

THE CANADIAN IDENTITY & AFRICAN NATIONALISM

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A MODEST BUT NONETHELESS NOTEWORTHY tributary flowing into the mainstream of recent Canadian fiction is composed of several novels set in Africa. These novels examine some of the conflicts almost inevitably present in a newly independent nation — conflicts emanating from the inordinate enticements of power inherent in a fledgling nationalism, or from disruptive but deeply ingrained tribal allegiances, or from the difficulty of capitalizing upon opportunities for economic growth without capitulating to the forces that would attempt to exact ideological or political remuneration in return.

Surely the tendency for some Canadian writers to be drawn to this sort of conflict is much more than a conspiracy to prove that Canadian fiction can go beyond the limits of solely Canadian experience. In my view a very plausible explanation for Canadian fascination with African nationalism can be found in the fact that many of the conflicts present in a newly independent African country have their clearly identifiable counterparts in recent Canadian experience. The threat to a firm conception of national identity posed by conflicting tribal, racial, or regional loyalties; the continual onslaught on national self-confidence that emanates from forces that have capitulated to the assumptions of colonial inferiority; the need for perpetual resistance against economic, ideological and political domination by larger powers — all of these consequences of being caught between two worlds are familiar components of Canadian national life. Perhaps Canadian writers are attracted by the prospect of greater dispassion in the examining of these very Canadian concerns in a non-Canadian context. Dave Godfrey indicated his awareness of this opportunity for greater objectivity in an interview with Graeme Gibson:

I think the best thing I do is get outside myself, or at least split off some segment of myself that's close to someone else, and expand it into their life and . . . write about them, write about other people. In *The New Ancestors*, that kind of big structure forced me to do that.¹

The best-known Canadian explorer of African nationalism through fiction is surely Margaret Laurence. In her first novel, *This Side Jordan* (1960), as well as her volume of short stories, *The Tomorrow-Tamer and Other Stories* (1963), Laurence shows how deeply ingrained assumptions about the superiority of the

white man and the childlike inadequacy of the African have to be abandoned by both the colonizer and the colonized as the process of "Africanization" proliferates. Nathaniel Amegbe, the sensitive central figure in *This Side Jordan*, is most conscious of the opposing forces within him — the difficulty of espousing a sense of values that is anything but European while simultaneously recognizing that he must move beyond the sense of identity that he has acquired because of his African background. Nathaniel feels guilty about forgetting, or avoiding, his past origins, but he also recognizes that Ghana will have to move ahead into the future, taking advantage of educational and economic opportunities, if it is to resist the onslaughts of neo-colonialism.

Most of Laurence's writing about Africa's response to independence is optimistic — or at the worst, provisionally hopeful. Such is not the case with three Canadian novels about Africa published during the last five years: Dave Godfrey's *The New Ancestors*, David Knight's *Farquharson's Physique and What It Did to His Mind*, and Hugh Hood's *You Can't Get There From Here*. While these authors' handling of the difficulties arising from African independence is, like Laurence's, compassionate, all three novels are very pessimistic indeed about the prospect for resolving these difficulties.² I would suggest that this refusal to minimize the threats to a strong assertion of national identity by ethnic or regional loyalties on the one hand and threats of economic and cultural if not outright political domination on the other is influenced by these writers' awareness of analogous difficulties in our own country.

The New Ancestors is an intricate but impressive work that focuses upon the disillusionment gripping the fictional African country of Lost Coast (a thinly disguised Ghana, where Godfrey spent some time as a CUSO volunteer) several years after it has been granted its independence. The collapse of ancient loyalties, the persistence of tribalism, and the intrusion of neo-colonialism have all contributed to the collapse of aspirations embodied in the once-popular slogans of "Free-dom" and "Work and Happiness."

