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THE ART OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Articles

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Opinions and Notes

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editorial

SAYS WHO?

I CAN LOGICALLY BEGIN this issue on autobiography with no other pronoun. The subject imposes itself on the editor, and if he stretches for a way to talk about it, so be it. Selfishness, perhaps. They say that that can be dangerous, but who knows for sure? Sometimes you have to face matters squarely. We all do. Sometimes one has to fight custom, at other times to adopt it, to stand where one is and say *Aye.* (My word.)

Clearly there are degrees of objectivity in this business of self-revelation. There is the (personal, engaging, self-centred, egomaniacal) *I* (pick an adjective); the (impersonal, disengaging, lofty, generalizing) *one*; the (aloof, disinterested, partial) *he*; the (imperious, imperative) *you*; the (communal) *we* (or is this just a royal, editorial convention?). By these pronouns we connect with each other — apparently inexactly, for they *are* open to judgment. How, then to respond? Such pronouns are the stuff of courtroom theatre and sibling rivalry:

You did it.
I did not.
You did so.
Who says?
I says.
Sez you.
I saw him, and he did it.

(Whom do we believe?)

Evidence is limited, partial, biased, circumstantial, sometimes corroborative, sometimes merely irrelevant. How closely it comes to truth depends as much on a judge-and-jury's skills of interpretation as on the "facts" being unfolded. And autobiographies, filled with the selective games, guises, and biases of a (self-defensive, self-aware, self-revelatory) largely ordinary life, require readers with just such highly tuned interpretive skills.

Several recent publications call attention variously to the problems of bias. Graham Greene's *Ways of Escape* (Lester & Orpen Dennys) is one, the title itself suggesting before we even begin the book a novelistic stance with life; it

renders a set of autobiographical choices metaphorically, making a "flight" through life, not a winged glide above the common world, but a series of evasive tactics devised by the successive ages of the same man, as he contrives to make himself anew. "It is a curious business," he writes, "to read an account of one's own past written by — whom? Surely not by myself. The self of forty years ago is not the self of today and I read my own book, *The Lawless Roads*, as a stranger would." But this convincing succession of premises hides a fiction. We may accept that his older and younger selves differ, but logic does not compel us to accept that the younger self will be as strange to the older "as a stranger" will be. Which he knows himself. The stance is a deliberate fiction, to engage the reader in a companiable kind of opening mystery — for the book is above all else an entertainment, a set of essays on the successive events in Greene's life that led to Africa, Asia, America, Intelligence, and Public Fame. Each episode, as he writes it, shaped the new persona of his next decade. Anecdotally he tells of the way that most of his life's experience, too, resulted in novel-writing, an activity which creates another problem for him as in retrospect he tries to unfold the sequence of his identities. As his novels become public property, they and "their author," which is at some remove from "him," invite public interpretation, identification. Greene is not required to accept identification with his characters or his interpreters' definitions of himself, or with those (if he is really famous) who may choose to pose as him in look-alike contests or public restaurants. But to what degree are they (all of them) inevitably part of himself? "I found myself shaken by a metaphysical doubt," he writes as he brings this volume to a close. "Had *I* been the imposter all the time? Was I the Other?" One might ask how serious such questions are, but must notice at the same time the writer's skilful play with pronouns. This book has all along been a quest for some sort of discovery; if at the end an imposter "I" named "Other" finds a *shaken* (newly fragmented?) "myself," what are we to make of it? An epiphany? (Hardly likely — it's not spontaneous enough for that.) A deliberate confusion? (But to what end?) A joke? (The element of comedy goes often unappreciated by critics strong for "truth.") At the very least the writer seems to be preserving his options, refusing the present as a definition of the future, already laying claim to the next identity (magus, perhaps) that it will be his to claim and inhabit.

Greene's sentences also, however, warn us to be wary of the autobiographical novel. The "I" in an autobiography may be a fiction, but it is not identical with a "fictional I." There remains a distinction between *fictionality* and *historicity*, which affects both the generic shape of the work and the critical response we bring to it. Audrey Thomas's fiction may be "autobiographical"; like all novelists she draws upon what she sees and knows and remembers as well as upon what she imagines — but that does not make her novels autobiographies. It does not make F. P. Grove's *A Search for America* an autobiography either, whatever the

author claimed. As far as Canadian writing is concerned, we do not clarify often enough the differences between the diary, the autobiography, and the first-person narrative viewpoint, nor have we sufficiently examined the differences between historical and literary (auto)biographical writing. *In Search of Myself* is tissued with imagination where one expects in the name of truth to find masks of reality; Malcolm Lowry's *Dark As the Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid* is tissued with reality where one expects to find aesthetic distance and metaphoric control. Most diary-keepers (the explorers, many pioneers, Monica Storrs, Elizabeth Smith) have shaped daily events into an historical record; John Glassco, in *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, and Charles Ritchie, in *An Appetite for Life*, have shaped a journal into a literary event. But the resulting memoirs are not more "truthful" in the one case than in the other. Glassco — like Claire Martin, like Clark Blaise and Bharati Mukherjee (in their magnificent *Days and Nights in Calcutta*), or like Lowry and Grove for that matter — has conveyed a *stance*, a version of experience, which may or may not adhere to externally verifiable *fact*, but may well, more effectively and even more accurately than a verifiable litany, convey the attitudes of a time, the priorities of a person, the biases of politics and place.

As theorists have lately been at pains to point out, autobiographies can take quite different stances. In *The Forms of Autobiography*, for example, William C. Spengemann delineates three categories: the *self-explanation*, which uses autobiography (in this cast The Past) as a means of justifying The Present; the *self-portrait*, which offers a kind of "philosophic" analysis of identity; and the *self-enactment*, which performs a personal psychodrama for the reader to observe and, perhaps, decode. And as forms vary, so do the motivations for writing. Some autobiographies are written because there are stories to tell; some are done for fame and money; and some are penned by ghost writers, which raises problems for critics, who must try to figure out not only who's being written about but also who's being revealed by the voice in the writing. June Callwood's literary hand, I'm given to believe, has appeared in the "autobiographies" of Barbara Walters and Otto Preminger; Ed Ogle's shaped Duncan Pryde's *Nunaga*; John Munro's created the literary voice for both John Diefenbaker's *One Canada* and Lester Pearson's *Mike*: one might well ask where one identity begins and the other ends.

Yet all can be fascinating. Writing recently in *Queen's Quarterly* about Canadian biography (once almost entirely the prerogative of historians), Donald Swainson itemizes some of the attractions of biography as a genre: "A study of a life humanizes the past and makes it immediate. A fascinating person holds our attention through drama and anecdote. While reading biography we absorb data and concepts about society. . . . " Autobiographies, too, offer glimpses of others. Eleanor Farjeon's *A Nursery in the Nineties* (which Oxford has recently reissued) recounts a splendid moment when her elated writer-father was about to give up

his colonial life to head to England to become famous — all because he had dedicated a book to Dickens and Dickens had responded with a letter. In cold ink the letter had moderately and indirectly said *Thank you, but if you submit material to my magazine it will not necessarily be accepted.* "Believe me," he closed, "faithfully yours." But as with ghost-written books, one might be tempted sometimes to trust surfaces too readily, to accept an autobiography's judgments of others simply because of the seeming authority of the personal contact. A good reader must be alive to the fact that — whether accurate, false, or just accidentally misleading — the nature of the judgment often reveals much more than the surface declares. Susanna Moodie's portrait of the little stumpy man, in *Roughing It in the Bush*, tells us as much of her own naiveté as it does objectively about her unwelcome visitor. She owns she didn't like him — but whether because of some intrinsic character trait or because he preferred others to herself she does not absolutely make clear. And of course it is this tantalizing near-revelation of the self which gives any good autobiography its special cachet. People read such works out of interest and curiosity, in order to catch the changing versions of a self; they do so also for the enjoyment of having a personal companion guide them through moments of history, and for the chequered pleasures there are that lie in the process of turning I to eye.

W.H.N.

SAMANTHA CLARA LAYTON

Irving Layton

Into the ordinary day you came,
giving your small nose and chin to the air
and blinded by the noise you could not see.
    Your mother's smile was your benediction;
my wonderment will accompany you
all your days. Dear little girl, what blessings
shall I ask for you? Strong limbs, a mind firm
that looking on this world without dismay
turns furious lust into sweet romance?
    These, my child, and more. Grace keep you
queenly and kind, a comfort to the ill and poor,
your presence a bounty of joy to all
that have vision of you, as I have now
who hold your fingers in my trembling hand.

CHILD ADDICT IN ALBERTA

Earle Birney

BORN SO MANY CENTURIES AGO (1904 to be exact), I fell an early victim to the reading habit. Until I was seven, an only child on an isolated bush-ranch in the Albertan foothills, I saw other children only on feast days or at church on the Sundays when the wagon-road to the Morningside flag-station was passable and my mother added me to the half-dozen kids in the Sunday School she ran there. In the long winters we two were alone for many stretches while my father was hundreds of miles away working in the bigger towns at his trade — he was a painter and decorator — to get the cash constantly needed to develop our surrounding woods and swamps into at least a marginal farm. Until he returned, my mother cared for the horses, cows, pigs, poultry and me. From spring to autumn my parents were busy through the daylight hours with planting, clearing, woodcutting, cultivating, harvesting, marketing. With no TV or radio to turn on, no movie house to be dumped in, no high-fi, no telephone, no sitters, I slid early and with parental encouragement into self-entertainment, learned my letters from father's sign-painting celluloids, and my counting from a card-deck.

Whenever housebound by snowdrifts and arctic temperatures, or bedded by a series of childhood diseases from mumps to scarlet fever (picked up no doubt at Sunday School) I worked at learning to read, and to play solitaire. Soon I was skimming, a mindless waterbug, with growing speed over great surfaces of the Bible, and Robbie Burns, and anything else in print and within reach. It seemed there was a lot of country beyond Morningside and even Calgary — where my father sometimes went looking for work and where he said I had been born — a world almost as splendid as Heaven on the Sunday School posters, and more reachable. Vices can begin virtuously enough. Through trying not to be a bother, I had become a compulsive reader and a card-shark. By May 1911, when I turned seven and my father sold the ranch and moved us temporarily back to my birthplace, I had developed as well a greed for travel, to wander and wander until I'd seen everything I'd read or heard about.

It appeared, however, that I would first have to attend schools and grow up. In Calgary I was deposited in a term-end holding-unit, ordered to sculpt with plasticene, and frightened out of my bushed wits at recess by a schoolyard full

of strange, shrieking and evidently hostile kids. I escaped, in two weeks, by contracting whooping cough. "Keep him in the fresh air this summer," said the doctor, so my father bought a tent and moved us to the banks of the Bow River in Banff. The prescription was right on. I soon stopped whooping, learned to handle a fly-rod, gut my own trout, and scramble up mountain slopes with my dad.

When September came we rented a house in town and I reported to the one-room Public School. This act was a cultural shock both to the girl-teacher and to me: Grade One was plasticene again, though there were also crayons for colour-books, and even a slate to start learning letters and later maybe sums. Fortunately the Albertan schools had not yet been martialled into what Sir Edward Beatty later called "the convoy system in education," all ships proceeding at the pace of the slowest. When it was discovered I could understand maps, was presently stumbling through my mother's copy of *The Heart of Midlothian*, and could calculate sums with the speed of a hardened cribbage player, I was kicked up to Grade Three.

There I had to be cured of writing only with block letters, and disciplined to do homework in the School Reader before being allowed to borrow another Everyman from the school library. But I went on reading anything in sight until my eye-muscles at last rebelled, and I was saddled with spectacles (for life, as it turned out). My spirits drooped; I was having enough trouble learning to make friends with Banff's native sons, who rightly considered me a freak, a teacher's pet, and a total loss for even the peewee hockey team, since I hadn't yet learned even to skate. Moreover, because I was redheaded and built like a lath, school-ground wits had dubbed me Matchstick. By Christmas I escaped into measles and bed; but bed was misery too, for the doctor forbade reading.

I WAS RESCUED FROM GLOOM by my father's announcement he could now fulfill a promise made to my mother when I was born, to send the two of us back to her birthplace in the Shetland Islands, to visit my grandmother. The cash from selling the farm was enough both for the passage and for my father to lease a lot in Banff, and start building us a new home while we were away. Moreover he had gained my teacher's consent to my leaving in January, so long as I was back in time for the May exams. (It would seem I was going to be passed anyway.)

It was a memorable trip and for the first month or two just the thing to hatch a bookworm into a boy. Six days in a train to Montreal, across a Canada not in any of my books, and nine more on an ocean. I proved to have sea-legs, as befitted a fisherman's grandchild, and by now a literary eye. In Edinburgh my

mother, lapsing a little more into Scottish each day, took me to walk Princes, "the werrold's bonniest street," and gaze up at a tower taller than any I'd thought possible. I thought it fitting it was a monument to Sir Walter Scott and that we now proceeded to St. Giles to stand on the spot where Jeannie Deans crouched and hurled her stool. My mom had brought me straight into a real Heart of Midlothian, still beating. Even better, next day, I climbed into a huge and truly ancient castle where there were suits of armour, great stone cannon-balls, and a cemetery for officers' dogs. I was now swallowing gulps of history without optical damage.

Shetland, of course, was something quite different; it was dropping back into history itself. We arrived in Lerwick, the port town where my mother had been a serving-maid, in time for Up-Helly-Aa, the end of the old Viking Yule. From my uncle's stone house one night my two schoolboy cousins and I gazed at a dragon-headed Norse galley being towed down their street in torchlight. There were bearded men in it with great axes and horned helmets. We rushed out and followed them in a shouting crowd to the docks, where the Vikings leapt from their ship, tossed their torches into it and launched it to flame to death in the harbour. This was the real thing, better even than G. A. Henty. Travelling was even more fun than reading. I resolved never to stop doing either.

Next day my aunt drove up in a Shetland pony cart to my grandmother's. That night another boy-cousin and I climbed a ladder by the kitchen fireplace to sleep in straw under the thatch of an ancient croft. There were days then of pony riding and exploring traces of old stone-age forts in the windswept heather. I forgot all about books till a wind straight from the Arctic ice drenched me. Soon I lay with double pneumonia, fighting for air in grannie's own bed, with nothing to read but the Guid Buik again. In my grandma's croft that, officially, was the only book. When she wasn't in view, however, cousin John would slip to my bed with the Deil's Buik, a dog-eared deck of cards, to abet the second favourite vice of my childhood.

Back in time to be passed into Grade Four, I revelled in a second summer at Banff, now without whooping cough, learning to swim in the old Cave & Basin, selling subscriptions to *Canadian Pictorial* (reading every word in every issue first), starting piano with a maiden lady, and carpentry with my dad. When September came, and school, I looked no doubt the same dumb spectacled kid, a little lankier. But inside I felt vastly aged, a man of many parts, student of history, traveller between two continents, cardshark. I soon found, of course, that any betrayal of these inner personalities got me less than nowhere on the school ground. There I was still a dub at games, except marbles, I was Four Eyes the swot back again, the Matchstick who couldn't hang on to a hockey stick — and now some sort of travel-snob as well.

So I came down with chicken-pox, and followed that with something really exotic the doctors called "mountain fever," acquired from a wood-tick. I was back on a reading binge again, once the fever sank. Fred, the neighbour's boy, two years older, brought me his *Treasure Island*, and more Waverley novels from the school library. Back at school I found *Hereward the Wake* and *The Last Days of Pompeii*, and Rider Haggard's *She* and R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Sea* and . . . and. . . . Is there ever a time of life when reading is more exciting, more utterly compulsive, more trusting? No one told me I was on a diet manufactured by British imperialists. So long as they were *stories*, with unmistakable heroes who could do everything I couldn't yet, and heroines, if any, only there to be rescued, I loved all books. Propaganda I never noticed, unless it was the religious sort; piety I was still stuffed with at Sunday School, and raced past on other occasions. I put up with Ralph Connor's only because he wrote about country my dad had been a cowpuncher in.

THE NEXT SUMMER I TURNED NINE and almost kicked the reading habit. Dad took me on weekend camping trips trolling for lake trout, and bought me a No. 2 Box Brownie to take shots of the wild Park animals: bighorns, porcupines, deer, marten, and the like. But by now what I wanted most was a bike. I began to save for one by selling newspapers and curios to tourists, and sachet powders to housewives after school hours when winter came. I was a little heftier now, and less of an oddball in the schoolyard, and permitted at last into the scrub hockey games on the river rink. But I was still so lightweight I'd go flying into the boards at every check, and survived only by learning to move always faster than the others. For this I was made Rover — it was the old seven-man hockey days — and began to get around so nimbly I came to the notice of Lou Crosby, the town's speed champ. He began encouraging me to train for speed-skating.

News of this quickly raised my ratings with schoolmates, and I was invited on toboggan runs and snowshoe tramps. (Skiing had not yet arrived in Banff.) A happy redneck, I was practising "Speed" one night at the rink when the temperature dropped suddenly from a mere fifteen below F. to minus 35. I got another chill, another bout of pneumonia, and sank back into reading.

When I recovered, later that winter, Luxton's Lux Theatre began showing movies, and opened up a whole new story world for Banff kids. Two of the first films I ever saw were, as it happened, scripted from French novels, *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Toilers of the Sea*, which I'd not even heard about. Seeing the films sent me to their Everyman translations. There, though suspense was gone, I found still more excitement. The films had clearly defined the dim

bounds of Dumas' prison, and the length of Hugo's cephalopod. Reading, I could imagine even gloomier fortresses and far more dreadful sea-creatures. A heroin junkie doesn't easily switch to pot. I've never really changed, still tend to avoid movies with plots from Great Books.

I remember, however, that I remained willing to consider somebody else's devilfish, and later that winter got out a library book titled *The Octopus*, by Frank Norris, only to bog down in what seemed to me an incomprehensible affair about railroads and capitalists and wheat farmers, all happening on dry land. I was really much dumber than most nine-year-olds. It was another twenty years before proletarianism drove me to try *The Octopus* again and learn there was a drowning in it after all — in wheat. Meantime I returned to the tried if not so true adventures of *The Boys' Own Annual* and *Chums* and *Tom Brown's School Days*. And my father put me on the track of the most exciting tale-tellers of my boyhood by giving me Kipling's *Kim* for my birthday. That led me to *Stalky & Co.* and *Soldiers Three*. The public school imperialisms I took for granted now, but there was some magic in Kipling's story-making that held and still can hold me.

Those early silent movies in the Lux Theatre had begun to wake me to the separate world of American literature, about which I'd been taught virtually nothing. In all the grades from one to nine in that Banff school I can remember being introduced by a teacher to only one American novel, *Tom Sawyer*. It was *Huckleberry Finn* we boys found for ourselves, and Tarkington's Penrod books, and *Peck's Bad Boy*, privately owned and circulated from boy to boy till they fell apart; they were read and avidly quoted by kids who never read anything else they weren't compelled to. Our teachers surely read them too but they were not about to feed our appetite for practical jokery by letting them into the school library. Horatio Alger, Jr., was not stocked either, or O. Henry or Jack London. Perhaps that was just for lack of money. We read them by the barter system after they'd been lifted from parental libraries or, as with *A Slow Train through Arkansas* and any of the mild girlie magazines before World War One, by nickel rental from Bully Fulcher, who had an "allowance" big enough to handle such underground distributions.

I remember liking London and O. Henry most of all these; they were direct and compact; they practised what I would later learn to call "the art of the short story." Also they made me feel in contact with the North American world I lived in; they were writers still alive, who had worked on San Francisco docks or among New York's "four million" or in the small towns of the U.S.

The only other American author I'd begun to read, Cooper, was long enough dead to be allowed into our school library, though never referred to. For some North American juveniles like me, living in a western frontier village, his characters were still alive. Hawkeye and Nattie Bumppo were the self-made and for-

ever bachelor heroes I hoped to become, if I could find the pluck to match their luck. Cooper was long-winded, true, but Scott had already seasoned me to skipping, leaping over the rhetoric and the insipidities of heroines to concentrate on the manly melodrama. My father had run away from home at sixteen and ridden across the prairies with other bronco-busters, depending on his trusty Winchester for food, and arriving in Calgary even before the railroad. He still sometimes wore his old beaded buckskin shirt and a stetson hat. I believed in my father and, for a while, in Cooper too.

THEN IT WAS THAT SUMMER of 1914, when the world began to spin a little faster. I'd been able by the end of school to buy the longed-for bike, and was at once busy selling more and more newspapers when I wasn't guiding tourists along trails to fishing holes or up mountains to viewpoints. I was reading little beyond the headlines in the papers I sold till the *Calgary Herald*, for the first time to my knowledge, ran a headline one morning in red. It was the fourth of August and the heading: BRITAIN DECLARES WAR ON GERMANY. I began to grow up more quickly. When school resumed I joined the cadets and discovered I was a good marksman despite my specs. By spring my father had enlisted with a Field Ambulance unit, against my mother's pleadings, and was in Calgary for training.

After a while my mother rented the house and lived with friends, and I was sent to her childless sister, Chrissie, on a farm beyond Three Hills. I was just turned twelve and still spindly; my uncle, however, a tough Cape Bretoner, ruled I was big enough for man's work. I was of course flattered, and put my guts into the haying, learned to drive a four-horse sweep, operate mowers, rakes and a disc-harrow, in between pitching hay and cleaning stables. I was inclined to flake out, however, by mid-afternoon and since I was wanted for milking after supper, my aunt decided I should have two hours after lunch to lie about in the tiny unused parlour. Here I found, among the old seed catalogues and almanacs, two broken-covered books by somebody named H. G. Wells, *Tales of Space and Time* and *The Country of the Blind*. They'd been left behind, my aunt said, by a lazy Sassenach farmhand my uncle had fired. She was going to throw them out, so I was welcome to them. I read those stories many times in the blissful rests between drudgeries on that lonely farm. From then on till college days Wells was my favourite science-fantasy writer, a modern fusion of Verne and Poe.

The winter that followed was a bleak one for my mother and me; my father was a stretcher-bearer at Ypres and on the Somme. To supplement the corporal's allowance from my father's pay, we took in roomers, mother did midwifery and I endured through a cold winter the five-dollar-a-month job of church janitor, confirming my secret atheism.

By summer my father was in an English military hospital, and I was a butcher's boy, delivering meat on my bicycle, learning to cut it, and learning too from a set of photographs treasured by Bert, the number two butcher, what fellatio and fucking-a-trois looked like. Perhaps because I was a virginal thirteen and had never seen a naked female, Bert's pictures have remained bell-clear in my memory to this day. No doubt they were fortified by my own rascality, for I persuaded Bert to lend me one set of his *feelthies* for a week, in return for my staying an extra hour a day doing his clean-up chores while he went swimming. I then charged a quarter for a five-minute look at my shockers, choosing customers from reliable school pals in town that summer.

Dad returned to us in the autumn of '15 — none too soon, it would seem, for providing me with paternal guidance. He was a sick man now, with trembly hands and rheumatism, though no less my adored father.

In September I was one of five who made it into Grade Nine, into High School. I now studied French, taught by a man who avoided pronouncing it; Algebra, my favourite; Ancient History, including a prose translation of the *Odyssey*; and so on. The English "reader" offered nothing later than Tennyson's "Maud." All this that teachers called Literature seemed never to be written by men alive, or even by dead Canadians. Nor was it ever as much fun as *Puck* magazine or *The Boy's Own Annual.*

I liked writing essays, however, and was getting A's on them. This approval, coupled with pressure from Joe and Wally, two schoolmates who had been customers for Bert's porno-packet, led to the three of us starting an underground school newspaper. The news for the first issue consisted solely of a somewhat vague but suggestive account by Joe, who had successfully shadowed an unnamed girl in our class and a bugler from the Internment Camp, and witnessed a stand-up fornication against a riverbank poplar. Wally, the school artist, drew a scribbler-size actuality of the scene for our cover. My job was to look after circulation, which would consist entirely of one copy, rented out. Unfortunately Wally, true artist that he was, thought of an extra visual touch, and began reworking the cover during a geometry lesson. He was nailed by the Principal. Our first and only issue disappeared forever, and we three became perhaps the last schoolkids in Banff to encounter the cat-o-nine-tails. It was a mere ritual flick, however, and our parents were not informed, presumably because the honour of the cover-girl, or rather of that of her socially important parents, was best preserved by general silence. There were enough underground reverberations, however, to shake down at last any image of me as a teacher's pet. I was elected president of our Boys' Club and sent, with Joe and Wally, to a provincial conference in Lethbridge of delegates from the Christian-Boys-in-Training Clubs. On my return I gave up writing and went back to the reading kick.

TO MAKE AN END

(For Malka Cohen 1897-1981)

Irving Layton

The last indignities are over:
the bar between convulsing jaws;
gaunt cheeks, death's familiar foxholes,
and breasts that once gave suck,
now flat and unresponsive as damp rags;
her diminutive teats, raw and wornout,
mocking our vaporous presence on earth
with the mordant emphasis of quotemarks.

If ten devils possessed me
I'd flaunt my scorn for this stale farce
that made Lear and Achilles weep
and pluck those shrivelled paps looking
like forgotten berries on winter's snow;
razor the mortician's balls and grow them
like bleeding rose bulbs in the urine bottle
empty and open to the nurse's hand.

Where's my kinswoman with her blue-black hair,
strong white teeth, peasant health,
her high colour and highboned cheeks?
Is this she, now so shrunk and quiet,
the cannula still in her vein
that supplied her seven rebel parts
till the common axeman
dismissed them all with one soundless blow?

Shall I never touch her warm hand again?
Never again look on her fluttering lids
or praise her rough affection for child and friend?
The white walls are mute. And no clever instrument
waits outside in the blank corridors
to graph incoherency and human rage
or the hopeless, homeless love
of her weeping daughters.

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THE DYNAMITE MAN: A CHAPTER IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

George Woodcock

THERE ARE PEOPLE who do not necessarily dominate periods of our lives, but who signalize them, so that when we look back to a particular time and pour the blood into the pit like Odysseus, one person advances out of memory before the others to give the tone to that past. In this way Anton Kohout signalized the period when Inge and I returned to Canada from a year — through 1951 and 1952 — spent in France and California.

Our first two years in Canada had been spent at Sooke, then a small and remote fishing and logging village on the southwestern tip of Vancouver Island; I have already told of that precarious time and of the way a Guggenheim fellowship in 1951 gave us an unhoped release from a situation of recurrent destitution. In 1952, at the end of the Franco-American interlude, we left the Russian River country of northern California, where we had spent the mild winter in a cabin in the redwood forest and started back to Sooke, to collect the possessions we had stored there and to decide how we would now arrange our lives in Canada, where we had finally decided to remain. As in our first years there, from 1949 to 1951, I had no regular source of income; no more than hopes. The Guggenheim fellowship had allowed me to put aside the small royalties from my book on Western Canada, *Ravens and Prophets*, and this time we had no intention of even trying to earn our keep by truck gardening, as we had done before. I wanted to finish the book on Proudhon I had researched in France, and then to establish enough literary connections to live by freelance writing; the first was a possible ambition, but the second at that time in Canada, as I soon discovered, was not.

We went by bus from San Francisco to Vancouver, travelling the Oregon coast road in a clear, bright spring, and sailed on one of the elegant old Canadian Pacific ferry boats through the Gulf Islands from Vancouver to Victoria. It was a slow four-hours' trip in those days, on an uncrowded boat with a passable restaurant, in which, on that day of our return, the first people we saw were Anton Kohout and his American wife Natalie. We sat down with them to clam chowder and halibut, and as the hour went by, the beginning of our second period in Canada was determined.

We had already known Anton Kohout for almost a year before we left Sooke

in 1951. Then he was a quick old man, more than seventy, Czech by race and certainly in appearance, with high Slavic cheeks, a rippling crest of white hair, a grey Hohenzollern moustache. His ice-grey eyes darted constantly and — like those of an animal — resisted one's attempts to fix them. People in Sooke considered him shifty, but I would rather describe him as protean, not to be trapped unless he wished it. His body never seemed out of motion, as if life were a constant gesture, and as if gesture could control the world; I remember how, when his ageing car would strain at a hill, he would move his body gruntingly backwards and forwards at the wheel, as if his action could magically help the machine.

Kohout talked rapidly and almost incessantly, and his accent was Germanic rather than Slavic. This gave a clue to his background, for he had been born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and — Czech though he might be in name and looks — he regarded himself always as a member of the Hapsburg Empire's German-speaking elite. Vienna, much more than Prague, was his spiritual home, and he had retained a kind of facile Viennese wit, interspersing his conversation with bright aphorisms and stale European jokes at which he would always laugh before anyone else, in a high-pitched mad cackle, rather like a jungle cock.

But his attachment to Franz Joseph's Empire had not prevented him from voting with his feet, for he had arrived in Canada not long after the turn of the century, and though he never admitted it, I am sure he left Austria-Hungary to avoid military service. After a period in Quebec he gravitated to Vancouver Island, and there I suspect he was involved in land speculation, for he was extremely informative about the corruption in provincial politics, particularly among the Liberals. Finally, he bought a piece of forest land on the cliffs at the entrance to Sooke Harbour, and there he built a resort hotel, the Sooke Harbour House, at the butt of Whiffen Spit, the long shingle bar that almost closes off the harbour. By the time we knew him he had sold it to a chef from Quebec who cooked disappointingly orthodox Canadian meals, even though his roast beef was succulent and his pies were crisp and crusty.

Very soon after we first encountered Kohout in the Post Office, where everyone picked up mail at 11 a.m. and exchanged greetings, we began to go down to the old farmhouse near Whiffen Spit which he was now inhabiting. We could not afford a car, and we had to walk nearly three miles, much of it along a narrow dirt road through the bush where in summer we would be half-choked by dust whenever anyone drove past us. The walks back along the unlit road after dark were sometimes nervous, for cougar and bear often used this piece of land as a thoroughfare, swimming the narrow entrance to the harbour on their way from the woods of Metchosin and East Sooke to the Sooke Hills. We never saw a bear there, but more than once we were assailed by a sense of presence and, halting, would hear a swish in the vegetation, perhaps a slight crack of a

twig, that ended immediately after we halted, and would know that a cougar, impelled by feline curiosity, was following us. And, though we knew that only when they were sick and starving did cougars attack human beings, we would still hurry to reach the main road as soon as we could.

Kohout had strange tales to relate, with a slightly contemptuous Viennese amusement, about the displaced English aristocrats and remittance men who gave a pinchbecky glitter to genteel life in the region thirty or forty years before we arrived. He had been there when the Prince of Wales came on an imperial visit and had attended the great eccentric ball that Lady Emily Walker ("that elderly cobweb" as the Pragger Wagger had privately called her) had thrown in her rustic mansion among the horse meadows, to the delight of the mosquitoes who flocked through the open French windows and the envious derision of the other would-be gentry.

