GROVE'S NEW WORLD BLUFF

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FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE is one of the most intriguing autobiographical novelists in twentieth-century literature. Unlike Joseph Conrad, who did not hide his Polish past, or D. H. Lawrence (whom we can follow with relative biographical accuracy in his autobiographical fiction from *The White Peacock* to *Kangaroo* and in his exile in Australia and America, Grove disappeared from Germany and systematically cut all personal ties with Europe during his still mysterious three-year stay in the United States before finally settling in Manitoba in 1912 as an immigrant of fictitious Swedish and British ancestry. During his Canadian years he ingeniously misled literary critics and biographers with his made-up past which, on the surface, was brimful of lies and distortions. In retrospect, however, thanks to D. O. Spettigue's detective work in *FPG: The European Years*,[1] we can now learn how Grove's fiction reveals psychological truths about his self-exile without a home-coming, about his attempts to re-create himself in his writings, and about the art of autobiography as practiced by an impressive literary liar.

While still in Europe, Grove once admitted his compulsive lying to André Gide,[2] but such a confession obviously became unnecessary after his emigration. He could not, however, run away from his memories of a life which, despite the apparent lack of archival evidence,[3] suggests remarkable similarities and parallels to that of Thomas Mann's infamous confidence-man, Felix Krull. Because of Grove's double identity and autobiographical tendencies his books are deceptively accurate, ironically self-disparaging, skillfully garbled,[4] and artifully patterned images of himself. Consequently modern readers have to disentangle not only the documentary but also the psycho-biographical truths of his self-proclaimed autobiographies, *A Search for America* (1927) and *In Search of Myself* (1946). Reinterpretation, however, must not be limited to such of his books which, even after skeptical scrutiny, remain autobiographical; reinterpretation needs to include his so-called prairie novels such as *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), because they are variants of the two *Search* books.

Drawing on Grove's German past, his exile and new identity on the last frontier of the fabled North American West, his inclination towards literary confession, and his German novel, *Fanny Essler* (1905), I will establish patterns of landscape and of character that reveal the confessional nature of *Settlers of the*

Marsh. My approach, which focuses on linguistic and psychological aspects of Grove's first Canadian novel, is of course partly reductive because reductions are inevitable in the study of confessional works. This is particularly so in Grove's case since he, I believe, is frequently tempting the reader to glimpse the haunting figure hiding behind the imposingly drawn F. P. G. monogram on the covers of *A Search for America* (2nd ed., 1939) and *In Search of Myself*, behind the title of the allegedly burned MS. of "Felix Powell's Career,"[5] and behind sporadic ambiguous statements on his craft, such as,

> I always dread the writing; not merely because it involves an enormous nervous strain and drain on my vitality; it is much more important that, by writing the story — necessary as that process may have become — I have to take leave of the figures involved in that story. They cease to be living beings to me; they lose their "freedom" as it were.[6]

Again and again this fear of writing surfaces in Grove's works. On the one hand, this fear together with total absorption in his character speaks for his seriousness as a creative writer; but, on the other hand, it corroborates his fascination with re-creating the shadowy world of his past. His literary characters lose their freedom as they turn into images of self, a phenomenon which Grove appears to have both loved and dreaded and which partly explains the disappearance of "Felix Powell's Career," of course. With *Settlers of the Marsh* as a case in point, one may want to question my interpretation of Grove's creative agonies. After all, that novel deals with prostitution, abortion, murder, and madness, themes which generally invite "enormous nervous strain." Yet in response to Lionel Stevenson's thematic reservations about *Settlers of the Marsh*, Grove promises that "there will be more repellent themes. I just can't help it. I can only write about what I have personally reacted to."[7] The platitude that good writers write about what they know best does not capture the ambiguity of "what I have personally reacted to." Grove is again guardedly self-revealing in the knowledge of his European years of literary pretensions, professional failure, and financial and social irresponsibilities. Indeed, in his comments to Stevenson the act of writing itself becomes a metaphor for writing about the past: "for the moment my problem is to make a living by hackwriting . . . , while incidentally I work over some of *my oldest writings*. I have no ambition except to *live one day, when I am dead, through my books*" (emphasis mine).[8] What seems to be a platitude about posthumous literary fame really includes a teasing challenge to biographers as well as a fear of being found out while still alive. The fact that Grove, who had been married in Germany, had a wife and two children in Canada helps to substantiate his agony about being unmasked. The autobiographical allusions in his comments to Stevenson inevitably prepare the alerted reader to question the meaning of Grove's life-long opinion of that novel: "To this day I am not quite sure that it conveys to others what it conveys to me."[9] To show the confessional