Godfrey demonstrates how independence produces uncertainty about one's own identity. The ancient securities of family ancestry and tribal loyalty are urged into insignificance by new ancestors — national rather than tribal leaders, governed by presumably national rather than regional aspirations. When these new ancestors fail, identity recedes, requiring re-definition by compromise and realignment of loyalties. First Samuels, an important official in Kruman's government, is the prime focus of Godfrey's analysis in this respect. He maintains a public image as the most visible supporter of Kruman's Freedom People's Party, but secretly joins forces with Core, a counter-revolutionary movement committed to demonstrations against the government, blackmail, sabotage, and even murder. It is as a member of this group that First Samuels, in the most suspenseful scene in the novel, murders Gamaliel Harding as he is being attacked by a mob of market

women who have recognized that the achievement of peace and plenty that Gamaliel has promised may be forever delayed. It is ironic that Gamaliel loses his life because of his inflexibility in refusing to change ancestors; to First Samuels, Gamaliel had become "a mere bourgeois reactionary who had adapted the papery words of the revolution, had eaten its idealism raw, had lived off its silver of betrayal — without ever changing his inner being." The revolutionary Marxist rhetoric in which he thinks of Gamaliel leaves no doubt as to who First Samuels' new ancestors are now.

The immense difficulty of reducing inter-tribal intolerance in the interests of national solidarity is another aspect of African nationalism portrayed in this novel. A proper awareness of tribal identity is a legitimate component in one's sense of selfhood, but when that awareness is assumed to be the basis not just for uniqueness but for superiority, the achievement of the degree of co-operation required to realize the goals of as tribally diverse an entity as a nation becomes virtually impossible. Canadian writers cannot help but be acutely aware of the problems emanating from an inordinate preoccupation by any segment in this country with either its racial or regional identity, which, I would argue, makes their handling of similar situations elsewhere that much more astute and sympathetic. Margaret Laurence has demonstrated her understanding of the dangers of tribalism, particularly the problems that ensue when it becomes exclusivist, as follows:

I feel we can't say *them* of Africans. What one has come to see, in the last decade, is that tribalism is an inheritance of us all. Tribalism is not such a bad thing, if seen as the bond which an individual feels with his roots, his ancestors, his background. . . . Where tribalism becomes . . . frighteningly dangerous is where the tribe — whatever it is, the Hausa, the Ibo, the Scots Presbyterians, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the in-group — is seen as "the people," the human beings, and the others, the un-tribe, are seen as sub-human. This is not Africa's problem alone; it is everyone's.

During the euphoria ensuing from the granting of independence to Lost Coast, expectations had been high that such abuse of tribalism was a thing of the past. The main exponent of this hope was Mr. Pobee-Biney, a government minister who had devoted much of his energy to trying to reconcile two feuding tribes, the Akante and the Akras. He was convinced that tribalism was "A feudal remnant. A crumb beneath the new broom. The nation would sweep such feudal jealousies into the dust." His optimism gains a substantial following at first, but soon, underestimating the potency of human jealousy and hatred, he becomes the object of animosity from not only the feuding tribes he was attempting to reconcile, but also the Redeemer, Kruman, who construes Pobee-Biney's popularity to be a threat to his own. He is first stripped of his membership in the party, then denied access to party funds, and shortly thereafter, jailed.

In the Georgetown prison where Pobee-Biney is confined, further demonstra-

tions of the persistence of tribalism become evident. No prisoner ever has a guard from his own tribe. Not surprisingly, this leads to all kinds of abuses, especially when the guards are bushmen who take out their inferiority complex on their victims.

Pobee-Biney is finally released, a wiser but greatly embittered man. In a scene portraying First Samuels supervising the burning of the huts of some rebellious fishermen on the Silla outskirts, Pobee-Biney laughs to scorn several demonstrating students who display a sign, "End Tribalism Now." For him, the very suggestion is nothing more than an exercise in futility.

In the same scene, First Samuels reveals that he too underestimates the durability of inter-tribal intolerance. In an attempt to arouse the spectators he castigates the demonstrators as follows:

End Racism, they say. Fine, I say. Let them wipe out their obruni methods, their obruni slogans begged from their foreign obruni masters. Lost Coast *is* our tribe, let us hear them admit that, this nation *is* our tribe, *this* nation — not the ones who buy them with confusion and disorder and shame.

