The working title for this piece was ‘Fucking Alberta’, which seemed too outrageous for a printed article, even if the book in which it appears is about poetry and sexuality. I have changed the title, but the notions of writing as fucking (taken for its double meaning: both ‘to copulate with’, and ‘to ruin, spoil, mess-up’) continue to operate as the dominant trope throughout the article. As one of three Canadian Prairie provinces, Alberta is a place of farms, big trucks, of fields cut through with a highway or two and a railway track, of grain elevators. It is a large rural landscape, ‘a good deal larger than France’ as Robert Kroetsch has noted, infrequently punctuated by towns and cities. To the west, Alberta is where the Prairie meets the Rocky Mountains; here it is a land of oil rigs and cattle ranches. To the east, where Alberta meets Saskatchewan, it is a land of wheat farms and soy fields, of what Shane Rhodes, in his second book of poetry Holding Pattern, describes as ‘endless repetitions of space’.

The current political climate in Alberta makes an article on the queering of Alberta poetry rather timely. Presently, the provincial Progressive Conservative Party holds a majority government, and has done so since 1971. The longstanding electoral success of the Alberta Progressive Conservatives indicates the generally (social and fiscal) conservative inclination of the majority of its voters. In the past few years, the foremost social/political issue in Alberta has been that of the federal government’s pending ‘Bill C-38’, the ‘same-sex marriage
bill’. On 28 June 2005 same-sex marriage became legal in Canada, despite efforts by Alberta’s Premiere, the infamously conservative Ralph Klein, to oppose the bill. Klein, noting that ‘the majority of people [in Alberta] are opposed to same-sex marriage’, attempted to thwart the work of the Supreme Court of Canada (which ruled that limiting marriage to heterosexual couples contravened the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms) and the Federal government, by instituting the Alberta Marriage Act.4 The Alberta Marriage Act maintains the ‘traditional definition of marriage’, that of ‘a marriage between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others’.5 Alberta is the only Canadian province to work so diligently to restrict marriage to heterosexuals, which perhaps indicates the political and social climate of the province, its population, and why a queer poet might have some hard work to do in dismantling traditional understandings of what it means to be Albertan:

leave me alone (thrusting with all my innate ferocity) at last, at last can’t you see I’m fucking the whole world.6

and if this is seen as unnatural by others then, love, we will be the most unnatural we will be their match their wood their fire7

In his essay ‘Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue’, novelist, poet, and critic Robert Kroetsch argues that for the Canadian novelist, ‘the quest

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