

Re-reading Grove

The Influence of Socialist Ideology on the Writer and *The Master of the Mill*

The handmill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam mill, society with the industrial capitalist.

KARL MARX, *The Poverty of Philosophy*

The motive of human society is in the last resort an economic one.

SIGMUND FREUD, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*

The word is the ideological phenomenon par excellence.

VOLOSHINOV, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*

Recent years have witnessed a revival of interest in F.P. Grove's freshly unearthed, creative and critical works.¹ This has been paralleled with an increasing number of papers that reassess and recononize older texts within the framework of specific theories.² Accordingly, this paper adopts a neo-Marxist position in an attempt to shed new light on Grove and specifically on *The Master of the Mill* (1944) (hereafter *Master*).³ My purpose is three-fold. First, by challenging traditional non-political critical practice, I fill in the gaps left (unwittingly or intentionally) about the influence of socialist theory on Grove and his works. Second, my Bakhtinian study of *Master* and other relevant works legitimizes and valorizes ideas and theories presented in the novel; not only does this paper explore social contradictions and ironies in relation to the "threshold figures," it also examines Grove's appropriation of multiple discourses. Finally, I focus on Grove's stark imagery of industrialization and his vision of alienation. The latter, I submit, was inspired by Hegelian-Marxist dialectics, which for better or for worse, eventually supplanted Grove's bent for ideological dialogism and led to a single political choice—utopian socialism.

Critical Encounter: Gaps and Silences

Pluralist we [Canadian critics] may strive to be, but the politics of influence continue to preclude the influence of politics.

(LARRY McDONALD 434)

Conventional Grove scholarship has tended to ignore the influence of ideology and politics. In 1976, Desmond Pacey's lengthy introduction to *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove* (hereafter *Letters*) mentions Karl Marx as one of several great thinkers who influenced Grove. But ironically, the first book-length criticism on Grove that fails to mention the possible influence of "sciences of man" (Marx) on Grove, is Pacey's 1945 *Frederick Philip Grove*. The chapter on *Master* accuses Grove of confused ideas and structure. In response to Pacey's devastating remarks, Grove wrote to C. Stanley: "I am almost indignant about Pacey and could wish to write a paragraph against him myself" (*Letters* 488). Since Pacey's study remained the only one of its kind until Ronald Sutherland's slim *Frederick Philip Grove* (1969), Pacey is partly responsible for much of *Master*'s unfavourable criticism. Conceding his initial oversights, Pacey later apologized that his chapter on *Master* was "somewhat inept," and said, "I should now be prepared to commend the novel much more warmly; and to note complexities in it which completely eluded me at that time" (*Letters* 488).

In "What was Frederick Philip Grove?," published in 1974, Sutherland comes closer to identifying the central issues of *Master*: "problems of labour relations and the effects of automation which are only now beginning to be generally debated in Canada" (9). Sutherland's main purpose was to identify Grove as a naturalist rather than a realist, given the dominant deterministic elements in Grove's novels. Regrettably, no mention is made of Marx, or Marx's economic determinism for that matter.

Margaret Stobie's *Frederick Philip Grove* (1973) mentions "Rousseau and Thoreau, Froebel and Herbert, Darwin, Bates and Belt, . . ." (188) as Grove's influences. But Marx is omitted. Strangely, Stobie makes light of Grove's wide range of knowledge with her disparaging remark that he made "pretensions to experience or knowledge that he quite clearly did not have" (189). This view is clearly contradicted by Pacey's comment that, "It seems to me that there is quite sufficient evidence in these letters to indicate that Grove was by far the most erudite Canadian novelist yet to appear" (xxi). My research has convinced me of the truth of Pacey's judgement.⁴

One critic who considers the structural and ideological aspects of *Master*

is Stanley McMullin. His “Evolution Versus Revolution” does interpret *Fruits of the Earth* and *Master* in terms of structure and philosophy and throws much light on the complexity and totality of history. Yet, because McMullin wrote his article in 1974, he was necessarily handicapped by the dearth of information on Marx’s influence. This probably explains why, by McMullin’s admission (78), the article’s Spenglerian perspective is some sort of guesswork.

Clearly there have been critical omissions and deficiencies in past analyses of Grove and *Master*. My claim that Grove seriously considered Marx’s economic and political theories is supported in his unpublished diary, “Thoughts and Reflections” where Grove described himself as giving “intellectual assent to the doctrines of socialism or communism” (Mathews 1982, 242). This ideological stance immediately evokes one of his characters’ considered choices in *Master* (226, 314). Nonetheless, as Mathews rightly points out, “the political Grove has never been examined” (1982, 242). It is imperative that Grove’s life and writings be evaluated within a political and ideological context.

The Power and Authenticity of Grove’s “Lived Experience” (Althusser)

We are alienated from our economy in Marx’s sense, as we own relatively little of it ourselves; . . .