It takes the minister of Roads and Energy, Mr. Eban, a hard-headed realist whose political survival has been due to his adeptness at compromise and accommodation, to reveal to First Samuels the folly of assuming tribal prejudices could be abandoned so gracefully:

You still believe, do you, after all these years of . . . counter-evidence, Samuels, your old theory that the governing group can toss three leopards, twelve baboons, a flock of vultures and what? Some pigs? — into the correct . . . theoretical structure, and come out with a peaceful collection of, of what, Mr. Samuels? Of something sane, similar, loving, non-greedy, hard-working? Cows? There are no cows in Africa, Samuels. Termites perhaps. A society of termites?

THE THIRD CRITICAL THREAT to a newly independent nation's self-determination is that posed by neo-colonialism, defined rather succinctly on one of First Samuels' propaganda tapes:

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the trappings of sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from the outside.

Here is another problem which Canadian writers are likely to understand more fully than their British or American counterparts at least. In a country whose very constitution can be altered only by the action of the British parliament, and at the same time whose culture and economy is dominated by American interests, such a sensitivity to pseudo-sovereignty is not unexpected.

In *The New Ancestors* Godfrey examines this problem of neo-colonialist inter-

ference in some depth. Occasionally his animosity towards such outside influences is so consistently intense as to impair the credibility of his analysis. The only outsider in the novel with any redeeming virtues is Michael Burdener, the English biology professor, whose sympathy with African causes has been confirmed by his marriage to Ama Harding, sister to Gamaliel, the Lost Coastian patriot eventually murdered by First Samuels. Burdener devotes a great deal of his pedagogical energy to exposing for the benefit of his students the *modus operandi* of imperialists and neo-colonialists. The following remark is representative of such disclosures:

You must seek questions. You were taught to seek answers because with answers you could be beaten. Stress their inferiority old chap, or you'll get nowhere. And if you run across a bright one, fill him so full of the encyclopaedia he'll not have time to think. That's what the school bosses say to us.

All other foreigners are neo-colonialists to a greater or lesser extent; their prime and consistent distinguishing characteristic is a repulsive superiority complex. Geoffrey Firebanks is a good example. A representative of the British Council in Lost Coast, we are informed that he "considered his position in dependent Africa as somewhat analogous to that of a first century Greek expatriate, spreading his ideas and wisdom not in Rome but in some distant province."

In "The London Notebook" section a cricket game at Bishop Adisa School acts as a recurrent motif that further develops this uncomplimentary depiction of neo-colonialism. The representatives of two countries wishing to influence Lost Coast, Ling Huo, the Chinese ambassador, and Clarence Hathaway, his British counterpart, have mistakenly shown up to watch the proceedings — "Caught, the pair of them, by WAWA and forced to break a mutually stainless rule: never the twain shall meet." They proceed to sit as far apart as possible on the spectator's stage, but the ironic similarity of their motives brings them in fact very close together.

Godfrey reserves his most venomous anti-neo-colonialist sentiments, however, for the Americans. Anyone even casually familiar with Godfrey's writings both fictional and otherwise knows that he makes no secret of his disenchantment with the American dream. Godfrey wastes very little time in revealing his attitude towards American do-gooders. Geoffrey Firebanks passes a couple of Peace Corps Volunteers, the male member of whom nasally refuses the offer of a lift to Silla. "One of those American PCV's," Firebanks thinks. "Down in the dirt getting the job done. And pulling others down in the dirt with them."

Shortly thereafter, Godfrey makes clear that this is more than the expression of jealousy on the part of one imperialistically-minded intruder towards another. Switching to the omniscient narrative mode, he reveals the arrogance of this young American, Ricky Goldman by name. While on the make in Silla for a black woman, Goldman thinks to himself:

This government was 100 per cent botch . . . Boy, if this was socialism in operation no wonder the old man [Goldman's father] ran from redness and became a psychiatrist. No brains anywhere. Name a ministry with a brain? . . . Boy, if they wouldn't let Ricky G., a Red-diaper baby if the Birchers ever labeled one, teach these miserable kinkheads English nor History, he'd show them American ingenuity. He'd get the message across. Even in Maths or French they'd learn it . . . Who cared if Ricky the Tricky flunked French and Maths at ole NYC?