But Kohout had other varieties of Island oddity to relate, including the strange history of the religious community known as the Star Brethren, some of whose decaying buildings the bush was slowly submerging down the road from his house. Many of the members had been farmers from Minnesota and other mid-western states who had sold their land and trekked in their old cars into Canada, and then, when one of the leaders absconded with the funds, had been left landless and penniless and, perhaps even worse, faithless.

And he had a great deal of miscellaneous Indian lore to go with the stone hand-hammers and arrowheads and the other artifacts that stood on his bookshelves in arresting contrast to the collections of Goethe and Schiller and Rilke and Hoelderlin in their gold-lettered bindings. Kohout had been in Sooke long enough to know an Indian woman who had been a slave of the Moachat at Friendly Cove, taken away as a child during the raids in which the West Coast peoples almost destroyed the once numerous Salish people of Sooke. The cliff edges at Whiffen Spit where he had built his hotel must once have been the site of a great deal of Indian activity, possibly even of commerce, for among the shell banks there he had found the artifacts — the last of a large collection — that stood in his house. Once, when he felled a tree, an Indian skeleton lay buried beneath it and, with the ignorance of archaeological methods at that time, he packed the bones into a box to take to the Provincial Museum. No archaeologists, but shocked at such disrespect for the dead and fearful of an angry spirit, his Chinese labourers at once deserted him, taking their story back to Victoria's Chinatown, and not until it was known that he had actually taken the bones to the museum did he find any Chinese willing to work for him again.

I don't think Kohout had a historical mind, though he did have that European way of valuing the past which distinguished his view of life from the living-for-the-day attitude of most of the Islanders we then encountered. He was essentially an anecdotalist, with a mind full of restless memories, yet he helped to

populate the tangling bush around us with historic content, and he was an amusing companion.

So, when we joined him and Natalie at lunch on the ferry that day in May 1952, we were receptive to his ideas and suggestions about our future, particularly as we knew that in a month at most we would have to move out of the cabin on the beach at Sooke Basin that had been lent to us. Why not remain at Sooke, Kohout suggested, particularly if we were giving up our Thoreauvian idea of living by truck gardening and subsistence cultivation? I would then have time to write at leisure, without the distractions of finding my feet in a city, and I could build up my connections in England and the United States to make up for the lack of outlets in Canada.

Half-convinced, we protested that we still had nowhere to live in Sooke after we left the cabin. A louder cackle than most, and then Kohout declared that he had the perfect solution. He had allowed the loggers to take out the largest timber on his clifftop land, and now he was dividing it into strips, almost an acre each, with more than a hundred feet of water frontage. The price — it seems incredible today — was $950, and we could pay it off at $50 a month without interest. Since we already knew how to build a house, the second time over would take less time, and there were ways in which he could help us. For example, there was a cabin on one of the lots, built by an old hermit who had died a couple of years ago. Anton and Natalie, having left their farmhouse, were camping there at present, but we could occupy it for the time we needed to build our house.

Looking back, I can only paraphrase a famous saying and remark that the sole lesson of one's past is that one does not learn from the past. We had already in 1949 been taken to a piece of land at Sooke and had let our illusions about the kind of life we might live there lead us into a morass of poverty and frustration from which the Guggenheim Foundation had providentially saved us. And now, in 1952, we went down with Kohout, up the sawdust road the loggers had left, and into the lot he suggested.

Small trees and underbrush had been left as a protective band along the roadside, dominated by a single giant first-growth Douglas fir, about twelve feet in diameter. The rest of the ground was the bare forest floor, dotted with stumps, but down the cliffs the trees still grew high, and there was a steep path to a shingly beach that gave way to sand where the tide lapped up. A bald eagle sat in one of the clifftop trees; delicately roseate lady's slipper orchids were blooming among the roots of the fir trees. We stood there, breathing the scent of the sun-warmed conifers, and talked about the kind of house that might stand there. As all of us were devoted to the Austrian Alps, it was perhaps natural that the idea of a kind of Tyrolean chalet under the great fir trees emerged. Inge sat down on a stump and sketched it out on an envelope: a single large room, el-shaped and

swinging round to the kitchen alcove whose wood stove would keep us warm in winter, a shower and toilet, windows on all sides to keep the room light in the shadow of the trees, a front verandah, window boxes and painted shutters, and the walls covered in rough cedar to fit the woodland. And this was the house we built. For, needless to say, we had fallen in love with the land, perhaps not as it was with its stumps and slash, but as it might be when we had cleared it all and planted grass and fruit trees and built a proper way down the cliff.

We built the house in six weeks of hard work, with handsaw and hammer. A friend helped me over a weekend with the rafters, and one day our aged local Ninety-Eighter, Dirty Sam, who had built the fireplace for our first house in Sooke, brought his vast birdsnest of a beard for a cursing day of tall tales about the Klondike as he laid the bricks for our chimney. For the rest we did everything ourselves, down to the wiring and the plumbing. They were long summer days, from eight in the morning until ten at night, and usually twelve hours out of the fourteen would be spent in the house; I was never so tired, or so slim, or so healthy, as at the end of those six weeks.

KOHOUT, WE REALIZED from the beginning, was moved to a restless fascination by what we were doing. He would appear with a loping walk through the trees, and stand with his head a bit on one side and his eyes darting foxily over the scene. "My, you're doing well!" he would cackle, and then begin to offer help in various ways.

His first passion, we discovered, was a constructive one, for laying concrete. When we poured the foundation blocks for the floor beams to rest on, he was there to help us hand-mix with shovels, and when we poured the concrete slab for the steps he again appeared. But very quickly we found that Kohout's passion had a more lurid side. Indeed, I have never met a man who more neatly exemplified such classic anarchist maxims as Proudhon's *destruam et aedificabo* (I destroy and I build up) and Bakunin's "The passion to destroy is also a creative passion." For Kohout was fascinated by dynamite and fire, and loved to find legitimate excuses for applying them.

I had not thought much about how we would get rid of the stumps on the property. I calculated that some might be grubbed out and burnt, and that the two or three large ones might somehow be disguised with shrubs and creepers. "Impossible!" declared Kohout. "It will take you weeks to grub out the smallest. And the large ones will be an eyesore for ever! You must *dynamite* them!" His crest of hair seemed to rise up as he spat out the words, and his cackle reached a peculiar tremolo of excitement. "I will show you! We will do it together!"

I was, indeed, somewhat amused at the thought that, having read and written so much about the famous anarchist *dynamiteros,* I should at last find myself

learning how to use the legendary stuff. So I agreed, since Kohout promised to do the more delicate tasks of fitting the detonators and the fuse.

We began, even while I was still working on the house, with a couple of small and distant stumps, and it was obvious that Kohout knew the art of dynamiting well, as he led me through the processes of digging out a suitable recess, well down between the roots of a tree, bundling the five or six sticks of dynamite, attaching the detonator and fuse, then burying the charge with good stiff mud and tamping earth over it to make everything firm, before we finally lit the fuse and headed for cover. There was a curiously intense quality to those moments of expectation as one squatted down behind another stump or a pile of brush, waiting until there was a satisfying crack in the air, a thudding vibration in the ground beneath one, a shower of earth pattering among the trees, and one stood up to see smoke drifting up between the neatly lifted and bisected or trisected stump.

The biggest stump of all was at least eight feet in diameter where it had been cut six feet from the ground; it was supported by heavily buttressing roots. It stood perhaps 150 feet from the house, and we should really have blown it before I even began construction. We decided that certainly it would have to be sprung before the windows were put in, and Kohout calculated that if we laid the charge properly we could direct the blast so that the house would not be harmed. So we went ahead, excavating a veritable sap under the centre of the stump.

Kohout was in a state of extreme excitement while this was going on, and when our sap was ready he huddled into it with a great bundle of fifty sticks of dynamite. He emerged, grinning and cackling. "That should do it! But, let me see! I've some old dynamite stored away that is probably not much good any longer. But it might give a bit of an extra boost!" So off he trotted to the cellar underneath an old barn on his property and emerged with another twenty-five sticks wrapped in an ancient newspaper. These too we packed around the fifty, and then went on with our tasks of fixing detonator and fuse, packing the end of the sap with mud, and then shovelling in earth and vigorously tamping it. "Whack it hard!" shouted Kohout, and whack I did, fearing all the time that too hard a bang might somehow set off the detonator.

When all this was done Inge and Natalie, who had watched the process with a horrified fascination, went off into the deep woods with our black cat Tim. I ran out into the lane to make sure no cars or people were around. And then we lit the fuse and headed into the trees a hundred yards away, where we squatted down in a ferny dell low enough to save us from the blast. We thought also that we were far enough away to avoid any falling debris, but when the mine did blow with a formidable earth-shaking roar (Kohout's stale dynamite turning out as good as the new), we cowered down in astonishment as rocks and hunks of wood went flying high in the air over our heads, missing us entirely and pepper-

ing the woods a hundred yards beyond us, I rushed back immediately, scared for the house, but Kohout's calculations had been exact. We had blown the stump apart into four vast segments in a way that did not harm the building.

Afterwards, when the house was complete, we blew the remaining stumps very successfully, and I became so infected with Kohout's enthusiasm that when he sold the next lot to a Danish logger and offered to blow his stumps, I gladly agreed to act as assistant blaster without pay. But it was on Erik's land that the moment of truth arrived which ended my career as a dynamitero. We were dealwith a moderate-sized stump that, we decided, needed ten sticks of dynamite. We went through all the processes, lit the fuse and retreated for cover. We squatted there the necessary time and nothing happened. A minute passed and extended into five minutes. Still nothing happened, and this time when I looked into Kohout's eyes they no longer danced away. They were fixed and anxious. He could not explain what had happened — perhaps a faulty detonator or a faulty fuse. But we could not leave the charge there to be a standing peril.

"What can we do?" "Risk our lives," said Kohout, his cackle quavering. "We can carefully uncover the charge and disconnect it. That is very risky. Or we can dig beside it and put in a smaller charge which we hope will blow the first. That is ten per cent less risky." "I'll settle for ten per cent."

So we got to work, digging carefully, in the end with trowels, beside the first charge, put in a couple more sticks, with detonator and fuse which we checked particularly carefully, hurriedly filled in over the second charge, lit the fuse, and ran. This time the double charge blew in a fine fountain of soil and stones, and we embraced each other and danced crazily in relief. I never blew another stump. Nor, so far as I know, did Kohout.

BUT THERE WERE OTHER WAYS of fulfilling the destructive urge. Dynamite merely split the stumps and lifted the fragments up. Fire was still needed to consume them, and we would drag slash and rubbish out of the woods during the day and pile it around the stumps in preparation for the evening change of wind, when the fires would burn with passion and clarity. I still remember vividly those exciting nights when the four of us, Inge and Natalie and Kohout and I, would feed the marvellously incandescent cores of the stumps, and over the crackling of the flames we would hear the slap of the seals as they played below the cliff or the crashing splash of the killer whales proceeding towards the harbour.

But Kohout was as dangerous a man with fire as he was with dynamite. As I have said, there was a good stand of surviving trees growing out of the cliff below our lot, somewhat cluttered with the debris of logging which we intended

some later year to clear away. But one day at the top of the cliff near the hermit's cabin to which he had returned, Kohout put a match to a pile of brush. It was early September now, and the last three weeks had been rainless, so that the rubbish among the trees had dried out. And, by a freak chance, the wind changed that evening from the customary southwester at that time of the year to a southeaster, blowing right along our cliff, catching the piles of slash and leaping into the trees. In the twinkling of an eye, almost, we had our own forest fire, the sky blazing a hundred yards away from our house.

Kohout appeared, darting along the lee of the fire, frantic, intoxicated with excitement, and in his face none of the still apprehension I had seen the day the charge did not blow. But in another way he was scared again, and when I suggested we get the Sooke fire engine he was so opposed that I knew he feared prosecution for setting a fire in a dry season. "It will burn out! It will burn out!" he kept on saying. It had only to run another half-mile, I pointed out, and then it would start to burn into the thick woodland of the next big property along the coast and he would have a major crisis on his hands. He still refused to go.

We had installed no telephone, and we feared too much for our own house for either of us to attempt the three-mile walk into the village or even the half-mile walk to Sooke Harbour House, which did have a telephone. So we stayed, our only weapon a garden hose which we took turns spraying on the roof of our house to put out the sparks that blew over from the blaze. There was nothing we could do with the fire on the cliff except to wait it out, and we stayed up most of the night merely to protect the house. Fortunately, when the fire had crept to the edge of the next property, the wind did shift and finally die down, but there were still smouldering pockets along the cliff that all night kept exploding into small fires. I went down next morning to see our cliff black and still smoking, the rubbish burnt away and many of the smaller trees killed; fortunately the bigger ones had not been harmed, except for a little singeing of the lower branches; they had been little cluttered with flammable debris and had stood mostly to windward of the blaze.

As winter came on, Kohout, who suffered from bronchial asthma, began to disappear for spells to avoid the intensely humid coastal winter: trips to the California desert ("For drying out," as he cackled), to Corvallis where Natalie had been a professor ("For edification") and to Penticton ("For elevation"). But every now and then he would appear again, scuttling through the trees to look at our lot and say "My, you're going well!" and sometimes taking us on trips in his car, of which I remember most clearly an expedition to Victoria in a blizzard, made terrifying by the fact that Kohout, who learnt to drive when there was virtually no traffic on the Sooke Road, seemed to regard it as his privilege to proceed in the middle of the highway in all weathers, as he had

always done, so that on that single brief journey we escaped at least three collisions in the blinding snow by a few inches.

Our house was now finished; with the experience of building an earlier home, and with a more modest plan, we had completed a comfortable small cottage by late autumn and had ploughed and seeded into a promising meadow the stretch of land between the house and the cliff. So I settled down to a winter of writing. Each morning I would work with saw, axe and wedge for an hour cutting and splitting the day's stove wood. Twice a week, when we could not scrounge lifts, we would walk into the village with our rucksacks to buy provisions and collect mail. On bright clear days I might put in another hour or so clearing more ground for future flower and vegetable beds. But there was still plenty of time to write, particularly as outside visitors had ceased to come and the lonely season had begun. I worked on the material I had gathered in France and the United States for my biography of Proudhon, and I wrote critical essays, and historical articles largely based on the knowledge I had gained in recent years about North America west of the Rockies. I established long-standing connections with the *Geographical Magazine* and *History Today* in England, with the *Sewanee Review*, the *New Republic* and the *Saturday Review of Literature* in the United States; in Canada, then so lacking in journals of literature and affairs, I continued to give occasional talks on the CBC networks and even sold a small series of documentary programmes on the history of utopian writing.

But still I was far from making the kind of living, through these remote freelance connections, that would enable us to live even the simple kind of existence we followed in Sooke, and when all the bills for our house had been paid we found ourselves again in debt and — as in our first 1949-51 period at Sooke — lacking any really assured stream of income. As soon as the weather broke in early spring, I had to take, as I had done in the earlier period, to manual work. I worked as a labourer for a friend who was building his house; this ended in a scare almost as extreme as that of the unexploded dynamite charge. I was working a small electrically operated concrete mixer, and suddenly, as I began to swing the handle to fill the barrow another worker pushed forward, I felt as if my whole body had been struck a great blow, heard a strange yelling voice which I later realized had been my own, and came to myself lying flat on my back; someone had switched off the power, but my hand was seared with a wide burn that took a couple of weeks to cure. I was puzzled that instead of showing sympathy and concern, my friend and his wife looked at me with a kind of suspicion that verged on hostility. Almost immediately I realized that they feared I might try to get compensation from them for my burnt hand, which would in fact have been something very much outside my view of friendship. So I quietly left.

Then Inge and I persuaded a fisherman who was building a house up the road to let us dig out his basement. For almost two weeks we laboured with pick and shovel and wheelbarrow, from morning often until dusk. We were paid partly in cash and partly in kind, and received $120 and as much salmon and halibut as we could eat for the next two months; we got very tired of fish by the time the supply came to an end. Finally, the last phase of our relationship with Kohout began when he decided to enlarge the hermit's cabin and put in such amenities as a bathroom and a real chimney instead of the dangerous old iron stovepipe. I worked for him digging ditches, taking a pride in the skill I had learnt years before working on the land as a conscientious objector in England. I could compete with anyone in digging a smoothly finished ditch with a gentle and regular fall, and I was pleased when Dirty Sam, with his memories of miners' flumes and waterways on the Klondike, came to build the chimney and roared through the tangle of his beard: "There's a bloody dandy ditch!" I worked too as Dirty Sam's assistant and, between curses, increased my store of tall tales about Diamond Tooth Gertie and Bishop Bompas. But my employment by Kohout ended on a rather sour note, since I pointed out that the going rate for labouring work was now $1.25 an hour and not $1.00, as he proposed to pay. Kohout had retained a goodly share of the European peasant's traditional parsimony, and though he paid me in full before he set off on another trip, this time to Europe, he clearly resented doing so.

As it turned out, I saw him only two or three times again, and those were fleeting contacts. For by the summer of 1953 we had decided to leave. Though I was earning more by writing than when we last lived in Sooke, it was still not enough to keep us going. And, just as between 1949 and 1951 we learnt that we were not temperamentally fitted for a Thoreauvian mixture of manual and mental work, so now we learnt that at heart we were really urban people. We were lonely and lost in so remote a countryside, despite the odd friends we had made in Sooke and the few people who in good weather might venture there from Victoria or Vancouver. During the late spring, when we went to Vancouver for me to record CBC talks, we began to make tentative plans to move there. At least I would be nearer to possible sources of income, and we would be back in a city again. Then we put our cottage up for sale, and waited a nervous two months until we finally sold it to a couple of women teachers who were so taken with the way Inge had arranged it that they bought it with almost everything it contained, and we set off with no more than our clothes, books and manuscripts and our cat Tim to start again in Vancouver, where Jack and Doris Shadbolt had found a cabin for us in a wood near their house on Capital Hill.

We never saw Kohout after we left. But not long afterwards we heard he had died rather miserably yet in a way that seemed to fit the more grotesque

side of his nature, for he was involved in a freak accident in a hotel lift in which his leg was somehow trapped; it had to be amputated, and the shock killed him. I sadly remembered how, like Bakunin, he had seen the poetry of destruction; like a Zoroastrian, he had loved the leaping of the fire.

DRIVING, ACCIDENTAL, WEST

Robert Kroetsch

1

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to hammer home

help, and the wild geese
heading south

and every way and
which, confuse

the fall of light
the fatal peen

how, and the commonest
crow or sparrow

speak the pale
or sensing moon

2

accelerate, the swan
sing, or eloquent as

antelope, the crisp
rejoinder of the duck's

quack to the deer's
leap, and, even then

even, a static dream
twitter and acquit

the kill, wait, for
and the nasty snow

fall, fall and for
tonight, only, dream

PLYMOUTH BROTHER

Roy Daniells

I WAS BORN IN A SMALL semi-detached brick house in south London, on the borders of Kent.* As I came into the world, my father and grandfather were on their knees in the next room, praying for me and for my mother. And I grew up in this house where prayers and hymns were the wings that carried life forward and upward.

"When I shall wake in that fair morn of morns / After whose dawning never night returns / And in whose glory day eternal burns / I shall be satisfied, be satisfied." That is what they sang of a Sunday evening, after the gospel meeting, friends coming in for coffee and cakes, my mother at the piano. "When I shall gaze upon the face of Him / Who died for me with eye no longer dim / And praise Him in the everlasting hymn / I shall be satisfied, be satisfied."

Then I would go to bed upstairs, where my grandparents lived, look out the window across the London-Brighton railway line to the Crystal Palace to see if there were any fireworks. "Now I lay me down to sleep I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. . . . "

My grandfather might come in when the gas was turned out and pop a peppermint into my mouth. One night, as the bag became empty, he said, "The last of the Mohicans." After that I called peppermints Monekies. I had a certain knack of getting things wrong. My attempt at reciting the 23rd Psalm began, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want Him."

My parents and grandparents were Plymouth Brethren, a group that actually originated in Ireland but had one of its earliest and largest English congregations in Plymouth. We called ourselves Christians gathered in the name of the Lord, avoiding any denominational name; we spoke of each local gathering as an assembly. We had no head, Christ in heaven being the head of the church; we needed no priest, for were we not all made "kings and priests unto God" (*Revelation* 1:6). (We were the descendants of those middle-class Independents who were so useful to Cromwell in his cavalry regiments and for whose liberty of worship Cromwell pleaded so eloquently to a Presbyterian-dominated Parliament.)

We had no confession, no prayer-book, no creed, no formal theology — nothing but the open Bible, the King James Version, the word of God. Each of us

*This essay was among Roy Daniells' papers when he died in 1979. In a slightly different form, it was broadcast in 1979 over CBC radio. ED.

read it for himself and hardly needed an interpreter, for the Holy Ghost, as Jesus had promised, would lead us into all truth. Brethren literally wore out Bibles by daily reading. There were occasional odd stories about Bibles. A soldier carrying one in his haversack might be struck by a bullet which embedded itself as far as a last unbroken page where some portentous text was found: "He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways" — the 91st Psalm.

We read the Bible continuously, so as to remember every word of it; we memorized whole Psalms and whole chapters of the New Testament. We were not critical — who could be of God's Word? — and if we compared one text with another it was never to see whether they agreed; we found prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in the New Testament. "Out of Egypt have I called my son" in the Old Testament was a prophecy fulfilled when Joseph, Mary and the child Jesus took refuge from Herod in Egypt and later returned home. The Bible was a seamless web; there were no loose ends or contradictions or statements without a profound spiritual meaning.

Occasionally, as a child, I opened the Bible quite at random, seeking enlightenment. (*Sortes Virgilianae* the Classics people call this.) I tried it once in bed and read "Thou shalt not get down from the bed whereon thou art gone up but shalt surely die." I hopped out instantly and hit the floor, before the words could take effect.

Accepting the Bible as the word of God, we really had no problems of any kind. We did not worry about the state of the world for we were merely passing through it to a much better and eternal world. The Bible kept asserting its own authority and this we accepted without question. Problems of authentic texts, of contradictions, of bloody massacres and murders in the Old Testament, or prophecies, miracles and wonders: well, no question arose. We knew that the whale swallowed Jonah and kept him in its belly for three days, for was not this a type of the death and resurrection of Christ? We knew that Noah had at least two of each kind of creature in the ark and to question the sanitary conditions in the ark, after nearly a year, never even occurred to us. When Christ said to his disciples, "I will make you fishers of men!" this seemed to us a very beautiful image; that fishermen kill all they catch — well, again, it never occurred to us. Once the Bible is felt to be the word of God, all questions cease. Reason retires behind the curtains; faith takes the centre of the stage. Faith does not ask for evidence or scrutinize testimony or sift out proofs. As Saint Paul said: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (*Hebrews* 11:1). Having the English Bible, we needed no Latin, Greek or Hebrew but we would have agreed with Tertullian, that early Father of the Church, *"Certum est quia impossibile est."* If you have faith you believe the rationally impossible.

The English Bible! Most of us had the firm impression that God spoke English and had said at the beginning, "LET THERE BE LIGHT!" He could not have said

it in any other language. The English were, in any case, God's chosen people and Christ was very English: "And did those feet in ancient time / Walk upon England's mountains green / And was the holy Lamb of God / In England's pleasant pastures seen!" These lines of William Blake used to be sung at the great political gatherings of the Labour Party. The English were chosen to spread the gospel to all the world; the Brethren were unstinting in their support of missionaries, and stories of Livingstone and his like were on every child's bookshelf. "What though the spicy breezes / Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle / Where every prospect pleases / And only man is vile" (we sang this in Sunday School). "In vain with loving kindness / The gifts of God are strown; The heathen in their blindness / Bow down to wood and stone." (So much for the inhabitants of Sri Lanka.)

Having no creed, no priesthood, no sacred edifices or holy days, no Book of Common Prayer or Order of the Mass, we were committed to the Bible, those square black letters bitten into the white page. We knew it by heart; from between its lines we rose directly toward heaven where Christ sat at the right hand of God, our Redeemer and Advocate, our Lord and Saviour, who would soon come again; the words were more firm and immediate in our minds than our own names and addresses: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: And so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 *Thessalonians* 4: 16-17).

WHAT I HAVE BEEN GIVING YOU is a recollection of my childhood in England. But now we came to Canada.

My father was a carpenter, who had risen to become an independent builder, but Lloyd George brought in a system of taxation that made it increasingly hard to raise risk capital and my father remembered that as a very young man he had worked in Canada, in the mining towns of British Columbia and in Victoria. So to Victoria we came and joined the Plymouth Brethren there, in a hall on Pandora Street, soon moving to Blanshard Street, to an old rickety wooden hall next to a nice brick synagogue.

I got a long letter from my grandfather in England, in his careful bent script, wishing me well in Canada, telling me he would pray for me and hoping I would grow up to be a man of God. But here in Canada my life changed drastically. At home things were the same; the same kindness and love prevailed. At South Park School it was rather uncomfortable; it was full of recent Scottish and Irish emigrants who did not much esteem us softer English. And in the assembly of the Brethren on Blanshard Street the changes were terrifying.

As I have said, the Brethren needed neither priesthood nor clergy. But we did have so-called "ministering brethren" who moved from assembly to assembly for shorter or longer series of meetings, particularly gospel meetings and expositions of the scriptures. Men with names like McGrath and McClure, who hailed from Scotland or Ulster, in whose veins ran the blood of Covenanters, Recusants, Calvinists and such, who in past centuries had been persecuted and had in turn persecuted. "Will you take the Test? If not, Make ready, present, fire, and there lay the Recusant." They were passionate men, intent on preaching Christ, denouncing the world and warning sinners. They loved to dwell on the imminence of judgment and the end of the world; they told us of the rich man and Lazarus. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (*Luke* 13:3). We sat under them as they thundered from the platform, night after night.

I felt myself now to be a sinner who might at any moment be irremediably lost. Instant and everlasting destruction hung over me like the sword of Damocles. Christ might come at any instant and take the saved, leaving me for judgment. I knew the very words that Jesus said: "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left" (*Matthew* 24:40). I have come home from school, opened the kitchen door and found no one in the house, called "Mother! Mother!" No answer. I would search the house and through the garden, full of fear. Nobody there. Then I've reeled against the doorpost with the conviction, Christ has come; they're all gone; I'm left for judgment. Later my mother would come back from a visit to a neighbour and find me white and trembling, hardly able to speak. This happened many times, for the terror of the second coming was thrust into our vitals at every turn. From this ultimate terror, this fear of eternal fire and torment, one never recovers. It is the extreme and final terror to which the mind and body, the heart and soul, the whole crushed and dismembered personality of a child can be subjected.

The ministering brethren, leaning over the lectern that held their outspread Bible, would also threaten us with the sin against the Holy Ghost. This was a mysterious and terrible possibility. By some act or other, perhaps scarcely voluntary, we might offend the Holy Ghost and He would depart from us, never to return. Or we might allow some blasphemous thought to lodge for a moment in our minds, which would seal our fate at the last judgment. The terrible texts poured, many of them uttered by Christ himself. We were told, of course, that none of these horrors need overwhelm us. We had only to repent and believe the gospel to be forever safe. To people like my father this had been simple. He told me once about his own conversion: "When I saw what Christ had done and suffered for me," he said, "I came to Him with all my heart."

I longed to follow his example but there was one enormous, insuperable difficulty — the nature of belief. We knew that to believe the facts of the gospel

story was not enough: "The devils also believe and tremble" (*James* 2:19). One had to believe in some special way; one must trust in Christ and believe that His sacrifice had taken away one's sins. Christ only received those who believe that He received them. In order to obtain salvation, one had to believe one had obtained it. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (*Hebrews* 11:1). The proof of your salvation is the belief that you have it, apparently.

Here was for me the dilemma, the catch-22, the revolving door that seemed to take one into the kingdom but always delivered one back outside again. Many times, over decades rather than years, I came to Christ and committed myself into His hands; always with the same result, a complete blank; I never had any sense of His presence as my saviour. The Holy Ghost, the scriptures said, would enter my heart and fill me with comfort and joy and lead me into all truth. It didn't happen.

"Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (*Matthew* 11:28). Why did I fail — so utterly and repeatedly — to realize this promise?

You are a Catholic? You will perhaps tell me that I failed to advantage myself of the powers given by Christ to Peter, powers transmitted by the laying on of hands to the priest of today — "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom" (*Matthew* 16:19). You are a High Anglican? You will perhaps say something similar, with a slight check at Henry VIII. Both of you will probably add that I failed to perceive in the bread and wine of the sacrament the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him" (*John* 6:56). Or perhaps you are a Calvinist and will hazard that I was not one of the elect, was never predestined to salvation. "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom he called them He also justified" (*Romans* 8:30).

You are a rationalist? And will remind me that if we believe absurdities we shall suffer penalties. You are a psychologist? And will recall that pulsation in either cranial hemisphere may give a sensation of extreme fear, of ultimate terror? You are a medical practitioner? You may remind me that feelings of sinking into the abyss may come from simple aortic stenosis.

And the good lady distributing gospel tracts outside Eaton's store on Granville Street had her own answer. Christ, she told me, had cured her of cancer; as for me, "You did not go all the way," she said, "You did not go all the way." (Actually I had always believed that the Good Shepherd went all the way to find the lost sheep and not vice versa.)

I have good friends in the United Church of Canada and they will say very gently that I should have avoided introspection and tried to do some good, something Christlike, in the community. My excuse is that, if you find yourself in a

burning building, in suffocating smoke, with dynamite in the attic, you have to get out yourself and breathe some fresh air before you can save anyone else. I could never seem to get out.

When I was about fifteen, out of a kind of desperate desire to get on the right road, I made a profession of faith, was baptized and was brought into fellowship. Baptism took place in a galvanized iron tank under the platform and was by total immersion. One came up gasping out of the water as the assembly sang with fervor and conviction, "Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o'er His foes." One was experiencing Christ's triumph over death but unfortunately I felt no sense of triumph; I simply felt wet. If you are a Baptist, you may tell me I totally failed to understand the nature of baptism. As Peter says, "Baptism doth also now save us . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 *Peter* 3:21).

I sat with the assembly, partook of the elements as they were passed from hand to hand, even, on occasion, gave thanks for the bread and broke it, gave thanks for the wine and poured it. I ascended the platform with my father and we preached "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son" (*John* 3:16). And I have stood at the corner of Government and Johnson Streets in Victoria, where we formed a circle, sang hymns and heard one of our number cry out the word of the gospel to all who passed and to any drunks who would lean against the brick wall and seem to listen. Much like the Salvation Army in its palmy days.

You will say I was a damned hypocrite, lacking in moral decency and intellectual honesty. *Mea culpa.* It is true: I had neither courage nor independence; they had been drained out of me. And remember, I was trapped in that revolving door, between a willingness to believe and the certainty of believing, that door that never stopped long enough to deliver me into the kingdom of God.