NORTHROP FRYE, *The Modern Century*

Though I cannot identify a specific year, Grove’s initial curiosity about socialist ideas and politics began as early as the 1920s. During his lecture tours across the country, he had many opportunities to meet prominent people of the left-wing persuasion. In Grove’s letters, readers are privileged to glimpse, as Pacey has perceptively remarked, the “spontaneous, unrevised expressions of the writer’s feelings and thoughts” (ix). Take, for example, this relevant correspondence reinscribing Grove’s genuine enthusiasm and palpable pride when he met the Left in politics. Grove wrote to his wife, Catherine, on 12 March, 1928: “I have many and powerful friends in Ottawa. . . . Met Woodsworth and the whole left wing of the House of Commons” (*Letters* 94). Two days later, he dropped her another line: “The left wing of the left side of the House of Commons has invited me for lunch today at the Parliament Buildings” (100). James S. Woodsworth was the founder of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. It started with the workers’ and

farmers' immediate interest in mind, but developed to encompass many other economic and political goals. Ivan Avakumovic thus has characterized the CCF:

Although electoral considerations caused the adjective "socialist" to be relegated to the background, the leaders and staunchest supporters of the CCF-NDP advocated and envisaged a social order which, on closer examination, would display many of the characteristics associated by most socialists in the Western world with socialism . . . (v)

Grove's long-term personal contacts with the left wing and his sociopolitical activities exposed him to socialist ideas and drew him into the political movement, despite "curious hassles" (Stobie 1973, 159). Though initially somewhat reluctant (*Letters* 296), Grove did stand for the CCF in the Ontario election of 1943. In other words, he was not merely satisfied with the discursive power of socialist theory to "interpret the world in various ways": he meant to take concrete actions and to "change it," to quote Marx (Singer 32).

Grove's personal life also led to serious brooding and questioning of the means and motives of capitalist production on the Canadian scene. As disclosed by Spettigue (1983, 325), Grove underwent a traumatic experience in his role as president of the Ariston Press in Ottawa. His partner deceived him, thereby appropriating control of the press from Grove. This gaining of money, power, and control by ill means was perhaps an experience that Grove later skillfully translated into Sam's discovery of his father's fraud. Grove's job in a canning factory also brought him face to face with the exploitative and parasitic nature of capitalist production. The boss does not earn his money by labour; his motives lie in making money by money, simply because he is in possession of the capital whereby to hire and exploit the worker. In view of these shocking and thought-provoking experiences, Grove's open appeal to the Canadian public should not come as a surprise:

Canada has had to stand the pressure of capital: One eighth, they tell me, of the industrial enterprises within its borders are owned by the United States interests. Canada has stood the pressure of the example given by the shallow ease of the life led by the industrial masses across the border. . . .
("Nationhood" *It Needs to Be Said* 146-7)

In Grove's view, capital is *ipso facto* evil; no less so money. Work, on the other hand, "is the only title to life". As Stobie correctly suggests (1986, 228), this was a new revelation for Grove and he clung to it tightly.

Grove's reading and translation also point to his perennial preoccupation

with current international socialist movements and revolutions, either Russian or Chinese. First of all, Grove's reading materials on the Russian Revolution show that he longed to possess sufficient knowledge about modern socialism inaugurated by Lenin, readings he described as "interesting" (*Letters* 307). Though Grove was once rumoured to have visited Siberia (Pacey 1945, 4-5), Spettigue's research has proved the rumour to be groundless (1973, 192). Unwittingly, Spettigue's new and more convincing discovery credits Grove's socialistic concerns rather than detracting from them because though Grove had *not* been to Siberia, he still had the suffering inhabitants in mind. Second, Grove's research speaks for his intense socialist interest. While preparing for *Consider her Ways*, Grove came under the direct influence of the Russian Revolution through his perusal of *The Ants of Timothy Thummel*, a satiric work in which the "workers overthrew their rulers and established an egalitarian society" (Stobie 1986, 228). Hence, one can surmise that he was considerably informed about the first socialist state and its new praxis.

Another useful fact, unknown to many, also testifies to Grove's socialist disposition. As early as 1929 he translated from the German a thick book, *The Legacy of Sun Yatsen: A History of Chinese Revolution* (henceforward *Legacy*) and published it. This work has rich political implications. First, Grove unequivocally informs us in the "Translator's Note" that the reason for this ideologically committed project is to present "a picture of a great subversion in modern history." Subversion, as confirmed by the authorial voice in *Master* (315), goes hand in hand with revolution. Equally worthy of mention is the intimate connection between Marx, Lenin, and Dr. Sun (83-84). Anyone sufficiently acquainted with Marx's life would immediately recall that Marx had described himself as "the Prometheus of the proletariat." It could hardly have been a coincidence that Grove, too, used the same term to attribute this liberating and salvaging quality to Dr. Sun, "the greatest man of our [Chinese] country" (57). Furthermore, if the dates "1930-1944" (*Master* 332) provided by Grove are considered reliable, then he started *Master* fresh from translating this work on the Chinese and Russian revolutions. Indeed, the presence of both Marx and Lenin is strongly felt in Sam's and Edmund's respective economic and sociopolitical discourse, despite Grove's typical strategies of camouflage.⁵ Finally, Grove's concern with the Chinese revolution remained much the same even two decades later. His "thinly disguised quasi-autobiography" (Mathews 1978, 63), *In Search of Myself* (1946), called for the acquisition of a "universal outlook"

which includes the Chinese as a unit of mankind “embarked upon the expedition of life” (193-94). Again, given the dates of its composition, the fate of the Chinese people remained close to Grove’s heart to his last days, because they were shaking off semi-feudal and semi-colonial chains and establishing a socialist state (*Legacy* 1-11).

