

Being-in-Landscape: A Heideggerian Reading of Landscape in Gerald Murnane's *Inland*

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My books are mostly about landscapes, because for me the world is mostly made up of landscapes. If you handed me a book of philosophy, I'd end up thinking of it as a book of landscapes. Gerald Murnane

I. Introduction

Landscape is an important presence throughout Murnane's writing from his first novel, *Tamarisk Row* (1974), to his most recent work of fiction, *A Million Windows* (2014). Murnane explained the centrality of landscape to his fiction in an interview, where he said: 'My books are mostly about landscapes, because for me the world is mostly made up of landscapes. If you handed me a book of philosophy, I'd end up thinking of it as a book of landscapes' (Braun-Bau, 'Conversation' 46).

Landscape is not merely a backdrop for narrative action, rather, landscape itself becomes an intrigue central to the fiction. At times landscape even aspires to the status of character, and occasionally achieves this status, as the sprawling Inner Australia does in *The Plains*. In spite of, or perhaps because of its central importance, landscape retains an air of mystery and inscrutability for Murnane's characters and readers alike. The aim of this essay is to penetrate this haze of ambiguity and offer an interpretation of the landscape's significance in Murnane's fiction. Particular interest will be taken in the way characters interact with landscape, and the ontological knowledge that the characters may arrive at in such interactions.

In order to uncover the significance of Murnane's fictional landscapes this essay will closely examine one book in particular, *Inland*. Originally published in 1988, *Inland* has recently been re-released by Dalkey Archive in the United States, where it garnered an essay-length review in the *New York Review of Books*. Given its perplexing narrative convolutions, a short summary of the novel's story is difficult. In essence, the novel revolves around an institutional repository of information on the world's grassy places – plains, prairies, grasslands *et cetera* – that is aptly named the Institute of Prairie Studies. The two main characters of the novel are its narrators, and both are contributors to the grand repository of grassland documentation. The first narrator has control of the story for the first sixty-odd pages before surrendering the reins to the second narrator. What makes the underlying narrative thread difficult to track is that it is never made entirely clear how the two narrators relate to each other; it remains possible that each may be a figment of the other's imagination.

Inland serves as an obvious focal point for a number of reasons. First, *Inland* is, in many ways, the most ambitious of Murnane's published works to date. Spanning two, or maybe three, continents the novel's architectonics allow for the mesmerising interweaving of observation, dream and memory. Murnane himself has acknowledged *Inland* to be the most demanding of his books, while J.M. Coetzee has called it 'the most ambitious, sustained, and

powerful piece of writing he has to date brought off' (62). Second, *Inland* is a watershed in the terrain of Murnane's fiction. Looking back across Murnane's entire output from 1974 to 2014, it is possible to see *Inland* as the point at which he changed direction. Prior to *Inland*, Murnane's writing was initially concerned with childhood and adolescence (in *Tamarisk Row* and *A Lifetime on Clouds*) and then with landscape (in *The Plains* and *Landscape with Landscape*). Then came *Inland* with its masterful exploration of how landscape is inscribed in words and in memory. After *Inland*, landscape remained a presence in Murnane's fiction (in, for example, *Emerald Blue* and *Velvet Waters*, which appear to be written in the shadow of *Inland*). But landscape's importance was undoubtedly on the wane, and it increasingly became a background for explorations of the phenomenology of reading and writing (which explorations reached their apogee in the recent *Barley Patch*, *A History of Books* and *A Million Windows*). Yet *Inland* has mostly been ignored by critics writing about landscape in Murnane's fiction, most of whom prefer to study *The Plains*. Yet *Inland* is entirely concerned with landscape, and particularly with the way humans relate to landscape. It is for these reasons that *Inland* is the site for this essay's comments on landscape in Murnane's fiction.