tensions within that opinion and the novel, I begin by examining the book's setting.

THE FRONTIER SETTING of the Big Marsh in the novel is composed of sloughs, bluffs, and bush land. Niels Lindstedt, a recent Swedish immigrant and the protagonist of the book, spends his first winter in the Big Marsh district "working in the bush and driving, driving. . . ."[10] On one of his drives over the "bare Marsh,"

> the snow was lashed into waves and crests like a boiling sea. There was no road left. He angled across the open land. It took two hours to make the mile to a huge poplar bluff which rose like an island or a promontory jutting out from the east into the waste of snow. He intended to unhitch and to feed in its shelter . . . And before long it somehow was clear to him that this was his future home. (*SM*, 43)

The following year, "he filed on the northeast quarter of section seven, in the edge of the Marsh, on the Range Line, which held the big bluff" (*SM*, 47).

> The southern part of his claim was covered with comparatively small growth; for one of the marsh-fires that broke out every now and then had encroached upon it, some fifteen years ago, consuming everything that would burn. For no apparent reason — perhaps in consequence of a change of wind — the fire had stopped short of that tall, majestic bluff which now stood dominant, lording it over this whole corner of the Marsh. (*SM*, 48)

While these descriptions of Niels's new-found home appear geographically accurate and in keeping with the tenets of literary realism — a classification which has, I feel, distorted critics' readings of the novel — one should not overlook the linguistic symbolic and psychological significance infused in the grandeur of the setting by means of topographical and climatic extremes, particularly the simple yet awesome name of the "Big Marsh," and the personification of the "huge poplar bluff" or "big bluff" as "that tall, majestic bluff which now stood dominant, lording it over this whole corner of the Marsh." The key to the covert significance of "Marsh" and "bluff" lies in Grove's German-English world of words. To him the "Big Marsh" would inevitably allude both to a vast *marsh* ("die Marsch") and a long *march* ("der Marsch"), while the "big bluff" is a splendid play on the word "bluff" with its one English and only German sense of "lie" or "false front"; its regional North American meaning of "clump of trees" merely provides surface realism.

The intense description of the bluff, its bilingual surprise, and its personification thus make transparent Grove's veiled comment on his own exile, his tall stature, his élitism, and his confidence in a new career in the New World behind a well guarded façade concealing his past. In short, Grove's fictional "majestic bluff" in part projects a self-confession as well as a vision of the future. This does

not mean that the reader should categorically identify Niels with Grove. In fact, it is not at all my intention to dare *psychoanalyze* Grove by simplistically equating him with characters or aspects of setting in the novel; however, I will, encouraged by Grove's "big bluff," interpret both characters and setting with psycho-biographical considerations in the light of his provocative autobiographical games with the reader. This approach will yield numerous parallels and similarities of varying degrees between the author and his fictional characters.

The linguistic tensions of "Marsh" and "bluff" lead me to their psychological tensions which link landscape with characters in the novel, above all with Niels. Such landscape-mindscape relationships are, of course, not unusual in fiction of the North American frontier. On the one hand, Niels carries out his pioneer tasks with impeccable planning and mechanical precision, and rises quickly to prosperity; on the other he unwittingly neglects his soul because of his overreliance on will. From behind the security of the bluff he plods steadfastly to fulfill his dream of an idyllic life in the new country: a farm, a family, and material comfort. "It was merely a question of persevering and hewing straight to the line. Life was simplified" (*SM*, 45), Niels concludes naïvely. Yet Marsh, bush and bluff not only frame the stages of his struggle with the land but also reflect stages of conflicts within him and with others in his quest for a new life and selfhood. The landscape of the frontier allows Grove to dramatize the layers of meaning of the immigrant-hero's naturalization and, by analogy, of his own immigration.