Grove’s correspondence also demonstrates his assiduous study of socialist theories, either Utopian or Marxist. In one letter, Grove shows himself capable of passing judgments on some critics’ comments regarding Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia*. Further, he read not one but two versions of *Utopia* and compared them (312). Grove’s correct use of the word “Utopian” in *A Search for America* (379) clearly indicates not only that he really understood its meanings, but also that he had no wish to conflate a utopian socialism with a Marxist “scientific” one. This much can be said here: Grove’s ideological sensitivity is to translate into a dialogic element *within* the socialist discourse in *The Master of the Mill*. To enhance his knowledge of Marx’s or Marx’s followers’ theories of capitalism/socialism, Grove wishes to read at least one of them twice (*Letters* 307). His pre-knowledge of socialism is impressive. For instance, he asserts that the works he read were “the clearest and most accurate definition of Marx’s position” (*Letters* 308).⁶ This observation suggests that he must have had previous thoughts about other books by Marx because he could already draw his own conclusions. As suggested by Pacey, Grove does not bluff in his letters: he simply makes assessments on the basis of his accumulated knowledge. Significantly, Grove read works on Marx and Russia at the same time, perhaps for the purpose of checking Marx’s theory with its praxis in the former Soviet Union. Grove, we may speculate, takes an open, warm but sober attitude toward the theory of socialism; he is equally interested in its social practice.

**“The Very Idea”⁷ of Socialism and Multiplicity of Discourses;
Contradictory Social Reality, the Figure “on the Threshold,” and
“Images of Ideas”**

They talk of capitalism and don’t know what they mean; they
talk of socialism and know still less what they mean. . . .

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While privileging individual and psychological characterization, early Canadian critics were in general wary or incapable of dealing with ideas, theories, and politics in literary works. The cases of Pacey and others elo-

quently illustrate this tendency.⁸ However, with Grove, ideas are indispensable to a novel. He declared his views openly: “[t]he novelist is in the everlasting dilemma between a novel, which must be a living life, and an argument. Every novel, of course, *is* an argument if it is a novel” (Quoted in Woodward 40). Indeed, this position reasserts itself in his repeated emphases on the necessity of “interpretations” and on the “subjective nature” of art (*A Stranger to My Time* 201, 208). Moreover, Grove’s readiness to embrace the didactic and ideological dimension falls in line with his notion about the social function of literature. In “The Novel,” he further exhorts Canadian writers to select the “*socially significant* material from the mainstream of life,” and to ground the “crisis and characters involved in it in the social conditions of the period” (Monkman 7; Grove’s emphasis). With these polemical statements in mind, I suggest that, given the complex capitalist mode of production, Grove must have felt drawn to Marxist theory of socialism—a new interpretive paradigm known for its social concerns, political commitment, and ideological visions—in analyzing capitalism and contesting it with socialist theories.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s discourse on the relations between ideas and ideology and the novelistic form best illuminates the nature of Grove’s views. In *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin emphasizes the fertility and power of an idea, or “form-shaping ideology” (92-3), since on the one hand it is systematic and independent and on the other, related to personality (“two thoughts are already two people” 93). Furthermore, for Dostoevsky, the contradictory nature of social reality during the Russian transition from capitalism to socialism became a potential polyphonic element; he depicted his character as enchained to “duality” (35), or caught in a “threshold” space, and made puzzled and undecided (34-37). Similarly, Grove’s protagonist Samuel Clark is strategically placed in the same epoch of ideological transition, an epoch of multi-voicedness.

A map of Grove’s field of ideological dialogism in relation to characters would begin with the fine sensitivity of an artist-ideologist; Grove brings into dialogic relationships a multiplicity of four identifiable discourses (in Bakhtin’s sense 1984, 184-5) in two major ideologies—capitalism and socialism. Until the very end of the novel at least three of these discourses contend simultaneously. For Grove, socialism is by no means a monolithic, unitary discourse: Sam’s utopian version interacts and vies with a radical Marxist one championed and practised by “radical leader[s]” such as