In articulating the importance of landscape to the characters of *Inland* this essay will make extended reference to Martin Heidegger's philosophy. It is posited that the characters of *Inland* engage with landscape in a way that results in them arriving at an understanding of the world largely in accordance with Heidegger's conception of Being-in-the-world. This understanding, however, is not reached immediately. Like all humans, the characters of *Inland* are always *in* landscape, and it is the experience of this immersion that they first seek to understand. They do so by conceiving of the physical world as a unified and infinite plenum. This conception of the world requires that the characters acknowledge that their own corporeal bodies are encapsulated within this infinitely extending web of matter. At this stage, the characters' knowledge still pertains to the physical world, as opposed to the ontological world. What happens next, though, is that this new understanding of the *physical* world precipitates a consideration of the nature and qualities of the *ontological* realm, that is to say the realm of Being or existence. It is to be the argument of this essay that the final position the *Inland* characters arrive at is an awareness that they are as immersed in the ontological sphere of Being as they are in the physical world. The characteristics of this ontological immersion are most easily understood with reference to Heidegger's notion of Being-in-the-world.

The progression of this essay's argument can be outlined as follows: first, it will answer the preliminary question that confronts all critics proposing theoretical readings of Murnane's fiction – namely, 'how should a critic conduct a philosophically grounded reading of a work by an author who has an express aversion to such readings?' Having attended to this issue the essay will proceed to map the current state of critical literature on *Inland*, and on landscape in Murnane's fiction. This mustering of critical sources is necessary given the disparate interpretations that his enigmatic prose has produced. After the modest literature review there will follow a brief adumbration of this essay's critical crutch—namely, Heidegger's notion of Being-in-the-world. This critical apparatus will then be employed in a close reading of a particular passage from *Inland* in which the narrator has an especially powerful experience of landscape. The discussion of the narrator's experience will show how he arrives at an understanding of his Being-in-the-world. The essay will conclude with a restatement of its place in the field and suggestions as to where critical attention might most rewardingly focus in the future.

II. Theorising the Antitheoretical

In today's climate one cannot be unaware of the pitfalls of reading a fictional text through the lens of a philosophical or critical theorem. One must be especially wary of such pitfalls when discussing Murnane's richly ambiguous fiction. A critic cannot fail to advert to Murnane's, and his narrator's, professed aversion to, and ignorance of, philosophical and theoretical frameworks. In an interview with Pradeep Trikha, Murnane confessed, 'I have never been able to understand philosophy' (99). Similarly, in his book of essays, *Invisible Yet Enduring Lilacs*, Murnane expresses a distaste for all systems of organisation not devised by himself ('Breathing author' 163). Yet Murnane admits, almost in the same breath, that 'I have sometimes thought of the whole enterprise of my fiction-writing as an effort to bring to light an underlying order' ('Breathing author' 162).

In *The Plains*, a group of people thought it necessary to 'provoke the intellectuals of the plains to define in metaphysical terms what had previously been expressed in emotional or sentimental language' (26). This same injunction could be directed at the narrator of *Inland* in regard to his descriptions of his interactions with landscape. The intention of this essay is to abide by this injunction, to attempt a metaphysical description of the world that the *Inland* narrator understands by engaging with landscape.

Given Murnane's reluctance to subscribe to any particular philosophical order, it is not this critic's intention to foist Heidegger's philosophy onto Murnane himself. Rather, the aim is to define the ontological order that best fits the descriptions of the two narrators' engagements with landscape in Murnane's *Inland*. This ontological order should not be attributed to Murnane, but it might reasonably attach to the 'implied author' suggested by the fiction. Murnane has commended the idea of the 'implied author' in a number of interviews (Braun-Bau, 'Conversation' 46; Heyward n. pag.). The term originally comes from Wayne C. Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, and describes the personage that a reader imagines to have written a text.

