s north-facing window she looked at the upper halves of downtown buildings that ranged up into the center of the city . . . As she moved closer to the window, the object of her attention hove into view . . . the whole expanse of a construction site, congested with yellow machines twenty-four hours a day, and the busy bodies of men and women ranging over the acre or so of dirt, with its steel framing, PVC piping, and heavy wooden beams. But to the occupants of room 647 or 1147 or 3447 – the room directly above hers – the busy excavation was just some faint hint of the future, like all the holes in this city were that eventually generated condominiums and shopping centers and bank towers. Marianne was the only person in the hotel *for whom the pit at the foot of the hotel meant the past.* (10–11, emphasis added)

It is interesting here that although construction is generally regarded as a promise of something new and exciting – new development usually contributing towards the city’s future and a ‘better tomorrow’ – to Marianne the site signifies the past and is a promise of something old and forgotten capable of being discovered. In addition, by observing the site and directing all her energy on watching “the world below” (187), Marianne is able to occupy her mind and focus on

an object rather than on her emotions which are a mix of sorrow, anger, confusion and rage. She thus substitutes action for feeling and, gradually, starts to see not death but the construction site and the City as her main opponents against which she has to fight in order to survive in the city.

The arena that the novel describes is referred to as “an unnecessary new hockey place” to which a “boondoggle of municipal and private money had been dedicated” (11) and called “Union Arena,” making it sound like an authentic place name in the city, since Toronto’s train station, located on 65 Front Street West, is, in fact, called Union Station. However, Union Arena is nowhere to be found in the physical city of Toronto and it exists only in the novel’s storyworld, revealing thus to the reader (familiar with material Toronto’s topography) the constructedness of the narrated cityscape. This particular detail – an invented toponym – also adds to the fictitious nature of the place and is one of the many referential distances in the narrative, which, Ameel argues, characterize the city novel. Yet, with *Consolation* there is a twist to the story. Although Union Arena is a made-up name, the place much resembles Air Canada Centre (ACC) whose construction began in 1997 and which stands in the exact spot that Union Arena is said to be located at. The ACC, home of the city’s basketball, hockey and lacrosse teams, is Toronto’s most popular sporting arena and, interestingly, actually built on top and around the east and south façades of a former Postal Delivery Building (constructed in 1939–1941), giving the arena a rather unique, historical look.

Hence, “the abandoned post office” (13) that “they’d start gutting” (quoted on p. 58 of this thesis) has an actual material referent in Toronto, and the history of the Postal Delivery Building is told about in official and unofficial articles of the city, as well as documented on historic plaques on the building itself. After having served over forty years as Toronto’s main postal terminal, the art deco building was designated as “a property of architectural and historical importance” under the Ontario Heritage Act in 1990 but, due to its maintenance having been neglected for decades, it faced an uncertain future – meaning the building was to be demolished.

Joint efforts by historical associations, architectural and local historians, and the building owner (Canada Post), however, resulted in an agreement in 1996 that ensured preserving parts of the building (designed by Charles B. Dolphin) in the hands of its new owners and developers:

Under the terms of this agreement, the owners agreed to preserve the two principal building façades overlooking Bay Street and Lake Shore Boulevard, the bas-relief sculptures and other significant decorative elements. It was also agreed that a display reflecting the history of the Postal Delivery Building would be installed and would incorporate some of the building's features that could not remain in their original locations. (Plaque on display in the building's historic "hall of fame," inside the ACC)

When the Air Canada Centre was completed in 1999, two years after breaking ground on the site, it marked an end but also, at least symbolically, a new beginning in the life of the Postal Delivery Building which today, despite having suffered great losses, is seen as a historical gem in the city. Although the interior of the building was totally demolished, the two standing façades, along with beautiful bas-reliefs and detailed stonework inside and outside the building remind Torontonians and tourists alike of the tensions and struggles that the city has had with its past.

Another invented toponym is the Harbour Light Hotel which exists only in the imagined, abstract city of the novel, yet it – as well as the northwest corner room on the 33rd floor – also has its real-life counterpart: the Westin Harbour Castle, located at 1 Harbour Square, can be found in the physical city of Toronto, on the same plot of land where the Island ferries leave from, and booking the room 3347, with windows facing west (and parts the lake) and north (downtown), is possible. Thanks to a major stroke of luck and the friendliness of the hotel staff, it is, evidently, also possible for researchers of city literature to gain access to the room, explore its materiality, get a sense of the place's atmosphere and examine the views opening behind its large windows. The first photograph on the next page is a bird's-eye view from the north-facing window of the room 3347 (Fig. 3), and the photograph below it is a street-level view of the Air Canada Centre and the east façade of the Postal Delivery Building (Fig. 4), to which the novel alludes.



Fig. 3. View from the room 3347 on the 33rd floor in the Westin Harbour Castle hotel, looking north towards downtown and the Air Canada Centre, seen directly behind the Gardiner Expressway, 28 Apr. 2017.



Fig. 4. Street-level view of the ACC and the east façade of the old Postal Delivery Building on 40 Bay Street, looking south, 28 Apr. 2017.

As seen in the first photograph (Fig. 3), the south façade of the Postal Delivery Building is almost entirely blocked from view due to the Gardiner Expressway cutting past it, and twenty years after opening the ACC, half-empty parking space dominates the area in front of it. Also, Heritage Toronto and The Toronto Historical Association (THA) – the city’s heritage advocates – write in their extensive “State of Heritage Report” (2015) that in Toronto the undesired practice of façadism, “the retention of only the façades of historic buildings” continues today, adding that “As far back as 1989, the Toronto Historical Board (later Heritage Toronto) put forth a policy trying to prevent this practice, noting that a heritage building is substantially diminished when the building is not preserved in its entirety” (8). What is more, in late 2017 it was reported that the Air Canada Centre was changing its name to Scotiabank Arena, the bank having agreed to pay \$800 million for a deal extending to the year 2038. Interviewed by Chris Johnston about the agreement, Dave Hopkinson, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment’s chief commercial officer, descriptively said: “It will be a change . . . It will be a change to the landscape of Toronto.”

After a week of monitoring the construction in solitude, Marianne gets company. John Lewis, Bridget’s fiancé, knocks on the door of Marianne’s room to check up on his mother-in-law and eventually – perhaps out of pity and due to lacking a 9-to-5 job – joins her in the task of observing the “muddy excavation at the foot of Bay Street” (100). Viewing the site through binoculars, John is trying to estimate, on Marianne’s request, the depth of the excavation, but having no experience in construction sites or considering the size of a bulldozer for comparison, he is unable to judge how deep the hole on the ground is. “So you have nothing to offer me?”, Marianne says, to which John answers “I’m not good at guesstimation” (101). This sort of witty back-and-forth defines the conversations between the two characters throughout the novel, and although in many texts it is possible to read the hotel room as a “heterotopia of deviation,” (owing to the purposes and actions of its visitors), it does not turn into that in *Consolation*, for the relationship between the two remains purely platonic.

Forming a habit of visiting the hotel on a daily basis, also John develops a keen interest in the site, yet both of their reasons are highly personal. Having been raised by his aunt and uncle in Toronto but having no close family in the city, John thinks that by keeping Marianne company and by trying to fix the relationship between his fiancée and future mother-in-law will console the family he is soon to become a member of (John and Bridget are to be married in the near future). In the privacy of the hotel room John and Marianne are confronted by the depth of personal memories – which belong to the many ‘temporal distances’ that the novel evokes – and the two contemplate some of the most essential questions of life in the hopes of discovering something new about themselves. Thus, their innate *desire of finding something* is concretized in their eagerness of monitoring the site, and the repetitive act of *digging through layers* defines not only the construction workers – “They dig. Dig, dig, dig. Busy as beavers (111), Marianne says – but symbolically also the characters observing the site. Entertaining a multitude of memories and having numerous flashbacks, most of which deal with the city, John and Marianne embody the analogy between the layered city and the layered mind.

When the two talk about the site’s significance to the city, John suggests that she go down and talk to the people in charge. Regarding him “with mock pity,” Marianne responds: “John, if I go down there and they get one whiff of me, they’ll pour the concrete that instant. You think they want someone making a claim on their dirt?” (112). By now it is obvious that Marianne trusts the City as much as they want individual citizens snooping around the site. Although it is not entirely clear whom she means by the pronoun *they*, the relationship between the developers and the city officials is, as argued earlier, so tight that the narrative basically treats them as one. Considering the City as her opponent, Marianne decides to act on her own and request halting of the construction only after she sees something that gives her a reason to do so. Rather interestingly, then, during their conversation, John (who is standing back and watching Marianne inspecting the site) closes his eyes and sees the buried boat in his mind’s eye:

He could hear the distant mechanical sounds from three hundred feet below them. Whirrs and clanks. *He closed his eyes and felt the whole of it in his mind: the big dirty space, the machines avoiding each other in their slow progressions, the earth being removed. He saw the land as a cross-section and imagined a shape just below the surface, rising.* Or the land falling, like water receding and revealing. It would be a miracle if there was anything there, he thought, but it was something worth hoping for. (112, emphases added)

The act of imagining is again linked to digging as well as to the desire of finding something and, dreaming, wishing and longing for things is a recurrent theme in the novel. Just as David saw the history of the city unfold before his eyes on the lakeshore, John sees the shape of the boat rise from the ground before his. Common to all the main characters in the novel is that what they cannot see they conjure up, what they want they fight for, and what they miss they dream of.

A week and a half after their first conversation in the hotel room, Marianne and John have established a routine for observing the site, keeping an eye on it day and night. John also becomes better at estimating the depth of the deepening hole – forty feet marking the measure of where the water’s surface would have been in 1850 and where the boat should be visible – and about his later estimation, which is actually a contemplation of the nature of history, it is written:

Since his first visit ten days earlier, they’d deepened the hole to what looked closer to forty feet. It was impossible to judge the depth: John had discovered the odd fact that his mind (perhaps most minds) was attuned more to horizontal measures than it was to vertical ones. Car lengths, street widths, kilometers per hour – all of these were units that made absolute sense to a life lived on a flat plane. Time was linear: it went forward and back. *But up and down was organic, it was growth and decay, it was time as experienced by vegetation. It was history itself.* He looked down into the hole and tried to measure it by the time he imagined it would take to fall from the lip of the hole at street level to its black clay depths. Somehow it seemed like thirty-five or forty feet. (129, emphasis added)

These sort of philosophical reflections characterize especially John who thinks that “[d]istances between things had at least two independent qualities, a spatial one and a temporal one (96)” but are typical also for Marianne who stays up parts of most nights, being convinced of the fact that

“whatever might be revealed in the excavation would appear with a certain kind of stealth after sundown” (129). Accordingly, discussing measurements, relations, distances and dimensions defines both characters, and the conversations between John and Marianne habitually refer to fundamental ideas about the passing of time and the history of places.