Watson (171-172), Mr. Birkinshaw (277-280) and the millers. Nor is capitalist ideology homogeneous or fixed: Rudyard's theory and practice of early, competitive capitalism is contrasted not only with Edmund's late, monopoly capitalist (or imperialist, in Marxist parlance) discourse, but also with Sam's utopian-socialist vision and capitalist practice. Indeed, by foregrounding ideologies, Grove turns all of his main characters—Rudyard, Sam, Edmund, and, to a lesser degree, Watson—into ideologues (Bakhtin 1981, 429), or still better, “images of ideas” (Bakhtin 1984, 90-93), since their various discourses are juxtaposed and set against one another in dynamic interactions. Their personalities are not separable from their respective discourses; individual psychology is reinterpreted within an enlarged framework in which social, economic, political, and ideological forces all have a role to play. Second, Grove actualizes ideological dialogism chiefly by employing the strategies of double voicing (particularly the devices of stylization and hybridization) and carnivalization (Bakhtin 1984, 359; 166-67). As a result, the two salient qualities—a new socialist discourse confronting an old one of capitalism, and unresolved social contradictions between capital and labour, as reflected in an undetermined, wavering personality—stand out; they contribute to an appreciable measure of ideological dialogism.⁹

Grove wastes little time in employing the very idea of socialism to enact sociopolitical and ideological dialogues and set character development in motion. No later than Chapter One, the generational problems between Rudyard, Sam, and Edmund (22) are put forward as ideological: Sam is said to be a “dreamer” (26); Grove footnotes: “Theoretically he [Sam] would, in his old age, say that he and Miss Dolittle had been socialists; and socialists are dreamers” (38). Elsewhere, Grove again pinpoints Sam's “socialist leanings” (45). Obviously, Grove is more than eager “to name the system,” to use Jameson's words (1991, 418), in singling out “the ruthless capitalism” (21, 192), as socialism's other. Grove's remarkable act is to present Sam as being poised or positioned “*on the threshold*” (Bakhtin 1984, 61; original emphasis) between two major ideologies: he is given rare opportunities to cross ideological boundaries at crucial historical junctures, and he repeatedly falls short of realizing his grand socialist plans. In fact, Grove employs an identical term—threshold—by positioning Sam at the “threshold of a new era” (40) of ideological dialogism.

Grove entertains no separation of personality and ideology, for he places

Sam's utopian discourse in relation to other characters and to their discourses. The first tension stems from his father, Rudyard, and from the laissez-faire capitalist discourse he establishes. Different from the over-used oedipal complex that is sexual at source, the father-son conflict proves to be a predominantly economic and political one. Here, Grove activates ideological dialogism by deploying the strategy of double voicing, since he explores "one discourse with an orientation toward someone else's discourse" (Bakhtin 1984, 198-99). Rudyard's capitalist practices have hardened into a system that permits no change; his instructions, regulations, and guidelines have become a rigidified discourse. Against these, Sam first feebly and secretly, then assertively presses his utopian socialist discourse. Because the latter is vital to an understanding of Grove's ideological dialogism, it merits a lengthy citation:

His [Sam's] father, with his secretive ways, had never allowed him a glimpse into anything that was not a matter of public record; and public record was fragmentary. . . . He had dreamt of many things; above all of the Terrace, that vast flat covered with *cottages* in which the mill-hands lived. . . In their agglomeration they were a horror. . . All these he would *change*. . . He would raise wages and give the men a *voice* in the administration. He had dreamt of the farmers whose wheat was bought by *the mill*. His father . . . had raised the price of his product to the consumer by every means in his power: by price-agreements with other producers; by price-wars eliminating competitors; by refusing to let dealers handle his flour unless they agreed to handle no other . . . All that he, Sam, was going to *change*. . . Producers, mill-hands, and consumers, *all* were to *profit*. That has been his dream. (39-40; italics mine)

Note, in particular, the utopian socialist thrust of Sam's discourse: Sam's desire to change the primitive capitalist *status quo* established and perpetuated by his father is coupled with his willingness to listen to the voice of the workmen and to engage in meaningful dialogue with them. Also present is the urge to redistribute wealth and redress inequality. By the devices of juxtaposition and contrast, Grove places Rudyard's capitalist practice and his discourse of laissez-faire, competitive capitalism side by side with Sam's utopian socialist blueprint. The two ideologically opposed discourses interact and collide. Rejoinders to one another, they are not so much exclusively referential to social reality as directed to each other as discourse.

An intertextual comparison of Sam's ideas with Phil Brandon's in *A Search for America* provides a definitive answer to Grove's utopian and Marxist discourses. After delivering scathing criticism of American selfish individualism and rampant materialism, Brandon enumerates several

things he would do were the young millionaire Mr. Mackenzie's property to fall into his hands. He would provide the farmhands with shelter, recreational facilities, and proper work, and "divest" (379) himself of his property. He concludes summarily that "collective ownership" or "limitation of wealth" would lead to a "real democracy" (380). This political agenda certainly has a close affinity to the one in Sam's dream. However, whereas in *A Search for America* Grove offers one version of socialism in a unified literary discourse, in *The Master of the Mill* he employs double-voiced discourse to keep ideological dialogism alive.¹⁰ He refrains from imposing his own authoritative and monologizing voice upon his characters. Instead, the latter are allowed much freedom to employ a discourse of their own, as exemplified by Sam's utopian socialism, or the workers' and the unions' radical or Marxist socialism.