III. The Critical Landscape

Since its publication, *Inland* has slowly accreted a rich body of critical commentary. The most significant secondary sources are Harald Fawkner's book, *Grasses that Have No Fields: From Gerald Murnane's 'Inland' to a Phenomenology of Isogonic Constitution*; a chapter of Imre Salusinszky's monograph on Murnane; and articles by Sue Gillett and Stephen Kolsky (as well as the substantial reviews by John Tittensor and J.M. Coetzee). Of these critical texts the majority focus on the act of writing in *Inland*, and how successfully it facilitates communication (Coetzee; Gillett, 'Loving and Hating'; Kolsky; Salusinszky, *Gerald Murnane*; Tittensor). Only Fawkner places any real importance on physical landscape in *Inland*. For Fawkner, the grasslands of *Inland* are a metaphorical illustration of what a phenomenological zone of constitution might look like. This essay will follow Fawkner in reading the landscape of *Inland* to be a metaphysical metaphor but will suggest a different referent, as will be apparent below.

Given the dearth of writing on *Inland*'s landscapes it becomes necessary to examine how critics have dealt with landscape in the broader context of Murnane's entire literary output. Three approaches can be identified within the extant academic writing on landscape in Murnane's fiction. These interpretative positions are not mutually exclusive; many commentators adopt more than one.

In the first approach, physical landscape is significant only insofar as it serves as a metaphor for other landscapes, both physical and metaphysical. Most relevant for this essay, Salusinszky and Paul Genoni take the physical environment of Murnane's novels to signify the 'interior' landscape of the Self (Salusinszky, *Gerald Murnane* 56–57; Salusinszky, 'On Gerald Murnane' 526; Genoni, *Subverting* 146). The second approach acknowledges the existence of physical landscape in Murnane's fiction but is only interested in the way Murnane's characters *perceive* this landscape. Nicholas Birns, Susanne Braun-Bau, Genoni and Tittensor all adopt this approach at various times in their scholarship on Murnane's fiction, as have I (Birns 74; Braun-Bau, 'Nature and Psyche' 24; Genoni, *Subverting* 158, 168, 193; Tittensor 99; Author 9–12). The third approach focuses on the act of *representing* landscape in Murnane's fiction, particularly the production of written descriptions of landscape. Helen Daniel, Sue Gillett and, again, Genoni are proponents of this approach (Daniel 328, 334; Gillett, 'Convenient Source' 28, 34; Genoni, *Subverting* 189–91). This essay will employ the first approach as it seeks to understand how the physical landscape of *Inland* serves as a means by which the characters can imagine the non-physical world of Being. But there is a departure from other authors who have read landscape metaphorically at the point where this essay gives equal weight to the physicality of the landscape as it does to its ontological significance as a metaphor.

Another way in which this essay will depart from the existing commentary is in its application of a Heideggerian ontological model. Very little criticism to date has concerned itself with identifying an ontology or worldview in Murnane's fiction, and the commentaries that do touch on this issue are largely in disagreement. Salusinszky's monograph on Murnane reads the fiction to express a solipsistic worldview (2, 14, 56–72, 89). In the only other book-length study of Murnane's writing, Fawcner advocates for a different ontological armature. In a Husserlian reading of *Inland*, Fawcner takes the grassy plains of that novel to be symbolic of a phenomenological zone of constitution (19–20). According to Fawcner, Murnane's fiction shows the individual constructing his or her Self, and the world, through experiential perception (20). Finally, the Swedish academic Lena Sundin provides yet another divergent ontological analysis of Murnane's writing. Sundin views *Inland* through the lens of Byzantine iconicity. Drawing on the novel's quotations of the Gospel of Matthew, Sundin attributes to it a 'conspicuously Christological framework' (88). Within this framework Sundin characterises the narrative 'I' as Kantian, in that it transcends both time and space (11, 114–15).

Within this context of dissonance, this essay proposes Heidegger's conception of Being-in-the-world as offering the definitive ontology of Murnane's fiction. A number of critics have already hinted at the resonance Murnane's fiction has with Heidegger's philosophy including Genoni, Salusinszky, Dominique Hecq and Andrew Zawacki (Genoni, 'Photographic Eye' 139; Salusinszky, 'Murnane, Husserl, Derrida' 189, 190; Hecq n. pag.; Zawacki 5). But none of the aforementioned writers have troubled to bring Murnane's fiction and Heidegger's philosophy together in any sustained reading. This essay will thus be making an original contribution to the field by reading Murnane's fiction with close reference to Heidegger's idea of Being-in-the-world.