His misapprehension of his total lack of discretion is capitalized upon by First Samuels and Burdener, who surprise him in the midst of a coupling session with a local prostitute. Even then, his naive chauvinism refuses to desert him as he screams, "Stop it, you guys. I'm an American. Americans are the most powerful good people in the world."

A rather more important role in the novel is played by the American lieutenant, Richard Rusk. A powerful symbol of unthinking imperialistic interference in Lost Coastian affairs, Rusk remains throughout the novel a hollow caricature. The reader is in perpetual doubt as to whether the man is capable of thought; his forte is action — most of which is in response to orders from his anonymous superiors. Michael Burdener records the audacious quality of this tendency when he first meets Rusk at Gamaliel's Grog Shop. Deciding he would like to play some chess, Rusk marches over to borrow a board and a set of men from some Russian players nearby. Michael is not certain whether Rusk is simply unaware of the social conventions that should govern relationships with one's enemies, or merely choosing to ignore such niceties. Burdener cannot help but secretly admire "such brashness. The Americans would ask God for a cigarette and the devil for a light."

Rusk drops out of sight until the complex surrealist section of the novel entitled "In the Fifth City." This segment of the novel has no clear relationship to the rest, for it is set in the actual region of sub-Saharan Mali rather than the fictional Lost Coast, and with the exception of Lieutenant Rusk, a whole new set of characters is introduced. Godfrey makes explicit the typicality of this American as follows:

there is something truthfully if indefinably American about him: an assurance, a willingness to smile, a lust after quantification, a competitive strength, a simple purity, a repetition of certain key phrases and ideas in all situations, a limited understanding of the ignobly tragic, a solidness to the body, a taste for steak, a shallowness of comprehension of other modes of social interaction than his own.

The author then proceeds to describe, in impressionistic prose that is nothing short of a nightmare to follow, several imaginative modes in which Rusk is murdered. He is shot by a Daga slave on the order of three Tuareg tribesmen and summarily buried in the sand, poisoned by a beautiful woman, killed, along with four others, by an exploding pineapple in a bar, and destroyed by a booby-trapped basketball.

The simplest response one could make to this section is to propose that it is

redundant and should be excised. It advances the central action of the novel not one jot, and in style it departs almost disruptively from the Lost Coast material. A more useful response, however, is to see this section as the culmination of this theme that is of such central concern in Godfrey's art — the intolerable interference of one country in the affairs of another. At this stage in the novel we have not yet been informed of the damage Rusk has initiated in Lost Coast; we only know that here in Mali he is attempting to "stir up trouble in the army and prepare for a rightist coup by the Bamako colonels." Burdener does reveal in the final section of the novel that Rusk has been responsible for the deaths of fifteen members of Core, the militant counter-revolutionary organization with which First Samuels was associated. Godfrey's assumption about the inherent insensitivity to violence historically evident in the American psyche is altogether evident:

And how did he [Rusk] think? Was it simple for him. The actual death of those fifteen young men. It must have been. An algebraic nothing. Fifteen Lost Coastians. Nothing more than fifteen Mohawks. Fifteen Pasquemoddys. Fifteen Crows. Fifteen Floridas. That doesn't enter it; that's foreordained. The blood and slaughter causes of his raciality.

Burdener concludes that there is no possible justification for the man being allowed to stay alive.

The style of the "In the Fifth City" section, then, underscores the profound pointlessness and frequent lack of direction of imperialistic interference in the affairs of Africa. The inordinate risks of such an undertaking are emphasized; it is not clear whether Rusk is actually killed, but at the very least the multiplicity of potential threats to his life is conveyed. And for what cause does he engage in such activities? Not only is the wealth of this part of Africa highly suspect, but its entire history is one of constant tribal warfare, so what does another military coup matter?²⁴ The foreigners to a man are ill at ease, dissatisfied, and out of place. That the whole undertaking is an exercise in madness this section by both its style and its content makes abundantly clear.

