

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

Two Versions of "Who Has Seen the Wind"

Barbara Mitchell

IN 1947 TWO SIGNIFICANTLY different versions of *Who Has Seen the Wind* were published. Little, Brown & Co.¹ published an edition that was approximately 7,000 words shorter than that released simultaneously by The Macmillan Company of Canada.² This seems to be a fact long since forgotten, not only by publishers and critics but by the author himself who was unaware that all subsequent editions³ of *Wind* have used the American version rather than the Canadian. A recent edition (1982), published by McClelland and Stewart–Bantam Limited for the Canadian market, states that “it contains the complete text of the original hard-cover edition. NOT ONE WORD HAS BEEN OMITTED.”⁴ Ironically, the “original” edition to which they were referring was the American shorter version. In fact, there has been only one edition, the original Canadian, that contains the text that Mitchell himself preferred, then and now.

Wind was accepted in 1945 by Little, Brown & Co (to be guaranteed by *Atlantic Monthly Press*, the coterie press of Little, Brown), but Mitchell sold only the American rights. Although he had been approached in 1944 by Macmillan of Canada about his novel, then titled *Spalpeen*, nothing came of this until March 1946, some months after Little, Brown & Co. agreed to publish. His decision to retain Canadian rights now seemed prophetic because he was able to deal independently with Macmillan and publish his preferred version with them. About the same time he was beginning to wonder if he had been unwise in contracting with Little, Brown & Co., for they had just written to ask him to consider reducing the text by about 10,000 words. There would have been an even more dramatic discrepancy between the two editions had not Mitchell insisted that half of the deletions requested by Little, Brown & Co. be re-instated. Writing to Macmillan he commented, “I appreciate very much that the Canadian edition is to be much the same as the manuscript I sent you; although I have managed to get about half the cuts re-inserted, I do not consider the Little, Brown edition as good as the Canadian.”⁵

Little, Brown & Co. argued that high production costs and concern for a consumer price of less than \$3.00 (which necessitated fewer than 300 pages) were the major reasons for shortening the novel. However, Edward Weeks, the editor, argued on aesthetic and philosophic grounds that the requested deletions would improve the novel. By the end of the editing process (nearly one year from manuscript to galley stage), it became quite clear that he and Mitchell held significantly different visions of the novel.

Wind is Mitchell's most meticulously edited work. Including himself there were four readers who carefully scrutinized the manuscript. Mitchell, by this time, had spent five years working and re-working the manuscript. He was 33 years of age, a graduate of the University of Alberta with a B.A. and a teacher's certificate, and the author of some fifteen published short stories; he was mature and experienced enough to appraise and defend his own work. As well, his mentor and second critical eye, Professor F. M. Salter, had edited every page of his manuscript before it was submitted. Therefore, Mitchell felt confident about the novel when he sent it on to Edward Weeks, the editor of *Atlantic Monthly*, around the middle of September 1945.

Professor F. M. Salter was Mitchell's first and most influential "editor." He "looked over his shoulder" (to use Mitchell's expression) from the beginning draft stages to publication and was far more in tune with Mitchell's intentions than was Weeks. Salter was a Renaissance scholar of international reputation and professor of English and creative writing at the University of Alberta. He was a remarkable man who inspired many beginning Canadian writers including Christine Van der Mark, who published the same year as Mitchell, and, later, Henry Kreisel, Sheila Watson, Robert Kroetsch, and Rudy Wiebe. Through his position as creative writing instructor he had made a number of contacts in the publishing world, and served, in Mitchell's words, as his "agent sans ten percent" for the marketing of *Wind*. Salter had earlier (late 1944) sent "The Owl and the Bens" and "Saint Sammy" to *Atlantic*, both of which were accepted and edited by Edward Weeks. Salter was impressed with Weeks's editing of the two stories and commented to Mitchell that *Atlantic's* offer of Weeks's services as editor of *Wind* was "extremely generous"⁶ and, indeed, very flattering to a first novelist. Weeks turned over the manuscript to Dudley Cloud, director and editor of Atlantic Monthly Press, for a first read and Cloud reported that it was being read with great enthusiasm.⁷

In spite of this initial expression of confidence in his work from Weeks and Cloud, Mitchell was cautious. Cloud assured Salter and Mitchell that *Atlantic* respected its authors in terms of both financial arrangements and editorial services. Weeks, he contended, was the best editor in the business, scrutinizing manuscripts meticulously (which was quite accurate judging from Weeks's detailed comments to Mitchell of Dec. 6, 1945). As evidence Cloud listed authors whom Weeks had edited: Mazo de la Roche, James Hilton, Agnes Newton Keith, Walter Lippmann, H. E.