IV. Being-in-the-World

Heidegger's conception of Being-in-the-world is most comprehensively outlined in the first division of his magnum opus, *Being and Time* (first published in Germany under the title *Sein und Zeit* in 1927). The essence of Heidegger's conception of Being-in-the-world is that the conscious individual is always-already *in* the world. Heidegger takes exception to the French

philosopher René Descartes, who asserted that any sound ontological theory had to build on the foundation of an isolated individual consciousness (Heidegger 101–02, all subsequent Heidegger references are to *Being and Time* unless otherwise noted). For Heidegger, Descartes' starting point was artificial and naïve. Heidegger believed that the individual first becomes aware of him or herself as he or she exists *in* the world, not independent of it. He calls this original mode of existence Being-in-the-world, and bases its veracity on 'pre-phenomenological experience and acquaintance' (86). According to Heidegger, Descartes only arrives at the isolated cogito by ignoring these experiential assurances of worldedness.

It is important to be alert to the fact that the phrase 'Being-in-the-world' does not employ the word 'in' to denote only a physical-spatial relation. Concomitantly, when Heidegger writes 'world' he is not describing the purely physical world (79). Rather, Heidegger's world is both physical and supra-physical, it combines all entities that present themselves to the individual whether these entities be tangible or abstract. Magda King, a prominent Heidegger scholar, has described Heidegger's world as 'an existential-ontological concept' (52).

When describing how we can come to recognise that we exist in the mode of Being-in-the-world Heidegger makes the following important, though subtle, comment. The individual's knowledge of his or her existence as Being-in-the-world is a different sort of knowledge from the directional knowledge by which the subject 'knows' an object. Heidegger notes that while knowledge has traditionally been conceived of as 'a relation between subject and Object' (87), this relation cannot apply to the individual's understanding of his or her place in the ontological world. Heidegger writes: 'Self and the world belong together. [They] are not two beings, like subject and object [but] . . . the unity of Being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, *Basic Problems* 297).

Salusinszky and Fawkner both identify such an erasure of the subject/object binary in Murnane's fiction. Salusinszky writes that '[grasslands] are neither mind nor world, but precisely where we find ourselves as soon as we've stopped thinking about things that way' ('Murnane, Husserl, Derrida' 192). Elsewhere Salusinszky has written, similarly, 'the philosophy of the plains . . . [entails] the bracketing of the whole dialectic of mind and world' (*Gerald Murnane* 45). Fawkner, writing on *Inland*, has advocated for a similar rejection of the subject/object relation. Fawkner identifies a plane of existence in *Inland* that is prior to constitution, or is constitution itself; he calls this plane 'a pre-substantial zone of givenness' (19). Fawkner's fundamental plane is 'that which, this side of objects as well as subjects, brings the subjective-objective flanks of the world to view' (20). For Fawkner, the grasslands of *Inland* are an extended metaphor for the omnipresent zone of givenness undergirding existence (60).

This essay supports Salusinszky and Fawkner's readings of Murnane's favoured landscape as an ontological metaphor. The exact ontologies that Salusinszky and Fawkner choose to read into Murnane's fiction are, however, rejected and a Heideggerian alternative is proffered. This essay will pay closer attention to the physicality of Murnane's landscapes than either Salusinszky or Fawkner, resulting in a more textually grounded formulation of Murnane's fictional ontology. To substantiate this claim for a Heideggerian echo in *Inland*, a close reading will now be conducted of one passage from that novel, in which the narrator has a moving encounter with his physical surroundings.