Smith argued previously that the site “sits as a perfect crossroads to the themes” in the narrative and that its dual role as a construction site and a potential excavation dig “sets a tone for the novel as a whole.” Even though Smith states this only in passing, it is of great relevance in understanding the dynamic between the construction site and the archaeological excavation in *Consolation*. Accordingly, Marianne acknowledges that as long as the workers dig and nothing of interest comes up, the site remains a construction site. But as soon as the workers – or anyone else keeping an eye on the site – spot anything unusual sticking out of the dirt, the site has a potential of being turned into an archaeological dig. Hence, when Marianne sees two construction workers, in the dark of the night, inspecting a rock-hard shape in the ground which the scoop of their truck has struck, she knows that her chance has arrived: “it immediately had confirmed for her that this was the beginning of the truth appearing” (194, emphasis added).

Learning the next morning that the object in the ground has been identified as the body of a boat – “It has rivets in it” (136) – Marianne decides to go down and inquire more about the discovery. To John, who tells Marianne to wait and devise a proper plan before rushing to the site (perhaps remembering the mock pity that his earlier suggestion of going down evoked), she says: “Look, this is what I’ve been waiting for, for two weeks in that stinking room . . . They promised to act responsibly if anything of interest came up; the dig got delayed for two months while citizens’ groups got them to agree to a code of conduct” (194). It is evident from also here that the site triggers tensions and disagreements so strong that the citizens’ groups are forced to take action against the City who, prior to approving construction with developers, has not ensured that a code of conduct will be followed. This only reinforces Marianne’s view of the City acting

against its own benefit and confirms her belief that the fate of the old photographs and old Toronto rests on her shoulders. Indeed, acting alone and attempting to monopolize the situation becomes an obsession for Marianne, and of her behaviour in the morning of the find it is written: “She would not agree to call the historical society first: she wanted control, wanted to be the first one to speak her terms so that even if some group took over the investigation of the object, her desires would be on record” (195). Mistrusting the developers, understanding the City as her adversary and doubting the power of city associations, Marianne adopts the mindset of David, firmly believing that they are the only two people capable of saving the city from itself.

Discoveries of archaeological objects are not only described in the city’s contemporary literature but also reported in a number of articles and non-fiction stories written about concrete Toronto. In the theory section of this thesis, Michael McClelland defines urban archaeology as a process that allows us to imagine the past in a concrete way, and is quoted stating that “Sometimes, as has frequently been the case in Toronto, artifacts such as old foundation walls, piers or drains (such as under the North Market of the St. Lawrence Market) have turned up on construction sites.” The construction site that McClelland refers to is the site of “Building 2” (discussed on p. 45 of this thesis) at the city’s oldest food market, established in 1803 and located at 93 Front Street East in the neighbourhood of Old Town. What is fascinating about this site in particular, is that it represents a rare case of archaeology in Toronto (and all of North America) in which the City has recognized the historical importance of the area that they are redeveloping – a five-storey city-owned market building is designed to open at the spot later – and let a team of archaeologists work on the excavation *before* turning it into a construction site. The dynamic between construction and archaeology in Toronto in 1997 in the novel is, of course, the opposite. Photographed on the next page is the main entrance to St. Lawrence Market and The Market Gallery, located on its second floor (Fig 5.), and the archaeological/construction site in its transition stage from an archaeological dig to a construction site (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5. Main entrance to St. Lawrence Market and Gallery, 93–95 Front Street East, 26 Apr. 2017



Fig. 6. View from The Market Gallery window (on the second floor), looking north and towards the archaeological/construction site of “Building 2” at St. Lawrence Market, 26 Apr. 2017.

The reasons for why the site has been widely discussed in the city’s media are many. Firstly, by focusing on agriculture and food history, it embraces the “archaeological signature of everyday folk,” as archaeologist Holly Martelle puts it, and secondly, thousands of interesting objects, including a large 1831 drain, have been discovered there – the site was an archaeological excavation from September 2015 to April 2017. Discussing the city’s earlier struggles with urban archaeology and the significance of the site, John Lorinc, a local journalist specializing in urban affairs, writes: “This project marks the latest in a remarkable series of major digs. For decades, Toronto was notorious for demolishing heritage structures and allowing recognized archeological sites, such as the original parliament, to languish. That changed after council approved an ambitious archeological management plan in 2004” (*the Star*, 8 Jan 2017). Referring to the Archaeological Master Plan and to one of the most prestigious archaeological discoveries in the city (the remnants of Upper Canada’s first parliament buildings which are also discussed in *Consolation*), Lorinc speaks for better city planning and is yet another professional to publically acknowledge the notoriety of decisions made by the city government in the 1990s.

The third reason for why the St. Lawrence Market excavation has attracted curiosity among the public is because some of the over 15,000 artifacts discovered at the site were put on display in The Market Gallery overlooking the dig when the excavation was still on-going. Of the exhibition that ran from November 2016 to March 2017, the City writes:

The exhibit uses archeological finds from the site in conjunction with video, historical maps, art works, photographs and artifacts to *help tell the story of one of Toronto’s most enduring public spaces*. Guests will also have a chance to see renderings of the new North St. Lawrence Market building, with construction scheduled to begin next year. (“Market Gallery Exhibit”, 18 Nov. 2016, emphasis added)

It is delightful that in addition to displaying actual artifacts that were dug up at the site, the exhibit, which the City supported and advertised, used a variety of materials and media to tell the

story of the place and location, since this is precisely the kind of action that professionals in arts, history, geography and earth sciences have been advocating for in Toronto for decades.

Finally, the fourth reason for why this particular site has been in the public eye is that the construction of the new building has been postponed on several occasions – not, however, by request of an individual citizen, but due to recommendations made by archaeologists working at the site. Although the City wrote in late 2016 that construction was “scheduled to begin next year,” in June 2017 *CBC Toronto* ran a story titled “Archeological finds put new St. Lawrence Market building 2 years behind schedule,” explaining that “a city staff update report . . . pegs the new completion date at 2020, rather than the previous target date in 2018.” Indeed, the transition from an archaeological excavation to a construction site took longer than anyone in city planning estimated and was due to the unexpectedly high number of historic artifacts discovered at the site. Yet, as evident from the title of the *CBC* article as well as from *the Star* quote below, what started as an embrace of local archaeology in the press and city staff reports, soon turned to negative publicity highlighting project costs and treating archaeology, all of a sudden, as a delay:

The cost for the St. Lawrence Market’s *long awaited* north building has surpassed the \$100 million mark, with construction expected to begin this [2018] spring. Toronto council originally approved a \$75 million budget in 2008 for the redevelopment of the historic site. A decade later the *cost has increased* to \$102 million, most recently *because* construction bids were more than city staff anticipated and extensive *archeological work delayed the project 14 months*, according to a staff report. City staff also increased the contingency fund to handle unexpected costs that might pop up. (Samantha Beattie, *the Star*, 21 Feb. 2018, emphases added)

An earlier (25 July 2017) article in *the Star*, titled “St. Lawrence North Market construction on hold for archeological dig,” also stated that “construction of the building has been bogged down by delays,” and alluded to archaeology being a problem that is taking too long to solve.

The drain McClelland mentions was found at the site in early 2017 and it caused heated discussion when the time came to decide on its fate: how to preserve it *if* to preserve it at all.

When the city's mayor refused to allow spending an additional sum of \$1.96 million on the preservation of the archaeologically unique "porcupine" drain (visible in Fig. 6 as a grey vertical line running through the middle of the site), a number of archaeologists, local citizens, journalists and councillor members were angered. Of the mayor's dismissal of the full preservation plan and the responsibility of city councillors to the city's heritage, Lorinc writes:

The mayor's conspicuously political reaction . . . is a choice example of how Toronto politicians have nickel-and-dimed, or erased, an historical record that is not theirs to remove. The city's heritage . . . is a collective responsibility, and such gestures reflect a careless disregard for council's duty to be stewards of that past. But quite apart from the moral case for protecting this find, many other cities know that such archeological discoveries have proven to be hugely successful draws for tourists and residents alike. Put another way, the amount spent preserving these sites represents an investment that will pay for itself many times over. It is not a cost, and I am shocked that *the mayor*, who describes himself as a supporter of Toronto's heritage, *doesn't see the value that lies beneath one of the city's pre-eminent tourist destinations*. Cities around the world have found innovative ways to surface these finds because they understand the economic potential of archeological tourism. We don't do that in Toronto. Instead, *we bury or bulldoze them* in the name of some cost-cutting bogeyman. Penny wise, pound foolish as the saying goes. ("Recognizing the Value in the Drain," Sep. 2017, *the Star*, emphases added)

Here many of the themes discussed in this thesis are voiced: (some of the) city politicians are described as being ignorant, indifferent and immoral when it comes to understanding history; heritage planning is seen as a collective responsibility; Toronto (and St. Lawrence Market) is portrayed as a major tourist destination that does not, however, know what to do with its archaeological record; and the city is characterized as a place willing to bury its past.

Councillor Lucy Troisi, with some others, supports full preservation of the discovery, and aims to get funding approved for the drain, arguing that "Councillors who oppose this (drain feature) are really out of touch. I think the vast majority of people in our city want to preserve the history of something as significant as this find" (*the Star*, 19 Jan. 2018). Only time will tell what the City's final decision will be when it comes to this and other archaeological finds in the city.

However, perhaps most interesting in the “case of the 1831 drain” regarding this thesis (and why it been discussed here in length) is that the controversy around it bears an uncanny resemblance to the city tensions detailed in *Consolation*: the buried boat in 1997 is to the abstract city of the novel what the buried drain in 2017 is to the material city of Toronto. As quoted, to Marianne the discovery of the buried boat denotes “the truth appearing,” yet the question of *which truth?* is left for the reader to interpret. One justified analysis, in the light of Toronto’s history with urban archaeology, is that the truth actually entails a nexus of city truths that surface through (and especially at the time of) archaeological discoveries; these truths expose how the city understands archaeology, how interested officials are in preserving finds, how much a discovery may cost, and how codes of conduct and archaeological plans concretize when action is needed. These are just a few of the issues that demand solving when historically and culturally significant objects are uncovered in the city. These are also reasons that make some city officials see archaeology as a nuisance and a threat to the prevailing order; as long as the buried “stuff” remains buried, the status quo is not disturbed and the city can go on without having to think about its past.