I shall never forget Victoria Hall, on Blanshard Street. It was a big, old frame building, rotten with decay and due to fall. The ceiling was high and stained. There was neither carpet, nor flowers, nor altar, nor pictures, nor amenities of any kind. Only a platform with a table and its old green tablecloth with drooping fringes, a woodburning stove and, I may add, absolutely deplorable washroom facilities. The walls were hung with blue texts on yellow paper, printed in Kilmarnock and framed in picture railing. There were a great many chairs, all of them hard on the spine. All this signalled that the world was a very temporary and passing affair and our minds ought to be elsewhere.

The effect of all the Bible reading, the preaching and the prayer meetings was simple, cumulative, undeviating, and finally overwhelming. It was a polarity. Heaven shone above; hell gaped beneath. Heaven meant the presence of God, His holiness, wisdom, mercy and loving kindness, God the Father, with Christ at His right hand and the Holy Ghost one with them both. Hell meant eternal

torment, prepared for the Devil and his angels. Two thieves were crucified with Christ; one went up and the other down.

Now if you wind a wire round a piece of soft iron and pass a powerful electric current through it, you have a magnet that points north and south. The same thing happened to the mind of a young person wound round by the Brethren's doctrines and subjected to the current of their preaching. Heaven and hell were the only realities and this world simply did not count as permanent.

I SHOULD, OF COURSE, have walked out of Victoria Hall and slammed the door behind me. But I couldn't do it. It was many years before I could leave the Brethren and even pull the door to behind me. Even then, I closed it slowly and quietly and waited for the latch to click. I am not sure that it ever did quite click.

The burden of the Brethren's doctrines finally became too heavy to permit a normal way of life. I left school in the middle of my last term. I worked in the Bank of Toronto as a junior; I worked on D'Arcy Island, the leper station, and carried packets of meat and rice to the lepers every morning; I worked on dairy farms in Duncan; I picked fruit in the Okanagan and in Oregon; I harvested on the prairie. During all these years I kept up my connection with the Brethren.

In Duncan we met in the drawing room of General Rice, who had served in India and was so old he remembered the Indian Mutiny. After the breaking of bread service, he would burn what remained in the fire; he did so, he told me one Sunday, because of what God commanded in Leviticus concerning the offering made by the priests. His military sons and their children in turn were all handsome, aristocratic in manner, and devoted Christians, as though one had crossed officers out of Kipling with archangels. One never knows what an assembly of the Brethren may bring forth. The kingdom of heaven is a strange place and full of surprises.

During these years, I met people for whom, though their doctrinal beliefs did little for me, I felt a warm affection and deep admiration. Their paths intertwined with mine rather than coinciding, yet I felt a sense of lasting fellowship with them. You might say that all our faces were turned toward the light.

One such was Claude Butcher, whom I worked beside in Duncan. He was a small Englishman who had come to Canada and for whom everything seemed to go wrong. He worked unceasingly but in the depth of the mid-20's depression he could scarcely keep his wife, her old aunt and himself. He started a small grocery store in Duncan, which failed dismally. A child was born to the Butchers, so small and weak that its life expectancy proved very brief. One would guess he would be in despair. But not so. His faith in God soared triumphant over all his

troubles. He was always cheerful and greatly esteemed. He would walk miles on a country road to take a message to someone that might get the fellow a job. He has long gone to his reward. But the image of Claude Butcher is still with me; he was one whose faith burned in an unwavering flame.

Then there were Sidney Burdge and his wife. Farming in Alberta and by some miracle retrieving half a crop in a dry and barren land. I helped him harvest it. He was no longer young and he was in pain most of the time. But you would not know it. His wife and counterpart was withered like some brown and beautiful autumnal leaf, after forty years of prairie hardship. She can never have known rest. My last encounter with them was years later, in Victoria. With the aid of a stick, he could make it up a flight of steps, one at a time. The last thing he said to me was, "He still loves us."

I still meet such people. One is a man who, after years of disinterested labour as chairman of a key committee in my own university, was relieved of his post as administrators changed. One would have supposed it a heavy blow, a sad frustration. Yet, over lunch, he was cheerful and equable as ever. He said simply, "I took it to the Lord." He showed no trace of disappointment, only a willingness to serve wherever he was permitted.

One of my memorable encounters was very brief. Passing through an airport, I saw a man in a clerical collar sitting on a suitcase. On impulse, I bent over and said, "Do you believe all Christians will meet in heaven?" He looked up with the countenance of one of Botticelli's angels and said, "I believe all people will meet in heaven." I went on and boarded my plane. But I've never forgotten him.

As I slowly departed from the Brethren, my father was hurt by my defection, though he never reproached me or even showed his disappointment. But he was wholly devoted to the image of Christ the Brethren showed him and he could not imagine any other way of life than that of Bunyan's Pilgrim. I have seen him put a ten-dollar bill into the collection bag, at a time when that was a great sum for a working man, and noticed that the purple of the bill was the same colour as an unhealed saw cut on his arm. He was in a sense giving his blood to the cause of Christ, to missions, for example. When he was very old he had some fears about his own salvation and my mother had to comfort and reassure him. She did not, I am sure, regret my leaving the Brethren. In fact, as time went on, she ceased to attend meetings. She said they made her nervous. Her faith was a matter of reading the Bible with the memory of her father and of her younger brother who had passed away and was in heaven — with these memories and thoughts of England always with her. She understood better than my father the complexities of faith and the inner life; she would not have subscribed to Paul's brash assertion to the jailer at Philippi, "Thou shalt be saved and thy house" (*Acts* 16:31). She knew that each generation must in some sense find its own way.

As the years went by, the biological urge to survive, the social urge to function in the community, the economic urge to earn more than $30 a month and the intellectual urge to do something other than labouring jobs — these led me to go back to my books at the age of twenty-three. I secured a very humble post, teaching in a small private school, and by slow stages arrived at university teaching, first in Toronto, then in Winnipeg, then in Vancouver. And now I began to make many friends.

My main interest was in the poetry of Milton. I was lucky, for here was a bridge between the Brethren's doctrines and the world of humane studies. The familiar beliefs were now clothed in poetry of surpassing eloquence and adorned with a rich border of classical and historical reference. I was now listening, not to the ministering brethren but to magnificent archangels, Raphael and Michael, who expound everything to Adam and Eve.

One small ingredient of *Paradise Lost* I particularly enjoyed was Milton's sense of humour. Humour, I hope you will agree, is a great lubricant in systematic thinking; it prevents the great facts from grinding too heavily on one another. Milton offers very little humour but the quality is excellent. Raphael the archangel is in the midst of warning Adam, as yet unfallen, against being too passionate in his love for his delightful Eve, when Adam suddenly asks about love in heaven: is there a sexual relation between angels? Raphael answers with "a smile that glows Celestial rosy red"; in other words, he blushes. He makes Adam an extremely hasty answer to the effect that they have every joy in heaven that Adam and Eve have on earth; he looks at the sinking sun (with the effect of looking at his digital wrist watch) and says, in effect, It's getting late; I must go.

My intense pleasure over this brief passage may seem rather odd. But, after twenty-odd years of gospel preaching and prayer meetings, not to mention Sunday school, years in which no subject could be viewed except in black and white terms, either as pointing to the will of God or away from it — after two decades and more of that sort of suppression of one's sense of humour, Book VIII of *Paradise Lost* came to me like a flower flung to me by angelic fingers.

Reading and attempting to lecture upon Milton, I could stay in the Biblical framework but find it transformed into something of great beauty and harmony. I felt I could learn from Milton as Adam learned from the archangel and, to some infinitesimal degree, offer the same kind of liberation to my own students. I might wear the chains of Milton's doctrines but they were golden, not the iron ball-and-chain with which the Brethren had tied me down.

As time went on, keys with which to open prison gates fell into my lap from unexpected sources. Furthermore, some of the walls turned out to be only plywood painted to look like blocks from the Rock of Ages. I was sorting books one day and accidentally came across that Old Testament passage which excludes from the congregation of Israel any man who — perhaps in an accident or in

battle — has lost what is politely called his virile member. The terrible tribalism of Old Testament writers became, as in a lightening flash, completely apparent. I threw the book on the floor. Then I began to find in the English devotional writers their belief that the joy of the redeemed in heaven will be heightened as they look over the battlements and view their friends in hell. Could I take these atrocious people seriously? In Rome, I looked long and hard at Michaelangelo's ceiling and end wall of the Sistine Chapel and perceived that he was in as much trouble as I had been. His God the Father takes his creative hand away from Adam, the innocent first man, palpably indifferent, clearly leaving him to his fate and knowing what it will be. Can I believe in such a God? On the end wall Christ in judgment is separating the saved from the lost, and such horror is depicted on the faces of those condemned that the whole pictured scene falls apart, as a courtroom might fall apart if suddenly the judge put thumb screws on the prisoner and broke his joints. Could I credit this Christ?

As the prison walls began, in this way, to crumble, there were also doors that swung open into direct sunlight. Certain books were invaluable; so was direct contact with the natural world about me. People were of very little direct help, because we in Canada do not like to talk about ultimate issues or "eternal things," as the Brethren would say.

Books: I found Emily Brontë immensely liberating. Among the luminaries of the English literary tradition she appears like a flash of lightning. In *Wuthering Heights* she accepts wickedness, violence, and suffering as part of the human scene but a spirit of abundant and unquenchable life supervenes. (Heathcliff and Catherine, though they have both died, are seen on the road, walking closely together, never to be parted. This is beyond reason but not beyond experience.) In one of her superb poems, Emily Brontë begins "No coward soul is mine" and goes on to affirm "Vain are the thousand creeds to waken doubt." Doubt in her faith that life triumphs over death.

I found the same thing in Dylan Thomas, the Welsh poet. In his memorable war poem "A Refusal to Mourn the Death by Fire of a Child in London" he sees the dead child as clasped safely in the arms of her mother, the immemorial earth, while the ever-flowing stream of the Thames triumphantly assures the continuity of life.

I felt the bonds of the Brethren loosen and fall away. There was an immediate life to be experienced, even though I had no experience of the "new birth." I no longer felt with the Brethren that "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 *John* 5:19).

Better even than books were natural things. Across the road from where I live is a magnificent fir tree whose branches are never still, for we live close to the sea and its varying winds. Do not be offended if I confess that this tree, which is older than I am and will outlive me, in its steady growth, endurance of all wea-

thers and aspiration toward the light — this tree is more to me than the tree of Calvary, with its message that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

And do not, furthermore, be offended if I say that the pair of swallows, violet-blue, who come and build in the nest I put up for them in April and feed their chirping young ones, fly swiftly out for food and swerve on sunlit wings — if I say that these give me more comfort and hope than any Biblical story of angels descending on Jacob's ladder.

BUT IN CASE YOU THINK I stray from a subject, the Plymouth Brethren, let me admit that I have never completed my escape from them. They say that, in the old days, a released galley-slave could always in a seaport town be recognized because he walked with a straddle, his legs skewed as though still in irons. It is the same with me. As a lapsed Catholic still in the back of his mind resents the abandonment of the Latin Mass, excludes women from his concept of priesthood, keeps somewhere in his memory the image of a compassionate Virgin and watches in imagination for the column of smoke announcing a new Pope — in like manner the Plymouth Brother who is no longer in fellowship is still haunted by thoughts of the moral polarity of the universe, the imminence of final catastrophe, the scene of the Last Judgment. He still feels he may step casually into an abyss, as one might make one casual step off the sidewalk in the path of a ten-ton truck.

If an old Plymouth Brother writes, he returns automatically to the Bible for a subject. "Remember Lot's wife" says the Gospel of Saint Luke and he remembers her, that extraordinary woman with an alcoholic husband, daughters of peculiar sexual habits, and neighbours about whose fate, as she left Sodom, she was naturally concerned. She was turned into a pillar of salt, you remember, but —

Her life was not a field of clover
For he was often half-seas over
And what he'd do when in that state
I will not here elaborate.
A place in Holy Writ she's got
But who would envy her her LOT?

And, all considered, where's the fault
In her? She's surely worth her salt.
So rudely plucked from home and garden,
Her backward look we well may pardon,
As, starting up the rocky way,
She thought of friends all young and GAY
And wondered if the falling fire
Were pyrotechnic or in ire.

Ah, well she knew what lay ahead:
Two girls contending for her bed.

With shining eyes, like votive candles,
The beasts now lie and lick her sandals.
Look on her, reverend sirs, with favour.
Good salt, she has not lost her savour.

Or, as I think of persecutors, of Bruno they burned in Rome, in the Campo dei Fiori, or Servetus, burned slowly with damp wood, in Geneva — as I think of these, I think of Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle Paul.

As Saul the persecutor rode
Hot in pursuit, the doubled heat
Of midday on Damascus road
Flamed into fire round reason's seat.

He, bright-eyed, bald, black-bearded, fell
And heard a voice from heaven call
(So all the scrolls and frescoes tell)
"Why do you persecute me, Saul?"

We know his subsequent career,
Can reckon up its strange percentiles:
He preached the word both far and near,
Was called the apostle to the Gentiles.

To those believing Paul announced
An ever present great salvation,
And those who did not he denounced
To fiery hell and deep damnation,

And down through all the Middle Age
Scribes turned to Paul and read his verses,
Unfurling scroll or lifting page
To find his wide embracing curses.

Oh, was the judge inclined to grace?
The executioner's hand unsteady?
Some scribe could always find the place;
A text from Paul was always ready.

The moral: Do not fear at all
Goliath huge or Samson hairy,
But oh! look out for men like Paul,
For persecutors never vary.

And so one keeps cheerful, like Balaam's ass, who felt much better when she had had a chance to speak her mind and tell how she saw what others couldn't see, the angel, with a drawn sword, ready to smite false prophets.

When I come to die, I shall rely on "grace alone" — that grace and compassion in the cosmos that I already receive from my family and friends. At the last judgment, which I now see takes place at each successive moment of life, I shall fall into the hands of God, whom the Plymouth Brethren could identify for themselves but not for me. God, who in the last event, identifies Himself — or is it, more likely, herself?

COOK'S GARDENS

E. W. Brewster

Last week in Melbourne I visited Cook's Cottage,
its bricks brought from Yorkshire
and carefully reassembled,
surrounded by an English
eighteenth century garden
of old-fashioned roses,
herbs, vegetables,
no tree that would not grow in England,
perhaps not even an Australian weed.

Now, crossing the Nullarbor Plains,
I see Cook's name again
at a station stop:
a desert town
existing only for the sake of the railway.

We stroll on the station platform,
buy postcards, souvenirs.
There is a hospital with six beds,
a primary school,
a post office,
even a prison
where someone was locked up last year
for disturbing the peace.

Back on the train
in our air-conditioned space
we return to our breakfast coffee,
cards or crossword puzzles,
watch sliding past
Cook's other garden:

mile on mile of salt bush, blue bush,
coarse wiry grass

no trees at all

no domestic animals,
not even the few sheep
we saw yesterday.

I think there is no life at all
until I see a sudden
graceless jump of —
a kangaroo? wallaby? —
running from us

and a startled bird rising

in this emptiness
that makes the prairies seem populous

a moon landscape
over which tonight
the full moon
which is neither English nor Australian
will arise

THE WAY HOME

E. W. Brewster

Last week
I picnicked in Western Australia
under the eucalypt trees
in hot late autumn weather

having driven from Perth and the Indian Ocean
along rivers with English names —
the Swan, the Avon —
and past small towns
(York, Northam,Toodyay)
where the old gaols
have become the town museums

visited a nineteenth century farmhouse
with its sheltering oak
grown from an English acorn
carried five months in a ship from home

This week
after crossing all Australia
and the long yawn of the Pacific
and half Canada

I am set down
dazed, confused
on the other side of the world
in the chill morning green
of Saskatchewan spring
the new leaves.

Chance, I think, carried acorn
man, woman, or child
across one ocean or another.
That Western Australian farmer
who planted the old oak tree
came from Lincolnshire
like my own father's kin

But the oak grows as well
in new soil
as native eucalypt.
The blue pine outside my window
here in Saskatoon,
the weeping birch —
they too are migrants.

Men flying in space shuttles
between earth and moon
must see the world as all one
fragile, luminous body

and other worlds
as possible
places for growing eucalypts,
oaks, people

somewhere alien that could become —
in how many generations? —
the old country
home

EXTRACTS FROM A BRAZILIAN JOURNAL

P. K. Page

February 1st, 1957

How could I have imagined so surrealist and seductive a world? One does not *like* the heat, yet its constancy, its all-surroundingness is as fascinating as the smell of musk. Every movement is slow as if under warm greenish water. The flavour is beyond my ability to catch. The senses are being sharpened by *that* smell: the vegetable pole-cat called jack-fruit, which, when fallen, looks in size and contour like a black porcupine and is picked, when ripe, from the trees in our jungle; by *these* sights: Niemeyer's bridges, for instance, built over the canyons of this extraordinarily mountained city — long, sinuous, low bridges on pylons, with glimpses of the sea both above and below; recurring couples — on the street everyone is paired, in love, embracing or half-embracing whatever the heat; the recurring solitary figure in the window, most often female, quite classical, framed by a mat of hot air, and gazing off in a kind of languor, as if all time were designed for this purpose.

It is hard to get anything done. It is hard to focus. A thought is barely born before it melts and in its place so lovely a void, one could hardly have guessed emptiness so attractive. We swim now, in the great hot pool, not cooling off, merely drowning our wetness in a greater wetness, while next door the Sisters sing their *Aves* in the totally dark convent. The other night we heard the giggles of a myriad of small girls, and leaning on the balustrade, in what must surely be the classical Brazilian pose, found — instead of a children's party as we had thought — the Sisters themselves, those whom we have seen at dusk silently reading their breviaries under the cassia trees, now swinging on the swings, dark robes flying. A wonderful subject for Pegi Nichol had she been alive to try the inky ranges of greens and blues, and momentarily lay aside her bright jujube colours. I think of her now perhaps because our reception rooms are like the shell-white rooms where mermaids might sober up after a drunken night — and a large Nichol of girls gardening and bending would shed a warmer light in all this green and white. A Nichol and a Frieman and a great Bonnard.

The Goodrich (Roberts) that we have — and all my life I've wanted to live with a Goodrich — is large and dark and totally without movement. The pines against the sky are characteristic as a signature — but it might be forged. Sky, trees, water — his best ingredients — lie locked on the canvas. I think of his

large still-life in the National Gallery and remembering, would hang it so happily with those other paintings. The fruit, the bottle, the plate — painted as if he had suddenly glimpsed a world in which all objects glow.

A. is spilled on his bed like warm milk, and the frogs, tree toads, cicadas and whatever else, cut, saw, bang and hit the black tropical night. Around and around the driveway the armed guard in his sand-coloured uniform strolls like a succession of men. In the darkness between the pools of light shed by the lamps, he is totally lost. The frogs sound like dogs, like hens, like drums, like strings, and when they stop, which they do occasionally, as if they are obeying a conductor, one hears the other drums and the wierd singing from the *favela.*

It is from the *favelas* that the sambas come, according to our host of the other evening, a small Brazilian of Italian origin. He is, he claims, a true Cariocan: loves the heat, the negroes and the samba, and he takes pride in being responsible for having published many of the best known sambas, found by him when visiting the hills.

February 6th

The heat is over for the moment. During the weekend the temperature soared above the century and no breeze moved among the smallest leaves of the maidenhair. But, dramatically, Sunday night a storm blew up and the house seemed to rise like a flight of wooden eagles, wooden wings flapping, as every shutter banged and swung. You could almost see the cooler air as it streamed through the rooms overturning photographs, riffling papers — a manic housekeeper on the loose.

Last Sunday, a day as sunny as looking through a topaz, we set off for the Corcovada. This is one of the highest of the peaks surrounding Rio. On its top an immense stone figure of Christ the Redeemer. Just below the summit kiosks selling postcards and dolls and butterfly wing pictures, and small boys swinging smoking braziers and carrying cone-shaped packets — some edible for sale, but what? Then endless flights of steps and lovers loitering — black, brown, white — dressed in their Sunday best. And finally at the top, the Christ, and the lovers being photographed at His feet by young men popping under black cloths. And below — all Rio, fabulous, extraordinary, with its bays and islands and mountain peaks and lagoons and skyscrapers.

February 13th

Notes on flora and fauna: in the garden a bird like a yellow-bellied flycatcher. Trying to find it in the inadequate bird books we have acquired, I discovered the fact that Brazil has a marsupial duck! Why baby doesn't drown while mother swims, I don't understand.

Yesterday, when Maria, the Spanish maid of all work, was cleaning the

verandah, she found a very blond frog asleep on the lintel above the door to the *sala.* Giving it a good peasant swipe with her broom — the kind she would give in affection to her husband — she brought it to the marble floor with such a resounding smack I'd have thought it dead. Instead, it leapt through the door to the sitting room and straight onto an upholstered French chair with all the authority of the transformed prince. Finally, finding Maria's persistence with the broom too much for it, it clung with both forearms to a railing of the verandah and emitted a loud wail like a Siamese cat.

For the first and quite unforgettable time, we have seen a Brazilian blue butterfly — as large as a flying hand — the upper surfaces of its wings a fluorescent Mary-blue, the underside soft as the colour of snuff.

February 18th

Today I fired the laundress with elephantiasis. Hated doing it but she was not a very good laundress and five kilos of beef and eighteen sugar bananas unaccountably disappeared on Saturday. Unfairly, perhaps, I suspect her. Yet I am sorry to see her go. It is unlikely I shall ever again employ a grotesque: elephantiasis of the legs and breasts and a strange little beard which hung straight down under her chin and curled only at the end. In a book I was reading the other day, the author said Baudelaire was the poet of the Brazilian jungle . . . and certainly Lourdes, for that is her name, is pure Baudelaire. Ready for the clothes line, her great brown arms full of white sheets, rows of clothes pegs clipped to her dress like rows of nipples on some gargantuan sow, she was a truly awesome figure.

In the garden one tree has four great sprays of tree orchids growing from it — white with purple centres. Another, a yellow orchid with a rust centre; still another, an indescribable flower of bright cerise with cerulean blue tips on its large heather-shaped flowers. I wish I knew how to describe the vegetation, or indeed, how to paint it. It is so excessive. Every tree puts forth some flower in clumps or sprays or showers of yellow, purple, pink, white or red — and almost every trunk bears orchids. Nature doesn't seem to know how to control itself! For instance — the other day a yellow-bellied fly catcher flew out of a cassia tree heavy with yellow blossom, the tree growing in a flower bed massed with yellow day lilies — and caught, if you please, an immense yellow butterfly.

In my bedroom at this moment there is a flying creature about two inches long — a cricket? a locust? — black lace wings and a green brocade head and a noise like a DC3 revving up. Just as the crisp air, the warbling of the magpies and the smells of gum smoke and daphne will forever conjure Australia for me, so will immense wet heat and thousands of night creatures — *bichos* — with their noise-makers, conjure Brazil. And too, the tremendous length of white sand, blinding white in the sun, the façades of white buildings which, for all their contemporary

design, look somehow like the ruins in a John Piper painting; pedlars with eagle-shaped kites under a coloured balloon barrage on the boulevard by the sea; tropical children in pony carts with coloured nurses in starched white; the faded patchwork of the houses in the *favelas*; people balancing parcels on their heads; crowds at the beaches in mid-day heat, minus sun-glasses, minus hats, beating out samba rhythms on the blistering hot radiators of their cars. This is Barbados and Paris. But there is more and other as well.

February 23rd

It is cool — seventy-five degrees with humidity a hundred. The air coming through the windows is like sheet rain. Everything is mildewing. We burn lights in our clothes cupboards and place bags of salt among our shoes but the mildew forms. I have just found, stashed away in the basement, some bottles of *Mildu-Rid*. Plan to plaster it over overything.

February 26th

Notes on fauna: yesterday, flying over the lotus pool, dragonflies of bright cerise with blue wings. Someone once said that cerise was hideous and not a true colour. When I asked what they meant by 'true,' they said it was a colour not found in nature. They had certainly not observed nature much in the tropics where bougainvillea and dragonflies deck themselves in it.

Last evening a bird like a ballerina — tiny, black, dressed in a white *tutu*, flew out onto mid-stage, did a fabulous *tour en l'air* and disappeared before I could further observe it.

February 27th

Today the house is full of plumbers (*bombeiros* in Portuguese, which also means firemen and spies!), painters, and electricians. This afternoon I have been de-mildewing books. Each day it's dry enough outside, I remove the books with the longest beards and put them in the sun. Today, however, I got caught with my books down. In one minute flat the sun had turned to torrential rain.

This is a very public house. In part, because we are over-run with workmen, but it is also something to do with Brazilian life, I think. I remember an Indian friend in Ottawa complaining how lonely she was in a Canadian house; in India she did nothing alone, she was always accompanied by others — in everything as far as I could make out, from cooking to making love. The bliss for me of a house where I see no one all day!

Curiously, even though I speak of the house as public, at the same time, I wonder about its "emptiness." For it *is* empty, psychologically. Built by de B., reported to be a cousin of the King of Portugal, on a dramatic site overlooked by twin peaks, *Os Dois Irmaos*, with imported marble for the floors, imported artists

to paint the ceilings, it is architecturally beautiful. A long three-storey house of terra-cotta pink with white trim, wrought iron railings, terraces, verandahs and arches; double and triple French doors with shutters and charmingly designed transoms. Lighted, at night, it is like a birthday cake, waiting to be blown out; while doubled, upside down in the swimming pool, its pinkness melts and slides in the dark water and the seven frosting-white arches of the lower terrace reflect in shimmering U's.

To lay out his gardens, de B. employed Burle Marx, the best landscape gardener (and jeweller!) in Brazil who used a stream with a waterfall, a lotus pond, flagstones and three different coloured grasses planted in sweeping curves, to make an abstract painting of the land.

Here in this *palacete* set in a jewelled garden, de B. lived with his beautiful wife until one day she was missing, then found dead. Sometimes Maria, eyes large, says, "The Senhora walks tonight, Madammy." And, occasionally when I've been weakened by the heat and unable to sleep again because of the drums from the *favela* or the frogs or the tree toads, I wonder if the Senhora *does* walk. But I have never felt her presence. If anything it is her absence that I feel — a sense of her having walked *out* taking the essence of the house with her, and it is that emptiness that the walls guard, as if it were a trust.

March 6th

All of Rio is sleeping off the orgy of *Carnaval.* Nothing now but hangovers, fatigue and hospitals and prisons bulging. For the rich there were a series of balls, all fancy dress — a ball a night, we are told. The Municipal Ball had a mere 7,400 attend! Many thousands of *cruzeiros* are spent on costumes and the dancing goes on all night. For the poor in the *favelas* this is the event of their year. Months in advance they join 'samba schools' and practise night after night. Just what they practise I am not quite sure because their 'dances' to the samba beat are a kind of mass walk, arms in the air. Each school has its own group attire — one group of about forty all in diapers and bonnets and sucking bottles.

Virtually everyone dresses up. In mid-afternoon we saw two adults, male and female, in Grecian costume in earnest conversation on a downtown street. And a man mounted on a *papier maché* horse in the manner of an ice comedian, 'riding' it along a sidewalk all by himself and having considerable difficulty keeping it from throwing him. Here and there a ghastly looking female (male, I suspect) carrying a placard: *Miss Portugal, 1957*, which bears out what we have already been told, that the Portuguese are one of the favourite butts of Brazilian humour. No baby so small it could not wear a paper hat, at least; and one, only a matter of months, was in all that heat, dressed as a white rabbit. Tiny tired Spanish noblemen in black velvet were lifted to rest on the radiators of cars. And everyone, large or small, carried with them the golden spray bottle of

scented 'ether' which is said to provide the energy to keep going. A very small boy sprayed A. on the legs so we came home smelling of carnival.

In the evening on the invitation of the Mayor, we went to the *Teatro Municipal* to watch the parade of floats sponsored by the Tourist Department. To my surprise we were able to fight our way through the crowd and up the wide stone steps through the mass of people — flexible, good-natured, rubberized almost and so able to contract and expand at will. The Mayor, looking a little like a Brazilian clerk because of his double-breasted white linen suit, greeted us with champagne. Below, one of the most extraordinary sights I've ever seen: a wide river of people samba-ing up and down the *Avenida Rio Branca*, thousands of them moving in such a way that if you half closed your eyes you lost entirely the sense of them being people at all. A great illuminated multi-coloured pattern pulsing to the beat of the samba. As far as one could see, there was nothing but people; the tropical night sitting fat and black on herds of zebras, families of leopards, tiny ballerinas no longer on their points and other enthusiasts who had done nothing more than sprinkle talcum powder on their heads. One indefatigable equilibrist whom we had seen in the afternoon standing on a narrow, sloping ledge and knitting a red woolen garment with frantic speed, was still there, hours later, knitting with the same frenzy.

Nature notes for the day: after one of the worst days domestically I have ever been through, I went out to get flowers for the dinner table and something moved in the high branches of one of the trees. I promised to forgive the whole day if it were a monkey. And it was! The wretched little thing, however, swung away from me into the jungle. It was small, only slightly larger than a squirrel.

Trees: in the garden there are varieties of what the Australians would call Rain Trees — with composite finely fretted leaves and clusters of flowers — pink, red, white or yellow. There are numerous palms — one with a pointed blade-like leaf and a massive tower of white blossoms; one like a feather duster which throws its old leaves down — feathers shed from a giant bird. We have the elephant ear tree, of which no more need be said, and one that grows smooth and straight as a young telephone pole, no branch below twelve feet. Then there is the dense and darkly massed foliage of the jackfruit tree and a spreading tree, with large, deeply indented leaves and green fruits which look like mangoes. Feathery stands of bamboo. And both nearby and, as it were, echoing off into the jungle clad hills, the *Quaresmas* (the name means Lent which is when they flower) blooming now with vibrant purple; and beside them, trees of pure silver, broad-leafed, and others with small clustered flowers yellow as gorse.

March 12th

Last night dinner with the D's. A small party: the Argentines, two Shell people, Ambassador N. — President of the Museum of Modern Art in Rio, and

C. — newly appointed ambassador to London, a Senator, owner of a chain of thirty newspapers, magazines, radio stations as well as prime mover in the Sao Paulo Museum of Art. The women elegant in black; much jewelled. Ambassador N. large, warm, expansive, sophisticated. We waited interminably for C. who finally phoned to say he would be 'a little late.' N. loathed C. and made no bones about it. Said he would not have accepted the invitation had he known C. was invited. Interesting to compare the two — both Brazilians, both ambassadors, both involved in Museums of Modern Art. There the similarities end. N. is an immense man, C. a Napoleon. C. spoke volubly in French which N. claimed was ninety percent error. When, forced as he later was, to speak English, he was just as voluble and the percentage of error just as high.