Bates, Walter Edmonds among others (May 18, 1945). This was an impressive list at the time. However, sensing that Mitchell and Salter were impressed with but still wary of Weeks's authority, Cloud wrote to Salter (although not to Mitchell) that the author's autonomy was always respected at *Atlantic*. It is with considerable irony that we read these initial exchanges which hint at the dramatic confrontation to come over this very issue of an author's rights. Even at the galley stage Weeks and Cloud attempted to delete passages without consulting Mitchell; consequently the editorial process was not a happy one for Mitchell.

However, both Weeks and Cloud saw something unique and powerful in Mitchell's writing. Cloud responded first with genuine enthusiasm and suggested a few changes which were quickly followed up by Mitchell. In December, Weeks, himself, commented very fully. He remarked that the novel contains "clear evidence of your talent, and, when later we ask you to fuss over certain details of revision, do not forget that in discussing the minor aspects we have always in mind the humanity and the over-all scope of your narrative."⁸ Certainly Weeks made some good deletions; however, his suggestions involving Brian and the wind did not illustrate an understanding of the author's "over-all" vision, nor were they "minor."

THE VERY ASPECTS THAT MITCHELL, with Salter's encouragement, had emphasized were the elements that Weeks wanted refined or cut. From the beginning Salter had suggested the enhancement of the wind motif, the conception of the Young Ben as "the symbol of the wildness of the prairie" (June 23, 1945) and the elaboration of the relationship between Brian and the Young Ben. What Salter saw as most vital to the novel and where he encouraged expansion, Weeks demanded deletions and revisions.

In his first letter (Dec. 6, 1945) Weeks summarized his main objections. In contrast to Salter and Mitchell's careful working of the wind motif, he felt that many of the wind and landscape passages were "dull" and "over-decorative." He thought Brian was too precocious, too independent (not punished enough for his misdeeds), and "too cute" with his references to R. W. God. Rather than appreciating the deliberately ambivalent ending with Brian, a small figure in the vast prairie landscape, he asked that Brian's future be spelled out, "whether he was to go to college, whether he would like to be an engineer, or a doctor." Weeks included an itemized list of comments (fourteen pages), some flattering, but many demanding deletions, particularly of the wind motif. To Mitchell these requests created more than a little "fuss" over details; in particular, Weeks's final comment caused Mitchell to rise up in arms:

The ending is abrupt. It must be strong. It must be free and clear — with no chance for the reader to go wrong.

The last two pages are now the weakest in the book, and they should be the best. The story in our minds will end with Brian, not with the wind. What of his future. (Dec. 6, 1945)

Mitchell consulted Salter about what he perceived as an attack on his creative integrity. Salter agreed that Weeks and Cloud were missing the point:

I'm willing to bet that neither Mr. Cloud nor Mr. Weeks knows what this novel is about. They know that you are picturing a small boy growing up, and that's about all. (Dec. 29, 1945)

However, Salter, more the diplomat and agent, realized that a compromise had to be made to get the book published. This compromise was the Preface, mostly composed by Salter, which would make *explicit* the wind motif. He hoped that Weeks would re-instate many of the wind passages when he understood their significance. Salter, at least temporarily, had defused the issue and Mitchell, nearly two months later, wrote a surprisingly temperate-sounding letter to Weeks saying, "for the most part I have followed your very helpful suggestions" (Jan. 26, 1946). But he adamantly stated that the last two pages, as well as half of the requested cuts, must stay. He enclosed a point by point response to Weeks's editorial suggestions, patiently explaining, with occasional sarcasm, each passage he wanted retained. The same day he wrote to Cloud reiterating forcefully his main point: the book "must end with the wind" (Jan. 27, 1945).

Between December 1945, when Weeks and Cloud first responded with their editorial suggestions, and September 1946, when Mitchell made his last counter-attack demanding that certain portions be re-inserted (at the galley stage), the four editors clashed continually over the vision of the novel. Mitchell was particularly upset by the deletions and changes involving the wind motif. In a recent conversation⁹ he recalled vividly the confrontation with Weeks over the wind deletions but relatively dimly the requests for cuts and alterations to character and landscape description. Yet 75 per cent of the cuts involved these latter passages, not the wind motif. A number of reasons account for Mitchell's less vehement response towards these other cuts: most of the character alterations, particularly to Brian's character, occurred in the first hundred pages where Mitchell wrote he was "least sensitive" (April 11, 1946); also, he did not feel that these cuts as seriously distorted his total conception of the novel; he recognized that he had to compromise on some issues in order to stand firm on the wind passages; finally, in a few instances, Weeks's editing was perfectly correct and Mitchell knew that. Although Mitchell does not recall as accurately and vividly his arguments over these passages, he did, at the time, forcefully, sometimes sarcastically, defend their validity.

As it is impossible in this short space to detail each deletion Weeks requested and discuss Mitchell's responses, only three major areas will be examined: the wind motif, the relationship of Brian and the Young Ben, and the character of

Brian. Before discussing these cuts, it would be useful to summarize the nature and extent of the other, less severe, cuts.