The novel’s plot takes a turn when Marianne and John get an appointment with city official Jack Thomas whom they try to get to investigate the discovery of the boat further. Thomas, however, is upset about the press and the two of them making the city look bad, and the conversation between the three much reflects the tensions discussed earlier. After Marianne tells Thomas about “the history of the area, the potential value of the find, and the minimal work stoppage that would be required” (226), he replies with “We know all this,” adding:

‘But here’s the problem.’ He snapped open his briefcase and slapped the *Toronto Star* down on his desk. ‘The problem is the cat is out of the bag.’ . . . ‘It’s the kind of thing the mayor would prefer not to be lectured to about.’ He opened the paper smartly and read from the story. ‘ “Calls from the mayor’s office were not returned. Gerald Lanze, Dean of Urban Studies at the University of Toronto, when asked to commend said, ‘The mayor has a sorry record when it comes to city heritage.’ ” ’ Thomas closed the paper. ‘Unfortunately, now it has to be dealt with smartly, by which I mean *intelligently* as well

as *quickly*, or they'll make hay. They'll talk about how this mayor doesn't care about the city's history.' [Marianne] 'He doesn't.' [Thomas] 'He does, Mrs. Hollis. But he doesn't want the pink pages to tell him what his business is. So it's too late. Union Arena won't hear from his office, and whatever that thing is, it'll be wood chips by the time the *Star* sends someone to do a follow-up. If they do a follow-up. Page A-15 doesn't speak to this being a priority for the paper.' (226, italics original)

It is fascinating that the novel, which came out in 2006, depicts the dynamic between urban archaeology and topics related to it (planning, politics, heritage) in such a way that makes it difficult not to read it as an extensive comment on the material city itself. And without treating *Consolation* as a realistic report of the events in 1997, it is defensible to say that as a city artifact, the narrative acts as a powerful tool in exposing the issues Toronto has with urban archaeology.

Finally, although city officials in the novel aim to continue construction at the ACC site as swiftly as possible, after Marianne and John's visit to Thomas's office, to everyone's surprise, the excavation is turned into an archaeological dig. Talking on the phone with John, Marianne says she now sees workers at the site "Digging. With little shovels. Handheld shovels" (231) and later, when the two of them are back in the hotel room at their usual spots looking down at the site from the window, they realize that the transition is taking place right before their eyes:

Two of the people down there – young women, it appeared – had begun to hammer thin wooden stakes into the ground at regular intervals around the wooden rib. They watched the women trace the outline of a rectangle around the exposed shape. One of them brought a line of jute from one stake and tied it off against the one directly opposite: the beginning of an archaeological grid (231).

This is a pivotal moment in the novel, and the reasons for the site's transformation nearly overnight are more complicated than one might at first assume (Thomas, for instance, did not further the matter). The explanations, in fact, have everything to do with *documents* and the power they hold and, thus, the matter is explored further in chapter 4. Before that, however, let us take a look at what exactly is the buried city described in *Consolation*.

3.3 The Buried City

The novel's fourth main character – in addition to David, Marianne and John – is Jeremy George Hallam, usually referred to as (Mr.) Hallam, whose life is narrated in the chapters alternating with the ones that describe urban Toronto in the late 1990s. What sets him apart from the other three characters, however, is that he lives in a completely different time period: when Hallam first sets foot on dry land in the Toronto harbour, the year is 1855 and the city is only some twenty years old. The buried city under the modern one is revealed through Hallam's perspective, and it is through his thoughts and experiences (in 1855–1857) that the reader learns about the early stages of the city, albeit in fictionalized form; Hallam's story is thus the story of the buried city.

Moving to Toronto from Camden, England, Hallam leaves behind his wife and two daughters and opens an apothecary in the city in the hopes of having his family join him after the business takes off. Four months later, during a particularly harsh winter – which leads Hallam to conclude that a “Toronto winter was a thing beyond imagining” (41) – he is having trouble sleeping and in the quietness of the November night, he contemplates the day of his arrival:

He remembered freshly his first glimpse of the city, as the ferry came around the western side of the island that lay off its shore: a vision of spires and yellow brick and white stone set against a wall of trees. And from that distance – even as the ferry bore down on Brown's Wharf at the foot of Young street – the seeming feebleness of the little twists of smoke and steam rising up from different buildings, Lilliputian industry while all around it raw nature went about its effortless business. *Who thinks of making a city in the rough?* he'd thought, seeing the place for the first time, and he knew from the expressions on the faces of the newly arrived that this was the wondering thing that occurred to everyone who made landfall here. (43, italics original)

In this passage we find not only the familiar theme of arrival but also the recognizable imagery of the ferry, the lakeshore, the wharf and raw nature, to which the novel alludes frequently in both

time periods. Also, the image of the city emerging from the wilderness or Torontonians “making a city in the rough” is a powerful metaphor that communicates the perseverance of the locals.

Departures and arrivals characterize the narrative, yet their significance to each character is unique: to David the departure symbolizes death, to Marianne the arrival marks the start of a personal quest, and to Hallam the arrival denotes a new beginning in the most traditional use of the trope – he is a newcomer. In Hallam’s case, a variety of *distances* are also evoked: there is the distance travelled from Europe to North America by sea, the emotional distance felt by the father and husband longing for his family, and the cultural and social distances that describe both daily life and the external conditions in the new environment: “there was no language, no simile for this shut-in weather: a city so benighted by snow that it was as if thousands of people were living, perforce, alone in it. Social intercourse had to be managed indoors, but few were willing to seek it out in such a punishing environment” (41). Winter and snow are described in negative terms, as is typical for literary representations of the North, and the cold environment strongly corresponds to the emotional response Hallam initially has to the city, thinking “it lacked warmth” and that it “aggravated his melancholy” (43). Away from his loved ones, shut-in and feeling cold in an unfamiliar place, Hallam’s experience of his first Toronto winter is everything but flattering.

Eric Arthur, who traces the architectural history of the early city through photographs and written accounts by newcomers to the early city in his influential study *Toronto: No Mean City* (published in 1964 and discussed in the theory section of this thesis), includes in his book actual descriptions written by people who had moved from Europe to Canada and tried to adjust to life in Toronto in the 1800s. One of them is Anna Jameson who, as Barbara Legault writes, “was a prominent author, feminist, travel writer and art historian . . . Born in Dublin, Ireland in 1794 [she] came to Upper Canada in 1836 to join her husband, Robert Sympson Jameson.” Interestingly, her account, published in *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (1838) and quoted in Arthur’s study, is rather similar to Hallam’s experience of the cold city:

[Toronto is] most strangely mean and melancholy. A little ill-built town . . . some government offices, built of staring red brick, in the most tasteless, vulgar style imaginable; three feet of snow all around; and the grey, sullen, wintry lake, and the dark gloom of the pine forest bounding the prospect. (67)

Exaggerated and somewhat comical, Jameson's depiction of young Toronto is full of passion, and the personified adjectives "mean and melancholy" mixed with the negative ones "tasteless, vulgar, grey, sullen and dark" make the non-fiction description read like a novel. This is also perhaps why Arthur, having studied Jameson's life and the circumstances which brought her to Toronto, writes that "Mrs. Jameson was a highly educated, talented woman, but her views may have been prejudiced by her unhappy marriage to the attorney-general of Upper Canada" (67).

Whether Mrs. Jameson would have thought the city a miserable place in *any* case, or whether her views were influenced by her emotional state is, of course, impossible to say some two hundred years later. Of Hallam, however, it is written that "The coarsening of his character had begun the moment he made landfall in Toronto" (144), denoting that the reputation of Toronto as a 'mean' city is deeply rooted in the city's non-fiction and fiction. Later, when talking with a friend, Hallam bluntly declares: "*This place* has made me mean" (185, emphasis added). In addition, just like the lakeshore acts as a meaningful place in the city's literary imagination, also the detailed descriptions of its harsh winters serve a purpose: to mediate that whoever makes it through a Toronto winter, will survive any obstacles looming in the future.

Although not feeling celebratory in the local restaurant where he has most of his meals, Hallam mentions to his waiter the very day denoting four months in the city, to which the waiter responds with bringing an extra egg on the side of his oatmeal, with the words "to mark one entire third of a year *passed and survived*" (41, emphasis added). Indeed, the idea of survival, which is often seen to characterize Canadian literature, is a prominent theme in *Consolation* and entails not only surviving the winter but also the hardships that the novel's main characters face.

Whereas David battles with his disease and Marianne with the city officials, Hallam struggles with his business. The apothecary is not doing well; haunted by rumours of the previous owner having accidentally poisoned more than one of his customers, the shop suffers from a bad name, which Hallam learns too late. When the city's most established druggists, the Cockburns (late of Scotland), offer to buy the shop – for its location – Hallam is upset and he drives away the man sent to seal the deal: “[Hallam] stood then in the open space, which he had thought he was done with, finally, for the day, and for the first time felt a powerful affection for the shop, which was his, his family's, and which suffered, as he did (he now understood) from ghosts” (69–70). Mortified by the state of his finances, Hallam chooses not to disclose his struggles in the letters he writes home, for he sees going back a failure: “To return to his family and the world he knew, this was something dearly to be wished. But to fail, and hear the jeers at his back as he climbed the gangplank... it was difficult to deny the power this held over him as well” (75). To live and work in the young city of Toronto, then, is merely to *survive* it.

Growing attached to the shop he owns on 81 King Street East, “in the heart of the shopping district” (68), Hallam tries to think of alternative ways to make money, and he sees an opportunity when a man introducing himself as Samuel Ennis (late of Kerry, Ireland) walks into the apothecary and asks for silver compounds for a new form or art, photography. Hallam amuses himself “with the thought that he could beat the Cockburns to the silver nitrate trough by ordering in a tremendous stock and becoming the sole supplier to the city's photographers” (74), and he quickly forms a friendly business relationship with Ennis. Aiming to gather more funds, Hallam travels to upper New York State, sells his apothecary stock to a man in Niagara and buys as much silver compounds as possible: “When he came back to Toronto, Hallam was the sole supplier of photographic salts west of Kingston, east of London [Ontario], and north of Buffalo, and he had forty-nine pounds sterling to his name. Before the end of the spring he would have *all seven photography firms* in Toronto as his clients” (141, emphasis added). Passages like this reveal not

only the size of the early city and the scale of its industries but also the American and British mindsets that Toronto has internalized (money is made in the US and the currency itself is an emblem of the British Empire). Hence, life in the city habitually mirrors both influences.

When spring finally arrives Hallam's business is thriving: the photography industry is booming and his new-found success proves (to himself and to the reader) that the "punishing environment" of the city has only made his character stronger. In addition, Hallam's perception of Toronto is changing:

[T]he incipient charms of the city were suddenly manifest. The smell of sweet-grass in empty lots, the honeyed air, the lovely breezes off the lake. And where before the city had seemed a subterranean nightmare of hidden faces and hushed voices, Hallam now nodded at this fellows in the street and received the most friendly time of day in return from them. Perhaps because English winters were not as cruel, never before had he encountered spring with such a sense of gratitude, and this sense was shared by everyone else who survived the winter of 1856. (169)

Indeed, the city changes both in Hallam's eyes and, above all, in his mind, and the better he is doing emotionally and financially, the more attractive Toronto grows to him. The place (the city) is thus in a continuous relationship with the person experiencing it, and the novel seems to realize existence in a Heideggerian sense: as founded in interactive and interdependent relations between a human being and its environment. That is to say that *to be* in Toronto *is to feel* in Toronto.