When the party broke up, C. asked A. and me if we would care to see the Cruzeiro Palace. It seemed obvious that we *should* care and so we drove off through the rain and darkness (nights seem immensely dark in Rio by virtue of a by-law forbidding the use of headlights, only parking lights permitted) down into the old part of the city where the streets are narrow, the buildings warehousey and undistinguished, to come at last to an immense cube, light as foam rubber and glowing as if phosphorescent. This was the Cruzeiro Palace, the plant where the magazine *O Cruzeiro* is published. Although in use, its presses rolling and its night shift working, the building is not yet finished. Designed by Neimeyer, it is raised on pillars, the walls of all floors above the ground floor are glass, covered entirely by a *brise-soleil* of punched sheets, the punch holes being two to three inches in diameter. It is this that gives the effect of such lightness; and because a very white fluorescent light is diffused through the holes, the phosphorescent glow results. A mural by Portinari is underway in the entrance hall and upstairs a dozen of his paintings are waiting to be hung. Strange paintings, flat, like cartoons for his mural. Groups of people, wonderful in their design, disappointing only in their surfaces, looking much as prime coating does on a wall.

Thinking of the three of us — C. small, stocky, ill-tailored, talking execrable English, yawning, pulling us by the force of his will across the cobbled streets in the black rain — the two men, black and white in dinner jackets, I in a black and white dress with ribbons — to the cool martini of a building, it seems more like a sequence from a black and white movie than an actual experience. And C. talking on, yawning and talking through his yawns, of his masters — Caesar and Nietzsche — of the ugliness of the world, of his great marble hall in Sao Paulo 'for the people.' The photo of him that we had seen in front of the book about the Sao Paulo Museum is a wonderfully good portrait — it is a snapshot only, of a small, squat man in a crumpled suit, wearing on his head a child's newspaper hat. The accompanying wooden sword is not there because he doesn't use one. Of wood.

Manuel, our gardener's assistant, has planted a new lawn at the side of the house. This is done in the manner of planting seedlings. A little hole is made in the earth and a small root of grass popped in. The effect, at this stage, is that of a candlestick bedspread — brown with green tufts. The whole as if measured and ruled.

March 30th

Went, the other afternoon, in intense heat to see the *Museo de Arte Moderna* in the process of construction. It is being built by private subscription and costing in the vicinity of three million dollars. The building committee consists of Sra B., wife of the owner of one of the largest newspapers; Ambassador N. whom we met at dinner; the elegant young chief of the Department of Tourism; and Henrique Mindlin, architect and editor of an interesting and well-produced book about modern architecture in Brazil. We know his book and I had noticed among his acknowledgements the name of Elizabeth Bishop. When I asked him if she is still in Brazil, he said, yes. The next thing is to meet her.

The maquette of the Museum is impressive, and standing in the dust and brick of the actual foundation, on land recently reclaimed from the harbour, one is aware of how immense the building will be and of how wonderful the site.

April 1st

The Portuguese language is fascinating. In a country which, to us, seems to place small value on life, there is a difference of only one letter between *to live — morrar*, and *to die — morrer*. So far I have been unable to find any expression for *how funny* — perhaps because the Brazilian finds everything funny. One learns *muito bom — very good*, immediately. It is used about almost everything that is not *muito bem — very well* or *muito mau — very bad*. In fact, the ubiquitous *muito* is said with such feeling that the most ordinary events become dramatic. Life itself becomes dramatic. There are differences between the language texts and the spoken language: servants are no longer *criados* — a word originating with slavery when a small slave child would be brought up in the house of the master, in effect, *created* — but *empregados* meaning *employees*, used however, with *voce*, the intimate second person, not *o senhor* or *a senhora*, the more formal third.

As to the small value placed on life, one has only to read the newspapers to learn of the number of people who carry guns and fire them. A member of the Chamber of Deputies fatally shot a traffic policeman who had stopped him for speeding. This is but one of many such incidents reported in the press. If one can believe what one is told, the very law itself ignores the importance of life. In a traffic accident, responsibility for the injured lies with anyone who calls an ambu-

lance or obtains medical help, with the inevitable result that a victim can lie in the roadway for hours before anything is done.

April 22nd

Our car has arrived. A great relief. I can now, if I wish, get away from the house. I took off for Copacobana this morning — my first shot at Brazilian traffic!

Such a morning . . . the sea beautiful and miles of beach. I swear every child in Brazil has a kite and manages to get it air-borne no matter how tiny the piece of ground on which he is standing. The sky jerks and bobs with them. One, a candy-pink heart on a string, leapt and spurted its joy.

I walked among the shops, just looking. Prices high, even of fruits — custard apples, *kaki* and *mamao*. In a workman's shelter on the side of the street a group of men was solemnly playing dominoes.

April 30th

To produce small boys quicker than you can say 'kite,' fly one. We went on Sunday with our *papagaio* to the beach at Ipanema. A strong wind tossed it up and flung it down again, its right wing always leading. All the small boys on the beach were kite doctors. Each took it as his right to tie another knot in the harness string to 'restore' the balance. One finally tore off its cat's cradle harness to make a new one. After each 'restoration' the kite descended, right wing leading. The small boys made us offers for our poor kite. Many negotiations.

The beach was beautiful — slightly hazy. Black, brown, white Brazilians in *futebol* sweaters, kicking the ball about in the thick, soft sand; the curving façade of apartment buildings — whites, pinks, blues; the odd-shaped mountains — how describe their shapes? — elongated cones? the top joints of thumbs? — making the sea look like a surrealist painting; and the waves tumbling in — riding in green and high, their plate glass cracking and breaking and pulverizing into crystals and white powder.

We drove back with our wounded bird to the young man who sold it to us and he undertook to mend it. A long, thin, tight young man with one leg swinging at an unusual angle and a face like a Modigliani. He ripped the existing harness from our kite and, from a spool of string, measured exactly from wing-tip to shoulder, shoulder to beak, wing-tip to beak, knotting as he went and hanging the strings around his neck until he was ready; checking further measurements by the length of his palm plus one, two, or three fingers — all his actions quick and pretty with certainty. We squatted with him on the boulevard beneath his row of coloured balloons bobbing in the wind as the light failed suddenly and street lamps came on and traffic increased and the balloons bobbed more wildly. His small helper, wearing shorts and the top of an old bathing suit which came to

just below his nipples, ran to his bidding as he shouted orders — the two of them serious and intent beneath the balloons.

By the time *papagaio* was completed, the wind was too strong for kite flying and the night too near. But the young man gave him a trial flight, letting him out over the traffic then losing him in a perilous drop over the telephone wires in a sudden calm, fighting as if he had a trout on his line, using all his skill and cunning to edge the bird into whatever wind he could find until, coaxing, beguiling, he finally eased it up and over the wires and, miraculously, safely back. I thought then, as all kite flyers must have thought, that this strange childish sport which holds so great a fascination, is really fishing in reverse.

May 1st

Drove into the depths of the city yesterday alone for the first time. Took as my route the whole length of beach. Beautiful, beautiful. I shall never get used to it.

May 12th

On the first, we left for Sao Paulo by plane, returned yesterday by car. One world to another. One planet to another. Between the two cities a difference much greater than between Montreal and Toronto.

From Rio's downtown airport you can catch a plane to Sao Paulo every half hour, like a bus. The buildings, designed by M. M. M. Roberto, are not my cup of tea. Columns too heavy and a kind of de Chirico-like desolation about them. We were given numbered discs upon arrival and boarded the plane according to number. Very orderly and neat. *Café* and *biscoitos* served on board.

Driving in from the airport Sao Paulo looked more like my idea of a Scandinavian city than a Brazilian one. The houses on the outskirts, mainly two-storeyed, white and austere. Our hotel, The Jaragua, a mixture of North America and Australia in flavour. It is the upper half of a skyscraper, the lower floors of which house the largest newspaper in Sao Paulo. Much use is made of tile, inlaid in floors and walls and forming planters filled with tropical plants. From our window we might have been visiting a higgledy-piggledy New York — skyscrapers everywhere, as if without plan. Our room was full of those extraordinary baskets of flowers — *cestas* they are called, and I hate them. Each flower head is cut off and wired. Within a day they are all dead.

Sunday the best day of all. We visited an early nineteenth-century *fazenda*. A colonial house — light pink with white pillars and lacey black grilles on the windows. The present owners have modernized the plumbing but left everything as much as possible in its original state. The downstairs hall with its honey-coloured stone floor and rough-beamed ceiling was decorated with three beautiful cherubim and four flat candelabra from old churches, wooden, painted cream and gold. Off the hall, a room full of trophies and slave relics, and off that, the slaves'

room. I asked Senhora M. if it was haunted and she replied that there was a little old lady, very nice, full of good will. Upstairs was a mixture of modern and old, containing beautiful church carvings, a Gobelin tapestry covering an entire wall and, oddly, a Vlamink. On a deep verandah, dark from creepers with pink bells, were birds in cages and a white tasselled bridal hammock. She said C. had given her an antique white one and her Doberman puppies had eaten it!

Her husband, a rich industrialist who is now a rich farmer and who gave up riding some years ago in favour of a jeep, still wears the shiny chestnut boots, spotless white breeches, white shirt and chestnut tweed jacket of an equestrian. He is blond, bland, blue-eyed. She dark, with long thin hands and immensely long scarlet nails, was wearing plaid slacks and a white twin-set.

We drank a Brazilian cocktail — made from *pinga*, a sugar cane liquor — which tasted very like a daiquiri. Then lunch. On the dining room table, and running its entire length, was a narrow, flat dish crammed with every kind of yellow, red and orange flower the garden produces — brilliant, no leaves, startling. The meal began with what looked like a bowl of potato soup with a poached egg staring from its centre like a jaundiced eye. This was *carra* soup. Traditional Brazilian. The *carra*, I would guess, is a variety of yam. This was followed by roast pork, black beans mashed and made into a roll and garnished with little sausages and sitting on a bed of what looked like cooked grass which tasted bitter and pleasant. For salad, sliced cucumbers and cold sliced marrow. Dessert was candied pumpkin served with farm cream and fried bananas. And coffee. Everything a product of the *fazenda*. Everything traditionally Brazilian. And very good indeed.

After luncheon we saw the coffee plantation. Brilliant green bushes with scarlet berries. And the coffee 'courtyards' where the beans were placed to dry. We visited the calves which sucked your fingers as if they were udders when you put out your hand to stroke them and saw the elaborate forecasting month by month of the number of calves to be born. *A Senhora* looked after the coffee and he the dairy. He preferred, he said, his cows to his textile workers!

One day we visited the park that was built to celebrate the fourth centennial of the foundation of Sao Paulo — its gardens laid out by Burle Marx and its buildings designed by Niemeyer. There is a desolation about this architecture. Every bit of it seemed wrong, which just shows how illogical I am because there are times when I find it so wonderfully *right*! Perhaps it needs sun. The building which houses — but does not show, for I think it is rarely open — the aeronautical exhibition and the Santos Dumont artifacts (Dumont was a Brazilian whom the Brazilians claim was the first to fly — even before the Wright Brothers) — is a long, low two-storey structure of glass and pillars. Seen under a grey sky, with the nose and hand prints of a thousand A.'s attempting to peer in, it looked simply shoddy. From our peering position it seemed unsuitable for the display of

aircraft, the ceiling being so low that the top of even a small plane all but touched it. The Palace of Arts, built exactly — but exactly — like an igloo with the addition of a row of portholes around its lower edge really depressed me. Why transport a form dictated by materials and weather conditions of the arctic and put it down in Brazil — and then blow it up, give it a radius of two hundred and fifty feet?

Disturbed and excited by Brazil. Why? What is it all about? Does place alter person? It's like falling in love — with the country itself.

Am reading Yeats's letters. He complains that George Eliot had morals but no religion and that if she only had had a bit more religion she would have had less morality. He writes too of his dislike of reasonable people whose brains suck all the blood from their hearts. And how he disliked moralists with neither spirit nor imagination enough for a good lie. How he would have loved Brazilians and how, indeed, do I!

Drove to Santos, the coffee port and took the ferry to Guarajà, an island summer resort. Going down the escarpment from Sao Paulo the weather was clear so we could see the sinuous double road with its tunnels, the narrow strip of flat land and the sea. Very lovely. Arrived finally at a totally unspoiled beach on a wild and beautiful coast and, unfortunately, an all-too-Hawaiian-appearing restaurant. More interesting the absurd trio of small monkeys in a cage — the ones with tufted ears — whose tiny fingers, trying to remove my rings, felt moist and limp as the stems of violets. Four *araras* — the large macaws — wing feathers cut to prevent flight, sat on perches and cracked sunflower seeds. Their extraordinary black, dry, ill-fitting tongues moving about in their mouths, looked as if they had each bitten off the little finger of a negro, which now they were trying unsuccessfully to spit out. Nearby, two green parrots, chained and aggressively bad-tempered, screamed at each other and everyone else.

There was a clean and pretty aviary where I had a chance to identify some of 'our' birds, for their keeper — a truly Conradish man with a week's growth of beard and a long, wistful face — was kind enough to understand my Portuguese and let me understand his. As he stood in the cage peeling bananas and fixing them onto the bars, cutting oranges in half and impaling them on pointed branches, placing sunset coloured arcs of *mamao* on the ground, he also told me the names of the birds around him. We saw 'our' tanagers in the cage and the little jumping birds with striped heads were identified as *tico-ticos*. The *sabia* was there too — like the North American robin, only larger — and the dove and a dozen pairs of lovebirds all freezing and huddled together.

After a long wait, a fine lunch: fresh shrimps from the sea and good Brazilian beer. Afterwards I followed a row of bright pink shells along sand almost as hard as turf. Returning, in the distance, beyond the curve of this lovely shore, appearing like shafts of distant rain, the skyscrapers again, surrealist in such a setting.

Their vertical lines a reaction against the horizontal lines of colonial architecture, perhaps. Or, more likely, A.'s theory, that Copacobana has become the symbol of all things lovely and so is being duplicated everywhere. In Santos, this argument is certainly borne out. There, like Copacobana's twin, the curving Santos beach is rimmed with skyscrapers, its sidewalks patterned with black and white stones.

We drove to the port — the largest coffee port in the world — and visited the aquarium where we saw the terrible Amazonian carnivore — the fish which, within seven minutes, I think the statistics run, can reduce a horse to a pile of bones. I had imagined something the size of a shark and found, to my astonishment, a little fish no more than a foot long. This remarkable creature can smell blood a great distance off, and will come in a flash to attack anything already wounded. Saw too, the inevitable sea horse which never fails to amuse me — why should it want to stand upright like a man? — and those poor blind shrimps with their wide-ranging antennae, looking half like a caricature of a guardsman, half like a nervous pianist — their anxious white front legs like fingers nervously playing the same music over and over again. At one tank of striped yellow and black fish, as bright and flashing as anything you could wish, a minute child gazed mutely until an inch-long colourless guppy swam into sight, whereupon it set up a great howl of excitement: *Pequeninho, pequeninho!* (Baby, baby!).

The Museu de Arte, C.'s collection, even with most of its best paintings currently on exhibition in the States, was still enjoyable. There is a whole roomful of Portinaris, large strangely grey paintings full of pain; some Segalls and di Cavalcantis and a fair collection of da Silvas. Also a lovely El Greco of St. Francis, two enchanting little Renoirs; a number of early religious paintings; and then, almost alarmingly, about five hundred small Degas statues, looking rather like the black notes on the piano. The much larger ballerina in her real *tutu* is there too, with her hair tied back. But all the little ones lose any impact they might have. Quantity definitely diminishes quality — the eye blurs. The figures are reduced to no more than the stick-men I drew on the upper right corners of the pages of my school books to make a 'moving picture' when I riffled them quickly with my thumb.

Lunch with A. at a French restaurant and then to the natural history *museo* with Senhora L. to see the birds. We began by having coffee with the curator, a man with a face just like a dog's. Most extraordinary. As I looked at his eyes they were dog's eyes — those pale eyes often seen in curs — and I would think, 'Nonsense, look at his nose,' and his nose too, was a dog's. And so I switched to his teeth — pointed, white dog's teeth. Uncanny. But such a polite dog. Would not cock his leg just anywhere.

I don't really like stuffed birds, nevertheless I learned a good deal. 'Our' lovely little blue bird with its black mask is the *sai-azul* (blue skirt). Upstairs —prefer-

able to those in the cage below simulating life — the recent result of one man's field trip, twelve hundred birds lying on their backs, stuffed with dried grasses. So light! And like a rainbow. Drawers full of them. The *alma de gato* — soul of a cat — is a variant on our Mangrove cuckoo or yellow-billed or black-billed. Rufus above, grey beneath.

I asked about the marsupial duck. It is true enough. Brazil has a number of marsupials. I said, "Australians think *they're* the only ones who have," and our guide replied morosely, "It's not the business of Australians to know about Brazil. And we will never tell them because all we think about is football." He showed us a large blond marsupial rat with four babies in her pouch. And a skunk, just like ours only brown instead of black. We saw a balleen in his bones, long-fingered at his sides.

> "I cannot tell who loves the Skeleton
> Of a poor Marmoset, nought but boan, boan.
> Give me a nakedness with her cloaths on."

And I had a long, slow look at the sloths, with their loofah fur and their Henry Moore faces.

The drive back from Sao Paulo was beautiful — rolling country culminating in mountains as we approached Rio — a climb and then a tortuous drop to sea

"OUR HOUSE"

level. We passed coffee plantations, citrus fruit farms, cattle. Saw oxen hauling carts and burros with wicker baskets and negroes in bright colours and *flamboyantes* in flaming flower.

We passed one little town built on a knoll from which every tree and blade of grass had been meticulously removed, the whole earth-coloured structure of houses and hill rising like an Australian ant-hill, while crowding at its perimeter, the lush, tropical growth of Brazil. One day I hope to return and go into the church, for it was here a miracle occurred, so the guide book says, but my Portuguese is not quite enough to understand what the miracle was! O Glory be.

May 18th

Nature notes: I saw a spider with a golden web. (It sounds like the start of a riddle poem.) This spider has a torso about the size of the top joint of my thumb and of the same general shape. In colour it is dark grey with gold spots. The web matches the spots. I would have thought it a trick of light, except that no matter what the light, the gold was unchanging, and on the spider's abdomen was a clot of golden thread — like the clot formed by a sewing machine on the under side of the stitching if the bobbin has not been correctly adjusted.

Does it eat only those it can lure by beauty? I had believed, without knowing much about spiders, that they spin webs as invisible as possible in order to deceive insects into thinking they are flying through air. If that *is* so, then what is this spider up to? And still what, even if it isn't? Do flies have an aesthetic sense? Why do I imagine it is the property only of 'manunkind'? Is stupidity justified by anything less than beauty's trap?

June 13th

I have been drawing with a felt-nibbed pen and so much enjoy it. Trying to recreate the wonderful shapes of the leaves and the intricate background of mosaic tiles. I think I might be able to draw if only I could . . . what? If only I *could.*

There is a phrase — *amigo de onca,* meaning *friend of the tiger,* a term used to denote someone who is not your friend. Heard the origin of it today. One man said to another, "What would you do if you were chased by a tiger?" "Why, I'd run, of course." "And if the tiger was gaining on you?" "Why, I'd climb a tree." "And if the tiger climbed the tree after you?" "Look here, are you my friend or the friend of the tiger?"

June 17th

Our marble floors are like sliced brawn — or is it head-cheese? — lots of gelatine and veal and pork with occasional bits of fat. A cold-buffet chef's dream.

The Royal Palms are truly the elephants among trees. Their trunks are, to the trunks of other trees, as the elephant's leg is to all other legs.

July 5th

I have done another large drawing of a *cesta*. It amazes me how easily and quickly I draw — just start right in with my heavy black pen.

July 6th

Last night dined with Senhora M., a famous Brazilian sculptress. The apartment is wonderful — Renoirs tucked away in corners, a group of nudes by Rouault, a Picasso and a new acquisition by that Portuguese woman, da Silva, entitled *The Circus*. It was like an intricate and mysterious crossword puzzle in more than the usual number of dimensions, mixed with the feeling of circus tents and the checked clothing of Pierrot, the patches of Harlequin and the corridors of dream. With my felt pen I *could* have done such a thing . . . I cannot blame the tools!

August 17th

How do I write my love song? It is as if I were wired and someone (Someone?) had their finger on the buzzer all the time. A strange feeling that makes me almost afraid. Can one fall in love with a country?

Drove today up over the hills and through the *favela* which should make any sensitive, decent person devote their life to social reform, but I'm afraid my initial reaction was one of a fierce pleasure in its beauty. Turning a corner we saw a group of vividly dressed people standing against a great fortress of square gasoline tins, painted every conceivable colour. Water — of course. And socially distressing, but my eye operates separately from my heart or head — or at least in advance of them — and I saw first the beauty.

Following the beach, the great roaring green waves rising and smashing, the roadside edged wth a low-lying palm-like plant which is putting forth small ears of golden corn, we came finally to Bandeirantes beach where a high conical rock joins the sea to the sand and a disreputable looking inn is located. But I love the inn, straight out of a rather sordid short story, and its round tower and tile roof and untidy paling fence and the herds of munching goats and the sheep that tried to eat our picnic basket. In front of the inn two men were involved in what appeared to be a minute survey. One, black, dressed in a spotless pith helmet and white shirt, carried a knife with a blade long enough to disembowel you. The other, white, pant legs tucked into ankle-high boots, made his calculations beneath a violet beach umbrella. Drugstore cowboys riding delicate little motor scooters, arrived by the half dozen, wearing lilac and yellow shorts. And a dusky *brasileira* in a linen suit of so bright an orange that it almost hurt your eyes,

P. K. PAGE

A CORNER OF H.'S GARDEN

walked along holding the hand of her sweetie whose pale green slacks made her the ripest orange on the tree.

Home by the beach road again — the pounding sea on one side, the lagoon on the other and an evening mist giving the impression that spume illuminated the dark land. Earlier it had been bathed in a smoky blue, translucent and luminous, I grow to love it all more each day — even the wide flat corner with some rather awful houses and no vegetation but grass cover. That to me, now, is so like a Portinari painting that I greet it with a special kind of eye. In fact, I think much of my pleasure is a literary pleasure. Had I read nothing and seen no pictures, what *would* I see?

August 18th

Luncheon today with the N.'s. Their house, in the heart of Rio — a high heart, for it's up a steep hill from the centre of the city — is an old coffee *fazenda.* It overlooks the bay and has a vast garden with pool and guest house.

N. has had Portinari paint his wife and children. He showed us with pride the first Portinari they commissioned — the Sacred Heart, which hangs in a golden frame. In their dining room three enormous murals of Brazilian fauna — monkeys, parrots, anteaters.

The party was entirely family — dozens of young people — girls with immense eyes and young men with brandy snifters. Highly baroque mirrors with frames of gilt and mirror 'tears' let in, like eyelet embroidery. In the library their books all bound in gorgeous leathers. We ate Bahiana food — ground rice cooked to look like snow; fish with shrimps and a blistering hot sauce full of tiny peppers.

This morning I drew the jacko tree — attacked it like a crazy woman to get it onto paper before we went out. It's not very good but I shall do it again.

August 19th

This wild Rio wind is tearing at the house. Last night it blew and blew and blew. Blew through my dreams. Awakened as if I had been tossed about all night.

Reading the letters of R.L.S. What a darling he was. And how extraordinary of him to set off for the South Seas with his wife and stepson and mother, when, at any moment a hemorrhage could have ended his life. And what a life in Samoa. It would suit me fine. Every day a new vegetation to fascinate my constantly hungry eyes!

August 21st

Started out this morning with H. She was full of confusion and concern — we must go to Saint Antonio's to draw because she owed him some money. She

had lost her diamond clip and had promised him a lot of money if he found it. Later, when she discovered the clip on a dress, a friend had told her that as it had not been lost, she no longer needed to give the money. But H. claimed that this was Saint Antonio's way of showing her that she hadn't been giving enough to the poor, so she must go today before she forgot. But first, could I drive her to her dentist, as she had broken a tooth.

It was terribly hot, even at nine. The air coming in through open windows was like a furnace, but the sun was shining and the day beautiful. We parked the car outside the *Teatro Municipal* and, acting against all previous plans, went straight to Saint Antonio's. It's an exquisite church with a simple putty-coloured façade, plain except for the lovely curlicues on the towers and the stonework around the windows. Inside we stayed only long enough for H. to drop to her knees, scattering drawing blocks, paints, a folding chair in various directions. Saint Antonio himself wore a halo of baguettes of mirror. Through a room like a formal drawing room with floorboards a foot wide and dark with years of polishing, jacaranda doors and a white ceiling with simple mouldings of burnished gold leaf, we entered the chapel. Pure gold — every inch — every half inch. Dazzling. It reminded me of the day when I was a child and my father stopped the car and asked me to go and get some information from a man working in a field. When he opened his mouth to reply, it was as if he had the sun in his mouth — uppers and lowers of gold. His mouthful of gold is the only thing comparable to the excess — but in this case the beautiful excess — of that chapel.

Standing on the black and white marble squares outside we overlooked a clutter of roofs, all tile, moving in a dozen different directions — high gables, low gables, wide gables, narrow gables, all red tile. Spent two hours drawing like someone demented. H. draws with great sensitivity. She drew the façade of Saint Antonio's with its curlicues delicately, elegantly — a very beautiful subject but one that I had no wish to do.

Then through the crowds to H.'s dentist, sambas blaring and the whole world light-hearted. One particularly light-hearted fellow above me dropped a paper cone full of coffee which landed bang on my head, point first, before spilling its contents over my dress. Ended the morning at a shop that sells paints. I bought some gouache. On reaching home I put some dirty red paint on all those tiles and felt very content.

Bedtime. My first day of paint. As well as the dirty red on the tiles, I have added putty colour to the façades and laid a thin and mimsy sky. There is now a pale ochre wash on the jackfruit and the house is pink. I like these gouaches. The colours are vivid, they mix easily and are what you will — transparent or opaque. But I am overwhelmed. I hardly have enough time to draw. How will I have time enough to paint?

August 27th

The other night talking about Saint Antonio's church with a Brazilian, he told me that Saint Antonio has the rank of colonel in the Brazilian Army and that one of the Brothers goes monthly to the paymaster to collect his pay. They made him a corporal a long time ago in a moment of great military need, and he did so well that he was promoted to sergeant. Since then he has gradually worked his way up. It is this kind of thing that makes me love Brazilians.

August 28th

Drawing with H. in her dream garden. Words cannot describe it, which is perhaps why I draw. Anturias of every size and shade — white to deep red; those great red rockets bursting out of banana-like leaves; an ipè in full flood of yellow — its flowers seen middle distance like yellow hydrangeas. Against a blue sky it is unbelievable.

H. says, among other things, that the Brazilian woman lives always in the shadow of her husband. And as lunch time drew near, she bore this out, becoming anxious, eyeing her watch to make sure she would not be late. Her husband is a handsome man, a hunter, and his cages are full of birds whose calls he can imitate exactly. "Good eating," he says.

ADOBE

Al Purdy

From the mud
thick bubbles pop
up comes newt and salamander
up comes man
the immortelle of humans
mud nursery of humans
mad nursery rhyme
mud bubbles pop
pop pop

Mud bricks
baked in fire
the sun's fire a bakery
for living men and living women
people of the dust
not Aztec kings or Inca lords
but people of the brown dust
mud fireflies
flash brown instants

mud rose mud rose
flower firefly

Why applaud stone?
— fire-formed in the planet bowels
a spewed green vomit
banded schist and granite glitter
humped black basalt
in deserts of stillness
why applaud permanence
only dead things are permanent
moments are life
quick instants
flutter away under your eyes
you flutter away as well
being yourself
a ray of sunlight
or water shadow

God mud
the pig stuff of life
sucking guck in rain
memory of a memory of a memory
new happening birth
float little human child
on the surface of transience
in the wild moment
hinged instant
mud flower mud rose
die little human child
between before and after
mud rose

LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE

John Glassco's Quest

John Lauber

"MY MOTTO HAS ALWAYS BEEN 'Liberty and the pursuit of pleasure.' "[1] In that phrase of Man Ray, avant-garde photographer and the character "Narwhal" in John Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, one recognizes the unifying theme of Glassco's book; it provides both pattern and meaning (the terms are ultimately indistinguishable) and makes the autobiography a work of literary art rather than a repository of facts. Liberty and pleasure — each a good in itself, and each a means to a still more valuable end. Liberty is a necessary condition for the pursuit of pleasure, and pleasure, at its highest degree, transforms itself into the experience of ecstasy. As Ford Madox Ford says, or is made to say: "Joy is in the nature of a fever, of hysteria . . . a drunkenness, an unnatural state."[2] It can best be attained, the *Memoirs* suggest, through sensual pleasure, and such pleasure can be experienced best in youth, when the senses are keenest and worldly commitments are fewest. The *Memoirs* culminate in a series of ecstatic moments, resulting from supreme pleasure.

There are no Blakean implications here; sensual pleasure does not lead to a cleansing of the doors of perception and a recognition of the infinite in everything. In Glassco's cosmos, "all life and indeed the whole universe of phenomena existed only as . . . an accident, an interruption of nothingness"; therefore, joy or ecstasy can be felt only while one is able to ignore the basic truth and its consequence — the transience of everything, particularly of youth. Rather than revealing ultimate reality, sensual pleasure mercifully blinds us to it. Youth, after all, is defined as a drunkenness.

Such a world-view must lead to a reversal of values by which frivolity becomes serious and seriousness frivolity, while "to remain on the surface of life" is the only genuine wisdom, and the pursuit of pleasure the most rational use of one's time. A moralist might accuse the *Memoirs* of advocating an ethic of selfish irresponsibility, but they contain their own defence on both the metaphysical and the practical levels. Glassco's behaviour conforms to the nature of the universe as he sees it; furthermore, in an accidental and therefore absurd, or meaningless,

universe, all moral codes must be purely arbitrary and *all* action absurd. (But surely that which is most pleasureable is least absurd!) In practical terms, the *Memoirs* assert that Buffy and Graeme's way of life had at any rate the negative virtue of not harming anyone;[3] they were guilty only of "greed, sloth and sensuality — the three most amiable vices in the calendar." But Glassco claims more, he argues in effect that their behaviour satisfied Kant's categorical imperative: so live as if your every act were to become universal law. "Far from misusing our time, we were really turning it to the best account . . . half of man's miseries result from an insufficiency of leisure, gormandise and sexual gratification during the years from seventeen to twenty." No starving in a garret for the sake of Art! When Kay Boyle writes, in her edition of McAlmon's *Being Geniuses Together*: "We were thin as rakes, white-skinned, hollow-eyes, as poets had always been,"[4] that "we" does not include Buffy and Graeme, who are no more ambitious to die as romantic bohemians than to live as prosperous businessmen. Buffy's nearly fatal illness results from devotion to pleasure, not poetry.)

Food and sex are the prime sources of pleasure in the *Memoirs*, and it's in terms of food that the contrast between Canada and France is most dramatically presented: "Lobsters broiled in butter, tender little octopuses in black sauce, how your memory haunts me in this abode of corned-beef hash and Jell-O!" The "abode of corned-beef hash and Jell-O" is the Royal Victoria Hospital of Montreal, in which Glassco completed the *Memoirs* while awaiting a dangerous operation. These foreshadowings occur throughout the book, intensifying the sense of present pleasure. But corned-beef hash and jello have more than literal significance; they symbolize the omnipresent blandness of North American existence, its willful denial of the senses, in contrast to the delicate perversities hinted at by "tender little octopuses in black sauce."