In this psychological context, the Big Marsh comes to represent memory, the world of the past and of the unconscious; the bush land, which is easily cleared and cultivated, suggests a world of the present and of hope for the future so typical of the North American frontier; while the ambiguous big bluff signifies, on the one hand, a world of appearances where life, comparable to the bluff's tall trees, seems straight, rational, and secure, and, on the other hand, a world of the present threatened by the past. The threat of the past and the unconscious to the world of the present and appearances is symbolically explicit in the Big Marsh's potential for violent change. The paradoxical images quoted above of the Marsh as a "boiling sea" in winter and an occasional inferno in summer represent a chaotic, primeval energy which the big bluff, in all its meanings, has so far been able to dominate only by chance. The unexpectedly cohesive and strong archetypal topography of the Big Marsh district thus counterpoints and questions Niels's conquest of the land, and, as I shall clarify along the way, both setting and Niels's story reveal Grove's fictionalization of the transition from German past to Canadian present, his own "big bluff."

Niels's lack of awareness of the forces of the unconscious and his general disregard of the past explain the paradox of both his progressive homesteading and growing rootlessness. Almost from the day of his arrival his inner chaos is fore-

shadowed when images of a woman and children first enter the landscape. In the bush,

> where moonlight filtered down through the meshes of leafless boughs overhead, a vision took hold of Niels: of himself and a woman, sitting of a mid-winter night by the light of a lamp and in front of a fire, with the pitter-patter of children's feet sounding from above: the eternal vision that has moved the world and that was to direct his fate. He tried to see the face of the woman; but it entirely evaded him. (*SM*, 36)

The vision is more than mechanically associated with the unconscious in the book, for it alludes, through the connotations of "eternal" and facelessness, to a major archetypal figure in the unconscious, namely, the *Anima* or womanhood personified: "When symbolized in dreams, the *Anima* appears to a man in the figure of a woman, generally either a woman with a blank face or no face at all, or a woman whom the man may not recognize in terms of his conscious experience."[11]

WHILE MY JUNGIAN PERSPECTIVE might seem contrived, it has really grown out of the novel's archetypal setting, the novel's main theme of quest for self and, particularly, Niels's archetypal domestic dream; a Jungian reading of the latter is hardly out of place in light of the close semantic correspondence between the quotation on the theory of the *Anima* and Grove's wording of Niels's vision. Moreover it should not be surprising to see the author's process of psychological dramatization of Niels's life in a new land extended to his new acquaintances and friendships, especially with women.

Ellen Amundsen, the first woman to whom Niels feels attracted, takes the place of the blurred woman in his dream. However, Niels's first casual acquaintance with the virginal Ellen already suggests his fateful obsession with sex, for "the trees stood still, strangely still in the slanting afternoon sun which threw a ruddy glow over the white snow in sloughs and glades" (*SM*, 27). "Strangely" and the repetitive "still" heightened by the new sexual shades of meaning of the now familiar psychological tensions among the images of the Marsh all allude, in D. H. Lawrence fashion, to the turmoil within him.