V. An Example from *Inland*

Inland is a novel in which the narrative action primarily takes place indoors. Salusinszky goes so far as to say, '*Inland* is a book written from and about the writer's room' (*Gerald Murnane* 76). Indeed, the first seventy pages of the novel comprised the first narrator's description of sitting in his library, writing to a correspondent in the Institute of Prairie Studies. Similarly, the remainder of the novel has another narrator—or the same one?—ensconced in a room recording his memories of childhood. Yet throughout the novel these closeted scribes are obsessed by the landscape outside. They write about it, remember it and stand by their windows to look out at it. Thus, the primarily indoor setting of *Inland* serves to heighten the importance of the few outdoor moments.

The most patently significant of the few times we see characters in the outdoors in *Inland* occurs soon after the 'second-beginning' of the novel where the voice of the second narrator first addresses the reader. The second narrator opens by describing his relation to the place of his birth, an area between two waterways, which he refers to as his 'native district' (66). The narrator sets out to arrive at an understanding of 'the look and the feel' (69) of his native district. He hopes to 'learn the peculiar qualities that distinguished my own particular things from other things of other districts' (66). This understanding will be reached, the narrator hopes, if he experiences his surroundings to the fullest, opening himself to the sights, sounds and feel of the landscape. The narrator recounts his ensuing experience in the following terms:

I looked across my native district . . . I braced my feet among the weeds. I turned my face north-west, and I opened my mouth and waited for the air that had come from counties whose names I did not know and had poured down through the cold, dark-blue hills known as the Central Highlands and had then been shaped into a particular wind on the downward slopes around Jackson's Creek and in the winding valley of the Maribyrnong and at last on the grasslands of my own district. I opened my mouth and waited for the wind to blow my tongue around. (70)

The result of the narrator's experience is that he realises his own district, his own 'things,' cannot be distinguished from other districts, other things—all exist within the same grand 'pattern' (68). The following analysis will show how the narrator's experience of his native district allows him to understand his Being-in-the-world. Specific attention will be paid to the role of the wind in the above passage. Wind is a natural phenomenon which obsesses the two narrators of *Inland*, appearing at the following pages: 4, 6, 7, 11, 38, 49, 53, 122. (Unsurprisingly, Murnane's writing after *Inland* continues to show an interest in wind. See, for example, 'First Love' 151, 169; 'Cotters Come No More' 116; 'At the Edges of Plains' 8–9). There are two elements of the *Inland* narrator's experience of wind that catalyse his awareness of Being-in-the-world: first, the wind's passage across tracts of land beyond the horizon; and second, the formlessness of the wind as a natural phenomenon.

(a) *The wind's passage across the Earth's surface*

In the above-quoted passage the narrator is intrigued by the passage of the wind over landscape, particularly the history of the wind's passage prior to reaching the narrator's location. This is not a concern unique to *Inland*. In *The Plains*, the narrator is overcome by a powerful sensation when, standing at his open window, he feels 'the surges of air that rose up

from the nearest miles of grassland' (10). Similarly, in a later instalment of Murnane's fiction the narrator recounts a passage from *Wuthering Heights* which also describes the sensation of inhaling the wind after it has passed across landscape: 'And that wind sounding in the firs . . . Do let me feel it—it comes straight down the moor—do let me have one breath!' ('Emerald Blue' 93). The repetition of this scene in Murnane's fiction indicates that the author considers it worthy of our attention, and certainly each of the characters in the three scenes are strongly affected by his experience.

We can find a clue to the 'meaning' of this motif in the lines introducing the above scene from *Inland*. Before the narrator begins imaginatively describing the passage of the wind over the hills and valleys of the Central Highlands, he wonders about its earlier movement through 'counties whose names I did not know' (*Inland* 70). And if we go back even further to the opening pages of *Inland*, we see a foreshadowing of the narrator's fascination with the unknown source of the wind. The narrator is describing feeling the wind come off the Great Alfold (a Hungarian tract of grassland): 'I only feel the rush or the drift of the air, and all I think of is the width of land that the air has crossed before it reaches me' (7).