The *Memoirs* assume a necessary opposition between the hedonist and society; the unqualified pursuit of pleasure is socially subversive, setting a bad example and rendering ridiculous all socially-approved goals. Society deals with the demands of the senses by ignoring them, by repressing them, or (more subtly) by selling an inferior substitute for pleasure, exemplified by a night-club floor-show: "this ton of listless flesh, these fixed smiles, these snowy pink-tipped contours . . . the appetites of desire, glamour and money were opposed and never met." This organized "pleasure," frustrating rather than satisfying the senses, is to the reality as corned-beef hash is to octopuses in black sauce.

From the point of view of the *Memoirs*, all social institutions (including the various professions) impose constraints on the pursuit of pleasure. Hence Buffy's early attraction to the apparent anarchism of the surrealists. But anarchism with leaders and manifestos is perhaps self-contradictory, while on closer examination the surrealist techniques, far from offering imaginative freedom, become only another set of rules — formulas for surprise. Better then simply to lead one's own

free life in the cracks and crevices of organized society; that is the practical possibility which the *Memoirs* present. Freedom from external pressure is gained at the outset, by the escape to Paris. Freedom is threatened more seriously by the internal danger of commitment — specifically, to the career of writing. "I had no commitments except, in a vague way, to remain uncommitted . . . vis-a-vis the deadly earnestness of Morley Callaghan . . . I had once again the salutary sense of the abyss that yawns for everyone who has embraced the literary profession . . . literature . . . was just another trap." The writers who figure in the *Memoirs* appear dehumanized in some sense by literary ambition: Hemingway a calculating opportunist (behind a show of boozy good-fellowship), Callaghan a myopic professional, Stein the tyrant of her salon.

The conflict between father and son, or Montreal and Paris, is external; that between the apparently incompatible demands of life and art, or "enjoyment and achievement," is between Buffy's own conflicting desires, and therefore more difficult to resolve. Throughout the *Memoirs* he struggles to avoid the commitment to literature, which is demonstrated by the existence of the book itself and foreshadowed by Graeme's remark in the first chapter: "I just saw you in a dream — as an old man with whiskers, writing. . . . " The decision to write the *Memoirs* was an attempted compromise by which life, experienced to the fullest, might be translated directly into art. But this apparently undemanding form made its demands, and the choice between life and art had to be repeated in Luxembourg and on the Mediterranean. Even at 18, Buffy (unlike McAlmon) knew that an autobiography is more than a receptacle for facts.

But however much Buffy might believe "that if I could only get rid of my itch for writing, I might be quite happy" to get rid of it was impossible. He lives his life in literary terms. Arriving in Paris on a disagreeable winter night: "I had only to think I was now in the city of Baudelaire, Utrillo and Apollinaire to be swept by a joy so strong it verged on nausea." (Pleasure and pain, at such a pitch, seem indistinguishable; perhaps the quest was ultimately not simply for pleasure, but for intensity of life.) To denounce the soul-destroying boredom of his Montreal job, he borrows the rhetoric of D. H. Lawrence: "the day was curling its edges around the granite walls of the Sun Life Assurance Company, while inside the men and women were all busy denying their dark gods." The dream of Paris itself seems to have originated in a reading of George Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man*, and Moore's hospitality and gift of a pamphlet to Buffy and Graeme constitute a secular benediction for their enterprise.

Repeatedly life is shaped or given significance by literary recollection. When Buffy and the novelist Diana Tree, about to become lovers, share a carriage: " 'Keep on, keep on!' she cried, like Leon Dupuis in *Madame Bovary*." Mrs. Quayle misquotes appropriately on reencountering Buffy after an interval of six months: "O what can ail thee, man-at-arms / Alone and palely loitering?" The

quotation not only describes Buffy at the moment (pleasure has ended for him) but foreshadows the sexual slavery that she will impose upon him and his condition when he emerges from it. When Kirilenko the photographer gives the now penniless and hungry Buffy chance of employment as a male prostitute, the offer is seen as the recurrence of an archetypal situation: "the theme of Mephisto and Faust, of Vautrin and Rubempre, here reduced to its crassest terms . . . Homeless, cold, and hungry, I made the classic response. 'You might as well.' "

Moments of ecstasy in the *Memoirs* result not only from sensual enjoyment, but from a total experience of which literary, artistic and historical associations form an essential part. These alone suffice in the realization of Paris already quoted, which owes nothing to outward circumstances. Even an ecstasy which appears purely physical, the consummation of liberated sexuality, owes much to reminiscence and association. The passage must now be quoted in full:

> 'Keep on!' she cried, like Leon Dupis in *Madame Bovary*. 'Go right around the Arc de Triomphe and then come back.'
>
> As we returned down the avenue a parade came out from the rue de Presbourg. About a hundred students, led by a makeshift band of drums and tin trumpets, were pulling a float bearing a gigantic movable phallus; worked by ropes, its head was slowly rising and falling. The crowd shrieked with joy as it moved slowly into the glare and crawled down the avenue. We fell in behind this symbol of the Third Republic. Reaching the Café Tortoni, our carriage turned off at the Rue Galilee outside Mrs. Quayle's apartment. We looked into each other's eyes with rapture; we had become lovers.

Pleasure is intensified and universalized by placement in a wider context. The occasion is Bastille Day, a national holiday celebrating the destruction of a prison, the symbol of repressive authority. The phallic image invokes a more ancient past, a pagan consecration of sensuality, including the sexual climax being achieved in the carriage (with the lovers triumphing at the Arc de Triomphe!), while the Café Tortoni recalls the literary and artistic life of nineteenth-century Paris. The passage ends, ironically, with the Christian implications of "turning off at the Rue Galilee." (A double irony, since their destination is the apartment of Mrs. Quayle, and Buffy's later involvement with her nearly destroys forever his capacity for pleasure.)

The third ecstasy is the vision of the Mediterranean, and as with the realization of Paris, it comes primarily from within:

> my throat was dry as ashes, I was coated with a mixture of soot and sweat and aching all over; but the sight of that tideless inland ocean, mother of gods and men, nurse of poetry . . . made me dizzy with joy. The moment was permanent, unforgettable, Keatsian . . . The first dip . . . was like a baptism: all the grime and sweat and alcohol seemed to wash away in the embrace of the Mediterranean.

It is a pagan baptism, following the initial benediction by George Moore and

the celebration by Buffy and Diana Tree of what has been presented as a holy day of sensuality. Such a moment transcends simple hedonism; it is available only to the mind prepared by experience and knowledge. Ecstasy is felt in those instants when the physical world is, in Wordsworthian terms, half-perceived and half-created. "The visionary gleam . . . the glory and the dream" — the language of Buffy's favourite poet seems appropriate, and for both writers these moments are a unique privilege of youth.

BUT ECSTASY ALONE does not make a writer; craft is needed, and experience of other kinds. Buffy refuses to make the commitment to literature precisely because he realizes its demands, and doubts his own willingness, and ability, to meet them. Not only was the labour of composition incompatible with the full-time pursuit of pleasure, but "I had never known despair or anguish . . . hunger, frustration, illness, or chastity. . . . How then was I qualified to write?" The list of deficiencies is formidable, but all of these experiences were to be supplied, and are recorded in the *Memoirs*. Finally, he doubts his own vocation: "I told myself that my desire to write had never been more than a . . . symptom of juvenile revolt. I came to believe that I was lacking in any seriousness . . . I had really nothing to say." The bulk of the *Memoirs* was in fact composed, as Glassco informs us in his Preface, "in the Royal Victoria Hospital at Montreal during the winter of 1932-33, when I was awaiting a crucial operation." Dangerous illness resolved Buffy's doubts, providing both occasion and motive for writing. While writing in order to relive past happiness and to find meaning in his brief existence, he would discover that he indeed had something to say.

Given these circumstances, one is tempted to say that the *Memoirs* move from frivolity to seriousness. But this is too easy. If the pursuit of pleasure constitutes the most rational use of one's time, as the *Memoirs* claim, it cannot be considered frivolous. It might be more accurate to say that there is a progression from a trivial seriousness (the solemn dullness of Buffy's Montreal) to a profound seriousness resulting from a comprehension, under threat of death, of the value of life when it is fully experienced.

Seriousness is required to provide both the content and the shape of art. Material and occasion are both useless without that devotion to the craft of writing for want of which McAlmon's book remained only "inchoate maunderings." From the beginning, Buffy understood that recollection was not enough. The basic decision was made deliberately and early: "I've already abandoned surrealism and decided to write my memoirs — not a journal but a record of my life written in chapters, like one of George Moore's books — to impose a narrative

form on everything that has happened since we left Montreal last February." From the outset, the author had provided a model for himself, and a principle of selection and emphasis: "This is to be the book of my youth, of my golden age." The recording of events without form (as in a journal) is rejected, and form is not expected to arise automatically out of recollection (it is to be "imposed," and requires a certain aesthetic distance from the raw happening). Buffy explains one of his abandonments of the *Memoirs* on the ground that "I was feeling handicapped by the recentness of events. I could not see Daphne and Angela in any kind of perspective and was reduced to stating just what had happened." Three months in hospital, two years and more after the experience, provided that perspective.

LACKING THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT, we cannot study the process of composition in detail. Something can be learned, however, by comparison of the first chapter of the *Memoirs*, as published in 1970, with the version that appeared in *This Quarter*, under the title "Extract From an Autobiography," in 1929. Glassco's claim in his preface that "The revision amounts to the occasional improvement of a phrase and, in the case of the first chapter, the excision of some particularly fatuous paragraphs" clearly does not hold.

In fact, a version of about 5300 words was reduced to about 2300. A continuous passage of 3½ pages (out of 12), describing the last night in Montreal, was dropped; gratuitous anti-semitic remarks were omitted; diction was sharpened and colloquialized; telling details were added. "George [the "Graeme" of the final version] and I were striding along the station platform behind a porter, our arms full of overcoats, then I relaxed"[5] became "Only when we were marching along the echoing wooden station-platform, under the great wooden roof that covered the lines of tracks and with the engine shooting soot and steam all around, did I relax." In his prefatory remarks to the *Memoirs*, Edel praises Glassco's "fine 'visuality' "; the praise is deserved, and the effect was deliberate — no accidental result of total recall! If the language contained such a word as "audiality," we could say that the passage exemplifies that as well. Something more is accomplished; the recurring adjective "wooden," reinforced by "echoing," not only characterizes the station but, by implication, the society which produced it.

In spite of its much greater length, the "Extract" gave no information about Buffy's actual work at Sun Life, whereas the *Memoirs* inform us that "By ten o'clock I would finish my morning work of posting up the five and ten-cent weekly premiums for burial insurance paid by Chinese labourers in Hong Kong, and then go and bed down in one of the toilets in the basement, where I made

myself a little nest in my ankle-length raccoon coat." The triviality and dullness of the job combine with the implied exploitation of the poor to indict the world of business. Posting premiums for burial insurance — what an incongruous job for the 18-year-old Buffy, concerned only with enjoying the present at all costs! The fact that even bedding down in the toilet seems a desirable alternative emphasizes the monotony of the work, while the raccoon coat offers a picturesque period detail. The entire passage functions both as texture and as an essential part of the total design; it indicates precisely what Buffy and Graeme are escaping from.

Stylistic revision eliminated vagueness and wordiness and often substituted a colloquial for an inappropriately "literary" diction. After subletting their Montreal apartment, says the "Extract," "We . . . were hardly discommoded by having to remain away from our apartment on certain nights of the week — less so than we had at first thought when it transpired that one of the men was never in the place, undoubtedly owing to the fact that he would obtain no one who would accompany him thither."[6] "Discommoded," "transpired," "accompany him thither" — the obsolete vocabulary of a provincial man-of-letters, entirely inappropriate to the narrator of the *Memoirs*. In revision: "The extra twenty dollars was a help, and it was no hardship keeping away from the apartment until late on Wednesday and Saturday nights; moreover, it soon turned out that Petersham was not using the place (his night was Wednesday), though he continued to pay."

If the narrator could not be allowed to seem a belated Victorian (as the diction cited above might suggest), neither could he express himself as a gushing adolescent. "But George, you know that I cannot go to Paris without you. I can go nowhere without you. To think of you living alone here, without me whom you love so much . . . do you think I could enjoy myself in Paris, had I ten women in my bed every night?"[7] The Buffy of the *Memoirs*, who "must have imbibed sophistication with his mother's milk," would have seemed incredible after such a passage; necessarily, it was dropped.

We may note in passing the increased dramatic effect achieved in revision. The first sentence of the "Extract" reads: "In the winter of 1928, George Graham and I were living in an apartment on Metcalfe Street in Montreal." The opening sentence (fragment, rather) of *Memoirs* is "Winter in Montreal in 1927." Season and location, the two essential facts, are given, the rest can follow. Furthermore, the revised version parallels "Paris! We made it after all," which opens the second half of chapter 1 in *Memoirs*.

Study of Glassco's revisions demonstrates that the *Memoirs* were the product of conscious art, not only in their texture but in their shape and focus. The persuasion of George, it seems likely, was cut not only because of its embarrassing sentimentality but because it was inconsistent with the sense of destiny being

fulfilled which the *Memoirs* create. External obstacles are emphasized, while internal doubts cannot be admitted: "It was on a dream of Paris that our ideas were vaguely but powerfully concentrated. This kept us going." In the "Extract," not only does "George" require persuasion, but the topic of Paris only arises after Buffy's father has offered him an allowance of $100 a month. "After a great deal of hypocrisy on my part," says the "Extract," "and of generosity on his, he consented to give me a hundred dollars a month for seven years. I was greatly touched by this. . . ."[8] The pattern of the *Memoirs* requires that the father must not be given credit, even ironically, for generosity, and that the son must be uncompromising in his hostility. He can acknowledge neither hypocrisy nor the weakness of having been "greatly touched." The passage was completely rewritten, with the father being motivated solely by desire to avoid scandal: " 'I hear you and your friend Taylor are running something close to a house of ill-fame. . . . Colonel Birdlime, of McGill's Department of Extramural Affairs, tells me it's common knowledge.' . . . [H]e offered me an allowance of a hundred dollars a month if I would live more discreetly." Father and university, related symbols of stupid authority, are ridiculed by association with the farcical name "Colonel Birdlime" (implying a trap for those who desire freedom), and by the sense of petty espionage which the detail creates.

It's no use asking what the historical truth might have been — that is irrecoverable. Doubtless the 1930 version represents not pure invention but the elaboration of a different selection of facts, and the effect created certainly was necessary to the *Memoirs* as we have them. To say this is not to discredit their accuracy. A life cannot be recorded in all its detail; selection must take place, and inevitably it creates a pattern, or establishes a goal. Experience must be reported in words, and language is not a transparent window; the autobiographer's diction and syntax imply an attitude toward the events being narrated.

"Autobiographies are essentially works of fiction" — a fact which has been known for a long time, and has become a commonplace of modern criticism.[9] But it must be added that a fiction is not necessarily fictitious, that is, it need not be a "lie," or invention. To say that an autobiography is a work of fiction is to say that by selection, by emphasis, by control of tone, the author has revealed what appears to be the meaning of his existence. For him to be found lying would discredit his work. We go to autobiography for truth of a different kind than the "truth" of fiction; we look for a revelation of meaning in actual, historical existence.

What, then, should one make of those aesthetic discussions and monologues by Ford, "Narwhal," and others which are recalled in such convincing, yet im-

probable, detail? They cannot be accurate reports unless Glassco, like Boswell, immediately entered them in his journal — but he kept no journal. The greater part of those speeches must have been invented. Yet in the act of reading we do not take them to be lies in a sense which would discredit the work. One assumes that they were neither entirely invented nor simply recalled; rather, that they were elaborated from remembered fact. In addition, they are saved by their transparent artificiality. One is not asked to accept them as literal truth (as Boswell claims for his recorded conversations). The implicit claim is of a different sort — of dramatic appropriateness to character, time and place.

Glassco himself has stated this dual responsibility of the autobiographer:

> Dear Kay, this loose and lying chronicle
> You'll understand and all its young intention
> to dress the naked facts and brightly tell
> A young man's story. . . . [10]

The verse does not imply authorial irresponsibility. "Loose and lying" is a statement, perhaps exaggerated, of the autobiographer's freedom, but is promptly qualified by "to dress the naked facts." To "lie" in this carefully qualified sense — not to arbitrarily invent, but rather "to dress the naked facts," to select, to emphasize, to elaborate, to slant — there is the essence of the autobiographer's art.

The *Memoirs* are structured around a set of basic polarities. On one side the father, the university, Montreal, business, age and authority, and denial of the senses. On the other, youth, Paris, rebellion, art, liberty, and sensual pleasure. Both literally and symbolically, winter is associated with Montreal and its correlatives, while Paris is identified with spring and the Mediterranean with summer. The narrative pattern is equally clear — a rising and falling curve of pleasure, commencing with escape from Montreal and the encounter with Moore, reaching its long climax during the summer and early autumn on the Riviera, and declining with the return to Paris, poverty and a scramble to survive (and significantly the sale of Moore's gift), separation of Buffy and Graeme, obsessive love, and nearly fatal disease.

" 'I don't like an unhappy ending to a book,' " remarks Narwhal, functioning as aesthetic spokesman. " 'I'm not saying I like a happy ending either. I'm led to wonder if a book should end at all . . . there might be some merit in a book that was either left unfinished, or ended, say, by repeating the sense of its beginning.' " The *Memoirs* both satisfy and exceed those requirements. The ending is open — Buffy is left waiting for his operation; it repeats the sense of its beginning — Montreal, winter, the absence of pleasure — but at a higher intensity, both because the danger is greater and because the narrator has experienced life and pleasure and learned their full value. The form is a spiral rather than a circle; pattern has been achieved without the boring symmetry of exact repetition.

This narrative pattern derives from life, but there is an important and related structuring device which is purely literary, the technique of foreshadowing or more precisely of juxtaposing contrasting layers of time. In chapter 1, the chronological account is interrupted by "Paris! We made it after all. This is where I'm writing now . . . It's spring night in the rue Broca, and there's moonlight on the unfinished, abandoned statues in the yard outside the studio." Knowing that the dream has been entirely fulfilled, we return to the intensified drabness of Montreal. But not before a further, more complex layering: "As I begin writing again, his [Graeme's] voice startles me. . . . 'I just saw you in a dream — as an old man with whiskers, writing. . . . ' " That chilling suggestion of age and mortality not only emphasizes and adds pathos to the transience of youth, it ironically undermines the efforts of Buffy to avoid the destiny, the commitment to writing, that John Glassco would accept.

Beyond their first three chapters, the *Memoirs* were composed under the shadow of death. Chapter 3 ends triumphantly: "The streets were dipped in warm sunshine now; it was the first day of spring." Chapter 4 is headed:

> DECEMBER 1932
> ROYAL VICTORIA HOSPITAL
> MONTREAL

That heading, with the following paragraph, accounts for the existence of the *Memoirs* and offers a perspective from which the events to be narrated can be understood and evaluated. These references to the hospital, set off in italics, recur throughout the book. (Could Glassco have learned the technique of signalling time shifts with italics from Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, published in 1930?) They follow moments of fulfillment or of ecstasy: spring in Paris, McAlmon's praise for the first chapter of the *Memoirs*, its acceptance for *This Quarter*, the two months' idyll with Stanley on the Riviera, the acceptance of Mrs. Quayle's invitation, the dream of a perfect existence on the Ile St. Louis. Pleasure appears more precious with our foreknowledge, and suspense is created as well. Not as to whether Buffy will survive his operation — we know he will — but as to what, facing death, he will make of his own experience. Can hedonism survive the threat of death? It does, nothing is recanted, and the work retains its integrity. Pleasure remains a self-justifying goal, the narrator has pursued and attained it, he has lived his youth to the limit, and his project has therefore succeeded. There is no moral to be drawn; physical pain can teach only "the pointlessness of suffering," and the only possible lesson is the need "to be a little more careful in exploiting the resources of pleasure." The conventional moral pattern of sin, punishment, repentance, redemption is necessarily denied; punishment and redemption are impossible in an accidental universe, there is no repentance, and the concept of sin becomes meaningless.

The significance of order depends finally on what is being ordered, and the *Memoirs* are notable for their richness of texture, or content. (Some of the methods by which this richness was achieved have been pointed out in the discussion of Glassco's revisions.) Perhaps the most striking single quality of the *Memoirs*, which justifies their title, is the author's skill at portraiture — of Stein, Hemingway, Callaghan, McAlmon, Moore, Frank Harris, Lord Alfred Douglas, etc. That of Stein may be taken as representative:

> A rhomboidal woman dressed in a floor-length gown apparently made of some kind of burlap, she gave the impression of absolute irrefragibility; her ankles, almost concealed by the hieratic folds of her dress, were like the pillars of a temple. . . . Her fine close-cropped head was in the style of the late Roman Empire, but unfortunately it merged into broad peasant shoulders without the aesthetic assistance of a neck; her eyes were large and much too piercing. . . . She awakened in me a feeling of instinctive hostility coupled with a grudging veneration, as if she were a pagan idol in whom I was unable to believe."

That Stein *did* look like this can be proved by photographs; the portrait is true. It becomes literature because it is imaginative as well. "Rhomboidal" wittily suggests the geometrical blockishness of her figure and introduces the sense of rigidity which pervades the passage. The reference to late Roman sculpture not only aids visualization but implies the kind of authority she possesses — an implication reinforced and extended by the associated simile of the pagan idol, which in turn has been prepared for by "hieratic" and by the comparison of her ankles to "pillars of a temple." A "floor-length gown apparently made of some kind of burlap" — the casualness of the description suggests her total indifference to fashion and throws emphasis on the figure itself; no adornment is present or required. "Irrefragibility" immediately draws attention; such learned words are rare in the *Memoirs*, and it is an unusual adjective to apply to a person. Meaning "undeniable" or "irrefutable," it seems more appropriate to an argument or a doctrine. In context, it indicates that Stein's authority (for believers) is *personal*, not depending on her work or her theories. The final comparison to a pagan idol sums up not only the details composing the image of Stein, but also the writer's own ambivalence — throughout, whatever is granted, or taken away, is instantly qualified.

"But this is not the whole truth about Gertrude Stein!" her admirers might object. It is not; only a novelist can know the "whole truth" about his characters. In this portrait Glassco offers not *the* truth but *a* truth, a testimony which reveals both subject and author. The total "truth-about-Gertrude Stein," to the extent it goes beyond primary source materials, is after all made up entirely of such testimonies.

Glassco's *Memoirs* easily surpass their model, Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man*. (Moore really confesses nothing, he neither narrates nor portrays, he never

allows the reader to be aware of anything but his own ego.) Glassco has written a memoir in the true sense; he presents the most vivid image we have of expatriate life in the France of the late twenties. Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, written perhaps thirty years after the event, lacks the immediacy of Glassco's record, while not more than a quarter of Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* deals with the twenties. *Memoirs* is less sentimental and less pretentious than Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return*; Glassco did not consider himself an exile (Paris was his true home, he was an exile in Montreal) and he does not offer his experience as representative of either his country or his generation (such abstractions did not concern him).

The *Memoirs* are rooted in a particular context of time and place, but they possess a wider interest as well. They are representative in a more universal sense than Cowley's. They ask fundamental questions. Liberty and pleasure — can one make them the exclusive goals of life, and what are the consequences if one does? To do so is an experiment that only a young man would attempt, and the narrator embodies the youthful desire for pleasure, fullness of life, intensity of experience. More truly than Moore's *Confessions*, the *Memoirs* constitute "a statement of youth for all time, a youth in which we all partake somehow."

NOTES

[1] From an interview prefaced to *Man Ray*, ed. Jean Saucet and Sarane Alexandrian, trans. Eleanor Leviewx (Chicago: J. Philip O'Hara, 1973).

[2] John Glassco, *Memoirs of Montparnasse* (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 37.

[3] In this essay the author of the *Memoirs* will be referred to as "Glassco," the protagonist as "Buffy."

[4] In Robert McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together*, revised and with supplementary chapters by Kay Boyle (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 209.

[5] John Glassco, "Extract from an Autobiography," *This Quarter*, No. 4 (Spring 1929), p. 210.

[6] "Extract," p. 199.

[7] "Extract," p. 200.

[8] "Extract," p. 200.

[9] T. H. Huxley, quoted in John Sturrock, "The New Model Autobiographer," *New Literary History*, 9 (Autumn 1977), 52.

[10] From an unpublished poem to Kay Boyle, written on the half-title page of a copy of *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, in the Canadiana Collection of the North York Public Library, Willowdale, Ontario.

DESIGN AND TRUTH IN GROVE'S "IN SEARCH OF MYSELF"

Paul Hjartarson

AN IMPORTANT SOURCE for the study of a writer is the body of his own statements concerning his life and works. This is as true for the study of Frederick Philip Grove as for other writers. In *In Search of Myself*, in letters, in published and unpublished lectures, and in notebooks Grove comments at length upon the genesis and composition of his works, his relations with publishers, colleagues, and friends, his views on the literary questions of the day, and his vision as a writer. Until recently, the most influential — and certainly the most frequently quoted — source of such statements was Grove's autobiography, *In Search of Myself*. That book was indeed the cornerstone of critical thought concerning the writer: from it commentators derived their conception of the novelist, their understanding of the shape of his career, and their knowledge of the composition of his books. Following Desmond Pacey, whose pioneering study, *Frederick Philip Grove*, was based upon a reading of the then unpublished autobiography, critics emphasized the cosmopolitan nature of Grove's early life; noted the importance to the future novelist of the trips to Siberia and Biskra, and of the twenty years spent as an itinerant farmhand in the United States and Canada; and characterized Grove's life in this country as that "of a lonely immigrant, unknown to fellow-writers and rebuffed by publishers, resolutely creating literature in shacks and barns during the long northern winters."[1]

The publication of Douglas Spettigue's two studies, *Frederick Philip Grove* and *FPG: The European Years*, and of Margaret Stobie's *Frederick Philip Grove*, has forced critics to recognize that the novelist's account of his life in *In Search of Myself* is often inaccurate and at times without any basis in historical fact; and consequently, that the critical conception of Grove and the body of commentary on his writing must be reassessed in light of the new biographical evidence. There are some signs that such a reassessment is underway. The commentaries that have appeared to date suggest, however, that critics are uncertain how to evaluate *In Search of Myself* in light of the biographical discoveries, and that some have simply dismissed Grove as a "congenital liar," none of whose statements can be trusted.[2] Certainly enough of Grove's autobiographical remarks

have been questioned to make commentators uneasy about citing any of them in support of a critical argument. In lieu of more reliable information, and perhaps in the belief that the Canadian section of the autobiography is accurate even if the European is not, some critics continue to quote Grove's statements about his career as a writer in Canada, but most simply avoid any reference to *In Search of Myself* at all.[3]

If the image of Grove prior to the publication of Spettigue's studies was that of a poverty-stricken but indefatigable author "resolutely creating literature in shacks and barns during the long northern winters," the image now gaining currency is the one that emerges from André Gide's "Conversation avec un Allemand quelques années avant la querre," an image far from flattering. In a review of *FPG: The European Years*, Michael Darling questions the need for the final two chapters of that book — in which Spettigue re-examines Grove's Canadian writing in light of the new biographical evidence — and suggests that Spettigue adds those chapters because he is "more sympathetic" than to conclude his study with the Greve-Gide interviews. According to Darling, those interviews represent the "low point" in Greve's European career.[4] In one sense Darling's remark is surprising because the Greve story does not of course end with the second Gide interview in 1905, but with Greve's disappearance in 1909; in another sense the remark is understandable because reviewers generally have focused upon the Gide interviews as the most revealing and certainly the most interesting evidence Spettigue uncovered concerning Felix Paul Greve. Stanley McMullin, for example, states: "The most intriguing insights into the working of Grove's mind occur in the short-lived relationship between Greve and Gide."[5] But what does Gide's record of those interviews reveal about the elusive Greve? According to Darling the portrait that emerges is "of a rather pathetic clown, a poor actor, and a self-confessed liar"; and although some critics might deny that Greve was either a "pathetic clown" or a "poor actor," few would object to Darling's description of him as a "self-confessed liar."[6] After all, at one point in the first interview Greve himself states: "Il faut que je vous avertisse, Monsieur Gide, que je mens constamment."[7] Indeed, Spettigue himself places considerable emphasis on the portrait of Greve that emerges from the 1904 interview and returns to Greve's confession of mendacity late in *FPG: The European Years* to explain the novelist's intention in *In Search of Myself*.

There can be no doubt that Spettigue's portrait of Greve as a congenital liar has influenced Grove criticism. In a review of *The Master Mason's House* one critic, for example, writes:

> Unkindly, one might suggest that [Grove] was a literary con man, or more kindly, that he derived much of his psychic energy and creative power from the life secret which he cherished, guarded, and never revealed to anyone. He must be having a good laugh right now, whatever sphere he dwells in, as he looks down and sees

> the work that scholars must do to untangle the threads he tangled [,] as they follow up the false clues he planted, and try to find the buried paths he so successfully camouflaged.[8]

What is striking about these comments is not only that the range of possible responses — from the "unkindly" to the "more kindly" — is so limited, but that any distinction between them almost immediately disappears when, after setting forth the possibilities, the critic pictures Grove as in fact a "literary con man" intent upon tangling threads and planting false clues.

In 1969 Spettigue pointed out that although Grove critics based their commentaries upon the novelist's autobiographical statements, they were reluctant to examine the autobiography in any detail. The commentaries that have appeared since 1973, the year in which both Spettigue's *FPG: The European Years* and Stobie's *Frederick Philip Grove* were published, suggests that critics are now willing to dismiss *In Search of Myself*, again without submitting it to much scrutiny. In a review of Stobie's book, Stanley McMullin, for example, describes Grove's autobiographical statements as a "romantic smokescreen" that scholars have penetrated to reveal "how often [the novelist's] actual state of affairs was different from the picture he wished to present."[9] Alec Lucas's remark is even more striking. In a review of Desmond Pacey's *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove*, Lucas states quite bluntly: "Scholars have trained their guns on the wondrous autobiography that fascinated Pacey (and Grove) and, owing largely to the work of Douglas Spettigue, they have reduced it almost to ruins."[10]

Undoubtedly such repudiations of *In Search of Myself* are in part a function of the previous critical reliance upon that work: having accepted the autobiography as factual, critics feel betrayed. (Spettigue's revelations prompted one critic to remark concerning Grove: "He was a stranger, and he took us in.")[11] Although in the short run critics may choose simply to dismiss Grove's autobiographical statements, and thus the image he creates of himself in *In Search of Myself*, in the long run Grove criticism must come to terms with that image and with the questions implicit in the discovery that the autobiography is historically inaccurate. We must come to terms with *In Search of Myself* because the image the novelist creates in that work permeates all his writing, and is central to our understanding of his fiction and of his place in Canadian literature. We must come to terms with it, too, because literary criticism is concerned not only with historical facts — for example, when and in what order Grove wrote his novels — neither of which has yet been conclusively established — but with, among other things, the novelist's vision of himself as a writer and his conception of the art of fiction. In what follows I consider how Spettigue's biographical revelations alter our understanding of *In Search of Myself*, what light the extant manuscripts of the autobiography shed on the composition of that work, and how Grove's account of his life is shaped by the stance he adopts in the Prologue.