The turmoil grows when Niels meets a second woman, Clara Vogel, the district whore, during a Sunday gathering at a neighbour's farm:

> She was dressed in a remarkably pretty and becoming way, with ruffles around her plump, smooth-skinned though rather pallid face. In spite of the season she wore a light, washable dress which fitted her slender and yet plump body without a fold. Her waist showed a v-shaped opening at the throat which gave her — by contrast to the other women — something peculiarly feminine: beside her the others looked neuter. (*SM*, 29)

While her "pallid face" recalls Niels's faceless *Anima* figure above, her "black beady eyes" say otherwise. They would "glow with a strange warmth when they lighted on his own," which he finds "strangely disquieting" (*SM*, 39-40). Always confident behind "the protection of her sex" (*SM*, 30), Clara becomes for Niels an archetypal *femme fatale*,[12] and the "strange" energy exchange between them prepares for his seduction.[13]

The third woman in Niels's new world is his dead mother, who appears to him after the wedding party of his friend Nelson. During the newlyweds' departure Niels "caught [the bride's younger brother] by the shoulder. 'I'm going, too,' he said to the boy. 'Tell your mother I'll be back in the morning to finish the hay.' 'All right,' said Bobby and squirmed in the crush" (*SM*, 54). The "crush" affirms Niels's covert longing for comforting male friendship after the loss of Nelson, with whom he used to work as a "steady team" (*SM*, 22); it also points to his child-like state of confusion and fear because of Clara's presence at the party:

> Without waiting for anybody Niels dodged . . . into the thick bluff beyond. . . . The air was strangely quiet for a summer day in the north. . . . He was a leaf borne along the wind, a prey to things beyond his control, a fragment swept away by torrents. (*SM*, 55)

Yet the symbolic false front of the bluff gives him little protection from the "strangely quiet" undercurrent of his sexual turmoil which reduces the strong-willed, rational Niels to "a leaf," a nobody, yearning for mother: "He seemed to see her before him. . . . There was pity in the look of the ancient mother: pity with him who was going astray; pity with him not because of what assailed him from without; but pity with what he was in his heart" (*SM*, 56). This desperate attempt to return to his mother, who, as the word "ancient" implies, is of archetypal significance, fails. His symbolic rebirth on the primeval frontier cannot begin as long as he remains powerless over the forces of his unconscious which have manifested themselves so strongly in his sexual awakening and paradoxical fear of women.

Niels's instinctive escapes into hard physical work, his hiring of Bobby as a farm help and companion, his taking in an old neighbour, Sigurdsen, all fail him in his growing derangement; Sigurdsen even aggravates it:

> The old man was getting to be *stranger* and *stranger*. Sometimes he would talk to himself for a long while, taking no notice of Niels's presence. . . . "Mind, George, that girl in Copenhagen?" . . . Niels would nod. He understood that the old man was talking to the phantoms of his youth. *Strange, disquieting* things he would sometimes say, trailing off into Icelandic which Niels understood only half: things that seemed to withdraw a veil from wild visions, incomprehensible in one so old. . . . The reappearance of the animal in a man whom he loved, aroused in Niels *strange enthusiasms*. (*SM*, 84; italics mine)

The significance of Niels's sexual "enthusiasms" lies in their association with his struggle to overcome his childlikeness and rootlessness, to build a future on a present without a past. All his successful pioneering cannot give him the emotional self-reliance he needs to cope with Ellen's refusal to offer him more than sisterly friendship. He rejects her offer because he senses her as a failed *Anima* figure not only destroying his domestic dream but also intuitively reminding him of his emotional mess by her own emotional insecurity and put-on mannish behaviour. Ellen thus becomes the unintentional catalyst for his seduction by and marriage to Clara. Although Clara, as a new *Anima* figure, can alleviate the sexual manifestations of Niels's anguish, she makes a mockery of his quest for selfhood and a family; she soon intensifies his haunting fear of being ironically uprooted and forsaken in his big house behind the "big bluff." The house, built on the Range Line of his section of the Big Marsh, is called White Range Line House, as if to underline the paradox of Niels's derangement despite his prosperity and moral seriousness.