Yet Hallam is inspired by another occurrence; Mrs. Claudia Rowe (late of Bath, England and an acquaintance of Ennis) has just moved in with him, due to Claudia having been struck by a number of misfortunes (her husband is believed dead and her lodging is in ruins after a fire). Having company and a person to talk to, Hallam now finds himself "laughing unaccountably as he walked down King Street" and arriving in his shop "to find a note tucked in behind the handle asking for his [photography] services at one or another location" (169). Despite living together, the relationship between Mr. Hallam and Mrs. Rowe is unconsummated and the 'honour' of

Claudia unviolated, for Hallam much values the business-like relationship they are engaged in. Both, however, worry what members of their community (especially those of the church society) think when they see an ‘unaccompanied woman’ enter Hallam’s apartment, and the two of them are aware of the peculiarity of their living arrangements, which seem shocking to many in 1856.

To complicate matters further, Hallam soon realizes that Ennis’s health, which was bad to begin with (due to drinking, having little money to spend on doctors, and having been exposed to toxic photography chemicals for years) has deteriorated to the point where he is unable to make it (survive) on his own. Ennis’s neighbourhood is poor and located past College Avenue, the point that marks the “hard barrier between the accustomed-to-having and the never-did-have.” Of the inner division of the city it is written: “On one side of the city, Toronto was still the little British hamlet with treed avenues and good shops, but the well-wrought illusion of a town growing at a regular rate burst apart once one came east of College Avenue.” (148). It is important to note, then, that the neighbourhood where Hallam works and socializes (King Street East) is in stark contrast with the housing areas that Ennis and Mrs. Rowe can afford and, many would say, are forced to live in. Realizing that he is unable to house all of them in the apartment he shares with Claudia, Hallam transforms his spacious shop not only into living quarters for the three but also into an art studio, believing that it will allow them to grow the business together.

The exact address of Hallam’s studio actually exists in the physical city of Toronto and, as evident from the photographs on the next page (Fig. 7 and 8), it is possible to locate it on the city grid and explore it both by walking around the area and zooming into it on virtual maps. Instead of an art studio or apothecary, however, the space houses a rug store (which was being prepared for its opening at the time of the visit). What is striking about the neighbourhood of Old Town and its historic King Street East – the city’s finest street in the 1850s – is that although it is still considered the city’s main design district, many of its historical buildings have been left at the mercy of the weather and are in desperate need of proper preservation (as visible in Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. No. 81 King Street East, Toronto. View from the street towards the studio (located on the ground floor of the beige building and to the right from King's Discount), 26 Apr. 2017.

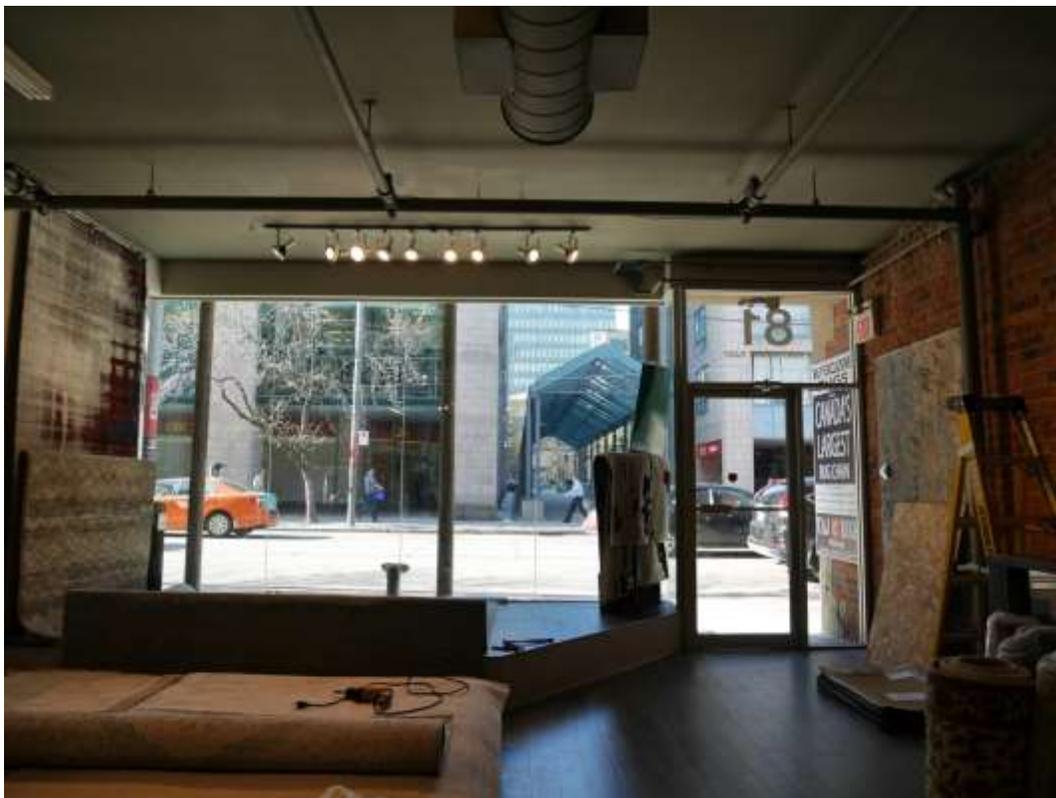


Fig. 8. No. 81 King Street East, Toronto. View from the studio towards the street, 26 Apr. 2017.

Talking to the friendly owners of the rug store (who were excited to hear about the literary fame of the place), revealed that they were aware of the building being historically significant (it was one of the reasons for why they had chosen the location) and that they also had seen the sign that anyone walking past 79 King Street East could see: “Notice, A change has been proposed to this site [79–89 King Street E]. A Development Application has been submitted to amend the Zoning By-law to permit a mixed use building with ground floor retail, a private club (Albany Club) on floors 1 to 4, and residential uses on floors 5 to 25.” What this means in practice is that whatever businesses are located at the site (in updated plans nos. 65–75, 79–81, 83, and 85–89) are forced to leave sooner or later, as the City is ‘developing’ the area and is in the process of constructing a massive “next-generation workspace,” a wide 18-storey glassy tower on top of the five or six historical buildings that can be seen in Fig 7.

The city-approved developer of the area, Carttera Private Equities, has devoted a website to the project (which goes by the name 65 King Street East) and in addition to showcasing revised plans and renderings, it acknowledges the site’s historical significance:

Reflecting contemporary style while honoring the district’s heritage architecture, 65 King East has preserved four heritage buildings along King Street. Integrated with large glass exterior walls, the lobby’s two-storey mezzanine floods with natural daylight, highlighting its historic interior brick wall. Above, private outdoor terraces continue the connection between historic stewardship and newly built form. (emphasis added)

Although this sounds like excellent news to anyone interested in taking a historical tour of the district and the buildings in old Toronto, what the developer fails to say, or is reluctant to admit, is that “honoring the district’s heritage architecture” actually means only preserving the façades of the buildings. This, as argued earlier, is a typical phenomenon in Toronto’s heritage planning, which is often dictated by the developers rather than the community or even the City. The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat is more honest about the procedure and on its

website, which tracks the development of tall buildings internationally, it writes: “At ground level, *the development would preserve two heritage façades* at 71 and 75 King Street East, *while adding a red sandstone façade* to the west – referencing the materiality of the surrounding heritage architecture – and stretching the length of the wrap-around podium” (emphases added). Once again, façadism, which Heritage Toronto considers an undesired practice and has been speaking against since the 1980s, has been chosen as the best alternative and as an acceptable practice of heritage planning and preservation in the city. What happens to the original 1850s stone walls and foundations, visible in the basements of the street’s studios, is yet to be decided. However, the construction (expected to begin in late 2018) is already affecting the fabric of the street and the small rug store which opened in 2017 is closing its doors a year later, advertising: “Last chance, Doors close May 27th, Demolition closing, Lease expired, 81 King Street East.” If business was difficult in the heart of the district 170 years ago, it seems to be that also today.

Finally, McClelland’s realistic (non-fiction) description of King Street East in the 1850s (quoted on p. 31 of this thesis) bears much resemblance to the novel’s world. Scottish, Irish and English men and their partners – many of whom are newcomers – have shops on King Street and, in both texts, contribute to the city’s appreciation and affluence, making Toronto seem like “an important city in the new colony,” as Mrs. Rowe puts it in a discussion with city official Colonel Thompson in 1856. Rather tellingly, she adds: “One day they [future generations] will want to know from where its greatness sprang” (268). What is fascinating about McClelland’s and the novel’s description of old Toronto, is that both accounts understand the city as a living organism. Hallam, for instance, while surveying the city, sees also its incompleteness and temporariness:

The city was forever a work in progress: Hallam could not imagine a future when the streets would not be pockmarked in regular intervals by butts of brick and piles of wood, forged and cast nails being ground underfoot for future generations to chance on, along with the broken ends of tobacco pipes and smashed beer bottles. (281)

Understanding Toronto as “a work in progress” and trying to imagine its future while walking down its many streets, makes Hallam dream about the incomplete city. Interestingly, in one of his dreams the city transforms into an unfamiliar place – another city altogether – which Hallam, however, calls and somehow still recognizes as Toronto:

The lake was as still as glass; he walked out onto it. He moved across it, staring down into the gleaming surface. *There was something below*, but the sun was too bright on the water and all he could see was himself and the sky above him. He would have to lower himself to his belly to annul the shadows, and once he did he saw that he was in the sky of *another city*. He was looking down on Toronto. *It was Toronto, but it was not the place he was living in*, not the place he was dreaming. It was full of marvelous conveyances – train cars that moved on macadam all by themselves and towering buildings glad in glass. And people, a shocking number of people. (288, emphases added)

Like David, Marianne and John, also Hallam is constantly thinking about the materiality of the city and he seems generally concerned about its legacy to future generations. Although Hallam’s dream appears to celebrate the marvelous modernity of the city-to-come, it ends on a sad note: “He saw people he knew in the streets, he watched them. Presently, he was among them, and he tried to speak to them. *Do you not remember me?* he tried to say to one woman, but in his head all he could hear was twittering (288, italics original). Thus, in this new city of glass, Hallam, along with old Toronto, is forgotten and his simple question is muted by loud twittering.

Much remains to be said about the buried city in *Consolation*, about Hallam’s adventures in the 1850s Toronto – its buildings, streets, neighbourhoods, culture and people – but due to the scope of this thesis, a summary of the topics discussed is what the reader will be left with. Indeed, the buried city in the novel is simultaneously the young and the old city; a place to survive and a place to feel in; a subterranean nightmare and a charming hamlet smelling of sweet-grass; a rich city and a poor city; a city that honours heritage and a city that favours façadism; a city made of brick and a city made of glass; a place that remembers and a place that forgets.

There was always the feeling . . . that those people who haunted libraries were all working together on some mysterious work of revelation that, once completed, would blow off the lid clean off reality.