UNDERLYING THE CRITICAL DISMISSAL of *In Search of Myself* as "a pack of lies"[12] is the assumption that autobiographies must be historically accurate, and that because Grove's is not, it is necessarily a sham, a "mask" behind which the novelist conceals his "true" self. That assumption is questionable, and given its implications for Grove studies, merits more scrutiny than it has yet received. The assumption is questionable for at least two reasons. First, it ignores the fact that autobiography differs from biography precisely in that whereas a biographer endeavours to provide an historically accurate account of his subject's life, an autobiographer attempts to articulate his own vision of himself at the time of writing, of who he is and of how the events of his life have shaped his development. What the autobiography offers, consequently, is not the historical facts, but the autobiographer's vision of himself. Secondly, the assumption that autobiographies must be historically accurate involves a failure to recognize that an individual's life is shaped less by historical events than by one's reaction to and understanding of those events, and that each of us constantly reinterprets his or her own past. In Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* Morag Gunn observes: "A popular misconception is that we can't change the past — everyone is constantly changing their own past, recalling it, revising it."[13] We continually reshape our past in accordance with our changing understanding of ourselves.

Of course, not all autobiographies diverge as markedly from the verifiable facts as Frederick Philip Grove's. In a recent study of André Gide's autobiography, *Si le grain ne meurt*, C. D. E. Tolton observes that "even if a reader admires the style or enjoys the anecdotes [in an autobiography], he must still respect the truth of the work for it to be successful *as an autobiography.*" That observation leads Tolton to ask: "Just how much licence with the truth can the autobiographer be allowed and still remain worthy of our respect?" The answer he gives with regard to *Si le grain ne meurt* is instructive. After pointing out the many historical inaccuracies in Gide's autobiography and citing Roger Martin du Gard's comment that "Gide's self-portrait was always slanted with the opinion of posterity in mind," Tolton states:

> Gide traces not only the self that actually existed, but also aspects of himself which he only believed to exist. Very few people are infallible in their self-appraisal, and even fewer could be counted on for as much honesty as Gide in an autobiography. Gide's factual discrepancies, in Martin du Gard's eyes, would become only normal human failings, associated with the larger question of most people's incapacity for completely honest self-portrayal. They would have little bearing on the total impression of the autobiography. Gide confessed that facts external to himself could indeed become twisted in his memory, but the personal emotion evoked by the events remains constant. His nephew, Dominique Drouin, laughingly pointed out that Gide's 1931 account of a story which Drouin had told him

> at the end of the First World War so distorted the original version as to become pure invention. In consternation Gide investigated what might have happened, and, somewhat relieved, surmised that while he might have telescoped two different stories, he had not, after all, invented a new one: "Car, en tout cas, ce que je n'avais pu inventer, c'était mon émotion . . . " We may and must believe that even where there are doubtful facts in *Si le grain ne meurt*, the emotions are honest. *It would seem that this is all we can hope for from any autobiography.* This is especially true when the autobiographer is . . . using his own life and a narrative form primarily in the interest of polemics. Provided that the emotional state he associates with each event is honestly depicted, Gide will have fulfilled his obligation to the autobiographical genre.[14]

According to Tolton, the autobiographer's primary obligation is to be true to his own inner life, his own vision of himself. Readers of autobiographies, he asserts, "are able, indeed almost always *obliged*, to excuse inconsistencies in factual details . . . [and] even conscious distortions of truth."

The relevance of Tolton's statements to an understanding of Grove's *In Search of Myself* is to be found, in part at least, in Douglas Spettigue's comments concerning the Prologue to that autobiography. For although in his first book on Grove, Spettigue questioned the accuracy of the Prologue — as of the autobiography as a whole — he nevertheless affirmed that "emotionally the whole Prologue rings true," an affirmation he repeats in *FPG: The European Years*, adding that it is not only emotionally but to some extent biographically true as well.[15] Indeed, Spettigue reports his own surprise at discovering just how much of *In Search of Myself* has its basis in verifiable facts. "What emerges from a close comparison of Grove's account of his life with the facts," he remarks in the Introduction to the NCL edition of *In Search of Myself*, "is an astonished sense not only that the life story is so fictionalized but also that so much of it is true."[16] Critics to date, however, have focused primarily on the more unsavoury aspects of Grove's past and marvelled at the measures he took to ensure that his early life remained buried.

But if Spettigue's and Stobie's studies reveal the points at which *In Search of Myself* diverges from the verifiable facts, they also demonstrate that at a very early stage in his life Grove began to reshape his past and thus slowly to evolve the image of himself he embodies in his autobiography. Although details — like the precise date of his birth and the number of sisters — change, the image Grove creates of himself in the autobiography develops with remarkable consistency. The process of evolution is apparent in Felix Paul Greve's letters to his German publishers, Rudolf von Poellnitz and Anton Kippenberg; in André Gide's record of his "Conversation avec un Allemand" (1904); in the biographical notes Greve sends Franz Brümmer in 1907; in Fred Grove's letters to Isaac J. Warkentin; in the biographical notes the novelist sends Ryerson Press in 1925, in articles like Grove's "Apologia pro vita et opere suo" (1931) and "The Plight of Canadian

Fiction: A Reply" (1938), and in the novelist's letters to Arthur Leonard Phelps, Watson Kirkconnell, Richard Crouch, Lorne Pierce, Desmond Pacey, and others. As Douglas Spettigue himself notes, "the core of [Grove's] account of his background in the autobiography is to be found in the lies told to Gide in 1904."[17] Those lies constitute Grove's response to and attempt to cope with the world in which he found himself. It is important to note that they predate his immigration to Canada.

If, after the excitement of Spettigue's revelations concerning Frederick Philip Grove's European past, students of Canadian literature have found Desmond Pacey's edition of the novelist's letters unrevealing — and the reviews suggest they have — it is not because Grove simply buried his past, but because he slowly reshaped it in terms of his changing understanding of himself. Thus the man who declared to Franz Brümmer in 1907 that he "was firmly convinced that in the future [he] would somehow, somewhere in the world, be a centre," gradually came to feel that he had a crucial role to play as a spokesman for Old World values in the New World. Although Alec Lucas asserts in his review of *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove* that "the 520 letters of Grove's Canadian period . . . lift Greve's mask at least a little," he is almost immediately forced to acknowledge that "*even in the intimacy of letters to his wife*" the novelist plays out the role he created for himself.[18] Grove did not simply play that role: he lived it. And in his autobiography he sets his vision of himself before his readers. *In Search of Myself* will remain a central document in the study of Frederick Philip Grove because in it the novelist sets forth the vision that shaped both his life and his fiction.

In *FPG: The European Years* Spettigue is clearly uneasy about the liberties Grove takes with the historical facts and about whether the novelist's reshaping of his past disqualifies *In Search of Myself* as autobiography. In the closing pages of his study Spettigue raises the question of whether Grove's autobiography really involves a "search for the self," as its title suggests: "if this book did represent FPG's search for the self within," he asks,

> would it not have dealt honestly with his peasant antecedents, the family's financial and marital problems, his relations with his sister, his father, his mother, his friends? With the shock that allegedly made him a liar on his mother's death? With the trauma of university days, the Wilde imitations, the assumed elegance, the extravagance, the attempt through his youth to be what he was not? With the dishonesty, with the humiliation of imprisonment? With the strain of poverty and overwork? With the flight to North America? He had nothing to fear, surely; in the nineteen forties few who had known him were living, few at least who would be likely to notice or take an interest in his book. After two World Wars his publishers were not going to pursue him. He could not expect Elsa to be interested in him now — she hadn't been much interested apparently in 1909.[19]

Spettigue concludes that because Grove was "carefully concealing much of the

truth about himself" the autobiography is not in fact a search "by the author for the author." Although he stops short of disqualifying *In Search of Myself* as autobiography because it does not involve a sustained search for self, he does imply that such a search characterizes the best autobiographies. *In Search of Myself*, Spettigue suggests, is simply a "conventional autobiography" that "conform[s] to a pattern in Canadian confessional writing." Grove, he asserts, "hides" his "real" identity within the autobiography: it is not the autobiographer but the reader who engages in the "search."

Spettigue's comments raise serious questions about Grove's intention in *In Search of Myself*. Certainly Spettigue is right to question the use of the word "search" in the title of the autobiography, for nothing in the Prologue or in the main body of the work suggests that Grove intends to engage in such a "search for self"; on the contrary, the novelist makes it clear in the Prologue that he *knows* why he has failed as a writer and that he attributes his failure not to his own inadequacies but to the circumstances in which he was forced to write. Although he professes doubts about his ability to explain his failure, he states that he sees "the reasons clearly enough" (*ISM*, 11). Grove's intention in the autobiography is actually much closer to that of an apologist than to a confessional writer: he does not propose to search his past in order to discover the essential truth about himself, but to explain why his "struggle [as a writer] has been such as to make defeat a foregone conclusion" (*ISM* 6), and thus to defend himself against his own feeling of failure. Grove uses his own life story and the genre of autobiography to demonstrate that life in Canada is inimical to the arts, and that he did not succeed as a writer in this country because no one could possibly do so.

In 1931 Grove published an article entitled "Apologia pro vita et opere suo," and like that article *In Search of Myself* appears to have developed out of the novelist's growing sense in the 1920's and 1930's that he was writing in a cultural wilderness. In the 1931 article Grove defends his life and works with considerable confidence; he had, after all, published five books in the preceding six years, and in three cross-Canada lecture tours had established a reputation as a gifted speaker. Although the novelist speaks repeatedly in the article of the possibility of failure, he looks to the future with considerable confidence. "I aim," he proclaims at the outset, "at building the sort of work which, while like the pyramids, taking time to build, will also stand for some little time after being completed." Early in the "Apologia" he shifts into the first person plural, and in the final paragraph asserts:

> what we are trying to do cannot become clear till at least a trace of the walls of that edifice becomes visible which we are trying to erect: so far, we have put

> down only a few of the foundation stones. And so we come back to this: either our day has been, or our day will come; we only know that, in our aim, we are not of this day of false fronts and shoddy. But we also know that, if our lives and works are to be of any value whatever (and we sometimes doubt it), they will be so precisely on that account.[20]

In the autobiography, begun in the summer of 1938, Grove is much less confident. Having published only one book in eight years, and reduced to soliciting subscriptions for a private printing of *Two Generations*, he is forced to acknowledge that he has failed to gain an audience for his work. Although he still looks to the future for his jurisdiction and although he still affirms that "the artist should always build his work as if it were meant to last through the centuries" (*ISM*, 426-27), he is forced to acknowledge that his achievements have fallen far short of his own minimum expectations. What is more, Grove is haunted in the Prologue and throughout the autobiography by the spectre of old age, and with it the decline of his mental powers. This is not the first time he has despaired of gaining an audience, but now he feels that "[his] day has been" and that old age is upon him.

In *Experiment in Autobiography* H. G. Wells states that he "began [his] autobiography to reassure [him]self during a phase of fatigue, restlessness and vexation," and notes at its conclusion that "it has achieved its purpose of reassurance."[21] *In Search of Myself* appears to have been occasioned by a similar need. At no time was Frederick Philip Grove's career at a lower ebb than just before he began his autobiography in the summer of 1938. In a journal entry dated April 6, 1938, the novelist asks himself what the first three months of the year have brought him and he replies:

> They have been three months of the profoundest economic depression through which I have lived; and, therefore, of the most frantic endeavours to break it. Everything seems to have gone wrong. There is practically no income: $4.75 a week or within a few pennies. I have to have many trifles. But, in order to be able to spend 23¢ on a box of matches, I have to plan for weeks ahead to gather the sum together by pennies. The strange thing is that, within this great, relatively prosperous country, it would be entirely within the possibilities for a man like myself who refuses to apply for help, to starve to death if he persists in doing what he was meant to do, namely in standing face to face with things, instead of immersing himself in them. Of course, I am too old now in any case. But, had I foreseen what has happened — that, as a writer, I should be forgotten in my retreat — would it have made any difference in the past when I was still young enough to do other things? As a matter of fact, I am just obstinate enough not to mind for myself; I could live in a hovel and go on, damning the world. But my wife? And my boy?[22]

It is in this despondent state of mind — so effectively evoked in the Prologue to *In Search of Myself* — that he begins to write the story of [his] struggles as a writer."[23]

The two extant drafts of *In Search of Myself* confirm Grove's statements in his letters that he initially conceived the autobiography as a sequel to *A Search for America* "dealing with the 26 years following the years treated in the older book" (*Letters*, 337; cf. pp. 327, 330). In the opening pages of the earlier of the two drafts, the narrator, Phil Branden, summarizes his first twenty years on the North American continent and recounts the events that followed his decision to become a school teacher in Canada. It is only in this early stage of composition, and then only once, in a letter to Lorne Pierce, the editor of Ryerson Press, that the novelist gives the tentative title of the book as "In Search of Myself" (*Letters*, 337). He does so, I suspect, only to link it with *A Search for America*, the most financially successful of his earlier works, and thereby with luck arouse Pierce's interest in publishing it. The title Grove almost always uses when referring to the autobiography in the years between its conception and subsequent publication is the "Life of a Writer in Canada," a title that accurately reflects both his initial choice of subject and the focus of the published work. Interestingly, the title that appears on the last manuscript draft, which for the most part covers only the European years, that is, from the novelist's birth until 1919, is "My Life[:] The Life of a Writer in Canada."[24] At no point in the composition of *In Search of Myself* does Grove waiver in his desire to demonstrate that his "struggles [as a writer] had been such as to make defeat a foregone conclusion" (*ISM*, 6). "Canada," he contends in "The Plight of Canadian Fiction: A Reply," an article he completed shortly before writing *In Search of Myself*, "is a non-conductor for any kind of intellectual current."[25]

If Grove's subject in *In Search of Myself* is his career as a writer in Canada, why in the last manuscript draft and in the published work does he include an account of his European past? And why in giving that account does he not reveal his former identity as Felix Paul Greve? It is impossible to answer either of these questions conclusively. Grove could conceivably have written an apologia for his life in Canada in which he either gave no account of his years in Europe or completely revealed his German past. The basis for the inclusion of the European section is, however, laid in the initial draft of that work, for in the opening pages of that manuscript, as in the published book, it is clear that Grove's feeling of failure is inextricably bound up in his belief that he had shown considerable promise as a young man in Europe and that, given the circumstances of his birth, education, and travel, he was ideally prepared to be a "spokesman" for the "pioneers" he encountered on the North American prairie (*ISM*, 226). In recounting his life in Canada Grove apparently realized that he could not make his readers understand the enormity of his failure without first leading them to realize the promise he had shown as a young man. So he includes in *In Search of Myself* the account of his life in Europe that he had shaped over the preced-

ing decades to explain to himself and to others why he had become an author and what qualified him to write about pioneer life in western Canada.

The reason why Frederick Philip Grove did not reveal his former identity as Felix Paul Greve is perhaps implicit in what I have stated thus far. Grove undertook *In Search of Myself* not as a confession but as an apologia: his intention was not to seek the essential truth about himself, and thus achieve a greater self-knowledge, but to defend his career by demonstrating that his failure was inevitble. Grove's subject — and the focus of the published work — is thus his years as a writer in Canada, that is, the years from 1912 to the time he began writing *In Search of Myself*. He added the European section to his "Life of a Writer in Canada" in order to set his failure in what he regarded as its proper perspective. The vision he presents of Europe and of his early life there is one seen from this side of the Atlantic by a man who feels that after decades of "often titanic endeavour" (*ISM*, 4) he is a failure, who feels finally that he is "an exile from [his] youth and its promise" (*ISM*, 236). To demand that Frederick Philip Grove search his German past is to demand that he examine his life from another point of view and that he write a different book.

IN "DESIGN AND TRUTH IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY" Roy Pascal defines autobiography as "the reconstruction of the movement of a life, or part of a life"; however, he hastens to add that it necessarily "imposes a pattern on [that] life, constructs out of it a coherent story."

> Autobiography means . . . discrimination and selection in face of the endless complexities of life, selection of facts, distribution of emphasis, choice of expression. Everything depends on the standpoint chosen. . . .

Pascal in fact argues that the "interplay" — he also calls it a "collusion" — between past and present, between the events of one's life and the particular standpoint from which they are reviewed and interpreted, is "not merely a condition of all autobiography, [but] its very essence." Moreover, he asserts that the "significance" of autobiography "is more the revelation of the present situation than the uncovering of the past."[26]

In the Prologue to *In Search of Myself* Grove outlines the circumstances that impelled him to write his autobiography and establishes the standpoint from which he proposes to reconstruct his life in this country. An accurate understanding of the standpoint he adopts is essential to a recognition of the pattern he imposes on his experiences, and of the image he creates of himself as a writer. The mood is established in the opening lines:

> It was a dismal November day, with a raw wind blowing from the north-west and cold, iron-grey clouds flying low — one of those Ontario days which, on the lake-shores or in a country of rock and swamp, seem to bring visions of an ageless

> time after the emergence of the earth from chaos, or a foreboding of the end of a world about to die from entropy.
>
> It was into such a country of rock and swamp, a few miles north of Lake Erie, that my business took me that day. I was driving my old and battered car and, having come a not inconsiderable distance, I felt chilled and cheerless. At last I entered upon a straight, rutted marl road which led for miles over a clay-coloured dam thrown through a morass dotted here and there with the dead stumps of huge trees of a departed generation: swamp-oak, white ash, and pine, now blackened by carbonization. (*ISM*, 1)

Into this dreary, life-forsaken landscape the novelist drives "to fetch a girl for the Sisyphus task of a household drudge" (*ISM*, 1). The further up the road he proceeds, the more deeply rutted and impassable it becomes, until he finds his way blocked by a washout. While forlornly considering what action to take, he suddenly thinks of the events of the preceding evening and realizes that his present despondency has its source in those earlier events. "My profound feeling of misery no longer seemed to proceed from any momentary quandary," he states, "but from something I had lived through the preceding night" (*ISM*, 2). His immediate physical predicament in effect becomes a figure for what he regards as the plight of a writer in this country.

The novelist relates that a friend, "the librarian of a great city" (*ISM*, 3), who periodically drives to the Groves' isolated, ramshackle farmhouse to keep the writer supplied with "six or ten" of the best recently published books, had on the preceding evening brought him "the biography of a Frenchman still living" (*ISM*, 3) whom Grove claims was once a close personal friend. In their youth, the novelist asserts, this critically acclaimed French writer had frequently deferred to his slightly younger friend and "had prophesied . . . the most brilliant of futures" (*ISM*, 6) for him. Compared to the Frenchman — whom Spettigue has identified as André Gide — Grove considers himself a failure, and proposes to write his autobiography to explain why he has not fulfilled the promise of his youth. In the Prologue Grove makes it immediately clear, however, that the chief reason for his failure is to be found less in himself than in the fact that he "never had an audience";

> for no matter what one may say, he says it to somebody; and if there is nobody to hear, it remains as though it had never been said; the tree falling in a forest where there is none to hear, produces no sound. A book arises as much in the mind of the reader as in that of the writer; and the writer's art consists above all in creating response; the effect of a book is the result of a collaboration between writer and audience. That collaboration I had failed to enforce. . . . (*ISM*, 6)

Although in this passage Grove places the onus for such "collaboration" on the writer, the Prologue as a whole suggests that there are a number of factors which in this instance absolve him of responsibility. On the one hand, he establishes early in the Prologue that in his youth he was recognized as a man of consider-

able talent destined for a brilliant career; on the other, he depicts this country as a dreary land of "rock and swamp," a wilderness inimical to the arts. Thus, whereas "in the crowded capitals of Europe" (*ISM*, 4) the French author has written works that fill "eighteen pages" of bibliography, and consequently has earned the distinction of seeing his biography published within his lifetime (*ISM*, 4), "on the lonely prairies of western Canada" the Canadian novelist has "in spite of often titanic endeavour . . . lived and worked in obscurity, giving expression at the best, to a few, a very few mirrorings of life in the raw such as it has been [his] lot to witness" (*ISM*, 4). Grove proposes to explain why in spite of acknowledged talent and in spite of prodigious effort his failure was inevitable; and thus he sets out to dramatize the plight of a writer in Canada.

As Pascal's comments on autobiography suggest, the stance Grove adopts at the outset of *In Search of Myself* shapes the account he gives of his life. Grove's own title for the autobiography, "Life of a Writer in Canada," is a more apt description of the work than the title of the published book because all the elements of *In Search of Myself*, including Grove's account of his European past, are organized as a revelation of his present situation. In the Introduction to the NCL edition of *In Search of Myself* Douglas Spettigue suggests that Grove's book follows

> a pattern in Canadian autobiographical writing whereby the author as an immigrant or of an immigrant family exalts his European past into a sort of Golden Age of culture and affluence. Mrs. Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* is one clear example; *In Search of Myself* is another. According to this pattern, the artist comes to Canada as to a land of promise, but the promise is not realized, or not in the way he had expected. Instead he suffers isolation, humiliation, poverty, and neglect until he emerges from this ritual descent to a sober realization of the nature of Canadian life and his relation to it. (*ISM*, xi)

What Spettigue's comments suggest is that Grove shapes his European past in terms of his present understanding of himself; indeed, Spettigue himself argues that the "literary intent" of the European section of *In Search of Myself* and of "the first section of Part III" is " . . . to build up a sense of early promise to emphasize the fall."[27] Certainly Grove characterizes his life in Europe as a period of great wealth, culture, and travel to contrast those years with the time spent in poverty and neglect "on the lonely prairies of western Canada" (*ISM*, 4) and on his small farm outside Simcoe, just as in the Prologue he recasts his relationship with the "young Frenchman," exaggerating the promise of his youth, to heighten the pathos of his own subsequent failure. Similarly, the novelist shapes the account of his life in Europe and of his years as an itinerant farm labourer to demonstrate, on the one hand, that he was a "cosmopolitan," and on the other, that he "had fitted [him]self to be the spokesman of a race" (*ISM*, 226), facts that serve both to heighten the injustice of his failure and to place the

responsibility for it on shoulders other than his own. Concerning Grove's background B. K. Sandwell wrote in 1945:

> Of the first forty years of his life, one half had been devoted to the acquisition of a very rich and wide-ranging education in various European universities, and to extensive travel in many parts of the world; the other half had been lived in the closest contact with the soil and with the life of the great generality of North American people. There could hardly have been a better preparation for a literary career of the most important kind.[28]

Because of his "unique" (*ISM*, 226) background Grove begins to feel at a very early stage in his Canadian career that it is his task to record "the age-old conflict between human desire and the stubborn resistance of nature," the conflict that underlies the autobiography itself. "Perhaps, very likely even," he states, "I was foredoomed to failure in my endeavour; in fact, I seemed to see even then that I was bound to fail but the attempt had to be made" (*ISM*, 227).

To recognize that Grove organizes *In Search of Myself* to explain his failure is to acknowledge the limitations of that autobiography — and of autobiographies generally — as an historically accurate account of the autobiographer's life. "Every historian," Pascal remarks, "knows how critically he must use autobiographies, not only because of conscious polemical intentions in the autobiographer, but also because of the unconscious polemics of memory."[29] Certainly it would be misleading to assume that while the European section of the autobiography is largely fictional, the Canadian section is for the most part historically accurate. Although the Canadian section may be, relatively speaking, more historically accurate than the European, the novelist shapes all the events recounted in the autobiography to justify his failure. And just as he recreates his European past as a time of great wealth, culture, travel, and promise, so he reconstructs his years in Canada to emphasize the poverty, isolation, humiliation, and neglect he suffered.

In *Frederick Philip Grove* Spettigue notes how Grove organizes events in *In Search of Myself* to indicate that "a malevolent destiny or touch-of-death [is] upon everything associated with him." Concerning the "Russian manor-house" in which he was allegedly born, Grove states: "Incredibly, within an hour or so of the event, the hospitable house . . . was struck by lightning and burned to the ground" (*ISM*, 15). As Spettigue notes, this is the first of many similar events in the autobiography:

> As a second example of the malevolence of fate, he records that a French Catholic priest in North Dakota persuaded him to go to Winnipeg to take up teaching — the priest was subsequently killed in a train accident (*ISM*, 240). Similarly, when the Groves drove East in 1929 their car coasted into Port Hope and stopped there, out of gas, in front of a branch of the Royal Bank. Completely without funds, Grove was granted credit by the manager, who had heard one of Grove's Canadian Club speeches. The manager, 'suddenly' died, 'two days later' from 'causes

> unknown' (*ISM*, 404). As a matter of record, it was the previous manager who had died, of pneumonia, two weeks before Grove's visit, but Grove appropriated that death for his purpose.[30]

Did Grove consciously "appropriate that death for his purpose" or in the decade that had passed, had he unwittingly reshaped that event in his mind? Whatever the answer, throughout the Canadian section of the autobiography Grove can be seen similarly reshaping events.

Thus, in *In Search of Myself* the novelist asserts that in 1917, as a third-year, extramural student at the University of Manitoba, he was awarded two $150 scholarships, one in French and the other in German; but that because "payment of the amounts [was] conditional upon attendance at the university, [he] forfeited both to the next-in-line" (*ISM*, 295). Circumstances apparently conspired against the novelist. "It has been my fate throughout life," Grove reflects, "in all material things. It was always the next-in-line who got the prizes" (*ISM*, 295). However, as Margaret Stobie points out, the University of Manitoba's records indicate that Grove was in fact given the money for the French award, but that the money for the German scholarship was given to the runner-up, "a practice," she notes, that is "still commonly followed in many universities to divide up scholarship funds." If, as Margaret Stobie suggests, "Grove's memory deceived him" when he gave his account of the scholarships in *In Search of Myself*, that deception was part of the process by which he reshaped the events of his life to justify his failure as a writer.[31]

In 1962 Mrs. Grove objected to the emphasis critics placed on the poverty she and her husband endured, and observed that it occupied only a "short period" in their lives.[32] But it is precisely the poverty and neglect upon which Frederick Philip Grove himself dwells in *In Search of Myself* and out of which he creates the image of himself as a writer. It is the image of Grove writing *A Search for America* "with lined gloves on stiffening fingers" (*ISM*, 193), and years later, when confronted by the *Saturday Evening Post*'s request for a typescript of that work, being forced to type each word of his most recent draft over three times because his typewriter ribbon had worn thin and he could not afford to buy a new one (*ISM*, 360). In 1948 Northrop Frye described Grove's life as "a pitiful record of frustration and heartbreak, combined with a dogged insistence on writing as he felt without compromise. He is apparently our only example of an artist's fight for survival in an indifferent society."[33] Certainly that is the image the novelist creates in *In Search of Myself*. In reaction to that image critics have more recently asserted that "in spite of his complaints against lack of recognition in Canada, [Frederick Philip Grove was] one of the most honoured Canadian novelists of his generation" (*Letters*, xvi). In fairness to the novelist, however, it should be noted that the Governor-General's Medal, the honorary degrees, and other marks of recognition usually cited in support of this statement were given

to him in the years after the autobiography was completed.[34] When he wrote *In Search of Myself* Grove was looking back over the decade of the thirties, and particularly over the years from 1933 to 1939, during which despite all his efforts he was unable to secure the publication of a single book. What he could no longer forget was the poverty and the neglect; what he could no longer evade was his own profound feeling of failure.

IN HIS STUDY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY Roy Pascal points out that an author's autobiography is "not simply a statement of what a man was and is"; it is also, he notes, "in some sort a polemical statement, another contribution to his life's work, not a resumé of it. It is an active contribution, not a closing of accounts."[35] Spettigue's discovery of Grove's German past necessitates the recognition that *In Search of Myself* is not only the novelist's self-portrait, but "in some sort a polemical argument," another of Grove's attempts to win an audience for his work; it is another "Apologia pro vita et opere suo," a defence of his literary aspirations occasioned in this instance not by the attacks of critics, but by his own profound feeling of failure. In the Prologue to *In Search of Myself* the novelist makes it clear that his autobiographical impulse originates in and is guided by an overwhelming need to defend his career as a writer, to explain that his failure was really a "foregone conclusion." He offers that explanation in the hope that it "might more than compensate for the failure to have made [him]self heard so far" (*ISM*, 11). There is no resignation, no closing of accounts.

Throughout his life in this country Grove was haunted by the spectre of failure and of "a coming senescence" (*ISM*, 457). When he arrived in Canada to begin life anew he was thirty. By the time he returned to writing and published his first book in Canada he was forty-three. He felt and claimed to be much older than he was. He believed that time was running out on him, and was impatient of success. Above all things he feared failure and the decline of his mental and emotional faculties. But if he feared these things he also found his inspiration in them. He saw the spectre of failure and decay in the boarded-up White Range Line House, and the experience inspired him to write *Settlers in the Marsh*; he saw that spectre, too, in the palatial but decayed Rugby farm, and fashioned *Fruits of the Earth*. Out of his fascination with and fear of "a coming senescence" he created characters like Whiskers in *A Search for America*, Sigurdson in *Settlers of the Marsh*, Percy and Ada Weatherhead in "The Weatherhead Fortunes," Martha and John Elliott Senior in *Our Daily Bread*, Blaine in *Fruits of the Earth*, Sam Clark in *The Master of Mill*, and of course, the senile old man in the Prologue to *In Search of Myself*.

Grove's portrayal of the senile old man is particularly striking. "There ye can

still see the hole where they pulled him out, with two towing trucks," the old man remarks concerning the "smart-aleck salesman from Tilsonberg" whose speeding car struck the washout and careened off the road.