Clara's role is complex. On the one hand, I see her as a personification of the symbolic sloughs, blizzards and fires of the Big Marsh, as a kind of archetypal Terrible Mother whose realm is in the wilderness and who, in appropriate Jungian terms, is "the mother of innumerable evils, not the least of which are neurotic disturbances [which rise] from the stagnant pools of libido."[14] On the other hand, she is a demonic wife whose aggressive sexuality has turned her into a Lilith-like figure in Niels's Adam-like rise and fall in the new land:

> [According] to Jewish tradition ... Adam, before he knew Eve, had a demon wife called Lilith, with whom he strove for supremacy. But Lilith rose up into the air through the magic of God's name and hid herself in the sea. Adam forced her to come back with the help of three angels, whereupon Lilith changed into a nightmare or lamia who haunted pregnant women and kidnapped new-born children.[15]

Grove appears to have adapted an appropriate mythological figure to deal with Niels's *Anima*. Ellen is the original Lilith whom Niels wants to own but who rejects him. A storm and metaphorical "breakers in the surf" and "the roar of the sea" (*SM*, 98) accompany her rejection. Clara now becomes Niels's vengeful Lilith, his nightmare. Here, too, it is hardly coincidence that Clara's last name is German for bird, a creature which in mythology alludes to angels.[16] Also similar to Adam's Lilith who stole semen from sleeping husbands with which to breed monsters, Clara plays her role as district prostitute with nightmarish features always lurking under her make-up: "the flesh was still smooth and firm; but her face was the face of decay" (*SM*, 133). Her *decaying face*, which is reminiscent of Niels's earlier vision of a faceless woman, emphasizes her failure as an *Anima* figure. Her whoring, in not only the house which is the symbol of Niels's new existence but also the bluff that is to protect it, parodies in grotesque fashion the

hollowness of Niels's quest for self, wife and children, a quest for a New World future independent of his Old World past.

He senses this hollowness as he, psychologically speaking, recognizes himself in Clara's shadow-like personification of crude sexual obsession, an obsession which is at the centre of his emotional upheaval. The recognition comes when a neighbour, whose sexual temptation he resists, taunts him about his marriage to a whore, a fact of which he had not been fully conscious before:

> For a moment he felt that he must pitch forward and faint. Instinctively his trembling hand reached for [the mower] to steady his swaying body.... The woman saw it and stopped in her rush of words. Her eyes became wide. She realized what she had done: she had swung an axe into a great, towering tree; and the tree had crashed down at a single blow. (*SM*, 178)

Mower and axe, the tools behind the success of his homesteading scheme, paradoxically signal his total failure to take roots. In response to the neighbour's revelation, Niels's vestiges of emotional control finally succumb to his passional chaos; Niels shoots and kills Clara in his White Range Line House during one of her orgies.

Rarely does Grove's authorial voice intrude as bluntly as in these crucial scenes in which a quasi-Freudian chain of metaphors of castration or impotence dramatizes the end of Niels's quest for self. First we see him as "a towering tree" felled by a woman's "single blow." Then we follow him through trance-like wanderings through his section of the Big Marsh including a poplar bluff where "he felt his way from tree to tree, supporting himself by his hands, feeling up and down the ridged trunks as if searching for something" (*SM*, 183), the something being his virtue and manliness. The loss of both is doubly emphasized with grotesque Hemingway-like clarity: Neils's murder weapon is a big-game rifle with which, after Clara, he kills his favourite horse, a gelding. Even without resorting to further simplistic Freudian reductions, something so tempting to do because of the novel's laboured focus on sexuality in conflict with search for self, one feels certain that Grove's evident fascination with the book's "repellent" theme, to use his word to Stevenson, is somehow linked to a blending of autobiography and fiction. I will try to explain that link after first rounding out the novel's archetypal pattern of landscape and characters.