(*Consolation* 202)

4 City Documents

A large part of *Consolation* is devoted to discussing the significance of documents, documenting and storytelling. Not only does the narrative refer to fictional stories featured in Toronto's actual newspapers, *The Star* and *The Globe and Mail*, but also to other forms of documenting city life. One might even say that the novel is as much about archaeology as it is about papers of various kind. Accordingly, the narrative discusses monographs, diaries, maps, novels, travel accounts, memos, court documents, personal correspondence, manuscripts, descriptions of photographs (including a picture of an actual photograph) as well as notes. In addition, John (like David) spends much time in the city's libraries, and his independent research, which is his part-time job, is narrated in detail. All of the four main characters of the novel are also avid readers: David, Marianne, John, and Hallam embrace the world of letters and are often described being deeply immersed in the things they read; the three men also engage themselves in writing.

Thus, the fourth chapter of this thesis studies the many (essentially fictional) documents, or 'letters' in the broadest sense of the word, that the narrative refers to. In the first subchapter the topic is approached through identifying some of these papers and looking into the power that they hold. The second subchapter, on the other hand, discusses lying, reveals how literature and storytelling (as metatextual concepts) figure in the narrative, and shows how the metaphorical act of burying the dead and the literal act of leaving the city defines the ending of the novel. Similarly to chapter 3, also this section includes photographs (all mine) in places where they are considered relevant. Ultimately this chapter argues that written documents, once a primary source for archaeologists, are an integral part of the process of archaeological discovery in the novel.

4.1 Papers that Show and Tell

The first document that the narrative mentions is David's monograph in which he discusses the history of Toronto and the discovery of the boat: "Before his death, he'd published a monograph about these shorelands that Marianne looked out on from the hotel. The booklet suggested there was greatness in that anonymous dirt, but his colleagues had ridiculed him, had accused him of inventing his source" (12). The key word here is *source*, since David claims he has found a handwritten diary from the 1850s in the rare book library at the University of Toronto: "I found a diary. An Englishman who came to Toronto in 1855. Faded grey ink and actual fingerprints in the margins. You can feel him sitting at his table and writing everything down in that very book. Drinking tea like I am right now. He was a photographer" (29). At this point of the novel, the reader does not yet know that the author of the alleged diary is Hallam (for Hallam's story follows David's) but by the end of the book, it becomes clear that the events mentioned in the monograph and described in the diary correspond to Hallam's portrayal of the city. In addition to relating personal day-to-day occurrences, the diary reveals how Hallam, Mrs. Rowe and Ennis created a complete photographic portfolio of the city, showing what it looked like in 1856.

What is more, of the library where David spends his days "hunched over papers" and which is referred to as "his heart's home" (28), the novel states:

Pyramids of Bankers Boxes there held the barely cataloged papers of perhaps eight defunct archives dating back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Squinting academics had stroked the John Graves Simcoe papers with cotton gloves (the city's founder! the holy grail!) and taken down every last *bon mot* muttered by him or any of his bucktoothed relations; Simcoe and Mayor Howland and William Lyon Mackenzie and Timothy Eaton had spawned biographical industries. And yet David had somehow ferreted out an unknown eyewitness with a story of early Toronto. (12)

The library, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at U of T, exists in the concrete city of Toronto, and the men mentioned by name are actual historical figures whose role has proved significant in the history of the early city. Nevertheless, in the quoted passage their names are listed in an ironic tone and, once again, the call for people's history (as against to official history) is voiced; the "biographical industries" the men have spawned is contrasted with "an unknown eyewitness with a story of early Toronto," emphasizing how much remains to be studied about the anonymous, the masses, whose contributions to the city are not fully recognized. However, the fact that David refuses to produce his source – "*Let people show some faith*, he'd said" (12, italics original) – results in him being shunned at the university and his source being considered anything but trustworthy. This paradox, David claiming that his source exists but refusing to provide any proof for it, haunts later Marianne and John who try to make sense of his suicide.

Perhaps most interesting about the case of the alleged diary is that, as a document and source, it is both private and public, non-academic and academic, and subjective and objective. The academic credibility is lessened by the fact that the author of the diary has not signed it (it lacks a name), that it belongs in the category of sources that are considered untraditional, and that it may be seen as a too personal and one-sided account of what happened during only a short period of time (of two years). In other words, as a source the diary is considered insignificant. David refusing to provide even a call number for his source greatly undermines its credibility, yet, at the same time, the reader is lead to believe that the diary does exist and that by 'being difficult' David only tries to prove the academia that it concerns itself too much with the official history of the city. Discussions of the diary's authenticity, then, are a recurrent topic in the novel.

David's passion is to study the anonymous and confront the academia about its biases, but his desire to know what the early city was like is obsessive. Although he tries to ignore the disease he suffers from, by the time he discovers the diary, his body is already so weak he can barely walk. Still, determined to find out the exact location of the buried boat that his source talks

about, David concludes: “All I need is a couple of *maps* and I can triangulate the position. There’s probably even *records* of the wreck. Measurements” (31, emphases added). Further, in a flashback that Marianne has, she remembers one day entering the living room and finding David “sitting at the dining room table, the whole surface colonized by paper” (32), denoting that in addition to doing field work, David practices paper archaeology. Discussing the discovery with his wife, he says: “*Marianne, I can see where it is on this map, but do you think I could walk down to Union Station right now and trace it for myself?*” (32, italics original). As evident, geographical maps and archived records are other city documents that the novel discusses, and David studies them enthusiastically. In order to get a better look at an old map he has brought home and despite it being a struggle, David positions his body so that he can see the city in full: “*he was standing on the chair, trembling, staring down at the city in the old photocopied map*” (33, italics original). By surrounding himself with paper, bringing his research home, drawing and studying plans, and gathering as many documents as possible on the topic, David shows that along with field research, city documents are, in fact, at the very centre of his work.

It is also descriptive that after her husband’s death, the things that Marianne brings with her to the downtown hotel room are, in large part, books and papers:

It had taken her a few hours to pack a bag of her things at the house and then two boxes of books and papers from David’s library. Some of these were his writings – older monographs, or books including chapters he’d written, books on urban development at the turn of the century, pamphlets done for the Department of Earth Sciences on specialty subjects such as archival practice before 1920, reverse erosion (a computer program that retro-modeled shorelines based on historical snow- and rainfall measurements), and air-to-ground cartographic reconciliations. (13)

It seems only fair to say that Marianne takes the papers with her in order to feel safe, at home and, above all, closer to David; indeed, of the connection she feels to the documents, it is written: “She’d brought the books, books he had loved, to have his company while she was there” (14).

Yet Marianne's reasons are also practical. Making up a white lie so that the hotel staff will leave her undisturbed – she “intended to finish a novel there, she said” (13) – Marianne begins to read frantically about urban planning and development, the city's history, architecture, heritage, and landfilling, and does this in order to get the City to turn the construction site of Union Arena into an archaeological dig. Accordingly, early on Marianne realizes that if she wishes to halt the construction, she needs to have proof, a document that backs up her word. Among the more academic sources scattered in the room are also newspaper articles, stories of everyday life, and Marianne's personal connection to the documents shows especially in passages like this:

She spent her first night in the bed closest to the west-facing window, and shed photocopied pages of the *Globe* from 1855 to the floor beside her. Government lands for sale, new goods arriving daily at Rutherfords's. This world that had so possessed David seemed unwilling to impart any scent of itself to her. She'd heard his stories on an almost daily basis throughout their married life, and yet she knew now that she'd listened to so many of them only passingly, as one does when the commonplace is spoken of. Reading these papers, she tried to imagine men in costume standing on wooden sidewalks, snapping open their fresh, linen-like newspapers and scanning for tell of England. She read 'Death of a Canadian in California': a man 'foully murdered' while on his mule. People gone a century and a half, but freshly dead in those pages, their bodies only just committed to their graves and the widows still keening. (25)

Like David before, Marianne surrounds herself with papers that recount how the city developed, and she indulges in the world of letters, imagining the stories as they happened. It is also rather symbolic that in the midst of a personal crisis Marianne's mind gravitates to articles about death and grief, and she is quick to identify with tragedies of the past.

At the end of chapter 3.2 it was noted that the construction site's transformation into an archaeological dig is a pivotal moment in the novel, and that the transformation has much to do with documents. Indeed, when Marianne and John discuss the view opening behind the hotel room window in the first days of the excavation, their hopes of halting the construction are minimal. When John asks Marianne about her estimation on when they will pour the concrete,

she says: “I read all about construction sites . . . They’ll put down an iron grid first. Then they’ll drown it in cement, and that will be that” (111). This inspires John to investigate further, to read more on the topic, which comes natural to him: although John is trained as an accountant, his part-time job is working as a “stacks-sniffer” (119) for a local playwright. Like David, also John is described spending an awful lot of time in libraries. It is also interesting that in the novel he is first introduced through the act of reading; when Bridget calls her mother in the hotel, John, who is at home with his fiancée, is pictured thus in the background: “Bridget said ‘What I understand is that you’re acting like a madwoman.’ She looked across the living room at John, who was sitting at attention on the couch, *a book open in his lap.*” (15, emphasis added). The notion of John doing research, reading and writing, reoccurs throughout the novel – his reading material ranging from plays to TV Guides, and from film studies to heritage laws – and it is due to his research (and Marianne’s determination) that the site eventually turns into an archaeological dig.

After seeing the scoop of the truck hit the boat in the dirt, John, a regular at Toronto’s Central Reference Library, goes to the library to research work stoppage at construction sites. Asking the librarian to pull out all council meeting memos from 1995–6, two years before the construction began, does not, however, result in John finding the right answers, and the papers he initially flips through seem useless:

He lifted about five pounds of pages and pushed them over. In July, it was determined that there would be a public competition to name a new park to be built on August Street in Kensington Market. He’d been down that street many times and couldn’t picture a park at all. The books contained all the minutiae of the day-to-day working of the city, but *there was nothing*, as far as he could tell, *that could predict the fate of a boat lying in the ground.* (202, emphases added)

Coincidentally, a man sitting next to him in the reading room asks if he can be of help, and John, correcting the man’s assumption that he is interested in bike paths and waste disposal, says: “I’m actually interested in... I don’t know what you’d call it. Local archaeology” (203). He continues:

“Like, for instance, what happens if you decide to build a new concert hall or something, and while you’re digging a hole, you find, like, and old statue or something? What happens?” The man, presumably a local, says without blinking: “You dig faster and hope nobody notices it” (203–4). Right after this, the man stands up, walks over to a shelf nearby, returns with “a slender unmarked book bound in red boards” and hands it to John, saying:

Anyway . . . it’s not even up to the city. This is the Heritage Act – it’s a provincial bill. It sets out what’s protected in the province, whether it’s on provincial, municipal, or private property. If you want to know the truth, it’s a toothless bill and most of it’s about how many appeals you get if you *really, really* want to tear something down. March of progress and all that, good luck if you’re and Indian burial ground or a nice old house standing on some expensive dirt. (204, italics original)

A certain kind of pessimism and criticism characterizes the novel especially when it comes to discussing heritage laws which are seen as outdated, or “toothless”, as the man says. Continuing the conversation with John, the man also tells him: “If you’re hoping for a work stoppage, you’ll need a lawyer . . . This thing doesn’t make any noise without a mouthpiece attached to it” (205).