> 'Him, I say, but I mean his car.' And once more he focused his mind's eye in that absent way of his; and then he burst out laughing in his sterile, cackling hilarity. 'Do you know what he did?' He took his elbow out of the window of the car and raised one foot to the running-board. Then, as if to smooth out a kink in his spine, he pressed his left hand into his side, just below the ribs. And once more, under that dismal sky, he surrendered himself body and soul to the impulse of his overpowering merriment, slapping his raised knee with his right hand between guffaws. It was an incomprehensible, obscene, drenching torrent of mirth before which one could only stand gasping. 'Yeah,' he ejaculated at last between his bursts of gaiety, 'the blasted fool broke . . . broke his . . . broke his neck!' And six, seven slaps of his open palm resounded in succession on his knee while his head, swinging from side to side as if severed on its pedicel, hinted at the entire inadequacy of mere laughter to express to the full just how funny this trifling mishap had been. . . . (*ISM*, 10)

What Phil Branden, the narrator of *A Search for America*, states concerning Whiskers is really true of all these characters: "He was the walking Death-in-Life; he stood for the end of all things mortal, for ambitions foiled or misguided; for that disappointment which is the more heart-breaking when it is unconscious. He stood for Old Age looking back on Youth; for failure incarnate, such as in the essentials awaits us all, no matter what our apparent success may be."[36]

The spectre of failure and decay haunts Grove's writing because it haunted his life, and in his autobiography he wrestles with it once again. He uses the form of the autobiography and the events of his own life to demonstrate the truth of the belief — widely held at the time — that a great literature had not developed in Canada because, as E. K. Brown was to argue in 1943, economically the situation of our literature is, and has been, "unsound"; politically we exhibit a "colonial spirit" and show little interest in things Canadian; and culturally we cling to frontier values, admiring "the man who can run a factory, or invent a gadget or save a life by surgical genius," but questioning the value of "the aesthetic or contemplative life."[37] Given these conditions, Grove argues, his own failure was inevitable. To recognize that Grove writes *In Search of Myself* to justify his failure is to acknowledge its limitations as an historically accurate account of the writer's life, but it is not to lessen the value of the autobiography as the novelist's vision of his years in the country.

NOTES

[1] Desmond Pacey, *Frederick Philip Grove* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1945), p. 10.

[2] In a review of *FPG: The European Years* entitled "A Mask for All Occasions: The Identity of FPG," *ECW*, 1 (Winter 1974), 50-53, Michael E. Darling speaks of the "growing portrait of FPG as a congenital liar." In *FPG: The European*

Years (Ottawa: Oberon, 1973) Spettigue himself describes Grove as a "congenital" liar: "As we have seen from the Gide-Grove interviews," Spettigue states, "FPG is a self-confessed liar. As we have also seen, the lying probably was at least as much deliberate as congenital" (p. 214).

[3] As recently as 1979 Grove's autobiographical account of the origin of *Fruits of the Earth* was quoted in an explication of that novel. See D. J. Dooley, *Moral Vision in the Canadian Novel* (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1979), p. 14. Dooley does not acknowledge that Grove dates the incident in 1893, when Greve was a schoolboy in Hamburg.

[4] Darling, p. 53.

[5] Review of *FPG: The European Years, Queen's Quarterly*, 81 (1974), 125.

[6] Darling, p. 53.

[7] "Conversation avec un Allemand quelques années avant la guerre," *N[ouvelle] R[evue] F[rançaise]*, August 1919; rpt. in a revised form in *Incidences* (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1924), p. 137.

[8] Miriam Waddington, a review of *The Master Mason's House, Humanities Association Review*, 28 (1977), 297-98.

[9] Review of Margaret Stobie's *Frederick Philip Grove* in *Canadian Literature*, No. 60 (Spring 1974), p. 107.

[10] "A Last Testament," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 17/18 (1976), 307.

[11] Ronald Sutherland, "What was Frederick Philip Grove?" *Inscape* (Grove Symposium issue), 11 (Spring 1974), 8.

[12] Armin Arnold, a review of *FPG: The European Years, ESC* (1975), p. 244.

[13] (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p. 49.

[14] *André Gide and the Art of Autobiography: A Study of Si le grain ne meurt* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 59, 67, 68. The italics are mine.

[15] *Frederick Philip Grove* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969), p. 23; *FPG: The European Years*, p. 23.

[16] *In Search of Myself* (1946; rpt. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p. ix.

[17] *FPG: The European Years*, p. 214.

[18] Lucas, p. 307. The italics are mine.

[19] *FPG: The European Years*, pp. 214-15.

[20] *The Canadian Forum*, 11 (1931), 422.

[21] *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (Since 1866)* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1934), p. 705. Quoted by Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 193.

[22] "Thoughts and Reflections," pp. 51-52. The journal is in the Grove Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, University of Manitoba Libraries, University of Manitoba, Box 22, folder 2.

[23] *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove*, ed. Desmond Pacey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 333.

[24] That manuscript is in the possession of the novelist's son, A. L. Grove, who kindly permitted me to examine it.

[25] *UTQ*, 7 (1938), 460.

[26] Pascal, pp. 10, 11, 12.

[27] *FPG: The European Years*, p. 20.

[28] "Frederick Philip Grove and the Culture of Canada," *Saturday Night*, 61 (No-

vember 24, 1945), p. 18; rpt. *Frederick Philip Grove*, ed. Desmond Pacey (Toronto: Ryerson, 1970), p. 56.

[29] Pascal, p. 19.

[30] *Frederick Philip Grove*, p. 7.

[31] *Frederick Philip Grove* (New York: Twayne, 1973), p. 46.

[32] Transcript of the CBC "Wednesday Night" radio programme, "The Search for Frederick Philip Grove," Grove Collection, Box 23, folder 6, p. 21.

[33] "Canadian Dreiser," *The Canadian Forum*, 28 (September 1948), 121-22.

[34] Grove completed the autobiography in 1940. In 1941 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada; in 1946 he was awarded an honorary D.Litt. by the University of Manitoba, and an honorary LL.D. by Mount Allison University; in 1947 he received the Governor-General's Medal (Non-Fiction) for *In Search of Myself*.

[35] Pascal, p. 19.

[36] *A Search for America* (1927; rpt. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971), p. 59.

[37] *On Canadian Poetry* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1943), pp. 6, 13, 19-20.

WE ARE A CONVERSATION

E. F. Dyck

I say *whales* and they sound, under the city.
You say *trees* — ah, dear binaries —
and we argue *time*, its ecstasy, its arrow
rooted in — no — its history, our consequences.
We trade in stories:
This is the lay of man, I sing
This is the song of branches,
and you trace your verb to this phrase
now by my side and the night.

You laugh with me — my story is
that I bought a pregnant heifer
and having never owned a living
thing I am excited — the end again
eludes me, I grow desperate, push
it to calving, heifer to milk cow —
I sell the beast.

We remember a small boy, a bull calf quivering
the red verb blade, its twitch and two testicles
in his palm, nouns, and the waiting dog;
remember a little girl with her secret words
father, brother, lover — all verbs
searching for nouns, flight and bump.

Now let us eschew phrases (they sleep, they dream)
and follow the flying verb, the bumping noun
punctuating this sentence (for we are implicated)
with comma, with dash —
We are a conversation
Encoded in an ancient grammar
Let us parse this sentence and speak.

DESCENT, AS USUAL, INTO HELL

Robert Kroetsch

I've told her now so long
so often and sojourn *salut*

diamond
star or

(*ouest*
or quest or)

worry bead
relinquish

redolent as always
as the heated rose

summer and
a scent

(allot illusion as
is necessary to)

annealing praise
reticulate as tongue

mighty and a mouse
alike a maze

can he her up haul
or over if and may

asylum for her worship
in the night announce

the word of way
widen the weave

the was or is of
story is a story of

GROVE IN SEARCH OF AN AUDIENCE

Janet Giltrow

AS A FICTION WRITER, Frederick Philip Grove seems to have settled into his rightful place in Canadian literary history — perhaps not so eminent a place as he might have wished, but a stable position nevertheless. Grove as a writer of non-fiction is another matter. Because of their literal reference, Grove's non-fiction writings must go on facing their contradiction: specifically, Douglas Spettigue's researches into Grove's personal history.[1] *Over Prairie Trails* (1922), *The Turn of the Year* (1923) and *In Search of Myself* (1946) all declare by their formal characteristics that they proceed from a faithful relation to fact. In *Over Prairie Trails* Grove honours that relation, striving to secure an exact verbal representation of reality. Yet Spettigue has shown us that we can't always count on Grove, that Grove does not speak truthfully when he describes his early life and travels in *In Search of Myself*. So we find an unsettling division in Grove's non-fiction: on the one hand, the breathtaking lies of *In Search of Myself* and, on the other, the meticulous veracity of *Over Prairie Trails*. In this essay, I will try to account for Grove's duplicity as well as his truthfulness by focussing on his sense of audience: Grove was obsessed with the problem of audience, and with his falsehoods he tried to short-circuit ordinary rhetorical routes towards discovering, engaging and convincing his public.

A writer's genre determines his formal relation to his audience; his genre both limits and licenses what he will tell and atuhorizes by convention his claim to his audience's attention. The generic conventions which govern Grove's non-fiction and establish his relation to his audience are those of the travel book; Grove was a journey-maker, and the central event in his life was his move from the Old World to the New. In this he was something of a literary late-comer, for he shares the perspectives of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers in the tradition of North American travel narrative — St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, Moodie, Richardson, Thoreau, and others.

In classic travel, the writer-audience relation is highly specified: negatively, in that the writer *does not* address the foreign society to which his travels lead him; and positively, in that he does speak to the society he left behind, at home, about what has happened to him abroad. Grove's separation from his native German culture, his alienation in a foreign community which did not readily acknowledge

him, and his failure to adapt happily to the new culture turned him naturally towards the travel genre. If he was to be unheeded here, he would speak to an audience far away which would understand him, and he would tell about what Mrs. Moodie called "painful experience in a distant land." But, having taken up a genre which demanded a literal account of reality, why did he lie?

Facing this question, we must recognize the social aspects of travel writing, for Grove's non-fiction narratives (both true and untrue) were a literary response to a social predicament. Travel writing, like other uses of language, occurs in a social context, marked by relations among those who speak, listen or overhear. Kenneth Burke has suggested that all literature should be seen as "addressed," as being directed towards a postulated reader, as going between individuals and making connections.[2] This connection-making is a social function of texts, and genres establish their own forms of social relationship between reader and writer. Sociolinguistic theory acknowledges this characteristic of utterance and genre; by convention, genres transmit social information, above the content level, as to the speaker's status and identity vis-à-vis his audience, his community, and his subject.[3] The speaker in the travel genre obeys specific conventions: his discourse about foreign places is informative, conveying comprehensive factual data heretofore unknown to his audience;[4] he speaks as a member in good standing of the community he addresses, expressing himself in ways valued by that community rather than in ways valued by the foreign society he describes; clearly, in situations of language difference, he will use his native language rather than the language of the foreign place. His discourse in itself signals his continuing membership in his original culture; it is an agent of social coherence, and the writer's choice of genre indicates his idea of his place as a social being.

With these issues in mind, we find Grove in a peculiar position. In telling stories of travel, the writer presupposes a distant, attentive audience representing a community of which he is a member. But the "addressed" quality of Grove's art falters on two counts. First, the travel genre was no longer a stable literary form. After four centuries of providing a direct literary avenue between the New World and the Old, travel writing had lost its currency; once eager for the published journals of travellers, European readers were no longer paying close attention to exotic news from America. Whereas Susanna Moodie could appeal confidently to a nineteenth-century European audience which sympathized with her troubles and took an interest in her descriptions of Canadian life, Grove in the twentieth century enjoyed no such confidence. Travel writing could no longer presume a recognized relation between writer and reader and, therefore, could not perform efficiently the social function of reaffiliating the absent writer with the addressed community. Second, Grove's membership in the society he would address with his travel art was dubious; the educated German community which

would have been his ideal audience had, in effect, rejected him, even set the law on him, as Spettigue discovered. I suggest that Grove's lies were an attempt to reconstruct the feeling of belonging, the clear sense of having come from somewhere, which would give his non-fiction writings generic status, transmissibility, and meaning. Grove's own remarks show that the problem of transmissibility weighed heavily with him. Repeatedly, he complains about his lack of an appropriate audience; he confesses his "terrible need to communicate" and his need to "explain" what has happened to him; he describes numerous instances of social isolation where his voice is unheard or disregarded. In all, he felt the awesome silence that settles on the alien in a foreign place, and he wanted to break the silence by finding an interlocutor who would receive his communications from this remote place. Like those who had gone before, he needed to tell the story of his travels.

In Search of Myself, Grove's account of his wanderings in Europe and America, is the keystone of his reconstruction of his origins. Long taken as a reliable record of Grove's career, this book describes Grove's move from the Old World to the New, and in it Grove managed the informational conventions of travel-based narrative, including social commentary, in such a way as to convince his readers of the truth of his account. In its expression of the writer's attitude of discovery and his feelings of social disorientation, this book shares important features with classic North American travel narratives. Like Mrs. Moodie in *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852), Frances Trollope in *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), and John Richardson in *Eight Years in Canada* (1847), Grove felt demeaned and degraded in North America, unacknowledged and even despised. Like them, he resorted to long expositional narrative to recover his status. Unlike them, however, he knew no conclusive connection with a clearly identifiable audience sympathetic to his argument. Grove's ties with the Old World were ambiguous, tortuous, and attenuated.

In order to understand *In Search of Myself*, it is helpful to look at its novelistic precursor, *A Search for America* (1927). The shaping event of each narrative is identical: the relocation of the narrator from Europe to America. Obviously, this story was seminal to Grove's Canadian years, claiming his attention to the end. Not until the end, however, did he violate the boundary between fiction and non-fiction, deliberately miscueing his readers as to the nature of reference in *In Search of Myself*. When he did cross this boundary, he took *A Search for America* with him by suggesting to readers of *In Search of Myself* that his novel about emigration had been more fact than fiction.

A Search for America tells of a young man's loss of fortune in Europe, his emigration to Canada, and his travels in the United States. Having enjoyed a youth of cultural refinement and careless self-indulgence, the hero, Phil Branden, learns from his father that the money which supported his leisure is gone. Shut out from his accustomed life, Branden embarks for the New World.

His situation is a familiar one. Like Mrs. Moodie, rather than endure a *déclassé* destiny at home, Branden sets out reluctantly to repair his fortunes. In her introduction to the first edition of *Roughing It in the Bush*, Mrs. Moodie writes about the social circumstances connected with this kind of travel: "In most instances, emigration is a matter of necessity, not of choice; and this is more especially true of the emigration of persons of respectable connections, or of any station or position in the world. Few educated persons, accustomed to the refinements and luxuries of European society, ever willingly relinquish those advantages, and place themselves beyond the protective influence of the wise and revered institutions of their native land, without pressure of some urgent cause."[5] Grove represents Branden's "connections" as having been at least "respectable" — indeed, as nearly illustrious — and his station as eminent for so young a man. His educated mentality amounts to genius, and his habituation to the "refinements and luxuries of European society" is profound. In Mrs. Moodie's terms, then, Branden's emigration is a drastic occurrence, and, like earlier travellers from Europe, he must learn to put up with having his social and cultural assets and his education called into question in all his transactions in North America. He enters into an anomic phase of disorientation and isolation:

> I had stepped from what I could not help regarding as a well-ordered, comfortable environment into what had upon me the effect of an utter chaos. For the moment all human contact was non-existent. I felt that not only had I to learn a great many things, the social connections of a world entirely different from the world I knew, for instance; but I also had laboriously to tear down or at least to submerge what I had built up before — my tastes, inclinations, interests. My everyday conversation had so far been about books, pictures, scientific research. Not a word had I heard or spoken about these things since I had set foot on the liner which took me across the Atlantic.[6]

Branden becomes anonymous, for his European identity is now obsolete. Moreover, he enters into a regime of silence; not a word is "heard or spoken" of what had been his accustomed intercourse with his fellow creatures.

In the third section of the narrative, "The Depths," Branden becomes a tramp, passing into a social void. He sets off on foot, westward: "I have left the society of man. I am an outcast. . . . I am alone; I stand against the world." Now complete quiet descends on him as he avoids all contact with other men, and is "silent for days and days at a stretch." In this extreme isolation, silence becomes tolerable: "I established a mood which eliminated the feeling of loneliness. It

may have been because I got used to being alone. That terrible need for communication, for imparting to others what I garnered in impressions, moods, thoughts was on the wane." Itinerancy seems to rationalize Branden's reticence; as an alien traveller, he cannot or will not establish the social relations that generate talk. He gets used to keeping quiet.

But it is not strictly true that he was free of the "terrible need for communication." In *In Search of Myself* Grove describes the composition of the Phil Branden narrative: "in 1893, at the end of the year, I settled down to write the story of what I had lived through since August, 1892. The result was a manuscript of, at a conservative estimate, between five and six hundred thousand words which I called *A Search for America*."[7] Grove's dating is false, but his idea about writing is heartfelt; what was not expressible in social intercourse was imparted, in a flood of garrulousness, in a literary form. When the time came for speaking out, Grove compensated a thousandfold for the verbal restrictions of life in the New World. And he also redressed his anonymity, for, with his two long narratives about his travels, Grove would make up for his lack of social recognition by publishing the details of his identity.

Here we must face the problem of Grove's self-misrepresentation. Spettigue's inspired researches into Grove's European past revealed an impoverished, irregular background which was a far cry from the opulent origins described in *A Search for America* and *In Search of Myself*. Grove came from agrarian stock, but before he was two years old his parents had left the land and settled in Hamburg, where his father found humble employment with the civic transit authority. By becoming a civil servant, Grove's father gave his family some claim to lower middle-class status. As a schoolboy, Grove developed scholarly ambitions, and in his later school years he consorted with children of families of higher social class. Over a period of two or three years during his young manhood he studied intermittently at German universities, but never acquired a degree. He tried to ingratiate himself with the literati, received some modest recognition for his poetry and translations, but finally failed to win the regard of the intelligentsia. Out of this confusion of social influences and aspirations comes a sense of Grove's classlessness and of his having been socially uprooted by his ambition long before he left for Canada. Of one thing we can be sure: Grove — or Felix Paul Greve — was no affluent gadabout but a rather seedy translator, poet, and novelist, eventually imprisoned for debt and fraud. It was this sordid indebtedness, not the loss of a magnificent fortune, which led to his emigration. Spettigue reckons that Grove didn't arrive in America until 1909 — fifteen years later than he claimed. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this web of subterfuge is the credulity of Grove's Canadian audience; by exploiting the informational conventions of travel narrative, Grove was accepted as the man he wanted to be. He created credentials for himself.

In his "Prologue" to *In Search of Myself*, Grove sketches the occasion of the book. His feelings of professional failure were crystallized, he says, when he saw a newly published biography of a "Frenchman, still living, who in my early days had been one of my intimates." The fame of this former cohort (taken to be André Gide) threw into relief Grove's own inability to find an audience. He compares his own obscurity to the prominence of the coterie of which he claims to have been a member: "of that group there was not one, except myself, who, that day, was not known beyond the confines of his country."

Grove implies that, had he not moved to the New World, he, too, would have found recognition. The audience unavailable in Canada would have been his in Europe. Yet all is not lost, for he can still attack the issue of his demoralizing anonymity. He can speak out, through his art: "If I could explain, to someone, why I had failed, the explanation might more than compensate for the failure to have made myself heard so far. Could I explain it? I did not know. I saw the reasons clearly enough. I must try. And 'to someone'? To whom? To whom but my friend the young Frenchman who was now a man of seventy or more." Grove clearly identifies his audience as European. Now uttered after years of obscurity and silence, this long talk — the "explanation" — will be directed to the sympathetic listener from whom his travels have separated him. Bypassing the uncomprehending Canadians who have so far paid no attention, the document becomes "addressed," and transmissible. Furthermore, the explanation "might more than compensate" for the years of being unheard. Being unheard and unacknowledged is, it seems, an inspiring experience, and the lack of encouraging social relations leads to literary work. Much later in *In Search of Myself*, when he fails to establish himself in the regular network of Canadian life, Grove feels again the "terrible need" to communicate; he wants to write: "the less congenial my surroundings became, the more insistently did my old aims and aspirations try to raise their buried heads. . . . "

In trying to "explain" his feelings of failure and isolation, Grove constructs an elaborate European background to his Canadian life, making sure his readers will understand the fitness of his having selected the famous Frenchman as a receiver of his communiqué. He tells us that his magnificent home, "Castle Thurow," was a "world in itself," sumptuous and secure. And even when young Grove was away from home, on his continental travels, he was part of a definable community, attached as he was to his admired and well-known mother: "No matter where my mother went, she dropped automatically into milieus where it established a higher claim to attention and even distinction to have written a notable book, to have painted an enduring picture, to have carved a fascinating statue than to have amassed wealth or even to have ruled nations." When he grew up, Grove acquired social credentials like his mother's: "I had a talent for forming the centre of certain groups. . . . I don't know what it was that

gave me this power of forming a nucleus of crystallization; I only knew I had it." Certainly, these elements of the narrative — the "world in itself" of the boyhood home, the "milieus" in every city, the "certain groups" of which Grove was the "nucleus" — establish a sense of social coherence in Grove's early life.

In the Canadian west there were no "milieus," and standards for community membership were opposite to those Grove attributes to the European circles he knew: here, wealth and political power carried the day. And if Grove once had a talent for being a "nucleus," he lost it in the New World, where he seems to have repelled rather than attracted social particles. Even when he takes up a teaching career, he remains socially isolated, and resists assimilation. As principal of the Winkler school in Manitoba he finds that "any sort of social life simply did not exist for me. Even as a farmhand I had . . . had more human contacts. . . . " When he marries, he draws his wife into the void; at Gladstone, "socially, we lived, apart from the Anglican minister's family, in as complete isolation as at Winkler."

Significantly, Grove describes his social predicament in a linguistic conceit. He writes: "I felt an exile. I was an exile. I did not live among people of my own kind; among people who, metaphorically, spoke my language. . . . " During the Great War, the people of Gladstone became suspicious of Grove's foreign origins and he despaired at the possibility of declaring his special kind of allegiance to Canada: "what could the people of Gladstone know about that? Could I even try to explain it to them? I should have had to speak an English to them as foreign as, let me say Czech. I had not even published any one of my books." Grove's concept of "language" here shows how deeply he felt the restrictions on expression in his new life. He felt as alienated, linguistically, as the monolingual traveller among foreign speakers. And Grove's thoughts on his "language" problems lead him directly to the idea of a specialized, literary use of his alien tongue, as the final sentence in the last-quoted passage shows. With writing and publication come feelings of belonging to some cultural community — remote or near. If Grove could believe that his language and "explanation" were intelligible and heeded in another place, he could ignore the hostility of the communities where he more or less temporarily resided. He could rely, as Susanna Moodie did, on the long-distance social connections brought about by publication.

But unlike Susanna Moodie, Grove had recourse to no reliable audience or social group abroad. As Spettigue has shown, Grove even in Europe existed on the dim margins of society. The few social ties which endured during the final period of his European life were negative ones, which he cut with his flight. Grove had no residual connections with his origins; there was no one in his life to receive letters-home, and no social group with which he could whole-heartedly identify and which could figure as an audience. His relationship to the distant

audience postulated in the "Prologue" is a fantasy, but a functional one rhetorically for it yields the formal occasion of the narrative.

Through *In Search of Myself*, Grove argues that his failure to discover a more immediate audience is a corollary of the immaturity of Canadian culture. Nearly a century earlier, John Richardson, who desired a reverent audience almost as much as Grove did and who was also overtaken by poverty and obscurity, published similar grievances about Canada's disregard of its artists. Grove's and Richardson's ideas on art and culture spring from similar social experiences. In *Eight Years in Canada* Richardson told about his experiences here and his disappointed attempts to fit into Canadian society after having returned for the official purpose of dispatching reports of the Canadian political situation to the London *Times*. Settled in a village in Upper Canada, Richardson felt that he was being buried alive. Immobilized by financial attachments, Richardson took a morbid view of permanent residence; his morose depression was relieved only by his irritation at local manners and his yearning for a more hospitable milieu. Similarly, Grove at the end of his life settled at Simcoe, Ontario, and committed himself through mortgage and other indebtedness to permanent residence. The situation aroused in him feelings like Richardson's: anxiety over powerlessness and demise, as well as expostulations against the indifference shown him by the Canadian community. But unlike Richardson, who finally sold up and moved on, Grove would travel no more. He lived his last years at Simcoe, and died there, although not without first expressing his desire to be on his way again. Remembering his earlier wanderings, he writes: "If there were no responsibilities involved, I should gladly leave the place I live in and join the army of those who are on the road; and if, as it would be bound to do, such a course, at my age, led to my physical breakdown, I would still take a savage sort of satisfaction out of the fact that I should 'crack up' by the side of the trail, by way of protest against what we call civilization." If he could keep moving, Grove's feelings of alienation would have meaning: his death would be a "protest" and public statement. But as long as he stays put, he faces all the social signs of his failure and powerlessness; his worries about debt suggest a recurrence of the desperation which led to his flight from Germany.

In Search of Myself compensates for the anonymity Grove experienced in North America by creating an identity for him. In this respect, *In Search of Myself* is a rhetorically successful text, its success demonstrated by the numerous reiterations of this fabricated biography in commentary on Grove's work. Right into the 1970's, until Spettigue's researches received wide attention, critics repeated the story of Grove's eminent beginnings in Europe, finding it, perhaps, especially appropriate to some current ideas about the neglect of Canadian art and artists.[8] Once launched in a referential form, Grove's fictions about himself made their way into the public domain as information.

IN SEARCH OF MYSELF is a product of inauspicious residence, *Over Prairie Trails* a product of propitious itinerancy. Stationed permanently at Simcoe, with no hope of escape through renewed travel, Grove turned to fantasy to explain his alienation. On the road, however, in the earlier period described in *Over Prairie Trails*, the actual form of Grove's life accounted for his alienation, and he needed no fictions to explain his view of himself and his environment. In *In Search of Myself*, he describes this interval when domestic arrangements necessitated — or invited — weekly travels, as the "happiest year of our lives" and *Over Prairie Trails* as an "inspired book."

Over Prairie Trails describes the winter of 1917-18, when Grove taught in Gladstone; his wife and daughter lived in an isolated teacherage at Falmouth, thirty-five miles away, where Mrs. Grove taught. Each Friday, Grove travelled by horse and buggy or, later in the winter, by horse and sleigh, to Falmouth. Each Sunday he returned to Gladstone. In making these trips, Grove showed that his attachments were elsewhere than in Gladstone, where he worked. At the same time, by working and living five days a week in Gladstone, he made himself only a visitor at Falmouth. In effect, he belonged nowhere — except on the road, as he travelled the route that became for this season the axis of his life.

As in classic travel narrative, the journey is all in *Over Prairie Trails*. Only the most meagre details hint at the conditions of the traveller's life at each end of the axis. The self-aggrandizing "I" of *In Search of Myself*, extravagantly accumulating attributes, looming ever larger, is not present in *Over Prairie Trails*. Here Grove doesn't have to tell about his wonderful beginnings, for the features of his discourse will tell enough. The structure of his text: narrative coextensive with itinerary; the logic of his text: inference drawn from first-hand observation; the semantic character of his text: literal reference secured by expert diction — all these features signify that the writer is a man of inquiring spirit, educated eye, and authoritative voice. Here the travels can predominate over the traveller, who is only their agent. The travels are a text in themselves, a "thing of beauty," a *raison d'être*. Grove writes in his preface: "These drives . . . soon became what made my life worth living."[9]

Each week's drive is an encounter with exotic desolation. Although his itinerary connects established communities and passes through settled areas, Grove is the only traveller abroad in the seven drives reported; he seldom sees the tracks of other travellers, and the few farms he passes show only negligible human signs. Grove likes this emptiness. During the drive described in the chapter "Fog," he experiences a benign isolation: " I was shut in, closed off from the world around. . . . It was like a very small room, this space of light — the buggy itself, in darkness, forming an alcove to it, in which my hand knew every well-appointed detail.

Gradually, while I was warming up, a sense of infinite comfort came, and with it the enjoyment of the elvish aspect." In the chapter "Snow," the very absence of human contact seems to reinforce his pleasure in his travels: "None of the farms which I passed showed the slightest signs of life. I had wrapped up again and sat in comparative comfort and at ease, enjoying the clear sparkle and glitter of the snow." Out here, on the road, the silence surrounding the solitary traveller makes a psychological shelter. Free of impinging opinions, his mentality ranges round him as he scrutinizes natural phenomena. He is the sole human factor, positioned centrally, a "nucleus" again.

After his description of the "elvish" comfort discovered in the fog, Grove's observations begin to work outward from this privacy to acquire materials for his text: "I began to watch the fog. By bending over towards the dashboard and looking into the soon arrested glare I could make out the component parts of the fog." His analyses of fog, of hoarfrost, of snow and drift, are like Thoreau's examinations of seaweed in *Cape Cod* (1865), or of phosphorescent wood in *The Maine Woods* (1864). The informational status of these writings — first-hand, factual, exhaustive — gives Thoreau and Grove the right to speak, and claim an audience. With their work towards discovering the natural world through expert watchfulness and precise, often scientific language, they make places for themselves. Like Thoreau, who became a "large owner in the Merrimack intervals," Grove appropriated parts of the terrain, making small rooms and private places.

For each writer, this literary tenancy offset his economic exclusion from other forms of ownership. In both *A Search for America* and *In Search of Myself*, Grove praises the easy terms on which Thoreau engaged poverty. However, this aspect of Thoreau's life seems to have remained an unattainable (and probably undesired) ideal for Grove, and the disparities between Thoreau's career and Grove's are conspicuous. Thoreau stayed put, productively; Grove felt only baleful despair when domiciled permanently at Simcoe. Thoreau's righteous pleasure in the decency of poverty need only be compared with Grove's nearly senile fantasies about wealth in *In Search of Myself* to reveal the distinctions separating the social mentalities of the two writers.

But when Grove speaks frankly about his travels, he can achieve the kind of heightened documentation that Thoreau had made out of his voyage on the Concord and Merrimack, his excursions to Cape Cod and his expeditions to the forests of Maine. In Chapter 4, "Snow," Grove surmounts a drift as high as the adjacent treetops, and reaches a moment of nearly unnerving perception:

> What lay to the right or left seemed not to concern me. I watched [the horses] work. They went in bounds, working beautifully together.... It probably did not take more than five minutes, maybe considerably less, before we had reached the

> top, but to me it seemed like hours of nearly fruitless endeavour. I did not realize at first that we were high. I shall never forget the weird kind of astonishment when the fact came home to me that what snapped and crackled in the snow under the horses' hoofs, were the tops of trees. Nor shall the feeling of estrangement, as it were — as if I were not myself, but looking on from the outside at the adventure of somebody who yet was I — the feeling of other-worldliness, if you will pardon the word, ever fade from my memory — a feeling of having been carried beyond my depth where I could not swim — which came over me when with two quick glances to right and left I took in the fact that there were no longer any trees to either side, that I was above the forest world which had so often engulfed me.

In this instant of exultant travel, Grove has journeyed farther than ever before, into an "other-worldliness." Riding high, Grove and his aerial sleigh are more than an image of transcendence: they are an actuality. No fictions are necessary to redeem Grove's sense of self. Neither argument nor vehemence is required to "explain" the author's claim to his audience's regard. He enjoys the rhetorical privilege of the travel writer; having gone to such lengths, he commands his reader's attention with his far-fetched news.