QUITE IRONICALLY NEILS'S QUEST for a new life continues in prison. The prison itself, "a group of buildings of truly Titanic outline" (*SM*, 193), is the counterpart of the Big Marsh: it is a symbol of supreme law, order, tradition and social consciousness, all of which are aspects of an established society rather than a frontier district. There Niels relives and orders his life with the help of the "fearless" (*SM*, 194) warden and bookish enlightenment. His

spiritual progression manifests itself in his early parole accompanied by suggestive changes in the frontier landscape (*SM*, 196): the Big Marsh has drainage ditches: "the old familiar bluffs [have] been cleared away"; only the big bluff at his farm is still "dominating the landscape," as a stolid reminder of his past which restrains his renewed unrest when dreaming of Ellen:

> Her eyes light-blue, her features round, her complexion a pure Scandinavian white. Again it was her expression that held him. . . . No smile lighted her features; her eyes were stern and condemnatory. (*SM*, 209)

Her pure white face appears to cast her again as Niels's *Anima*. When they actually meet, "her eyes looked searchingly, questioningly, expectantly. There was nothing in them that seemed to condemn. . . . They were full of sympathy" (*SM*, 211). Like Adam in the Lilith myth, Niels has been given a second chance.

Without the German-English word-play on the "big bluff" that frames the book's beginning and ending, and without Grove's life-long bluffing about his past, Niels's story would be just another version of frontier fiction about a North American Adam. The skillful manipulation of the surface realism of the Big Marsh frontier with its underlying archetypal dimensions, and the purposeful integration of the archetypal characters into the ambivalent setting serve to dramatize the traditional New World theme of man's chance at a new life. Yet the recurrence of the bluff motif demands further psycho-biographical interpretation from the critical reader in response to not just the discovery of a bilingual pun but the way Grove introduces the pun at the precise moment when Niels chooses his section of the Big Marsh where "one of the marsh-fires that broke out now and then had encroached upon [his claim] some fifteen years ago, consuming everything that would burn. For no apparent reason — perhaps in consequence of a change of wind — the fire had stopped short of that tall, majestic bluff which now stood dominant, lording it over this whole corner of the Marsh" (*SM*, 48).

Why does the omniscient narrator choose the exact figure of fifteen years? Why does he draw attention, by means of "*no apparent* reason" and "perhaps" as well as punctuation, to the "change of wind," a plausible factual explanation yet also a figure of speech applicable to change in a man's life? Within the symbolic significance of this passage which I introduced earlier on, the fifteen years have unexpected meaning when read as the fifteen years between 1909, the time of Grove's disappearance in Germany, and 1924, the year he completed *Settlers of the Marsh*. This reading, of course, also explains the attention given to the "change of wind," and reinforces the ambiguous personification of the bluff itself. In the dramatic allusions to his fifteen years of disguise rather than in the book's theme of quest for self lies Grove's initial challenge to the reader to be alert for oblique authorial self-revelations.

It would be too simplistic to dwell on the parallels between Niels's and Grove's life-histories. On a symbolic level the parallels are obvious, yet on the factual level there are major discrepancies: Niels's memories of Sweden are negligible, Grove's of Germany are not; Niels's imprisonment was for murder, Grove's (in Germany) for embezzlement; Niels was a labourer and farmer, Grove an overly ambitious novelist, essayist, and translator. One may, however, safely consider Niels as a surrogate of the new Grove who married a Canadian farmer's daughter and school teacher yet must have been haunted by his affairs with older women in Europe and his marriage to a German divorcee. Because detailed evidence is lacking, it would be irresponsible to equate that divorcee with Clara Vogel in *Settlers of the Marsh*. In fact, I question whether that could have been Grove's intent, because, in the book, Clara stands for a present with a past but no future. Niels's murder of her thus corresponds to Grove's quasi-annihilation of his past self. This makes it plausible to regard Clara as a surrogate of Grove's former self. While his self-portrayal in the disguise of a female character would give Grove additional security in North America from biographical critics, there is also a precedent of this kind of self-portrayal in *Fanny Essler* (1905), his first novel. Spettigue's notion that the model for Fanny Essler and Clara Vogel was Grove's German wife[17] is only partly plausible, because in both autobiographical novels Grove appears to reveal primarily himself through his female protagonists. Some thematic and psychological evidence from *Fanny Essler* will help to substantiate my interpretation.