John then realizes that the only way construction is going to be halted at the site is if they can get a lawyer involved – by chance, Bridget has just ‘passed the bar’ allowing her to work as an authorized representative of the law. Explaining the matter to his fiancée, John says: “We can’t get into the site. The minister of culture can put some kind of a stop-work order on the site, but *someone has to write a letter*” (209, emphasis added). Still angry at her mother, Bridget first refuses to sign what is called a ‘transfer order’ – a piece of paper which, if signed, means that “for a specified period of time, the province can lay a claim on private property in order to investigate something that might fall under its protection” (217), as John explains. Eventually Bridget, however, comes around and decides to help the two get the document authorized. Of the letter’s significance to the construction site and of its importance to Marianne, it is written:

Marianne had held the transfer order in her hands and read it top to bottom. ‘They have to stop?’ she said, and Bridget reassured her that they did. Further work on the site would happen on government time . . . Marianne had folded the paper and put it on the desk, then laid her hand on it briefly as if confirming its reality to herself” (307).

Interestingly, this letter proves to be one of the key documents in the novel, for its implications are many: the work is halted, Marianne is empowered (assured her efforts have not been futile), and the quarrel between the mother and daughter is reconciled. Above all, the document produces action and reaction and is a symbol of victory for Marianne. In addition, Bridget joins John and her mother in visiting the site, and when the three of them walk past the *Sun* in the hotel lobby, they see that the tabloids have taken an interest in the story: “The headline, over a crisp picture of an apartment building, read TOT DIES AFTER A FALL. Above it: SHE’S NO FAN – LOCAL WOMAN HOLDS UP CONSTRUCTION OF UNION ARENA” (311, capitals original). What is more, just days earlier, Marianne has been portrayed as being “hunched over the *Toronto Star*” (223) which has also run an article about the site: “A headline in the middle of the first section read HISTORY A SLAM DUNK AT UNION SITE” (224). Accordingly, referring to the city’s existing newspapers, the novel mixes fact with fiction and wittily plays with the literary concept of ‘a story within a story’ or ‘a letter within a letter’; David’s monograph is about a diary, John’s (and David’s) research focuses on exploring a variety of city documents, and the newspaper articles mentioned discuss historical stories as well as the effects of the transfer order.

Yet there are even more documents that the novel covers, namely, the correspondence between Hallam and his family in England. Having promised to bring his wife and daughters to Toronto once he is settled in the city, Hallam writes them letters which are a curious mix of hope and worry: “*Bisous to the girls, he’d written in August. Tell them their papa is going to build them a house with green shutters and hiding places. In truth, I haven’t yet found a suitable place for such a home, but I am making my priority getting through this winter*” (45, italics original).

With the letters, which are many and described in detail, Hallam encloses “scraps of things,” which he hopes makes the papers and their sender seem more concrete, more real:

In his letters, cheerily written, he'd enclose little scraps of things the girls might find amusing, although enclosures were expensive to send; bits of cigar paper, a raggy strip torn from the top of the *Globe* with the date on it, as if *to reassure them that he had lived through the same days as they*. In the privacy of his mind, however, he could not imagine their lives in London. (45, emphasis added)

The reason for why Hallam is unable to imagine his family's life back in London just months after his arrival in Toronto, is that his mind is worrisome and his business – at the time – failing. Hallam, however, keeps sending letters home at regular intervals and when his business picks up, also his letters become merrier:

Dearest Alice,

I imagine by the time you get this, the worst of your winter will be past. So it is here as well, with the sun out for longer periods every day and even birdcalls beginning in the streets! . . . I am busy with the shop, building clientele and meeting my business neighbors. . . . I write you and the girls a longer letter very soon. For the time being, I am enclosing a little picture made of me by one of the city's talented photographers. I trust that I am neither too fat nor too thin for your liking. I am a Hallam family man here, and before long you and the girls will come to join me and we will have a house in town and a cottage by the lakeshore with horses to convey us one way and the other. How I miss you! I cannot say, my dears.

Jem. (143)

The picture Hallam attaches to his letter is made by his new friend, Ennis, and the description of the photoshoot is rather fascinating. When Ennis asks if he can take Hallam's picture, he readily agrees, “to be able to give his family such a keepsake and have it cost him next to nothing (even if he were about to be fleeced) was irresistible” (82). But when it comes to the time of the shoot, Hallam insists on wearing a formal costume which Ennis rejects: “You're no bride, Mr. Hallam.

You're a missing man to all who love you. Let them see you as you are." To this Hallam says: "I'd rather something more formal, Mr. Ennis. Something that won't worry them" (82).

Wishing not to worry his family and aiming always to send them nothing but good news eventually leads Hallam to lie in his letters, which, in turn, leads him to become estranged from his family. Thus, over the ensuing months the emotional distance between Hallam's old life in London and his new life in Toronto grows so wide that nothing but a gap remains. He attaches more pictures to his letters home, but instead of them making him feel better, he feels worse:

[I]t felt cowardly enough to send these still images of a world she could not touch or smell. At least, in print, she could hear his voice. Although that voice, and those pictures, were bringing news of a place that was now so much like home to him, and yet not hers, not theirs, and did the pictures say that it would never be?" (245–46)

When the grief of missing his family becomes overwhelming, Hallam keeps writing the letters but withdraws from sending them: "He continued to write letters to Alice, but he finished few of them and mailed none. They lay about, half written and full of lies too egregious for sending, and were increasingly about his so-called leisure time" (159). Once he stops picking up the letters his wife sends him, their correspondence fades entirely: "Alice's letters he, at first, left unopened and unread in a pile on the windowsill. And then he simply stopped picking them up at the post office altogether" (160). Affecting his mood and spirits, the letters have thus become too powerful, and to avoid the pain they inflict, Hallam, in the end, decides to ignore them for good.

Finally, this subchapter has dealt mostly with fictional documents found in *Consolation*, but the official documents discussed in the book have not gone unnoticed in the city of Toronto. Indeed, the City of Toronto Archives has created a collection of items that connect to the novel's world and that can be studied by request. This fascinating collection includes artwork in the form of paintings and photographs as well as copies of city documents and records dating back to the 1700s. The items available for viewing are pictured in Fig. 9, and Fig. 10 (featuring the novel).



Fig. 9. A collection of official city documents connected to the novel *Consolation* at the City of Toronto Archives, 28 Apr. 2017.



Fig. 10. The novel *Consolation* (pp. 256–57), pictured with Fonds 1498, Item 1 at the City of Toronto Archives, 28 Apr. 2017.

The connection between the narrative and its documents, or the book's standing in the real world, is unique since very few novels have sparked as much historical enthusiasm in the city they portray as *Consolation*. As evident from the attention that it has gained at the City Archives – the photocopied map that David mentions was on display in its entrance hall from 2007 to 2017 and the items seen in Fig. 9 are available to the public by request – the novel is a valuable means in educating Torontonians and visitors alike about the city's origins. The Toronto Public Library has also encouraged locals to read the novel (it was chosen as the “One Book” for Feb. 2008) and dozens of copies are available in the city's libraries. What is more, a podcast walking tour of the narrative's setting has been created by Heritage Toronto and the author Michael Redhill, and a map highlighting eleven stops on the tour is downloadable online. Hence, city institutions in Toronto have truly embraced the book, which is noteworthy because as a city artifact the novel is, after all, a work of fiction, a work of art. It is also fascinating that the City, in the introductory text to the web exhibit “The Earliest Known Photographs of Toronto,” not only acknowledges the book but believes its readers find it more enjoyable if they learn both, the fictionalized *and* the official version of how the 1856 photographs came about: “These photos proved to be an inspiration for author Michael Redhill when he wrote his book . . . We think that you will enjoy *Consolation* even more if you know the ‘archival’ story behind the story.” Consequently, while the novel tells the story of Toronto, Toronto, for its part, tells the story of the novel.

4.2 Lying, Letting Go, and Leaving the City

Consolation discusses a wide range of city issues through urban archaeology, but the narrative thematizes also the act of lying, and all of the main characters are caught doing it at some point or the other: it is obvious that David hides something when it comes to the mysterious source he insists exists; Marianne is forced to lie to more than a few people around her in order to proceed

with her quest; and Hallam sends lies to his family in the hopes of saving himself from the embarrassment of failing. Yet, when the novel is finished, the reader realizes that out of all the characters, John is the one who has had the most to hide and lie about. Although first portrayed as someone who enjoys being in the background rather than in the spotlight – as someone who is always there to help and listen – John, in the course of the novel, turns out to be that and much more. The greatest individual thing that John keeps to himself is that on the warm August morning that his father-in-law committed suicide, it was him who drove David to the ferry.

Picking him up at seven in the morning in front of the Hollises' house, John is described being visibly nervous despite having agreed to David's request weeks before and despite the two having driven in the city together many times before. John's behaviour, then, mediates that although he wants to help David fulfill his last wish, he has grown doubtful inside:

John sat with his hands on the wheel, the street over the dashboard soaked in light, and he tried to think of something else to talk about, anything to keep them there, in front of the house. He began to speak, but David put a hand on his, and said 'Come on now, no more small talk. Let's go.' (96)

What makes John nervous is his understanding that once they get to the ferry, it will be the last time he will see David alive. But his anxiety arises also from the fact that he *knows* that what he is doing happens behind the women's back and that he does not have their approval. Of John not being truthful to Marianne and Bridget, and of his feelings of guilt, it is written: "At Bloor Street, passing under the viaduct, John realized he was probably equidistant from both of their women, both still sleeping, unaware of this invisible line he was drawing between them" (96). The adjective "equidistant" is rather intriguing because it simultaneously refers to the physical and the emotional distance that John feels while driving. From the location of the Bloor viaduct the geographical distance to the men's (and women's) suburban homes is the same, meaning they live equally close to it. But the distance that John feels emotionally is the one he is drawing

between him and the two women, the “invisible line” that grows in length as he approaches downtown. These kind of subtle remarks reveal, first and foremost, that John is aware and even reflective of his actions before carrying them out, meaning, then, that he lies deliberately.

The drive is interesting for other reasons as well. In addition to John contemplating life and death behind the wheel – the road symbolizing a journey and the journey symbolizing life – he thinks about the ways in which he has previously been useful to his father-in-law with whom he identifies best out of the entire family. The way John talks about the relationship he has with David is also descriptive of the role he has internalized in life in general, that of a helper, an aid:

Before this, he had done a number of small tasks for David – he’d realized long ago that his destiny was to be called upon – and he’d collected a book for David or looked up some small matter like a date or a street name. John’s so-called expertise was only a convenience, though. The two men were too far apart in age to settle on a simple friendship, so their relationship was sown on the berm of being useful to each other. (97)

Accordingly, John’s expertise, bookkeeping and fact-checking, has proved useful in building a trustworthy relationship with David whom he has helped research the boat, yet the way in which the novel discusses John’s own understanding of his role on that August morning is somewhat peculiar. Employing the words ‘destiny’ and being ‘called upon’ alludes to the act being nearly inevitable, something life has prepared John for, and the revelation he has in the car seems godly. However, just before reaching the docks, John hits the breaks (perhaps wishing to tempt fate), becomes flushed and, his face hot and red, asks David: “Will you let me take you home?”. David’s firm answer is: “I didn’t go through this to let you stumble the last steps to the docks. It’s three hundred feet to the turnstiles” (98). The image of David going through the “turnstiles” is powerful since, to continue with the godly theme, it can be interpreted to allude both to the exit gates of the worldly earth and to the entrance gates of heaven and hell. Metaphorically speaking, then, John’s task is to take David to the turnstiles, assist him in dying and guard his secret.