In addition to the wind passages some thirty landscape descriptions were cut. Weeks tended to remove those of a less pleasant-sounding nature such as the initial description of the town as "a clotting of frame houses" (Mac. 2). Also, as he wrote in a rough note (Dec. 6, 1945), he wanted the facts without the "trimmings." One requested cut that particularly rankled Mitchell was Weeks's comment that the opening sentence, "Here was the least common denominator of nature, the skeleton requirements simply of land and sky" (3), was "too dull" (Dec. 6, 1945). Weeks did not understand the integral role of this mathematical image which holds in itself not only a symbolic representation of prairie (land, horizon line, sky), but the implication of Brian's search for an answer (the skeleton) and the "answer" itself which is ambiguously dual and no further reducible.

Another fifty passages dealing with minor characters were cut. Many of these reveal the inner world of Hislop, Digby, and Miss Thompson. As the "quests" of these three characters, particularly Digby, provide an adult parallel to Brian's search for meaning, many of these deleted passages are significant. Also they delineate one of Mitchell's continuing concerns, the concept of the "ideal" teacher figure. Even Miss MacDonald is given a fuller dimension in the longer version.

It would be unjust, however, to imply that Weeks and Cloud made no positive contributions. Indeed, Weeks suggested (in bare idea form only) the addition of a number of scenes which added considerably to the novel. He suggested an argument between Uncle Sean and the grandmother and a conversation between Sean and Gerald which became Chapter Two. He asked for more of Maggie and a Christmas scene which became Chapter Seventeen. Mitchell and Weeks had disagreed over the ending and, although Mitchell was not about to give up either the wind ending or have Brian become an engineer, he did relent and add a passage about Brian becoming a "dirt doctor" followed by the one in which Digby refers to "Intimations of Immortality" and Brian's "wisdom without years" (296-97). Furthermore, Weeks did cut one or two gratuitously sentimental scenes and edited the Digby-Palmer philosophical debates (it is arguable whether or not that was an improvement).

Although in a sense Mitchell lost the battle, forfeiting 7,000 words, he won the war, at least for the wind. An amicable compromise with Weeks was reached, and certainly one that did not damage Mitchell's reputation, but he was never truly happy with the changes. When this intense nine-month struggle was nearly over, Mitchell wrote to Cloud indicating just how difficult the fight had been for him:

It is by choice that I don't deal through a representative and perhaps you wish to God that I did, but be patient with what may seem unwillingness to meet you halfway. I have already made the greatest concession I can make and that is to let somebody else cut *Who Has Seen the Wind*. . . . (May 14, 1946)

ASIDE FROM THE EXAMINATION of the editorial process as it illustrates the clash between two versions of the novel and, of course, the significant re-discovery of the author's preferred longer edition, a discussion of the most important discrepancies between the longer and shorter versions shows clearly Mitchell's ability to defend his work on a critical level, and illustrates again and again the meticulous craftsmanship that went into the making of this novel.

The major disruption to the thematic or philosophic concerns of the novel was Weeks's deletions of the wind motif. Mitchell has described his style in *Wind* as symphonic with the various rhythms or motifs blending into a harmonious chord at the end. The major motif heard above the others is, of course, the wind in *all* its voices, ranging from "lake-still" (Mac. 79) to a "lapping" wind (Mac. 315) to "a bereft sound winding lost and forsaken" (Mac. 111) to "Saint Sammy's" tornado. Weeks succeeded in removing approximately twenty passages involving wind and its accompanying light and dark patterns. He had requested many more cuts, about 2,000 words, which included two key sections — Brian's overnight refuge in the straw stack and the final two pages of the novel. Had he been successful "Neither you nor I" would have seen much of the wind in this novel!

Mitchell explained to Weeks that he had intended the wind to symbolize the growth of Brian's imagination:

Throughout the novel, from the time that Brian stands upon the church steps, to the last lines, the wind is the God of the Old Testament, the God of child-like ancients and of modern children. The wind is present in each one of Brian's mystic moments, whether as a prairie breeze or an avenging tornado. (Jan. 26, 1945)

Concordant with the wind motif is the interplay of light and dark including references to clouds, shadows, lightning, and Northern Lights all reflecting Brian's "fleeting revelations" (Sept. 1, 1946). To remove any substantial number of these motifs, as Weeks proposed, would disrupt the contrapuntal effect, the balancing of the dualities of light *and* dark, birth *and* death, caressing *and* avenging wind, human *and* prairie voice, insight *and* incomprehension.