ARATHER MORE CONVENTIONAL and yet similarly absorbing treatment of the difficulties attendant on the acquisition of national independence is to be found in David Knight's novel with the unwieldy title of *Farquharson's Physique and What It Did to His Mind*. Godfrey's novel provides evidence of its Canadian origin primarily in terms of its themes, although Knight supplements this relationship by making his central character a Canadian university professor, Henry John Farquharson, who with his wife and small son has come to the University of Ibadan in Nigeria to teach English literature for one year. With the exception of the Introduction, to which the author adds the anomalous designa-

tion "Prologue or Epilogue," the narrative line is carefully chronological; indeed, the chapter titles consist exclusively of dates, giving the novel very much of a documentary quality. The period covered, September 14, 1965, to July 29, 1966, is approximately the same as that of Godfrey's novel — February 1965 to February 1966. Most of the political events and the political figures in Knight's novel are factual, however, adding an additional element of authenticity to the narrative.

Farquharson's wife Joan joins a long line of wives in the Canadian fictional tradition who are unwillingly constrained to participate in their husbands' expeditions into the unknown. Joan seems resolved to dislike Africa right from the start — its dirt, its cheating, its absence of conveniences, its domestic servants, its perpetual atmosphere of insecurity. Farquharson comes to see her as "a prying, miserable woman who should have stayed in Canada." Refusing to disbelieve in his ability to not only adapt to Africa but also to contribute something to its development, he establishes a vigorous sexual liaison with Gail Johnston, a former student of his from Toronto now teaching drama at the University of Ibadan, in order to compensate for the progressively deteriorating relationship with his wife. This relationship with Gail acts as a useful index of the degree of his adaptation to African cultural mores, for it symbolizes the elimination of inhibition that is an important component of *his* concept of acculturation.

One striking characteristic shared by all three of the novels under discussion here is their unusual preoccupation with violence. Farquharson's increasing recognition of the common heritage of savagery he shares with the Africans is the key discovery he makes during his voyage from innocence to experience. As in Godfrey's novel, tribal intolerance provides the motive for the expression of violence. Political parties capitalize upon tribal affinities; as History professor Edward Eayrs tells Farquharson, "There didn't use to be this kind of hatred and organization. God damn it, the tribal organizations were cultural." Once in power, a party freely resorts to intimidation, election-fixing, and even murder to perpetuate its existence.

Farquharson persists in attempting to preserve a stance of patient neutrality. He is rudely awakened to the fact that fence-sitting is impossible in Africa when, returning from observing a student anti-government demonstration, he kills two partisan thugs who are ransacking his house, and later that night discards their bodies into a ditch.

At first, Farquharson does not recognize that in trying to become more immune to the violent consequences of tribalism, he is becoming less human. He tries to convince himself that "Sympathy . . . was a useless, interfering, and degrading privileged tourist's quality." He even goes so far as to admit that he had enjoyed committing murder. Then just a couple of weeks before the Farquharsons are to leave Nigeria, Henry is suddenly awakened to the inhumanity of tribal hatred when several Ibos are pointlessly slaughtered during a trip he and his son Jamie

take to Akure. He finally admits that he can hardly wait to return to Canada. His relationship with Gail, which up to that point had symbolized his rejection of the former inhibitions of his Canadian lifestyle, now begins to decline into emptiness.

In the meantime Joan, having discovered that Henry was a murderer and deciding that he was no longer a fit father for her son, secretly flees to Lagos with Jamie. Farquharson goes in pursuit courtesy of Oscar Nwonkwo, the Nigerian patriotic poet who lived next door. Oscar tries to convince him that the violence he had witnessed was about to end:

that what he had seen was one of the death spasms of the First Republic, inevitable perhaps, but essentially meaningless, and something which had already ceased to happen in the North. "We have turned the corner," he said. "We have put our Time of Trouble behind us. Now it is in truth 'One Nigeria'."

Oscar does not realize it, but the current hostilities were just the beginning of what was to lead eventually to that bloody attempt at tribal genocide known as the Biafran War.