When John, just a few days after David's death (or when he is still believed missing), goes to check up on Marianne in the room 3347, his intentions are essentially good: he is trying to get Marianne to phone Bridget after hanging up on her a couple of days earlier. It does not take long for John, however, to learn that because Marianne is frustrated and going through a crisis, she can only focus on herself and the mission she is on. This makes John sympathize with her, and when she asks John "Do you think my behavior is 'disappointing'?", he answers: "No. I understand it" (116). The awkwardness and the sensitivity of the situation also explains why John has not seen it necessary to tell his fiancée about visiting his mother-in-law, but when Marianne is curious about how her daughter feels about her behavior, his response is somewhat surprising: "I don't tell her anything . . . she doesn't know I'm here" (116). This is the first instance where John admits to being dishonest, but then again, at this point of the novel it seems understandable, for his intentions justify it. After his confession, however, John quickly adds: "But I will tell her," continuing: "I'm not here just for you" (117). Admitting that he is keeping something to himself, that there is something that Marianne and Bridget do not know, seems somewhat suspicious but Marianne does not inquire further. Speaking often in vague and ambiguous terms, John convinces Marianne that he is there merely to help the women reconcile. This scene then confirms John's role as a middle-man trying to be of use, and his lying is portrayed as something that happens out of a necessity, not want.

What is more, there are many subtle metatextual elements in *Consolation* and John's lying plays a prominent part in the narrative showing that it is aware of its materiality and its own textuality. One of the first scenes where the metatextual elements begin to surface is a scene where John visits Howard, the struggling playwright that he works for part-time. Explaining to Howard the tricky situation he is in – caught between the women's quarrel – John laments his part and complains about feeling powerless, which leads the playwright to say: "You like things complicated, John. You should be a writer" (120). This is one of the many hints pointing to the

novel's climax (and its denouement), but the hints are so subtle that it is nearly impossible to guess the ending. When Howard learns that John has started going to Marianne's hotel room on a daily basis, he voices what also the reader is partly assuming of the relationship between the two: "So what's with the shacking up with both mother and daughter then?". John strictly denies this and his answer is blunt: "I don't sleep at the hotel," which makes Howard to remark: "See, *if this was a play, you would*. And Bridget would show up and either kill you both or join in – no matter, it's a smash. Can I have it?" (120, emphasis added). The conditional phrase that Howard employs ("if this was a play . . .") is interesting, for it manages to allude to John's situation and the narrative itself which, when it comes to literary genre, is, of course, not a play but a novel. However, Howard's metatextual comment stands out only on the second reading, once the reader knows what to look for, since the conversation between the men revolves also around a play that John is assisting Howard with. In other words, the novel's metatextuality reveals itself through fragments that gain meaning only after the novel has been finished.

Conversing with Howard, John admits that he feels disconnected from the women in his life and he expresses his wish to feel more engaged, to take more part in their sorrow somehow: "Bridget isn't even talking to her mother. Or me, really. And no one's talking about David. So however crazy this thing is down at the hotel, *I think I should be part of it*" (122, emphasis added). If we, however, consider John's earlier actions, it is fair to say that he has played more than a minor part in it, although he seems reluctant to admit this. Nevertheless, the difference here is that John, realizing how devastated the women are about David's suicide, becomes remorseful and feels that he should do something to console them. And it is precisely because he cannot truly own up to his actions or talk about it with either woman, that he starts putting his thoughts on paper, writing about the things he witnesses (like Howard suggested). Consequently, when Howard asks if John could spend more time helping him with the play – do more than just fact-checking – John politely declines with the words: "I'd love to . . . but I think I'll be spending

most of my time with my own lies” (123). These “lies,” the reader comes to learn, have everything to do with David, the diary of Hallam, and the consolation John offers to the women.

Without further ado: what makes the metatextuality of the narrative so prevailing and complex, is that in the novel’s last chapter, titled *Consolation* (which lends its name to the book), it is revealed that in his spare time, writing mostly at nights, John has authored a manuscript whose implications are many. In the novel’s storyworld the manuscript is both a novella that he has secretly been writing as well as a fictional, extended version of the diary David claims exists. In the metatextual world and in the reader’s perspective, however, the manuscript is that and also part of the novel itself (the chapters discussing Hallam’s era), because if John wrote Hallam’s story, and Hallam’s story is part of the novel, then John wrote part of the novel that the reader is about to finish reading. This dramatic, unpredictable ending also makes the reader *rethink* everything that was said before and, naturally, on the second reading it becomes much easier to see the many metatextual hints that point to this surprising denouement. Most of these hints are presented as side notes or discussed only in passing, giving the impression of John working on something, but nothing particularly special. For instance, in a scene where John has just woken up, he is described reading through some pages, but the reader is not told what these pages are, there being many options to choose from (e.g. his research for David, Howard, or Marianne):

He got up, washed, made a coffee for himself, and brought out a sheaf of paper he’s started keeping in a junk drawer below the cutlery and the tea towels. He read the pages over and drank his coffee. He made a correction here and there, but otherwise felt that increasingly familiar trance overtake him in the presence of those words, this thing emerging from darkness. An hour passed. He was beginning to discover what Howard must once have felt: something blossoming in his hands. And a sense of betrayal, as he turned his attention away from the world he supposedly lived in. (200, emphases added)

This passage is interesting not only because this is the first time the narrative mentions the manuscript explicitly, but also because in it John is reading something he has written himself.

The manuscript is referred to as “a thing emerging from the darkness,” the text “blossoming in his hands,” and the act of writing is understood to entail a “sense of betrayal,” something that pulls John away from the physical world. Thus, the narrative plays with the age-old idea of a book – or fiction more generally – being a collection of well-crafted lies, words showing and telling but also betraying, and literature essentially drawing its reader away from the ‘real’ world.

What eventually makes John start writing the manuscript is that he does not believe that the diary David discusses in his monograph actually exists. He even tells this to Marianne after she confronts him about the matter: [Marianne] “I want to know if you believe it. If you believe him,” [John] “No . . . I don’t . . . But I believe in why he wrote the monograph” (130). The nervous conversation between the two continues and after Marianne presses John to explain himself further, he manages to say that he “wants” David to be right because “it would make his dying less awful” (131). This, trying to make David’s suicide seem less awful, trying to lessen the guilt that he feels, and trying to provide the women with something concrete to hold onto later, is why the manuscript becomes so important to John and the novel (as a metatext).

The reason why John does not think that the diary exists is because he asked David about it on the drive towards the ferry. In the car the men engage in a heated discussion, and after not getting any real answers from David concerning the origins of the diary, John says: “So there’s no diary. Just say that to me” (191). This silences David for a moment, after which he answers in length: “*There is a vast part of this city with mouths buried in it, John. Mouths capable of speaking to us. But we stop them up with concrete and build over them,* and whatever they wanted to say gets whispered down empty alleys and turns into wind. People need to be given a reason to listen” (192, emphases added). This fascinating metaphor that David uses, the city stopping up mouths buried in the ground with concrete, gains deeper meaning if we think of it through urban archaeology and its ability to discover those mouths and stories. However, David’s ambiguous answer and half-confession (of there being no diary) angers John, and after

swinging the car across the opposite lane, he says: “You’ve given them a reason to care even less. That’s what your legacy is going to be, David. A lie in an empty hole.” To this David answers: “They’re going to find something there. And it will matter to them simply because they chose to look. Something different but worthwhile” (192). The biggest difference between the men’s thinking is ideological: while John firmly believes that the City and the people “need to be given a reason to listen,” that in order for anything to be discovered in the city they have to be willing “to look,” John thinks that it will be worthwhile only if there is a specific thing to look for. This disagreement and juxtaposition starts to bother John really after David’s death and thus, the manuscript he conjures up is the ultimate consolation both to the women and to David’s legacy.

When John is in the middle of writing Hallam’s story (the reader still unaware of him being the author), he goes over to Howard’s apartment, as he wants his professional opinion on it: “I want you to look at this . . . It’s something I’m writing,” he says. Howard is instantly intrigued and he responds: “*You’re* writing . . . Wow. What is this? Is it a novel?” (212, italics original). John’s answer, considering the metatextuality of the manuscript (which the reader learns a hundred pages later) is telling: “No. I mean, even if it is, I’m not writing to publish it . . . It’s a gift. I think . . . It’s something I want to say . . .” (212, italics original). Here the idea of literature being able to convey a message, something that the author wants to say and give as a gift to his or her audience, is significant, for it mirrors the intra- and extratextual world of the novel: John’s manuscript is a comment and an elaboration on the source mentioned in David’s monograph, but it is also an integral part of the novel proper which is literature and a comment on the city itself. Thus, wrapping itself in thick layers of meaning, *Consolation* is, above all, a novel about the importance of literature, stories, and about fiction’s power to convey a message and to console. John’s feelings about living in the city also mirror the Shakespearean idea of ‘all the world being a stage’ and people merely actors in it; indeed, when John is walking outside one day, making his way to the hotel once more, he is said to feel “insubstantial . . . as if he were a player in a story

made up entirely of extras, each of whom had a line to speak” (222). John’s thought continues: “All the great books and legends were nothing held against this ongoing tale with no main character and no ending. He recognized that its only action was its telling” (ibid.). Although highly metaphorical and thus capable of pointing to many directions, John’s train of thought can also be seen as a comment on the essence of *history* and the power of stories: while history has no beginning and no end, it is constantly written down and “its only action is its telling.”

Further, the idea of literature, history and John’s manuscript being without an ending is emphasized when he takes its final version to Howard, saying “I don’t think it’s finished” (301). The audience of the manuscript, a document referred to as “the open secret lying dumb in the middle of the table” (ibid.), has also changed in the course of its writing. To Howard, who asks if his family is aware of him writing it, John says: “I was writing it for myself. But now I think I should give it to them.” Having learned that John drove David to the ferry, Howard advises against this and tells John that it seems he is merely “trying to fix a lie with another lie” and that it “isn’t exactly right” (304). John insists on being “a witness,” now understanding what David meant with the idea of giving people a reason to listen, but after being questioned by Howard, he admits that what he has produced is a “certain kind of lie” (304). When Howard asks him to be a little more specific, “So what kind of a lie is this, John,” he answers: “A comforting one” (305). Indeed, offering his manuscript to Bridget and Marianne at the end of the novel, John aims to comfort them in the midst of their sorrow, and the document – a piece of literature – thus acts as the only kind of consolation he knows to give them.