The first deletion was the second paragraph of the novel referring to wind and clouds:

But for now, it was as though a magnificent breath were being held; still puffs of cloud were high in the sky, retaining their shapes for hours on end, one of them near the horizon, presenting a profile view of blown cheeks and extended lips like the wind personification upon an old map. (Mac. 1)

This passage reverberates with meanings which are essential to the over-all vision of the novel. The adjective "magnificent" immediately suggests the biblical connotation of Godhood (which Mitchell reluctantly made explicit in the Preface). The passage also suggests the ability of the imagination to magnify and make

visible (here in the shape of the clouds) an invisible force whether it is God, the wind, or the "feeling" (108). Magnification occurs again when Brian looks at the drop on the spirea leaf. The personification of wind is appropriate to the point of view of a young child who animates the world around him. The reference to an old map underlines the boy's quest to find the 'route' to knowledge, to seeing the wind. Finally, in contrast to the opening paragraph of the moving wind that has brought the drought, this paragraph presents the contrary view of a still, beneficent force.

Wind is always associated with Brian's holy-whole "feeling." Mitchell impressionistically establishes the spiritual quality of Brian's first feeling (initiated by his visit to the Church and culminating on the prairie) through the accumulation of wind-light-dark patterns. Although other wind passages were retained in these final pages to Chapter One, none so clearly expresses, as does the following example, the sanctity of the wind and the natural world:

Past hollyhocks' tall spires swaying in the light wind with clock faces tilted towards them, the boys went to the front of the Sherry house. They walked down the boulevard through dry and rustling grass. (Mac. 8)

The wind suggests the immortality of the natural world, yet the clock face hints at mortality. The choice of "spires" to describe the hollyhock (in itself evoking the word holy) is carefully deliberate and many such religious overtones are used throughout the novel to ironically juxtapose the spiritual natural world and the spiritless institutionalized Church. Fox-tails are "haloed" (Weeks wanted this removed) and the gopher watches from its "pulpit" (111). Another deleted passage, as Brian and his friend try to make angel wings, and "the late morning sun limned the swaying heads of fox-tails with light, and gave to the ribboning grasses a watering glint" (Mac. 32), again reveals the spiritual in the natural world and in the children themselves.

The key sentence of this first chapter, if not the master key to all of the wind-light-dark patterns in the novel, was cut by Weeks: "Half aware of the shuttering effect of trees' shadows, Brian walked back towards his home, from bright sunlight to broken shadow and back to light again" (Mac. 12). The alternating light and dark produced by the wind parallels Brian's spiritual quest from the brightness of innocence, through darkness and doubt, to the new light of mature knowledge. In the last two pages of this chapter, the "shuttering effect" is echoed and re-echoed: the dragonfly shimmers, the hawk passes its shadow over the prairie, the clouds break suddenly to reveal a "blue well shot with sunlight," a butterfly goes "pelting past," the Young Ben silently, mysteriously appears then disappears, and the "prairie itself was breathing in long gusting breaths" (this last deleted [Mac. 13]). However, the resonance of these is lost unless the key note is struck.

Like the wind with its contrary voices, light and dark images balance one another. Even in Brian's most intense moments when radiance and clarity predominate,

shadow and the ephemeral, shuttering effect are present. Juxtaposed to Brian's holy "feeling" when he sees the drop on the spirea leaf is his "nonfeeling" in Church when he searches vainly for a recurrence of this mystic moment. Weeks deleted nearly a page here which emphasizes the other side, the dark and indeterminate aspect of Brian's quest. These passages stress Brian's separation rather than his wholeness. In Church he feels only "a deeper darkness, a phantom shadow high under the vaulting roof" (Mac. 132); he has to leave the congregation to attend Sunday school in the basement ("downstairs for the kids . . . upstairs for the people") and wonders, "Was this the house of God too?"; when he looks at the spirea outside the Church, "*Their* leaves were quite dry" (Mac. 133).

The "shuttering effect" of light and dark, of revelation and obscurity, is perfectly represented by the effect of lightning and the Northern Lights. The description on the novel's final page of the tinting green light "dying here" being "reborn over there" (300), which so aptly suggests the rhythm of the seasons, would be more memorable had an earlier reference to the Northern Light been left in. On Christmas Eve, too excited to sleep, Brian looks out the window and sees the Northern Lights. The Lights suggest the (w)holiness of both the religious occasion and the more profane excitement accompanying his anticipation of receiving the skates:

The street light outside was starred in the clear winter night; it made him think of the Star of the East and men on camels. Over the house across the street he could see the Northern Lights in a curtain shifting delicately, tinting green, fluted and rippling, with here and there a pale blush of pink. He watched them melt and reappear against the sky. (Mac. 176)

This passage also subtly foreshadows Brian's emotional shift as overwhelming excitement melts into bitter disappointment when he receives bob-skates rather than grown-up tube skates.

Similarly, when Brian invents R. W. God, his senses are heightened by the shimmering effect of light on the carpet created by the bevelled glass window, an effect that recalls the Northern Lights. Added to the impact of the light on his imagination is the shuttering effect of "the sound of the sewing machine [which] strengthened and weakened" (Mac. 38). In fact, in the original scene which is a prelude to a highly creative moment, all Brian's senses are engaged, but Weeks deleted nearly 100 words here that describe Brian's awareness of sound, smell, and colour.