Airport authorities refuse to allow Joan and Jamie to leave Lagos without Henry. On the way to an anticipated reunion with his son, Farquharson is asked by Oscar, "Do you want to leave our country so very much?" He replies:

I can't think of that. I want Jamie safe in my hands, and to know what to do with his mother. What's Nigeria? I want to get out before anything else happens here. I'm tired of bodies. The next body I want is my own, thank you very much.

That wish is tragically granted. Just as he is about to be reunited with his family, soldiers appear, bent on commandeering the airport. When Farquharson intervenes as an Ibo clerk is being bayoneted, he is wounded in the stomach, and then, to avoid the embarrassment of an investigation, a soldier blows Farquharson's brains out.

The compelling portrayal of the potentially destructive consequences of bigoted tribalism is the chief success of this novel. My thesis is that the Canadian writer is particularly sensitive to such issues because of similar threats in his own country.

THE LEAST SUCCESSFUL of these three novels about Africa is Hugh Hood's *You Can't Get There From Here*. Although it is hampered by a marked preference for narration in lieu of dramatization, and by characters who are far too representative to engage our sympathies, the novel still manages to examine rather closely the issues of tribalism and neo-colonialism in the newly independent fictional African state of Leofrica. It opens in the office of the new prime minister designate, Mr. Anthony Jedeb, as he makes preparations for the

first cabinet meeting. He clearly is the most suitable Leofrican for this office; not only does he possess the highest educational qualifications of anyone in the country, but his background of having been born in the Ugeti highlands and yet having lived most of his life among the Pineal lowlanders qualifies him as the one most likely to succeed in bringing about a resolution of the smoldering atmosphere of mutual hostility that governs relationships between the two groups. Like a pedantic school-teacher, the narrator reveals that there is no rational basis for the Ugeti hatred of the Pineals, for the latter have a long history of being agreeable and unwarlike:

The foreign anthropologists who have made studies of the Leofrican peoples have always been puzzled by the fear felt by the Ugeti of their placid neighbours. It is one of the most striking instances in cultural anthropology of a mass delusion without any historical base. Yet this delusive, almost hallucinatory terror felt by one tribe for the other is a real social fact in Leofrica, and has to be dealt with as such, not as a childish fancy.

In his inaugural address, Jedeb faces squarely this social fact, but he also believes that sweetness and light will prevail in helping them to surmount it:

In our country a man is first of all a herdsman of the highlands or a planter of the lowlands. That is the first fact we have to recognize in the founding of our united state. There are two peoples here.

But I tell you, fellow Leofricans, from this day onward these two peoples can, must and will grow toward union and mature statehood.

He goes on to promise full representation of all tribal, local, economic and ideological interests in his government. In order to do this he appoints four Ugetis, four Pineals, and three non-indigenous Leofricans to his cabinet. The inadequacy of Jedeb's idealism is shortly thereafter revealed, for bickering along tribal lines breaks out almost immediately at the first cabinet meeting, and the appointees demonstrate an almost universal unwillingness to rise above a preoccupation with their own selfish interests of salary or personal aggrandizement.

Like Dave Godfrey, though, Hood reserves his most caustic satirical talents for his depiction of those imperialistic forces that seek to manipulate and exploit Leofrica in keeping with their particular ideological goals. Ralph MacSweyn is the head of Interfoods, an American company devoted to the shameless exploitation of Leofrica's sole exportable commodity — nut oil. Fatuous and myopic, he is completely incapable of assessing matters from any value system other than his own. The narrator ironically describes his simplistic approach to life as follows:

He was one of a new kind of man who can envisage real social institutions deriving from American models, extended on a global scale. He was among the first true world-citizens, without affection for any particular place or set of local customs. He thought mostly about technical matters, usually related to communica-

tions, in a new kind of language as close to pictures as possible. His logic and his function alike dictated his characteristic contempt for complex syntax and peculiarity of expression.

The ostensible head of the Soviet presence in Leofrica, the uxorious Mr. Leontiev, is presented somewhat more sympathetically than either MacSweyn or the American ambassador, Fenton Ruggles. Genuinely committed to aiding in Leofrica's technical development, Leontiev hopes to attract the country into the Russian sphere of influence by diplomacy rather than intrigue.