The wind in *Inland* serves as an occasion for the narrator to reflect on the extension of the Earth's surface beyond his vision and knowledge. The narrator of *Inland* feels, in the wind, traces of the physical contours over which it has passed before reaching the point where he stands. But these traces leave so much unknown; the wind's ancestral paths remain a mystery, as do the vast areas across which it has passed. The narrator is nevertheless joined to the places along these ancestral paths by virtue of his sharing the same wind-path with these remote locations. The narrator's coordinates are linked to those of some distant land by the flow of air that affects them all in common.

Similar intimations of the history of wind's passage before reaching a particular place are described in Hayden Lorimer's study of animal and human responses to wind in the Scottish highlands. Lorimer discusses how native animals in mountainous environments are able to intuit the shape of the landscape around them by the strength, quality and vagaries of the gusts of wind they feel (516–17). The social anthropologist Tim Ingold has drawn similar conclusions from the work of his PhD student, Anna Järpe. In her unpublished thesis on reindeer herding in Sweden, Järpe describes how both animals *and humans* position themselves with reference to the wind (in Ingold 248 n.5).

Like the animals and humans which Lorimer and Järpe study, the narrator of *Inland* feels a connection to the landscape over which the wind has passed, even those parts of the landscape that he cannot see. This experience of union with foreign parts of the Earth is summed up later in *Inland* where the narrator describes the experience of a man who heard the rush of wind through the leaves of trees and said that 'the wind in the leaves speaks the message: *Have no fear of the Universe*' (122). Murnane, then, can be seen to be using the wind to draw the attention of the reader and narrator to our position in the physical world. And Murnane requires that we attempt such cognitive positioning not just in relation to our immediate surroundings but in the scheme of the entire cosmos—the infinite, extending physical space of the universe.

It is also a fact that the invocation of the grandest arena of physical existence, the Universe, enjoins reflection on the ontological, as well as physical, aspects of living. Murnane sets up this ontological implication in such a way that the reader's and narrator's response has a ready-made blueprint. Attempting to conceive of our place in the ontological world we, reader

and narrator, are most likely to fall back on the metaphor of the physical world, which precipitated the ontological speculation in the first place. In this way the narrator, and the reader, transpose the idea of physical immersion in landscape onto the ontological plane and we come to an understanding of our concomitant immersion in the ontological world. This final idea of ontological immersion is the state this essay analogises with Being-in-the-world, where the individual's implication in the world is accepted as the most fundamental—or 'primordial' in Heidegger's phraseology—mode of existence. The narrator's feeling of kinship with the unknown parts of the Earth's surface involves a rejection of the insulated *cogito* of Descartes. Instead, the narrator adopts a position like Heidegger's, in which he accepts his implication in both the physical and metaphysical spheres of existence.

(b) *The formlessness of the wind*

The second aspect of the *Inland* narrator's experience which contributes to his understanding of Being-in-the-world is the formlessness of the wind. In its formlessness, wind challenges received knowledge that the physical world is made up of discrete objects or material. Wind is not made up of matter as other elements of the natural world are. Instead, the term 'wind' denotes the *movement* of matter. Wind permeates many elements of the physical world which are commonly considered sovereign and inviolable. Wind passes through foliage, often detaching and scattering leaves; wind picks up sand and dirt, undoing the easy distinction between land and sky; wind carries insects, seeds and pollen and distributes them across new landscapes, thus playing an important part in the floral and faunal formation of those landscapes.

In its formlessness then, wind interpenetrates what are usually considered distinct elements of the physical world. Wind effects an erasure of boundaries. This merging of the boundaries of physical objects similarly constitutes a challenge to the most fundamental of such distinctions, the distinction between the human body and its surroundings. If the objects of the physical world are implicated in one unified fabric, why should the human body escape this enmeshing? The suggestion, of course, is that the human body must also be viewed as part of the unified fabric of the physical world. This contention as to the unity of human body and world is reified in the narrator's attention to the wind literally entering his body through his mouth. Reading of the wind blowing into the narrator's mouth, we are reminded of an earlier passage in *Inland* in which the narrator describes the wind blowing particles of pollen into a woman's throat as she sleeps (7). Once we accept that the wind can enter the human body, carrying dust, dirt, pollen and the like, then the basis for one's distinction from the rest of the physical world begins to disintegrate.