Lightning, too, is used to highlight a moment of insight. One such occurrence (60) is at the end of Part I with the burial of the pigeon. Mitchell successfully argued the re-instatement of that paragraph, but not this one: "With a sudden flash of insight that sometimes comes to children, like summer lightning winking up the prairie's rim, he knew why Ab had never asked Annie to marry him" (Mac. 259).

ARGUING AGAINST ALL THESE DELETIONS, Mitchell wrote to Weeks, "I have worked hard for a quality of dualism" (Jan. 26, 1946). Nowhere had he worked harder for this than in the night scene (233-37) from which Weeks requested cuts of more than 300 words, and in the final two pages of the novel which Weeks wanted removed entirely. As the wind motif was so thematically tied to other aspects of this quality of dualism, Weeks was disrupting more than he realized. Integral to the wind pattern was the town-prairie dichotomy, the human community contradicting the lonely prairie voice, the transiency of man's life posed against the eternity of the prairie. Mitchell knew that extensive cuts to these two major portions, one the climax, the other the ending to the novel, would severely damage what he wanted to say.

The patterning of this dualism was vital in the night scene to underscore Brian's near loss of his own psychological balance. This section not only foreshadows the father's death, but suggests impressionistically the death of Brian's child-self and his passage through an experience of "apartness" (237) and "nakedness" (236). However, there are glimpses of light reflecting the emergence of a new perspective for Brian.

About 200 words were cut from these four pages. Mitchell, rather sarcastically, insisted on the re-instatement of two paragraphs which referred to the wind's "two voices" (235) and to Brian being "drained of his very self" (236):

This is the wind again. The significance is that of an omen. I believe Shakespeare used them. The boy's father is being taken from him. Perhaps I don't achieve what I hope to with this sort of thing, then again I'm afraid I'm being obvious. (Sept. 1, 1946)

However, he did lose these following passages which emphasize Brian's crisis of alienation: his rejection of the human community ("They didn't have any right to boss him around the way they'd been doing" [Mac. 268]); his overwhelming feeling of insignificance amid the prairie which is silent except for the inhuman "twanging wind," the "rasping of grasshoppers," the squeak of a gopher, "questioningly — senselessly" (Mac. 269); and his frightening awareness of being alone, "as utterly alone as it is possible to be only upon prairie. The word, eternity, had grown in his mind, a word which had often fascinated him as he listened to Mr. Powelly's sermons" (Mac. 270).

The chapter ends on a tragic note with Ab's announcement, "Yer Paw down to Rochester — he went an' died" (237), a statement that Weeks thought was too abrupt. Here again Mitchell and Weeks were aesthetically opposed; Weeks wanted more explanatory dialogue, but Mitchell argued, again, that event and image would reveal meaning:

This is what Ab would say. I have tried to say more in the preceding night scene. . . . I don't think that Ab or I should say anything more. (Jan. 27, 1946)

However, there are glimpses, as in the last few pages of the novel, of a balance to this darkness and death. Brian experiences a “singing return of the feeling” as the “sun exploded softly over the prairie’s eastern edge” (237). But, other hints that Mitchell used throughout the scene to build up to this moment and to counter-balance the ominous note are omitted; at first the stooks are seen at the close of day, “their pattern shifting and changing” (Mac. 268); the wind was “twanging the telephone wires, gently so” and is a “dancing funnel” (Mac. 269); the vastness is described not only as “frightening emptiness” (235) but as “grandeur” (Mac. 270); and the “sliver moon now rising had the faintly pencilled outline of the old moon drawn from tip to tip” (Mac. 270).

These counterposed notes finally strike a chord in the last two to three pages of the novel. When Weeks suggested that the novel end with Digby’s remark, “‘Perhaps,’ said Digby to Brian, ‘you’ve grown up’” (297), Mitchell knew that Weeks had missed the extra-literal significance of the wind. Little wonder that Weeks at first disapproved of the title! He had missed, as well, the true meaning of Brian’s maturity which does not rest with the occupation he chooses, as Weeks felt, but with how he ‘sees’ his world. There was to be no compromise on these last two pages. Mitchell knew intuitively and critically that the novel must end with the wind, not Brian: “This is a story of a boy *and* the wind” (Preface; emphasis mine) and the wind would be there at the last in all its voices.