What need to be emphasised are the discursive differences between two versions of socialism, since a sustained dialogue also exists between them. Branden describes his ideas as "Utopian" (379), as does the introspective Sam (171). Both utterances remain utopian, since they can be distinguished from the "scientific" socialism Marx and Engels advocate. The latter not only locates the social, independent force capable of overthrowing capitalism and changing ownership in the working class, rather than among the capitalists, but also believes in violent class struggle or revolution.¹¹ Owing to his concentration on capitalist charity from above, Grove does not treat the working class as a material force to usher in an age of socialism; this partly explains his repetitions of "theoretically" (38, 45) in reference to Sam's socialism.

But this focus surely enables Grove to initiate Sam's utopian socialism vis-à-vis the trade union leaders' Marxist socialism. Grove dramatizes Sam's utopian socialist impulses and urges by contrasting his half measures, which earmark an ideological liminal state of affairs with the radical means of Marxist socialism. Grove's strategy is to set off the discursive differences contrapuntally: the first has to do with profit-sharing or distribution of wealth (171-172). Sam is ready to surrender some, but not all, of his profits to the dispossessed working men because throughout his life, he has been living mainly on their sweat and labour. In Grove's ideological vision, Sam is preconditioned to be parasitic and exploitative both by Rudyard's mentality and by his capitalist discourse (103-4). The second discursive divergence concerns ownership of property. Sam's own ambivalent attitude

toward the Clark private property becomes a stumbling block. What he calls public ownership remains, in actuality, partial, not total; by contrast, a Marxist socialism requires unconditional public ownership (cf. 278-279). By keeping Sam's allegiance to utopian socialism and making him a threshold figure, Grove maintains the dialogic interplay between two socialist discursive forces until the end of the novel.

In much the same manner, Grove fully exploits Sam's failure to extricate himself from the contradictory nature of the capitalist mode of production and go beyond ideological liminal space. This is easily demonstrable in Sam's relation with Edmund and with Edmund's imperialist discourse. Grove's device allows Edmund the fullest voice possible before totally silencing him with death. In Grove's scheme, Edmund not only articulates this new fascist-imperialist discourse most eloquently and systematically but also merges with his notorious discourse to become the Bakhtinian "image of idea" (1984, 91-92). At times, he even threatens to usurp the role of the narrator/author, and Grove gives up his own interpretive or controlling voice entirely (e.g. 310-313). Meanwhile, as befits the Marxist holistic or totalistic view of capitalism, Grove has Sam meet Edmund on every front to sustain the ideologically dialogic relations. Sam moves beyond the economic and local into the sociopolitical and national spheres; with a point-by-point counter-discourse he further opposes Edmund's enterprise of establishing an empire of the Machine against the state of the proletariat (327-329). It is more than a little ironic that Edmund dies at the very peak of his national fame and political influence. No doubt, Grove orchestrates his death to signal not only the collapse of his anti-human "state within the state" (228, 287) of the empire of the Machine fed by capital, but also the bankruptcy of his imperialist discourse.

Grove appropriates Marxist economic and sociopolitical vocabulary chiefly by the Bakhtinian devices of stylization and hybridization (1984, 189-90). He mainly borrows or imitates Marxist vocabulary and blends it with his own, with no apparent intention to parody or travesty. Thus Marxist discourses become an integral part of Grove's characters' vocabulary; his characters turn into "author[s]" (Bakhtin 1984, 184) of their own new economic discourse. The economic domain constitutes the very area in which Hugh Garner finds middle class Canadian writers wanting.¹² But in *The Master*, at every turn one is confronted with terms such as "wages," "profits," "by-product," "exchange-value," "outputs," "strikes," "methods of pro-

duction,” “labour,” “capital,” “exploiter.” Indeed, such professional borrowings sometimes fill his pages to the point of saturation (330-332). Much like Marx researching *Capital*, Grove’s effort to detail the milling process and profits must have been painstaking. A palpable sense of Marxist economic determinism can be felt.

Furthermore, in depicting Sam or Edmund in the process of grasping various discourses of socialism and capitalism, Grove admirably intermingles the sociopolitical and ideological with the literary and renders the novel almost encyclopedic in content and hybrid in style. The degree of complexity of political thought is increased in the second part of the novel; one frequently runs across such words and phrases as “socialist” and “capitalist” (*passim*), “proletarian revolution” (321, 328-9) and “state within the state” (228, 287). Occasionally, Grove borrows whole ideas or theories from books of sociology or politics he has read and probably noted.¹³ Parts of *The Master* form sophisticated expositions on sociological theories and assumptions (314, 327). Others provide intricate socio-psychological and political analyses of class mentality and power relations (246, 255, 326), while still others present informed discussions of possible proletarian revolutions and ideological breakthroughs (108-9, 310, 321, 329). Indeed, as Bakhtin points out, only the novel, with its incomplete or unfinished form, can accommodate such various discourses (1981:3-40). Grove dares to experiment and the multiple discursive elements contribute positively to his central purposes of encompassing the history of three generations, as well as dialogizing whole relationships of society—social, economic, political, and ideological.