Tim Ingold has written extensively about the individual's experience of wind. Ingold holds that attention to the wind can illuminate the essential unity of material underlying appearances. Wind, Ingold posits, interpenetrates both landscape and the individual. As wind passes across landscape it leaves its mark on that landscape in the form of erosion or accretion, but it also takes part of the landscape with it: sand, dust, water. The wind forms, and is formed by, the landscape: 'wind . . . mingles with substances as it blows through the land, leaving traces of its passing in tracks or trails' (Ingold 120). So for Ingold, the phenomenon of wind gives the lie to the neat distinctions humans set up between sky and land, air and solid matter. Instead, Ingold sees a unified zone of intermingling, and suggests that the individual, like *Inland's* narrator, comes to realise himself as part of this integrated space by virtue of his act of breathing. He writes: 'the living body, as it breathes, is necessarily swept up in the currents of the medium, . . . the wind is not so much embodied as

the body *enwinded*' (139, emphasis in original). Ingold is describing an experience like that of the narrator in *Inland*, in which the individual becomes aware of the material unity of the physical realm and his own implication in this unity.

But again these intimations of unity are not confined to the physical world. Murnane is almost always writing metaphorically as well as literally, and his characters are acutely aware of the way the physical world resonates with the world of thought and consciousness. Lena Sundin recognises this when she writes that the form of *Inland's* interlacing narratives mimics the process of bodily interpenetration entailed in respiration (118). Consequently, the *Inland* narrator's opening himself up to the wind involves an opening up of his Self to its Being-in-the-ontological world. The narrator's awareness that his physical body is within the physical world is accompanied by an awareness that his Self is also enmeshed in the world of Being. Such a conceptualisation of the Self-within-world aligns with Heidegger's notion of Being-in-the-world, in which the individual comes into existence already *in* the world.

VI. Conclusion

Across Murnane's *oeuvre* we see his characters trying to come to terms with the way landscape simultaneously constitutes a condition of their physical world and an insistent metaphoric reminder of their place on the plane of Being. While an obvious place to see this exhibited is in *The Plains*, it is as much a concern in *Inland*. In the passage from *Inland* discussed above, Murnane's narrator first has a powerful experience of landscape in which he comes to an understanding of his envelopment in the physical world. But for the narrator, as for all of Murnane's characters, knowledge of the physical world always has ontological implications. The narrator's experience of the passage of wind over landscape prompts him to reflect on his position in the scheme of Being. The result of this reflection is that the *Inland* narrator transposes his understanding of his immersion in the physical world to the ontological world. What results is an appreciation of the individual's immersion in the realm of Being, which this essay has suggested mirrors Heidegger's notion of Being-in-the-world.

This essay has situated itself somewhere between the two authoritative voices of Salusinszky and Fawcner. While rejecting Salusinszky's solipsistic reading, there has not been a total endorsement of Fawcner's phenomenological account of Murnane's writing. Instead, an approach has been carved out which neither denies nor relies upon the existence of the 'real' world, but focuses on Heidegger's existential-ontological world. The application of Heidegger's theory to the fiction has been illuminating rather than Procrustean. There has been no attempt to account for every element of Heidegger's worldview in Murnane's fiction. Rather, it has been suggested that Murnane's characters' powerful but ambiguous epiphanies suggest a worldview that generally conforms to Heidegger's structure of Being-in-the-world.

Given the harmony that exists between Murnane's fiction and the conception of Being-in-the-world it would be interesting to know whether other elements of Heidegger's philosophy can further aid readings of Murnane's fiction. A particularly rewarding comparison might be made between Heidegger's conceptualisation of time and Murnane's idea that time is simply a succession of places. However, it is not expected that all readers will agree with this Heideggerian reading of *Inland*. Accordingly this essay invites rebuttal and counter-suggestion as to other ways of reading landscape in Murnane's fiction.

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