It is incredible perhaps to suggest that the removal of twenty-odd passages and particularly the deletion of the “shuttering effect” sentence can produce such a drastic alteration in tone, mood, and ultimately theme; Mitchell believed it had. While this novel is indeed a celebration of life, it is a celebration of light and dark, clarity and obscurity and the continual quest for meaning. Mitchell felt that Weeks was skewing the balance by deleting the darker descriptions. He writes that, by the “recapitulation of the death theme,” through words which suggest no answers such as “seeking, truant” (on the final page), and by showing “the transiency of man’s days,” he had hoped to create a tone akin to that of Conrad and Hardy (Jan. 26, 1946). Philosophically Mitchell and Weeks were at odds. Like Hardy and Conrad, Mitchell saw man as vulnerable, playing his life out against the vast, incomprehensible universe. Weeks, on the other hand, wanted Brian, alone, to be centre stage, and the ending to be “free and clear” (Dec. 6, 1945). He preferred a more upbeat tone to the novel, ending with Brian, the “comic” hero whose happy future would be firmly spelled out. But the darker note is clearly present in Mitchell’s vision and is a note struck right from the beginning in the epigraph to the novel taken from Psalm 103: 15-16:

As for man, his days are as grass: as a
flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;
and the place thereof shall know it no more.

Mitchell's vision contains, consistently, this strong minor note. Weeks's deletions have the effect of transposing this symphonic novel into an essentially major key.

As with the wind motif, Weeks requested a more clearly defined and realistic treatment of the Young Ben and Brian. He wanted to remove the mysterious, the extraordinary aspects to their characters, and he asked Mitchell to clean up Brian's more aggressive and earthy responses.

Mitchell wanted the Young Ben's presence to be as elusive and powerful as the wind. Although the Young Ben is, of course, a very real country boy, we see him through Brian's imagination as more of a supernatural being, the prairie incarnate. The first description of him at the end of Chapter One and Brian's first words to him, "This is your prairie" (12), give to the Young Ben this supernatural quality. Weeks commented: "Young Ben is too much a spectre, implausible, [*sic*] Make him a real boy here" (Dec. 6, 1945), and Mitchell retorted: "The making of the Young Ben a spectre is deliberate. It is as Brian sees him; he is a creature of the prairie and part of its magic" (Jan. 27, 1945). Mitchell did not alter his view of the Young Ben although he did agree to remove two seemingly redundant lines:

The boy continued to stare at him.
"It's your prairie," Brian said, "isn't it?" (Mac. 13)

Emphasizing through repetition the Young Ben's silent stare enhances his mysterious nature, but it does more; it is his silence that causes Brian to rephrase his original statement in the form of a question which clearly echoes the ambivalence of the question/statement title of the novel and the paradoxical interplay in the final five pages of Brian's questioning (298), his statement, "he would know" (299), and the prairie's final *question-answer*.

The relationship between the two boys was extraordinary as well and very delicately, sparingly suggested. In a deleted passage Brian sees himself in the same terms as the Young Ben: "I'm a prairie boy — aren't I?" (Mac. 48) he asks his father. Mitchell in fact refers to the Young Ben as Brian's "alter-ego" (Jan. 26, 1946). Salter encouraged this relationship pointing out that "Brian *understands* the young Ben in a way that children often do . . . understand things that are too profound and complicated for their elders" (June 27, 1945).

In the end Mitchell lost five references to the relationship between the Young Ben and Brian (Mac. 13, 23, 48, 103, 118). One of these (Mac. 23) was an unfortunate loss because of its integral connection to the wind-light-dark motif. In fact, Weeks, at the galley stage, requested all references to the Young Ben to be cut from this scene. Brian, alone in his room, is feeling neglected because his parents are preoccupied with the very ill Bobbie, and he is frightened by the rising wind noises. He tries to find comfort in the memory of his first encounter with the Young Ben, but it is elusive and goes, "glimmering away as a reflection in water disappears when wind ruffles the surface" (Mac. 23). The reflection image suggests the alter-

ego role of the Young Ben, and the wind and “glimmering” repeat the shuttering light pattern; Brian’s relationship with the Young Ben is as tenuous and intuitive as his understanding of the “feeling” produced by the wind. Mitchell lost the above lines but retained at least the mention of the Young Ben in this scene. In answering Weeks on this issue he indicates the significance of the relationship:

On reading the galley I was struck by the fact that the Young Ben-Brian relationship did not stand out as I had intended it to. It is a delicate thing . . . but with all the deletions of the Young Ben references between Chapter One and Chapter Seven, it would take a very sensitive reader to recognize the wraith of the last chapter as the boy Brian met on the prairie in the first chapter. These references to the Young Ben should go back in. (Sept. 1, 1946)

He insisted that the appearance of the Young Ben be retained in two other scenes as well (24, 43).

IT IS, HOWEVER, the character of Brian that is most weakened by the cuts. These occur primarily in the first part of the novel and deal largely with Brian’s inner world and his creation of R. W. God. Of course, the relationship with the Young Ben is indicative of Brian’s imaginative response to the mysteries of life, and quite clearly Mitchell wanted to deal with the inner world of his main character to show the characteristics of visionary sight. “Seeing” is “feeling” in Mitchell’s vision; the world is a subjective reality as Digby points out.