The insidious nature of power politics is soon revealed, however, for it turns out that the real motive of both Soviet and American foreign policy is to drive Leofrica into the unwilling arms of the opposite major power. This plan is revealed to Leontiev by the beautiful spy Amelie de Caulaincourt, who by means of her abundant charms has been successful in worming her way not only into the good graces of the power-mongers in the country, but into a portfolio of the Leofrican cabinet itself. It is Amelie, Leontiev discovers, who has engineered the destruction of the expedition of Soviet scientists and technicians which had journeyed to the Ugetiland interior for the purpose of building a road. This inhuman deed was deemed to be a justifiable means of providing the Soviets with a basis for withdrawing from Leofrica.

The Americans naturally have their secret agent in Leofrica also; he is Clive Maharaj, Prime Minister Jedeb's naive confidential secretary, whose CIA superiors have equipped him with a sophisticated electronic device for sending six five-minute messages on Leofrican activities to a mysteriously omnipresent receiving station. That station turns out to be a U.S. submarine that has been completely immobilized for ten weeks in order to receive Clive's innocuous messages. In what is obviously meant to be an example of typical Yankee overkill, the submarine captain triggers a self-destruct device in Clive's set right after the last message, which blows to pieces not only Clive but also his Pineal landlord, nine other lodgers in the tenement house, and two whole families living adjacent to the ill-fated establishment. This does not occur before Clive has single-handedly sabotaged the Interfoods complex and blown it sky-high to provide the Americans with a good alibi for withdrawing from the country.

Not to be outdone, the Albanian trade commissioner Zogliu gets one up on both his capitalist and revisionist counterparts by engineering the secession of Ugetiland from Leofrica. He accomplishes this with the aid of Lance-Major Abdelazar, a Ugeti official attached to the Defence ministry, who in the process murders the Cultural Affairs minister for refusing to go along with the plot.

It hardly needs to be added that against these odds, Leofrica of course does not survive. Prime Minister Jedeb manages to escape to the Ugeti River in the ensuing revolution, but when partisans on both sides start shooting at him he does what

any self-respecting defeated mediator would do and dives to permanent refuge at the bottom of the river.

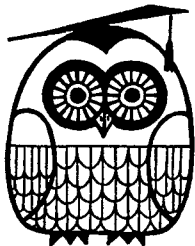
Cynicism and anger occasionally pervert the artist's intention in these novels. The credibility of the American neo-colonialists in both the latter novels, for example, is certainly reduced because of this tone of outrage. Margaret Laurence, in a recent conversation with Robert Kroetsch, made a comment about her African writing that has an important bearing here. She recognized that as a Canadian in Africa she remained the perpetual detached outsider:

You were in a sense, even though you were involved with the experience, cared about it, and all the rest of it . . . in some way you were a tourist. You could quit. You could get out. But with your own experience, your own background, your own roots, you have to come to terms.⁵

As I see it, coming to terms involves not only the sensitive delineation of problems, which these writers certainly do; it also requires the working out of some sort of synthesis (solution is too facile a word). Anger is understandable but ultimately unproductive. As Canadian writers, in spite of their recognition of the similarity of these African situations to the Canadian experience, these novelists can avoid the demands of resolution — can get out, as Laurence puts it. That is exactly what they do, and this, if anything, is their shortcoming.

NOTES

- ¹ *Eleven Canadian Novelists* (Toronto: Anansi, 1973), pp. 161-62.
- ² Laurence herself has recognized how inappropriate her earlier spirit of hope was. See "Ten Years' Sentences," *Canadian Literature*, No. 41 (Summer 1969), p. 12.
- ³ "Ten Years' Sentences," p. 13.
- ⁴ See Donald Cameron, "The Three People Inside Dave Godfrey," *Saturday Night*, 86 (September 1971), 22.
- ⁵ Robert Kroetsch, ed., *Creation* (Toronto: New Press, 1970), p. 61.

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