COMPARABLE TO NIELS, Fanny suffers from childlike naïveté, a mother complex, voracious sexual desires and frustrations, all indicative of psychological instability and inability to cope with her life-energy. Among her lovers are a pretentious baron, a gentlemanly sea captain, lesbian theatre colleagues, eccentric artist figures called Stein, Stumpf, and Barrel, and an upper-class landowner called Reelen. Stein, whose name alludes to his heart of stone, is a kind of demonic lover; the noseless Stumpf, though impotent as his name implies, can give her brotherly love and security; and Barrel, her first husband, finds in her inspiration for his writing. Barrel kills himself after Fanny's engagement to the duty-conscious, reserved Reelen, who offers her a symbolic refuge after the decadent world of artists.

In each affair Fanny's hot-bloodedness inexorably turns into frigidity and sexual torture; yet, ironically, she regards sex as the gateway to a successful career. Her attempt to be an actress, as if to mask her inner life, fails miserably; and just when her naïve dream of the fairy prince promises fulfillment in Reelen, her Niels Lindstedt-like derangement reaches its nadir, from which his world of hollow gentility can no longer rescue her. She dies of malaria in Portugal only

days before her marriage; and in her final delirium she longs to be with her mother. Unlike Niels, yet similar to Clara, Fanny is promiscuous, dabbles in literature and art, and likes nude paintings. She is, incidentally, also akin to Ellen in her puritanical upbringing and frequent signs of mannishness.

There is another crucial connection between the two books in the fairy tale Stein tells Fanny:

> Once upon a time there was a little girl who dreamed of a prince far away in the great wide world. And she ran away from her father and mother to seek the prince. And before she found him, she had to cross a great marsh, and her clothes and body had become dirty. And he, who was glad to be finally recognized as a prince, did not notice it at first, and was full of joy, and kissed her because she had found him. But then he saw that on her long journey she had been unable to keep herself clean, while he was dying because of his passion for cleanliness.[18]

The links to the Big Marsh as well as Niels's passion for symbolic cleanliness are self-evident. The "little girl," however, deserves closer attention, since traditionally the prince quests for the princess and not *vice versa*. This inversion of roles, in what is meant as a lesson for Fanny, gives additional support to my interpretation of her as a version of Grove himself and, by analogy, to my reading of Clara as a variation of that version. Even otherwise trivial coincidences become remarkable in this analogy: Clara and Grove dye their hair with henna;[19] Fanny's first creative piece of work is a book design, and Grove designed the cover for *Fanny Essler*;[20] Fanny and Grove are heavy smokers; and Fanny's and Clara's passions and mock-creative pursuits tend to parody Grove's passional and artistic difficulties alluded to in his *In Search of Myself* and partly documented in *FPG: The European Years*. I should add that Grove's self-revelations in the guise of female characters appear also in his second German novel, *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* (1906) with its Fanny Essler-like protagonist, Suse Ihle.

In the absence of thoroughly detailed biographical evidence and of syntheses of Grove's habits of writing, my psychological reading of *Settlers of the Marsh*, in response to both his implicit invitation to do so and his reputation as a confessional writer, relies on a synthesis of linguistic, thematic, and psychological pieces of evidence. While the ambiguity of the "big bluff" is the cornerstone of my interpretation, Clara's role as a surrogate of Felix Paul Greve, the old Grove, completes the evidence pattern I have established. To Niels she is a failed *Anima*, to Grove a Shadow figure in the Jungian sense of the term. In short, by creating Niels, Clara and Ellen as archetypal characters in an archetypal New World setting, Grove has dramatized versions of his *Persona* (Niels), his *Shadow* (Clara) and his *Anima* (Ellen); or, in other words, his present life (Niels), his memory of the past (Clara), and his future (Ellen). The big Marsh setting appropriately triggers and frames his oblique self-revelations.[21]

There is further support for the psycho-biographical significance of *Settlers of the Marsh* in Grove's evidently ambiguous revelations on his prairie books:

> I should want to work all my older books over again — to refashion them, to bring them into accord with my widening outlook.[22]