As with the wind motif, Weeks and Mitchell had dramatically different visions of Brian and his imaginary world. Specifically, Weeks objected to Brian’s creation of R. W. God. In fact, Cloud notes in a rough draft of editors’ remarks that Weeks found the humanizing of God (references to God in the bathroom and the use of the initials R. W.) so offensive (changed to “cute” when he writes to Mitchell) he wanted them dropped. Cloud suggested re-writing these scenes (Mac. 9-48) from Gerald O’Connell’s point of view (Dec. 6, 1945) to avoid the problem. Weeks and Cloud showed here their lack of awareness of the psychology of the real child; ironically, Weeks suggested a “punishment” scene with Brian “sent sobbing to his hide-out” and a Christmas scene to add some “verity” to Brian’s childhood (Dec. 6, 1945). In this confrontation Mitchell retained R. W., the references to the bathroom, and God’s belching, and he agreed to write a Christmas scene, but, in the bargain, he did lose over forty passages dealing with Brian’s inner world.

Along with his disapproval of R. W., Weeks also disliked Brian’s aggressive behaviour. Weeks found Brian “too fantastic,” not real enough. He wrote, “Brian’s development troubles me throughout the first hundred pages. . . . at the beginning his feet must be planted on the earth” (Dec. 6, 1945). Quite the contrary, Brian is a very real child. Without going into any detailed biography, it should be noted that,

at the time, Mitchell was studying Psychology for an Education course at the University of Alberta, was reading Jean Piaget's work on child behaviour, spent some time eavesdropping on children at play and recording their conversations, and was making notes on memories of his own childhood. Brian is neither too intellectually adult, too sweetly childish, nor too cutely vulgar.

Weeks remarked that Brian was too "precocious," independent, original, too "cute" (Dec. 6, 1945); Mitchell counters by writing that Brian is to be "self-willed and independent" and that "Brian's frankness and bluntness are part of his character; they belong generally to his age; he comes by them honestly through his mother, grandmother, Sean" (Jan. 27, 1946). A closer look at a representative selection of the cuts will illustrate that Mitchell compromised a great deal here.

In the beginning two or three pages there were originally more details about Brian's fantasies. Brian imagined driving two horses (Jake Harris's fire wagon horses) which leapt from his clothes closet propelled by orange pop that fizzed all the way down to their stomachs (Mac. 3). We are told, a bit later, that this 'imaginative' child had placed Bobbie in the dumb-waiter which got stuck leaving "his brother half-way up the dark shaft, suspended over the soft water cistern" (Mac. 41). Mitchell was also requested to cut some of the more violent passages in which Brian *delights* in imaginatively punishing his grandmother for ignoring him while Bobbie is sick:

His grandmother had no colour in her hair, he thought, as he gripped the shovel more tightly and with both hands so that he could hit the sand with greater force. As the shovel rose and fell, he made thunder in the back of his throat; hot fire, he decided, was coming from his nose, and eyes, and ears, and mouth. (Mac. 4-5)

Mitchell convincingly follows the child's mind in this sequence showing the free association that his senses make between the colour of sand and the colour of his grandmother's hair. The fantasy of himself as a beast of revenge is probably a mental association of Jake Harris's horses, fairy tale dragons and the abstract notion of a revengeful God instilled through his Presbyterian heritage.

Weeks also thought it offensive and irreverent to have God wading through "His prairie of oatmeal porridge" (Mac. 24) or have him, not just kick Artie once, but "drownd [*sic*] him too" (Mac. 38) and kick him again. Half a page of dialogue is removed in which God describes to Brian how He has fun bouncing on the clouds and how He travels by vacuum cleaner or piggyback by angel (Mac. 39). Brian plays store with God (who, like Brian's father, owns a pharmacy) and sells him toothpaste, toilet paper, and soda for the gas on his stomach (Mac. 40).

Again, this accumulation of detail shows how clearly Mitchell was aware of the imaginative workings of a child's mind; R. W. God takes on the characteristics of the most significant figures in Brian's world, the family members — the grandmother who belches, Uncle Sean who, although not a shepherd, raises calves, and his father who recites "Casey at the Bat." Through fantasy, Brian attempts to

cope with the disappointments, fears, and injustices of the real world, just as Uncle Sean does with his story of the County Down little man or as his grandmother does with her tall tales about her homesteading years.