Images of Power and Domination—the Mill and the Mansion, the Vision of History as Alienation, Dialectics and Dialogism

The perception of things is facilitated, above all, by means of antithesis. FELIX PAUL GREVE, QUOTED BY E.D. BLODGETT

Grove seems to have been impressed by Marx’s crude but pithy statement about the decisive role of the mill and turned it into an image central to both parts of his novel.¹⁴ With a firm grip on this industrial symbol and its sinister effects on human life, Grove not only adopts a Marxist historical division but also stresses the primacy of productive force—or tools and technology in current parlance—in capitalist development. Thus, parallel with the two-stage capitalist development in the Marxist classification—the

competitive and monopoly or imperialist—is the advancement of productive force crystallized in the image of the mill. Similarly, Part II focuses on Sam’s contending and colliding with his son, Edmund, on how and when to mechanize the mill completely with minimal unemployment. Thus, in the competitive as in the monopoly stages of capitalism, all personal, economic, and social relationships hinge upon the methods of operating the mill. The Marxist view of the mill as capital incarnate comes through most clearly when Grove has it bear the brunt of the workers’ attacks. In addition, the same inexorable logic detected by Marx in the development of productive force—the mill—bears down upon the capitalists. Just as the mill renders the feudal lord ex-centric and peripheral, so the capitalists now become increasingly submerged in and dwarfed by, the overpowering mill.

Grove’s images of the Clark mansion and the cottages throw in sharp relief the highly visible gap in wealth and possessions between the capitalist and the working class. In view of the urgency in Sam’s hidden socialist agenda to replace the “cottages”, Grove may have been inspired, again, by the much quoted passage from Marx:

A house may be large or small; as long as the surrounding houses are equally small it satisfies all social demands for a dwelling. But let a palace arise beside the little house, and it shrinks from a little house to a hut . . . however high it may shoot up in the course of civilization, if the neighbouring palace grows to an equal or even greater extent, the occupant of the relatively small house will feel more and more uncomfortable, dissatisfied and cramped within its four walls. (*Wage Labour and Capital* 259)

Indeed, the first riot of the workmen erupts precisely because they spot the tremendous disparity in housing. In Grove’s vision, the Clark mansion stands for the crystallization of the profits of the workmen’s labour. To put it mildly, the spatial metaphor is implicit. To the workers living below in cottages, the mansion perches literally on top of the hill as a constant reminder of economic exploitation and social hierarchy. Both Marx and Grove employ juxtaposition and contrast as rhetorical strategies.

What Grove assimilates most significantly in shaping the final artistic vision is, of course, the Hegelian-Marxist philosophical discourse. “Every system is born with the germs of its death in it”, Grove’s character declares dialectically (312); this citation about “antithesis” from Grove (Greve) himself further confirms his dialectical bent. This latter may be interpreted as either a curse or a blessing. On the one hand, it leads to a closing off of dialogic

play of meanings. Dictated by the logic of dialectics, Grove has to make a choice, to find *one* solution only as what Jameson terms a “symbolic act” (1981). Consequently, ideological dialogism eventually disappears. On the other hand, Grove’s novelistic closure facilitates the understanding not only of his ultimate ideological position, but also of his quasi-Marxist, expressionist belief in the function of literature to effect “spiritual/social transformation” (Grace 1989, 22).

Grove adopts the dialectical view of history as a process of alienation—man’s products ousting man (as species) from the production line and rendering him useless¹⁵—to interpret the nature of modern man in capitalist society. In keeping with his socialist allegiance and class bias, Grove does make a distinction between capitalists and the workers by holding out some hope for his millers and by revealing, paradoxically, the utterly helpless state of his capitalists. Since Grove focuses on the capitalist Sam’s sense of alienation, he fails to select a representative of the “emergent” (in Raymond Williams’ sense) class—the proletariat—as an agency to fulfil the socialist mission. Grove’s solution cannot but be ambiguous. On the one hand, Sam’s socialist bent pulls him towards the side of the mill hands by delaying the automatic process. On the other, as the head of the Clark family and master of the mill (however ironically or nominally), he is driven by the motives for profits to use machines both to reduce the cost in hiring labour and to raise productivity. And yet, with the installation of machines and with the reduction of workers, culminating in the virtual no-man’s land of Arbala, Sam feels desolately isolated from humanity. He has helped to create the mill, but it has ousted his workers and become a force against him. Whereas the workers are alienated only from their own products—products as commodity or as machinery—but not from humanity, Sam, circumscribed by his capitalist status, feels doubly alienated, both from humanity and from the machine. Jameson illuminates not only the nature of the capitalist cult of technology and scientific management, but also the sense of alienation:

We live temporarily enthralled to what may be the most inverted reality yet—one in which the very subjective faculty of socialized labour is laid prostrate before the pure fetish anonymity and subjectiveness of “scientific management.” The intellectual tasks vested in . . . management are not seen as representing the worker’s mind, but as deriving directly or indirectly from science and scientific technology (1988:xxiv)

According to this view, whatever Sam’s mill produces should be re-

interpreted as the products of the workers' labour and creativity, since they put it into operation in the first place. Consequently, they should have legitimate share in the mill's subsequent huge profits to achieve disalienation. Though Grove's capitalists are spell-bound worshippers of technology, he does identify certain rebellious or carnivalesque qualities in his millers paralleling what the Hegelian Marx calls the "diggers" of the graveyard for capitalism from the inside. Grove's chief textual strategy lies in the staging of carousing, riots, industrial sabotages, arson, shooting, and strikes in the form of carnivalization as defined by Bakhtin below:

It proved remarkably productive as a means for capturing in art the developing relationships under capitalism, at a time when previous forms of life, moral principles and beliefs were being turned into 'rotten cords' and the previously concealed, ambivalent, and unfinalized nature of man and human *thought* was being nakedly exposed. Not only people and their actions but even *ideas* had broken out of their self-enclosed hierarchical nesting places. (1984, 166-67; Bakhtin's emphasis)

Grove's millers employ this subversive tactic almost exactly in Bakhtin's sense. Ignoring class boundaries, they ridicule and chase the upper-class Mrs. Sybil Carter right to the door of the Clark house; shattering sexual prohibitions, they leer and jeer at the half naked Clark ladies swimming in the huge pool; wilfully defying and indeed turning upside down bourgeois decorum and mores, they take to public drinking and exchanging wives right beneath the imposing mill. In this context of the carnival one can best appreciate why Grove unsparingly depicts scenes of workers actually destroying the machine or sabotaging the automatic system (169, 320-322). Of course, the most powerful acts of carnivalization take place in the political arena. When the workers realize that "trade unions were the solution" (134), they organize their unions and strikes effectively, thereby challenging and subverting the authority and hierarchy of capitalist *status quo* through extreme measures. Not only do they repeatedly threaten capitalists like Sam and Edmund with death, they succeed in doing away with Edmund's life. In Grove's semiotic system, Edmund's death is not merely biological; it symbolizes the collapse of the most rigid and monolithic empire of "the mechanical age" (Benjamin) and the bankruptcy of the imperialist discourse. It also signals the workers' disalienation, however ephemeral, by applying the principle of carnivalization.

In theme, imagery, and ideology, *Master* recalls the Expressionist film

Metropolis by Fritz Lang, Grove's German countryman.¹⁶ In the first place, both works concentrate on the theme of industrialization and alienation, and the images of the mill or machinery are "distorted, . . . violent images of reality" (Grace 1989, 21-22). They are so monstrous, inhuman, and gigantic that they shatter any sense of conventional realism. Ideologically, the novel and the film also seek to oppose the "social structures and assumptions of a complacent bourgeoisie" (21-22). The workers in Langholm and in the Metropolis organize themselves and challenge the Master's capitalist practices and discourse. In artistic vision, both appeal to the conscience of the capitalist (Grove's Sam or Lang's Frederson) against rampant materialism that denies the "godhead in mankind" (Grace 25). They also envision an apocalyptic future where reconciliation, mediated by women as "hearts" (i.e., Lang's Maria and Grove's Miss Dolittle) between the heartless capitalists and the suffering labourers can be achieved.¹⁷ Rather than adopting a Marxist violent class struggle as a strategy, the novel and film resort to romantic idealism or utopian socialism. The facile triumph of the workers over the machine and the capitalist, of "hands" over "mind"; the convenient deaths of Edmund, Hel, and Rotwang and the subsequent birth of a socialist community, preceded by the carnivalesque images of fire (in *Master*) and water (in *Metropolis*), suggest Bakhtinian ambivalence (1984, 126). The frantic but euphoric storming of the mill is more utopian and symbolic than realistic resolutions. In the final analysis, the two works go beyond Lukacsian realism, resist pessimism, and provide what Jameson terms "imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (1981, 79).

Both Grove's life and writing are indelibly marked by the combined influence of utopian socialist and Marxist ideologies/philosophies. His personal career as a school teacher, like Phil Braden's in *A Search of America*, served a communitarian purpose; his socio-political activities as a CCFer helped to alleviate the inequality and injustice of Canadian society. He emphasized not only the dignity of work and labour over capital and money, but also cherished an egalitarian ideal in resistance to capitalist society where poverty is writ large against the background of the rich few. As a translator, he disseminated Marx's and Lenin's theories of revolution, socialism, and imperialism.

As a writer and critic, Grove stresses the social and spiritual function of literature. Socialist ideology is used to challenge materialism, individualism,

and consumerism, the common tenets of a liberal society. By appropriating Marxist economic and political theories, he enlivens his own novelistic discourse and increases ideological dialogism. Grove identifies alienation as a modern malaise, and discerns a utopian socialistic cure.