> For the landscape as it lives in this novel [*Settlers of the Marsh*] and others, and its human inhabitants as well, were mine, were the products of my mind; yet, to me, they had become more real than any actuality could have been. For years, yes, decades, every figure in this novel, as in others, had from day to day, sucked my life blood to keep itself going, leaving me limp as a rag, making me a bore to others and a burden to myself.[23]

> [L]andscapes, characters, destinies, they were all there, but still hidden by the veil which could be lifted only by slow "creation."[24]

> I believe I have hidden myself fairly well.[25]

These statements round out my prefatory comments on Grove's literary background, his fear of writing, and his high regard for *Settlers of the Marsh*. Particularly the playful quotation marks around the word *creation* indicate his haunting temptation to both unveil and veil his remarkable past in the form of autobiographical fiction.

The aim of this paper has not been to reduce *Settlers of the Marsh* either to bits of sensational biographical gossip or to a convenient example of the validity of psychological theories. The aim has been to throw much needed light on the way this enigmatic literary confidence-man, Frederick Philip Grove *alias* Felix Paul Greve, manipulates the genre of autobiographical or, more appropriately, confessional fiction while provoking the reader's critical circumspection and attention to those unfashionable "hidden meanings" which demand respect for the symbiosis of fiction and autobiography.

NOTES

[1] *FPG: The European Years* (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1973). Unless stated otherwise, biographical information about Grove in this paper is drawn from Spettigue's book.

[2] André Gide, "Conversations with a German Several Years before the War," in *Pretexts: Reflections on Literature and Morality*, trans. and ed. by Justin O'Brien (New York: Delta, 1964), p. 239.

[3] See Hans Wysling, "Archivalisches Gewühle," Thomas Mann Gesellschaft, Zurich, *Blätter*, No. 5 (1965), pp. 23-44.

[4] See my note, "*Settlers of the Marsh:* 'A Garbled Extract'?" *Canadian Notes and Queries*, No. 21 (July 1978), pp. 8-9.

[5] *FPG: The European Years*, p. 197.

[6] *In Search of Myself* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1946), p. 386.

[7] Letter to Stevenson, 15 December 1926; quoted in C. M. Armitage, "The Lionel Stevenson Canadiana at Duke University," *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 7, No. 2 (Autumn 1977), p. 55.

[8] Ibid., p. 56.

[9] *In Search of Myself*, p. 379.

[10] *Settlers of the Marsh* (2nd ed.; Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1966), p. 42.

[11] Ira Progoff, *Jung's Psychology and Its Social Meaning* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1973), p. 78.

[12] L. McMullen, "Women in Grove's Novels," in *The Grove Symposium*, ed. by John Nause (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1975), p. 68.

[13] For eyes as symbols of genitals, see C. G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, trans. by R. C. F. Hull, Collected Works, Vol. 5 (2nd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 268.

[14] Ibid., pp. 174-75, 401.

[15] Ibid., p. 248.

[16] Ibid., p. 348.

[17] *FPG: The European Years*, pp. 137-38.

[18] *Fanny Essler* (Stuttgart: Juncker, 1905), p. 372; translation mine.

[19] "Conversations with a German," p. 242.

[20] *Fanny Essler*, title-page and p. 407.

[21] W. J. Keith considers the portrayal of Clara as Grove's "attempting to explore realms of experience to which he is a stranger," and he relates it to Grove's "decline of artistic control" and "decline of basic seriousness" (*Journal of Canadian Studies*, 9 [1974], 30-31). Grove's "decline of artistic control" is, of course, not the result of lacking experience; the very opposite is closer to the truth.

Concerning archetypal landscape, character and theme in autobiographical fiction, see also A. Fleishman, "The Fiction of Autobiographical Fiction," *Genre*, 9 (Spring 1976), 74.

[22] *In Search of Myself*, p. 257.

[23] Ibid., p. 373.

[24] Ibid., p. 372.

[25] Ibid., p. 383.