Unfortunately, most of Brian's imitations of Sean's language and manner have been deleted. He tells Forbsie that his Uncle Sean is "all the time talking goddam" (Mac. 6), which in his mind means that Sean knows God very well. At the dinner table when asked to eat his carrots, he replies, "Carrots are bloody" (Mac. 42), an expression his father thinks he has picked up from Sean. Once, he cheekily argues with his grandmother (Mac. 51) just as Uncle Sean does. By removing these more aggressive traits of Brian, the editor removed the Sean-like side of Brian's character, the active side of a predominantly reflective spirit. Furthermore, Weeks projected his own puritanical inclinations on the character of Brian and envisioned Brian's quest as a one-sided "search for that clean-washed, tremulous inner feeling" (Dec. 6, 1945). Ironically, he attempted and partially succeeded in reducing not the unbelievably fantastic but the psychologically real side of a young boy's character.

Right from the beginning of the confrontation between Mitchell and Weeks, Salter had urged Mitchell to defend his work critically and confidently: "you've got to become a critic yourself, and you've got to be able to follow up a suggestion or turn it down; you can't afford to have other people playing tricks with your future and your reputation, making you — let us say — merely popular and cheap when you want to be something else" (Dec. 29, 1945). Clearly, over the next nine months, Mitchell learned to deal objectively with criticism. Although, in the end, he had to compromise on many points against his own aesthetic judgement, and the Little, Brown version suffers as a result, he did not cheapen his work and certainly underwent a worthwhile initiation into the other side of authorship — the editorial process.

In summary, then, the longer Macmillan edition is superior to the American shorter version. Ideological differences, no doubt, accounted for the different visions of this novel held by Mitchell and Weeks. Weeks is urban eastern American; Mitchell is rural western Canadian. Although Weeks wanted the spice of a foreign, uncultivated (perhaps he was thinking uncultured) region, it was to be tamed to *Atlantic's* eastern sophistication and decorousness. In his first letter to Mitchell he wrote, "it is exciting" to publish a man who writes about "a region so remote and little known as yours" (Dec. 6, 1945). Mitchell, however, was not an unsophisticate; while he wanted to faithfully recreate the prairies as he knew them, he also had something to say via the landscape. The long and short of it is that Weeks wanted a "clean-washed" Brian and a "free and clear" (Dec. 6, 1945) answer presented at the end of this novel; Mitchell refused to present anything short of the truth: a dual-natured character and theme, and an ambivalent, never-ending quest.

It is abundantly clear, from an analysis of Mitchell's correspondence dealing with the discrepancies between the two versions, that he is a consummate craftsman

who intelligently evaluated his own work. Mitchell had been well tested in his apprenticeship by both Salter and Weeks, his two chief critics. In the end they both had praise for his editorial skills. Just after Mitchell took his firm position regarding the ending to *Wind*, Salter wrote in admiration: "You might be granted your degree and graduate into the world of authorship. I cannot see that I can be of any further value to you; you are beyond the pupil stage" (Dec. 29, 1945). The world of authorship extended well beyond the writing of the novel into the extrinsic areas of criticism and marketing. And, in spite of the arguments, Weeks, too, thought Mitchell had proved himself admirably: "It is always a source of satisfaction to watch a narrator develop and defend the validity of his work . . . and to say that is to give you honest praise" (March 1, 1946).

NOTES

- ¹ W. O. Mitchell, *Who Has Seen the Wind* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947).
- ² Mitchell, *Who Has Seen the Wind* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1947). All passages to be found *only* in the longer Macmillan first edition will be cited parenthetically (Mac. page number) following the quotation. This will indicate a passage deleted by Weeks.
- ³ The subsequent editions of *Who Has Seen the Wind* are (1) Macmillan of Canada, 1960, with study material by Ruth Godwin; (2) Macmillan of Canada, 1960; (3) Macmillan of Canada, St. Martin's Classic, 1971; (4) Macmillan of Canada, Laurentian Library, 1972; (5) *Qui a vu le vent*, trans. Arlette Francière, Montréal, Cercle du livre de France, 1974; (6) Macmillan of Canada, 1976, illus. William Kurelek; (7) Canongate Publishing Ltd., Edinburgh, 1980; (8) McClelland and Stewart-Bantam Ltd., 1982.
- ⁴ Mitchell, *Who Has Seen the Wind* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-Bantam Ltd., 1984), copyright page.
- ⁵ Mitchell, *Macmillan Archive* (Hamilton: McMaster Univ. Library), Oct. 28, 1946.
- ⁶ F. M. Salter, *W. O. Mitchell Papers* (Calgary: Univ. of Calgary Special Collections), May 5, 1945. All subsequent letters from Salter are to be found in this Collection and will be referred to parenthetically by date only.
- ⁷ Dudley Cloud, *Atlantic Monthly*/Mitchell correspondence (courtesy of Weeks), Sept. 21, 1945. Henceforth, Cloud's letters will be referred to parenthetically by date only.
- ⁸ Edward Weeks, *Atlantic Monthly*/Mitchell correspondence (courtesy of Weeks), Dec. 6, 1945. Henceforth, Weeks's letters will be referred to parenthetically by date only.
- ⁹ In conversation with W. O. Mitchell, Oct. 14, 1985.