However, Grove fails to believe that the working class under capitalism is capable of liberating itself from the margins. Instead, a change must be initiated by those with power at the center—the capitalists. Grove does not endorse class struggle, nor the gory, violent revolution championed by Marx or Lenin, nor the state of the proletariat. Rather, he advocates partial concession or compromise from both the capitalists and the workers, reconciliation of class conflicts, and amelioration of economic disparity. Grove does draw on a considerable degree of ideological dialogism through *Master*, but his own utopian socialist world view, tempered by the Hegelian-Marxist historical-philosophical vision, prevails at the end: dialectics he opts for, dialogism he ill affords. A unified, finalized, and hence monologized rather than open-ended, dialogical vision results. Grove ultimately negates the Marxist socialist vision, but his utopian socialism is placed in a dialogic relation with it. Since *Consider her Ways* (1947) continues the same critical thrust against capitalism,¹⁸ he would have probably agreed with Terry Eagleton's witty comment—"the only reason for being a [socialist] is to get to the point where you can stop being one" (1990, 7).

NOTES

- 1 A ready example would be D.O. Spettigue (1992). See P. Hjartarson (1986) and H. Dahlie's *Varieties of Exile* on two Groves, or one Grove, another Greve, 77-86.
- 2 See, for example, Irene Gammel (1992); see also *Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature* (1986) edited by John Moss.
- 3 This perspective is to be interpreted as arising mainly from the discourses of 20th-century (neo-)Marxists—L. Althusser, M. Foucault, M. Bakhtin, T. Eagleton, R. Williams, F. Jameson, G. Spivak, J. Kristeva, L. McDonald, R. Mathews, and J. Steele.
- 4 Stobie's 1973 work does comment on Grove, the CCF, and J.S. Woodsworth. But she fails to relate socialist ideas to Grove's literary works; see 159-60 and 182-3 on the CCF; and 121 and 174 on Woodsworth. I wish to thank Fred Cogswell for sharing his knowledge about Grove and Woodsworth.
- 5 One could not hope to have a better title than *A Stranger to My Time*, edited by P. Hjartarson, whose "Preface" reveals Elsa Greve's part in her husband's "suicide." See also J.J. Healy (1981) and Blodgett (1982) for Grove's strategies.
- 6 D. Pacey suggests two books of the early 1930 vintage, G.D.H. Cole's *What Marx Really*

Meant (1934) and S. Hook's *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx: A Revolutionary Interpretation* (1933); I have checked both to examine key concepts and images and shown some of the parallels in Grove's work.

- 7 I borrow this emphatic phrase from the title of W.H. New's "Editorial" to *Canadian Literature* (No. 135, 1992); it coincides nicely with Bakhtin's focus in "The Idea in Dostoevsky," *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 78-100.
- 8 See J. Moss (1978 9-10); see McDonald (1984; 1987) and Steele (1978) respectively on the Canadian critical tendency to psychologize and mythologize; see also Bakhtin's discourse on social contradiction and personalities in relation to personal psychology (1984, 36-37).
- 9 See Sherrill Grace on Grove's monologic tendency (1987, 123) and on possible application of Bakhtin's dialogism to a study of vying ideologies (123, 133). See also Cavell on the ideological dimensions of Bakhtin's concepts (207).
- 10 W.H. New perceptively points out Grove's various strategies of masks and disguises that make for a "double vision" (462) in *A Search for America*; for further information, see his "Afterword" to the 1991 edition.
- 11 For the concepts of (dis)alienation and of Marx's socialism described as "scientific" (as distinguished from Utopian, Fabian, or Christian socialism), see *The Communist Manifesto*. See also "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" by Friedrich Engels in Feuer (1959).
- 12 See H. Garner (25); see also D. Livesay on middle-class writers' avoidance of working class concerns with making a living, 175.
- 13 See M. Stobie's "Grove and the Ants" on Grove's methods of working (1986).
- 14 Marx stresses the importance of productive force, that is, in today's parlance, the use of technology. The quotation in the epigraph highlights a modern tool—the mill. See "The Growth of Capitalism" in Cole's *What Marx Really Meant*, 46-69.
- 15 See "Alienation as a Theory of History" in P. Singer (1980), 29-34; "How Men Make History" in Chapter VIII in Cole; and Chapter XI, "The Materialistic Concept of History" in Hook.
- 16 Grace encapsulates the dialogic elements of Expressionist works in Figure 3 (1989, 42); Grove's *Master* shares some of these features, but does not end dialogically. Grace does not discuss Grove in relation to Lang, but I submit that many of her comments on Lang are also relevant to Grove.
- 17 A socialist-feminist study is yet to be conducted on Grove's female characters, who are marginalized, fragmented, and exploited by capitalist patriarchy.
- 18 Grove's criticism of capitalism continues in this allegorical novel. The city of New York is criticized by the Head Ant for its gross materialism and selfishness.

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