Of course John’s gesture is not without its problems. Firstly, because the manuscript only covers Toronto in the 1850s, there is nothing that links John or his own actions to the story; in other words, he never tells Marianne or Bridget that he drove their husband and father to the docks. Secondly, John does not personally deliver the document, for he sends Howard to take it to the hotel, knowing that the women are still there. Handing “a thick manila envelope” to

Marianne, Howard says: “This is the end of something, Mrs. Hollis . . . you need to understand that” (336). When the women inquire about John, he tells them John has left Toronto and is on his way to England. Bombarded with questions, Howard blurs out: “He asks me to deliver it, and now I have. I’ve done my duty. Now yours is to read it and get on with your lives” (336).

When the novel ends all three men have made their exits: David is dead, Hallam is gone and his whereabouts are unclear, and John has left for England. Startled, angered and confused, Bridget says to her mother and Howard: “What the fuck is going on?,” to which Marianne, rather descriptively, answers: “It’s just us now” (337). Of the manuscript, the secret sitting in the middle of the desk, is it written: “Marianne turned half the pile of paper over and they both started at it. The line at the top of the page said, *As if beckoned by a strange gesture of hope, the spring came in earnest the week after Mrs. Rowe moved into Hallam’s rooms.* Bridget looked up at her mother. ‘Who’s Hallam?’ (337, italics original). Because by now the reader already knows what the manuscript stands for, it is not elaborated on much in the last pages of the novel. The women are also clearly overwhelmed by the overall situation, because right before Howard gives them the manila envelope, outside the hotel room window, they witness the archaeological site turn back into a construction site. Thus, at the end of the novel, Marianne ends up losing three things she once held dear: her husband David, the site which she tried to fight for, and her son-in-law. The very words that Marianne uses when she sees the archaeological site (and the boat) being filled with concrete are also symbolic: “Go pour concrete on him then. Go on – ” (330). Talking about the site but using the pronoun *him* reveals that Marianne is finally willing to give up on her mission, let go of the fight, and bury the hopes of seeing David alive. Right after this, Bridget and Marianne descend from the hotel to the street level, and drive home to the suburbs.

Finally, and to briefly return to the physical city of Toronto: ever since the publication of *Consolation* (since the mid-2000s), the City has started to work hard to improve its heritage laws, has updated and revised its practices on city planning and archaeology, and has started to pay

more attention to the historical discoveries made in the city. In addition to the St. Lawrence Market site, another major excavation in the middle of Toronto is the ‘Courthouse site dig’ from where thousands of artifacts were found when archaeologists were asked to study the site before construction of the court house began in 2017. Of the neighbourhood’s history, the City writes:

The excavation revealed tens of thousands of artifacts from the neighbourhood known as St. John’s Ward, or the Ward. As one of Toronto’s earliest immigrant and migrant settlements, the Ward in the 19th century was a place of refuge for Black settlers, including fugitive slaves and freed persons, as well as Irish, Italian, Jewish and later Chinese immigrants. (City of Toronto, 22 Feb. 2017)

Coincidentally, the Ward is also where Hallam’s friend Ennis, late of Ireland, is said to live in Redhill’s novel. Indeed, Toronto’s most diverse neighbourhood in the 1850s, the Ward, was once home to thousands of newcomers and its streets were buzzing with conversation and commerce. Today the area is part of the central business district and, unfortunately, no physical markers of the neighbourhood’s past remain. However, in order to embrace people’s history and pay tribute to the generations who made Toronto what it is today, the City, instead of putting up the usual blank hardboard fence, has devoted part of the wall surrounding the construction site to the many buried, forgotten and previously unheard *stories* of the people who lived in the Ward. This is significant not only because this sort of down-to-earth approach to new development is extremely rare in all of North America, but also because the texts featured on the wall are personal and second hand stories told by people who either lived or whose ancestors lived in the Ward before it was completely demolished in the 1950s. Offering a place and giving a voice to unofficial history, to the people who called the Ward home, is then a concrete step towards reconciliation and part of the “work of remembering” that Raweno:kwas argues the city must begin in earnest. Photographed on the next page is the Courthouse site in its construction phase (Fig. 11) and below it is the wall (Fig. 12), featuring the words “These stories are not unlike your stories.”



Fig. 11. The Courthouse site in its construction phase on 94 Chestnut Street, looking south, the City Hall visible in the upper left hand corner, 29 Apr. 2017.



Fig. 12. South wall of the Courthouse dig on Armoury Street (and Chestnut Ave.), 29 Apr. 2017.

5 Conclusions

This thesis set out to explore the dynamic relationship that Toronto has with its urban past, and my primary research material, Michael Redhill's city novel *Consolation* (2006), was researched thoroughly through the notion of urban archaeology. Examining texts of fiction and non-fiction, and including in my thesis the practical examination of concrete Toronto, I showed how the novel's abstract storyworld meets and converses with the concrete world of the city that it is set in: how the novel's intra- and extratextual worlds overlap and lend meaning to each another.

In the Introduction an overview of previous research on Toronto literature was given, and the question of reading and imagining was explored by comparing it to seeing, the thesis thus subscribing to the idea that fictional texts evoke complex mental cartographies which help us better understand the materiality of texts. Indeed, one of the main objectives of this thesis was to look into the materiality of Redhill's novel and show how analyzing fiction by employing a new multidisciplinary method, Deep Locational Criticism, can broaden our understanding on reading and analyzing cities. Choosing this subject matter and this practical approach to texts proved particularly topical because the thesis concluded that not only has Toronto literature been understudied but also that the relationship between urban archaeology and literature, space and time remains to be theorized. In the introduction it was also stated that urban archaeology is the single most important metaphor through which the reader of *Consolation* is told the story of Toronto and its people, and this notion of the power of *stories* grew as the research progressed, and their importance to the concrete city of Toronto was one of the most interesting findings.

In the second chapter I went into great detail to discuss and explain the theoretical and methodological foundation upon which the thesis builds. Before studying the characteristics of the city novel as a genre, I traced the study of a narrative's setting back to the Spatial Turn and elaborated on its stance in contemporary literary criticism. Following Andrew Thacker's

theorization on how to think geographically about literary texts, I also looked into the sphere of Canadian literature, arguing that *Consolation* is a distinctively Canadian novel, for it thematizes many cultural, geographical and political issues that have been under debate in the country. I then researched the theories put forward by literary scholars Blanche Gelfant, Christopher Den Tandt, and Lieven Ameel, and argued that based on their definitions on what characterizes the genre, Redhill's novel is a rather typical city novel. As the thesis moved on to study and define urban archaeology in literature, it became obvious that this was, in large part, untouched terrain, that few scholars have attempted to theorize the concept in the field.

Determined to make a connection between urban archaeology and literary research, I suggested that although it may not seem so initially, the academic fields have much in common. Mentioning the differences but focusing on the similarities between the two fields, I argued that although one is understood to focus on *material* evidence and the other on *textual* evidence, they both (1) study objects once created and produced by humans, (2) aim to gain an understanding of what the object mediates of its subject and the culture it communicates, and (3) subscribe to the idea of there being no 'right' answers to the more complex questions that the artifact proposes. Wishing to bring the fields together in theory and on paper, I also studied how geographers and archaeologists understand and interpret the material that they discover and work with, and was able to conclude that imagination and dialogue are important means through which not only literary but also archaeological interpretation works.

McClelland's definition of urban archaeology as "a process that allows us to imagine the past in a very concrete way" was seen as the most beneficial one for the thesis, and it was argued that while the excavations in the concrete city of Toronto teach citizens and visitors alike much about the city's history, the city novel, in its turn, is also a very useful means to uncover and rediscover the buried city and its stories. Using *Consolation* as a contemporary example of this, I showed how its author (like McClelland) turns to urban archaeology to make an analogy between

the city and the mind. It was also argued that both literature and the discoveries of archaeology have potential to be uncanny, for the effects of the discoveries are often unpredictable.

In the subchapter that introduced and discussed my method, Deep Locational Criticism, it was illustrated how useful this innovative, multidisciplinary approach to texts can be when researching a novel that tells the story of an existing city. Proving how essential visiting Toronto and including other material – like tourist brochures, maps, guides, and photographs – was in my research, I argued that Deep Locational Criticism is the most accessible practical approach to texts available. By choosing this approach and discussing its effects in length, I was also able to demythologize analyzing a city novel and show that elaborating on methodology can be an important part of literary analysis, and that stepping outside the novel does not undervalue or diminish its textuality, on the contrary.

In the third chapter, the novel's storyworld and its main characters – David, Marianne John, and Hallam – were analyzed in reference to the many city relationships that the narrative refers to. It was shown that the Toronto waterfront and its history with landfilling is one of the most prominent images and themes that surface both in the non-fiction texts written of the city as well as in the city's literature. The somewhat difficult and contested relationship that the city, or more specifically the city government, has (and has had) with urban archaeology was elaborated on especially in the subchapter that discussed the construction of the Air Canada Centre to which the novel alludes repeatedly. It was also concluded that discoveries of archaeological objects are described in detail both in the city's contemporary literature as well as in non-fiction articles, such as the city's newspapers which show great interest in reporting stories on archaeology. The buried city under the modern one was revealed through studying the novel's chapters dealing with Hallam's story, and it was said that it is through the character of Hallam that the reader learns about the early stages of the city. Discussing the neighbourhood of Old Town the thesis drew some comparisons between the 1850s and the present time and argued that although the city

publically promotes heritage conservation, it often resorts to façadism which Heritage Toronto and other vocal heritage associations in the city have been advising against for decades.

The fourth chapter dived into the depths of city documents, first identifying a variety of papers that the novel discusses and then analyzing their meaning and importance to the narrative. Books, papers, documents and letters, it was argued, are significant means through which the novel refers both to the concrete city of Toronto and to the emotional, inner world of all the characters. The novel's standing in the real world was illustrated by elaborating on what the City has done in order to draw its citizens' attention to the topic and themes that the narrative covers, and institutions like the City Archives and the Public Library proved to be some of the most prominent actors in getting the word out of the novel's world, as it were. The last subchapter of the thesis revealed the thick metatextuality of the narrative, showing how the novel is aware of its own textuality and how literature is able to refer to itself in order to convey a message. The chapter concluded on the notion of the concrete city of Toronto having "woken up" to its own materiality only relatively recently: whereas in the 1990s the city's urban planning was a far cry from what it is today, especially when it comes recognizing local archaeological resources, the number of present plans, projects and initiatives speak for the City's willingness to start learning from its earlier mistakes and to improve the preservation of Toronto's physical legacy. The two archaeological digs discussed in the thesis are great examples of this, and the thesis concludes on the notion that stories told *in* and *of* the city are a significant part of the work of remembering which, in turn, is respecting the legacy of the buried city.

Suggestions for further study on the topic include exploring what new and innovative ways there are to use the concept of archaeology in the study of literature; what the relationship between urban archaeology and tourism is; how much a discovery can cost to the city; and in what ways literary scholars could work with archaeologists in order to further common goals.

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