Grove's dangerous travels repudiate sedentary values and, on the whole, the townspeople are against his drives: they advise against his excursions; once they literally stand in his way, causing a serious delay. "I disliked the town," Grove writes, "the town disliked me." His successful travels are in effect subversive; they show his independence of the community which tries to absorb him and his contempt for the civic delegation which blocks his exit from the school one Friday afternoon. Grove's dealings with the communities in which he taught seem always to have assumed this political character and perhaps only in this winter of 1917-18 did he have the clear opportunity to resist the coercion of school boards.

Overcoming the social obstacles that would stop him in his tracks, Grove gets on his way. But it is not just his resolute departure which expresses his independence. His investigations of nature — skies, mists, temperatures — have a result beyond their informativeness; they also show that he does not share the outlook of the townspeople he leaves behind each Friday. "I am aware," he writes, "that nobody — nobody whom I know, at least — takes the slightest interest in such things." This way of speaking, this exhaustive and precise report of natural surroundings, is not valued by the community. Grove's narrative, then, does not address the population of Gladstone, for it is indifferent, but some other group which shares his refined sensitivity to nature. The more involved and subtle his discoveries as a naturalist, the further Grove distinguishes himself from the community in which he lives.

BEFORE THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, the naturalist's art in America had traditional connections with a European audience. John and William Bartram, the Philadelphia traveller-naturalists, and John Audubon, for instance, looked to European sponsors for their public. So did the eighteenth-century French traveller St. Jean de Crèvecoeur see the proper recipients of observations of America as European. Crèvecoeur settled down for ten years in pre-revolutionary America, but his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) shows that his watchful, inquiring attitude made his residence only a sojourn in a foreign place. When the fictional narrator of that book begins his project of sending reports on the American scene — natural and social — to a European correspondent, his wife warns him that his work will alienate him from the local community, set him going hither and yon and do him no good in the long run. He proceeds nonetheless — and eventually finds himself irreversibly estranged from American society, a persecuted victim of republican hysteria. The consequences of Grove's activities as an observer are certainly less catastrophic; he only makes his annual transfer to another school district. Further, he does not know Crèvecoeur's certainty that his informational writings will find an interested public abroad. But he does mark, with his excursions and methodical notations, the same separation from indigenous culture and economy which was the lot of Crèvecoeur's narrator.

The comparison between Grove and Crèvecoeur's farmer also pertains to *The Turn of the Year*, for in parts of that book Grove represents himself as a country-dweller, ordinarily involved in agrarian life, just as the narrator of the *Letters* is involved in farm work until he begins his investigative excursions. These parts begin and end Grove's book. The central part of his text recounts a series of bicycle journeys between Falmouth and a more northerly settlement, Leifur. There, in the middle section, he is on the road again, set apart as he is in *Over Prairie Trails*.

Three of the first six chapters of the book describe the seasons. (The other three, intermingled, are fragmentary fictions.) In these descriptive chapters, Grove often uses "we" to represent the observer, thereby suggesting a community of perception of which the narrator is part. For example, he becomes a spokesman for local experience when he writes: "we follow the tracks of the rabbits to where they have gnawed the boles of the young aspens; and we read the interlacing, busy-looking spoors of the prairie-chickens. . . ."[10] In these chapters, Grove presents cyclical time, recurrences rather than occurrences, and his perspective is fixed and local. However, in the long Chapter 7, "The Gloom of Summer," which comprises one-third of the text, he abandons the pronominal plural and the cyclical chronology. At the same time he returns to a linear

chronology and to the journey form for narrative structure. Grove is on his own again.

As in *Over Prairie Trails*, Grove in "The Gloom of Summer" is separated from his family — Mrs. Grove and their child remain at Falmouth while he teaches a summer term at Leifur — and he makes weekly twenty-five mile journeys to pass his weekends with them. Once more, he belongs nowhere — at neither Leifur nor Falmouth — having given up the social membership suggested in the earlier parts of the book.

Travelling north from Falmouth for the first time, Grove finds that he has come far. He enters a strange region remote from the strawberry-covered fields around the cottage at Falmouth:

> Dark, unknown, and gloomy, the shade of night seemed to crouch in these woods, ready to leap out on the clearings and the road, as soon as the sun should sink, threatening with incomprehensible potentialities. Somehow these woods reminded me of Darwin's description of the forests of Tierra del Fuego.

Although Grove is less than twenty-five miles from his point of departure, he is on an exotic adventure, making discoveries as marvellous as Darwin's. Like Thoreau, who could discover unheard-of wonders only a few miles out of Concord, Grove is alert to every sign of foreignness. His sojourn at Leifur has a macabre aspect, and the sullen northern summer has an estranging effect on the visitor. The woods, says Grove, are "gloomy, elemental, terrible in their gloom." Certainly, there is no question of staying on in this murky location, and Grove departs promptly when the term ends.

To other parts of the Manitoba landscape Grove expresses fond attachment. When he and his family first saw the isolated teacherage at Falmouth, Grove felt he had finally come home:

> The nearest farm was a mile away. The desolation of it all touched the innermost chords of my soul and made them vibrate.
>
> It was nothing short of a revelation. I was at home here. (*In Search of Myself*)

This was Grove's second homecoming. The first occurred, he says, during an expedition to the Arctic in his youth. His journey across the Siberian steppes touched those "innermost chords," too: "the steppe got under my skin and into my blood. . . . only when I struck my roots into the west of Canada did I feel at home again. . . . " Grove made no Arctic expedition; his experience of the steppes is a fantasy. And, in a way, his homecoming at Falmouth is a fantasy, too. He installed his family in this vast and, to him, endearing desolation but he himself stayed at Gladstone. And the "roots" he struck in the Canadian west were shallow and portable. Except for the few early chapters of *The Turn of the Year*, Grove's descriptions of the Canadian landscape are those of an alien wayfarer. His most perfect art — *Over Prairie Trails* and "The Gloom of Summer" — follows

the formal values of the travel genre and Grove at his best as an artist was Grove telling the story of his travels.

Over Prairie Trails seems not only "inspired" but also inevitable. Yet so is *In Search of Myself* a necessary complement to the earlier document. Grove went out from no clearly defined point of departure; certainly he did not originate in Gladstone and his audience was not to be found there. As he says over and over in *In Search of Myself*, he has no proper audience: he speaks another language, his voice is unheard, his manuscripts are returned to him unread. Up against this silent void, Grove constructs, in *In Search of Myself*, a meticulously imagined system of origins and a vehement sense of having come from somewhere. He cannot entertain any idea of going back there; the return trip would be as fantastical as the Siberian expedition, the destination as illusory as Castle Thurow. But he can map out the course of his art towards the culture he left behind. He can postulate the "Frenchman," the listener who shares his values and outlook, and thus make his writings transmissible. With his fictions of his origins, Grove makes his own audience for the story of his travels.

We can compare Grove to Susanna Moodie in his feelings of social estrangement and his compensatory literary activity. But he finally differs from her in his extraordinary loneliness. Grove belonged nowhere; he had burned his bridges. Even before he crossed the Atlantic, he had been rejected by the groups to which he yearned to belong. Felix Paul Greve was dead to the world he left behind him; in extricating himself from shady and even criminal involvements in Germany, he feigned suicide.[11] Crossing the Atlantic, he didn't even carry with him his own name. The "silence of the grave" which Mrs. Moodie felt closing over her as former attachments shrivelled was something Grove brought on himself. When he broke the silence with his writing, he wrote in English, thereby only indirectly addressing the literate German readers to whom his values and discursive arguments speak. But Canadian readers intercepted the message from the New World; when Grove finally did discover his audience, it was North American and not European. The "Frenchman" was surely not attending to Grove's "explanation," but Canadians were, at last.

A writer's choice of genre reflects the social context of his utterance — situation determines genre. Certainly, this is true of Grove's travel writings. Alien, aloof, disregarded in the community where he lived, he adopted rhetorical strategies generically directed towards a distant audience. But the converse is also true: Grove's choice of non-fiction genre, and his manipulation of its informational conventions, created a social context for him and his art. The response of Canadian readers to *In Search of Myself* put him in the place he wanted to be. Relishing Grove's impeccable pseudo-credentials, glad to stand in for the famous "Frenchman," the Canadian literati perpetuated Grove's fantasies of eminent

beginnings, publicized his frustrations and acclaimed his achievements. With his story of his travels, Grove stepped out of his voiceless, classless anonymity and situated himself.

NOTES

[1] Pursuing a train of inconsistencies in Grove's various accounts of himself, Douglas Spettigue published *Frederick Philip Grove* in 1969, "Frederick Philip Grove: A Report from Europe" (*Queen's Quarterly*, 78) in 1971, "The Grove Enigma Resolved" (*Queen's Quarterly*, 79) in 1972, and *FPG: The European Years* (Ottawa: Oberon Press) in 1973. References to Spettigue's findings are to those reported in this last publication.

[2] See, especially, Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950; Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969), pp. 38-39. "Address" is part of Burke's overall concept of "identification" — the process by which the use of language reinforces, structures, even creates social groupings and "hierarchies" — which is noticeably applicable to a case like Grove's, where social concerns are explicit.

[3] Succinct statements of sociolinguistic principles appear in John J. Gumperz's introduction to *Directions in Sociolinguistics*, ed. Gumperz and Hymes (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972), pp. 1-25, and in Dell Hymes's "Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Life," pp. 35-71, in that collection. In *Foundations of Sociolinguistics* (1974; rpt. London: Tavistock, 1977), Hymes surveys more extensively the possibilities for study of ways of speaking in relation to notions of speech community, speech situation and speech genre, as well as noting the convergence of interest of sociolinguistics and literary theory. See, especially, pp. 45-66.

[4] I use here James L. Kinneavy's definition of informative discourse, as he presents it in *A Theory of Discourse* (1970; New York: Norton, 1980), pp. 77-193. Kinneavy maintains that the three essential elements of information are factuality, comprehensiveness and "surprise value." All three elements exist conventionally in travel narrative; the travel narrator speaks exhaustively about what he has witnessed firsthand, and his subject is by definition foreign — new and "surprising" — to his stay-at-home audience.

[5] Susanna Moodie, *Roughing It in the Bush* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1962), p. xv.

[6] Frederick Philip Grove, *A Search for America* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971), p. 39.

[7] Frederick Philip Grove, *In Search of Myself* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p. 181.

[8] See, for example, even Carleton Stanley's review article on Desmond Pacey's *Frederick Philip Grove*, "Frederick Philip Grove" (*Dalhousie Review*, 26 [1946], pp. 434-41), which retails the most luminous details of Grove's inventions. Twenty-five years later an article on "Grove and Existentialism" (*Canadian Literature*, 43 [1970], pp. 67-76) by Frank Birbalsingh dutifully opens with the same old stuff. Grove's imposture, however, must have its greatest success in W. B. Holliday's "Frederick Philip Grove: An Impression" (*Canadian Literature*, 3 [1960], pp. 17-22). The author, who lived for a time with the Groves at Simcoe, presents eye-witness corroboration of Grove's fantasies, finding him "a patrician by nature as well as by birth," one who "as an affluent youth . . . had moved with ease in the great cities of Europe," and so on. In *FPG: The European Years*,

Spettigue makes an insightful observation on this whole process of verification; he suggests that Pacey's consultation of the manuscript of *In Search of Myself* and his publication of pseudo-information from it in *Frederick Philip Grove* (1945) added to the documentary weight of *In Search of Myself* when it appeared the following year.

[9] Frederick Philip Grove, *Over Prairie Trails* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1970), p. xiii.

[10] Frederick Philip Grove, *The Turn of the Year* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), p. 21.

[11] See Spettigue, *FPG: The European Years*, pp. 161-68.

from WHALE CONSTELLATIONS

Kristjana Gunnars

1

then grandfather rose
at dawn with the men.
their open boat rocked
by the pier, their hand
harpoons & arrows pointed
at night, at familiar
whale. they circled, aimed
just degrees away;
partly visible, they knew
it was there.

now we face north
emptied of past years.
like two outer stars we circle
ursa major, a great bear.
on a black & open night
we walk under seven stars

& i am unfamiliar
to myself. only part of me is
easy to see. new
days grow before me
but i am not yet
dependable, not whole

18

grandfather hunted blue
whale units
numbers based on oil
yield (blue, fin, hump-
back, sperm — types
compared by size
of wound).
the length, the weight

of a year is the same:
limited in body
serialized in a mass.
we chase constellations of
boötes' dogs
& hunt small
years that dip away.

there was opposition
in grandfather's industry.
scarcity shifted & then —
abandonment.

we need that caution
to match our decline, we
need to pursue
sharpness of whale that learns
in time to avoid
dangerous water
as the dogs' eyes
fade in spring mist

19

the antarctic stocks are
severely reduced. grandfather's
latest catch meant little;
the populations exploited,

explored. now
factory ships cruise where
grandfather whaled. tankers
fitted with factory
plants are moored
in harbor in humpback
fisheries. the small industry,
regular, land-based, runs
toward an end.

i begin at the end,
shape the line of descent,
of third & fourth
generations. i am the last
star denebola
in leo, i am the first
in virgin's head. a tale
of spica, i end
in the first magnitude
& rest. my relative
unimportance alters over the years:

take a place
among whale species,
take a line of measures
among the first steps
to conserve stocks. take licence
for catchers at work —
& this story of stars
is restricted
by silent change
silent head

28, I

remember the whales
stranded on the sand —
a school, maybe thirty or more
still unrecorded
deformed with healed
skeletal fractures? that way
they lay on the beach
when night refused
to cover the evidence
& the midnight sun shone
like rich stars in archer's bow.

grandfather told me of whales
trapped in ice as the sea
froze, broken
in the lower jaws,
a flipper missing, flukes
mutilated. he suspected
whale once was
highly developed. not
scarce but smart. not
dying out but modified
in habit. whale
avoids dangerous ground
& becomes suspicious of ships:

now he is dead.

28, II

when the milky way is brightest
i cannot remain
unrevealed. no glass, no
telescope is needed to know
the myth of sagittarius
shooting scorpion who bit
orion the hunter
to death.
when the archer is in
the sky, the hunter is
dead.

our life too is hazard.
even in the brightest time
a fractured face reveals
a hurt intelligence;
the habitual suffering
of suspicion.

& when i strand
like this on your night,
remember grandfather
& the accident of whales.

GROVE'S NEW WORLD BLUFF

K. P. Stich

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.

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books in review

RELUCTANT NATIONALIST

ELSPETH CAMERON, *Hugh MacLennan: A Writer's Life*. Univ. of Toronto Press, $24.95.

ELSPETH CAMERON'S LIFE OF Hugh MacLennan is the most thorough and most revealing account yet published of the life and writings of a Canadian author. A large claim, and perhaps a contentious one. But true. Only Douglas Spettigue's account of Grove's early years comes close to the standard Cameron has attained. Indeed, for sheer brilliance of scholarly detective work, Spettigue far outshines Cameron — or any other Canadian critic. But *FPG* covers only a part of its subject's life, and is more concerned with establishing Grove's identity than with explaining how that identity shaped Grove's Canadian fiction. On the other hand, Cameron's book is a comprehensive biography, a sustained and satisfying encounter between a perceptive critic and a major writer. Cameron's book will surely be recognized as a landmark in the development of Canadian criticism.

Cameron's main thesis is that MacLennan's novels "bear a profound relationship to the course of his life." That is, Cameron's study confirms what many of MacLennan's readers have long suspected, that his fiction is often a kind of displaced autobiography. Above all, MacLennan's dictatorial, often puritanical male characters owe much to his father, "Dr. Sam" MacLennan, a demanding and authoritarian parent, who closely supervised young Hugh's career until his graduation from Princeton with a PhD at the age of twenty-eight. Even then, MacLennan only escaped his father by the skin of his teeth, when he was unexpectedly offered a teaching position at Lower Canada College in Montreal.

In effect, MacLennan experienced a greatly prolonged adolescence that left him in emotional turmoil. Fundamentally he respected his father's ideas and standards. He could never simply rebel against parental authority and be done with it. Yet his father's expectations were a heavy burden. Young Hugh defined success in much the same way as his father did — as making a contribution to "civilization." The teaching of Latin grammar to the children of well-to-do Montrealers did not seem a vital contribution to society's health. And teaching demanded time that MacLennan would have preferred to devote to writing fiction, his own chosen route to success. Throughout the later 1930's, when his two first efforts at fiction remained unpublished, MacLennan felt he had not fulfilled his father's hopes — or his own. In short, he felt himself a failure.

When Dr. Sam died in 1939, MacLennan faced a personal dilemma. Even if his future books succeeded, how could he show his father that he had made a success of his life? So acutely did MacLennan feel his father's absence that for several months he continued to write letters to the dead man. In these letters, he sought to rationalize his apparent failure and transfer the blame to external conditions. Therefore, I feel Cameron is wrong to interpret the letters as the continuation of an apparent reconciliation between Dr. Sam and his son. Rather, MacLennan's subsequent novels, with their recurrent father-son conflicts, provide evidence that he retained a deeply ambivalent attitude towards his father.

I would argue that MacLennan used his novels to work out a hostility he could

never bring himself to openly acknowledge. In his first four novels the confrontation with the father becomes increasingly explicit, until in *Each Man's Son* MacLennan paints a severely critical portrait of Dr. Ainslie, who is closely modelled on Dr. Sam. But this novel also embodies MacLennan's atempt to understand his father *from within*. By putting himself in Dr. Sam's place, MacLennan was able to forgive his father's harshness and lack of overt warmth. Indeed, if the conclusion of *Each Man's Son* is read from Alan MacNeil's viewpoint (that is, from young Hugh's perspective), the novel marks MacLennan's liberating recognition that, despite a forbidding external manner, his father did want and love him.

A good biography should provide some surprises, and Cameron's book does this. The most unexpected revelation is the limited extent of MacLennan's knowledge about French Canada at the time he wrote *Two Solitudes*. He derived his picture of rural Quebec principally from Ringuet's *Trente Arpents*. Another surprise is the strength of MacLennan's impulse to leave Canada. Cameron makes it clear that MacLennan was, for a long time, a reluctant nationalist. In his two unpublished novels he wrote on "international" themes of universal importance. He used a Canadian setting in *Barometer Rising* only grudgingly, after he had reluctantly concluded that a perverse fate had doomed him to be a "Canadian" writer. In *Two Solitudes* he somewhat opportunistically mined the vein of Canadian approval he had struck with his first novel. For many readers these two novels filled a vacuum in Canadian letters; they were welcomed for their themes and forgiven their artistic flaws. Despite his enthusiastic Canadian reception (which, however, brought more applause than cash), MacLennan tried in *The Precipice* to break through to the larger American audience. He desperately wanted to write a best-seller. Only when *The Precipice* met a lukewarm reception did MacLennan fully resign himself to writing from his native background. Reluctantly, then, and despite a very un-Canadian appetite for applause and fortune, MacLennan pursued the literary career that has made him a Canadian national institution.

Since she began work on her project in 1974, Cameron has steeped herself in MacLennan's writings, both published and unpublished, and has read his extensive correspondence. She has studied the reviews of his books, and has interviewed not only MacLennan but also many of his friends. Her efforts have produced a book that is very detailed, a sort of fever chart of the fluctuations in MacLennan's emotional and intellectual life. But is this the best possible biography that could have been written using these materials? I raise this question because it is clear that Cameron is trying to write a Canadian literary biography that matches the standards set by such modern biographers as Leon Edel, Richard Ellmann, and Edgar Johnson. Judged at this level, I think Cameron's book has weaknesses. For example, she seems overly timid in using the psychological tools Edel advocates and her own interpretation of MacLennan seems to invite. She remarks that the ending of *Barometer Rising* has a deus ex machina quality about it. She fails to point out that the explosion, though superficially an arbitrary denouement, has a psychological aptness. The explosion acts out Neil Macrae's hostility towards Colonel Wain (and MacLennan's hostility towards Dr. Sam); the explosion achieves the secret wish that MacLennan could never let Neil (or himself) consciously admit.

Every modern biographer must choose between Boswellian accumulation of details and Strachean selectivity. Cameron's

book is emphatically in the Boswellian tradition. And like Boswell, Cameron has identified with her subject and prodded him for information; but she seems to lack Boswell's eye for the entertaining incident, the trivial but revealing anecdote. She has not taken to heart MacLennan's own repeated observation that today the best authors of non-fiction frequently use the techniques to fiction to enliven their narratives. Her book is perhaps overly earnest, too much like MacLennan's own prose at its most ponderous. Cameron shows us MacLennan the introvert, the tortured reasoner, the at times self-centred apologist for his own work. She doesn't show us MacLennan the raconteur, the boon companion, the lover of good liquor and genial conversation. She doesn't do justice to the side of MacLennan that produced the graceful familiar essays collected in *Thirty and Three* and *Scotchman's Return*, and that created such amusingly grotesque characters as Aunt Maria, Captain Yardley, and Matt McCunn.

My strongest reservation about Cameron's book concerns its lack of straightforward critical analysis of MacLennan's novels. Cameron explains the circumstances under which each novel was written, and she patiently outlines the twisted course of MacLennan's relations with his reviewers and his publishers. (Indeed, her study shows conclusively that MacLennan's novels were the result of a virtual collaboration between writer, publishers, and readers.) However, Cameron's closeness to her subject leads her to accept MacLennan's statements of intention as an adequate account of his final achievement. She often blames reviewers for misreading a novel when she might better analyze why the novel has failed to produce the desired response.

Above all, Cameron never confronts the question a young Peter Gzowski asked in a review of *Return of the Sphinx* brashly titled "Yes, But Can Our Major Authors Write?" How good a prose stylist is MacLennan? How believable (and how interesting) are his characters? How well can he arrange the incidents of his stories into coherent plots? To what extent was Diana Trilling right in suggesting that in MacLennan's novels "seriousness and decency do a very good job as proxy for art"? Cameron's failure to address the issue of MacLennan's artistic success or failure is a serious omission. I wonder, for instance, what non-Canadian readers or even Canadian readers who are not specialists in Canadian literature will make of the biography. I doubt they will understand what all the shouting is about. The book assumes, rather than argues, MacLennan's importance and skill.

But if Cameron does not analyze MacLennan's novels in detail, she does provide a revealing look at the man behind the novels. The reader need not agree with every detail of Cameron's interpretation in order to find the book valuable. Her abundant quotations provide a basis for reaching independent conclusions. The reader can sharply question (as I do) many of Cameron's judgments (for example, her assessment of the pretentious *Voices in Time* as "MacLennan's greatest novel") yet still understand why MacLennan's total accomplishment gives him a permanent place in our cultural history. If some of MacLennan's writings fall short of greatness, this only serves to remind us that MacLennan is after all a man, not a personification of the national zeitgeist.

Cameron's research has been thorough and accurate. I have only a few quibbles with her handling of facts. Why does she ignore his second published article, a left-leaning summary of the results of his doctoral research ["Oxyrhynchus," *Dalhousie Review*, 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1936), 314-23]? Why doesn't she mention the

novel about Montreal [mentioned in "Cape Breton: The Legendary Isle," *Saturday Night* (3 July 1951), 12-13] on which MacLennan says he spent six months before discarding it in favour of the book that became *Each Man's Son*? Shouldn't there be some mention of the doctor MacLennan insists (in a 1965 letter to the *Montreal Star*) is the model for Jerome Martell's healing touch, Dr. Reuben Rabinovitch of Montreal? Shouldn't Albert Jay Nock, author of a book that MacLennan admired and cited for almost forty years, get at least a word in passing? These are probably niggling points. But details as well as broad interpretations matter in a biography.

As Cameron points out in her preface, her book is part of a general reaction against the purely thematic criticism that prevailed in the sixties. Today many scholars are working to set Canadian criticism on a sounder and larger foundation of basic knowledge. One important result of this collective activity has been a growing interest in literary biography. Writers will be treated beside politicians and businessmen in the ongoing *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*; several smaller but still ambitious group projects are currently producing a large inventory of bio-critical studies of our authors; an entire conference has been devoted to the topic of Canadian literary biography. There is surely a connection between the study of individual identity and the study of collective identity. The current boom in biographical studies seems to presage a new stage in our pursuit of the elusive Canadian identity. At the outset of this process, Cameron's biography sets a worthy standard by which to measure all subsequent biographies of Canadian writers.

T. D. MACLULICH

TO REMEMBER

EARLE BIRNEY, *Spreading Time: Remarks on Canadian Writing and Writers. Book I: 1904-1949*. Véhicule Press.

THE FIRST VOLUME OF *Spreading Time* (Earle Birney's "literary memoirs") is here under its sub-title *Remarks on Canadian Writing and Writers — Book 1: 1904-1949*, and a very rewarding close-packed little volume it is — stimulating, entertaining, and instructive. One sees the graduate students swarming and "looking for indebtedness, Formal Influences, etc." in rummage for the author's precise Literary Relationships, confidently defining his *place*, tracing his literary *pedigree*, and finally assigning him to this stall or that. All their labour will prove vain. Birney has walked his own way, blazed his trail, and paced his path alone.

"Like most infants," he tells us, beginning *Spring Plowing 1904-26* (the first and longest and most attractive of the autobiographical sections under the running head of *As I remember*) "I absorbed 'poetry' before I could read, without knowing what it was." Thus he remembers his mother's lullabies and liltings and hymns and other "intercontinental chants echoed down from a Shetland croft . . . " ('O Caledonia! stern and wild / Meet nurse for a poetic child!). Also, however (and, in view of his future career, most significantly), he taught himself to read and, before school, had acquired "a permanent love affair with Words and their infinite shapes and sounds and meanings." These words are surely among the most affecting in the whole book. Of course, he had his parents' help, principally perhaps his father's; for, as the son has told us, that father had his own "quick eye & ear / & his faithful love-affair with words." It is all very moving — the solitary child ("Wordsworthian" is Birney's word) remote on the Albertan farmstead, puzzling out his language under Nature's ministry, the "flowers in the summer sun" and (severer intervention) "the vast snows of winter."

During boyhood in Banff, he took his chances with the holdings, Canadian and British, of the little school library; and it seems that he read, with a boy's eager appetite, whatever drifted within reach. At fourteen, in high school, he began to compose "bad verse"; and in Vernon at sixteen, a homesick junior bank teller, he found relief from loneliness in the composition of further verse equally "bad." There is nothing extraordinary in all this and nothing might have ensued; but he yielded to urgings (chiefly, it seems, his mother's) to enroll at some university. Accordingly, he entered (September 1922) the University of British Columbia. There he shortly made his first acquaintance with live poets. It was thoroughly disillusioning.

The first poet to come under young Birney's eye was Sir Henry Newbolt, giving a set imperialist speech with recitations of his own patriotic verse. When he intoned *Drake's Drum* (called by Birney after many years "a particularly silly jingle") the students responded with spontaneous booing. There was an exciting aftermath, of which Birney gives a lively account; and a scathing parody called *Henry's Horn* appeared in the student weekly. On Birney, it all had a profound effect. "I began to realize that poetry . . . had powers to provoke battles over ideas, rouse basic emotions, stir people to action. Out of *Henry's Horn* a flourish had been sounded I would never forget, an assertion of cultural independence . . . , a piece of *Canadiana*."

Subsequently three native Canadian poets — Wilson Macdonald, Bliss Carman, and Charles G. D. Roberts — were heard at the lectern and all found want-

ing. Birney (who had begun to nourish private ambitions to become a poet himself and was, in his junior year, to write the first draft of *Vancouver Lights*) dismissed them all. Two eloquent questions in *Spring Plowing* may best express his feelings in those days long past. "Who was there alive and young and coming up then? Would there ever be anyone to write the Canadian poetry that waited in the air?"

Benign influences upon him in his undergraduate years included the elfin Lionel Haweis with his "belief in the possibility of a significant Canadian literature," who taught the young aspirant "the pleasures of creative fellowship and the importance of trying." There was also the curriculum of English Honours which, though it failed to notice Canadian literature, yet gave him a sound first view of the whole body of English literature. Far and away the greatest and best influence was the legendary first Head of the Department, Garnett Sedgewick, then at the height of his powers. He introduced Birney to the scholarly study of Chaucer and furthermore, as Birney here says, "shocked parish-pumpery and intellectual laziness out of me, and replaced it with Arnoldian love for the 'best that has been thought in the world.' " In 1926, the subject for the Honours Seminar (that year conducted by Sedgewick) was Arnold's poetry and criticism. This acquaintance with Arnold was most important to Birney; and hence his reference to Sedgewick as "my mentor and culture-hero, my own Matthew Arnold. . . . "

Upon graduation, feeling that he had been "armed for a professional life in the research and teaching of literature" he decided to aim at that goal and left for

post-graduate study at Toronto "primarily in earlier English literature" — in short, as a medievalist. His work in linguistics sharpened an ear naturally acute, and he made notes upon the rhythms and intonations and dialectal forms of living speech. Afterward, during two years at the University of California, taking the Ph.D. program with philological emphasis, his work in linguistics was very wide — Gothic, Old Norse, Anglo-Saxon, Middle English, Old French, each with its associated literature and, to top all, extensive reading in the later periods of English itself. It was a remarkably rigorous and 'scientific' training in language, and he thoroughly enjoyed it. A fellow-student in that large impersonal graduate school still remembers Birney in high delight upon reading a couple of lines in Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* — 'Forty kine.... With strouting duggs that paggle to the ground.' He greeted the old poet's zestful words with a burst of happy laughter.

Out of all this comes Birney's dazzling play with words. From the brilliant and early *Anglosaxon Street* to the late *trawna tuh bellvul by knayjin psifik* and from the haunting *David* to *CHAT bilingual* (for example, *cucarachas in fiji*) or from *Turvey* to *Big Bird in the Bush* (to turn to prose), the language is heightened and extended by a master, qualified after years of arduous study. Granted, writing has always been a matter of words — but 'The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne....' And 'so sharp the conquering.' In all his wanderings over the earth, Birney has written his poetry and has heard and recorded the local accents and idiom that modify standard English speech.

After 1937 or thereabout, the story continues in sections of *As I remember* alternating (according to date of publication) with a score of reviews, editorials, magazine articles, and radio broadcasts. The reader welcomes, for example, Birney's own account of his pioneering work in establishing highly successful creative writing courses ("first stone in a little shelter for the creative student naked in Academia") at Toronto and at his Alma Mater, the University of British Columbia; but the minute account of his troubled editorship of *Canadian Poetry Magazine* becomes perhaps a little tedious (As the Queen said, 'Something too much of this'). On the other hand, the content of the reviews, editorials, etc. is uniformly delightful.

These pieces, twenty or so, couched in Birney's excellent prose — clear, direct, and plain, and therefore powerful — range from general reflections upon Canadian poetry and its place in Canadian life to particular criticism (beautifully expressed) of the poems of Robert Finch or of Paul Hiebert's humorous masterpiece, *Sarah Binks*. The most valuable of these 'essays in criticism' may be *Has Poetry a Future in Canada?* and *Yes, Canadians Can Read, but Do They?* But all arouse us and provoke thought, as does everything that Birney utters. It is good to see in print, *Why is Canada still Banning Joyce's Ulysses?* This radio broadcast of 1949 makes us ask again how any reasonable man faced with the question of censorship can come to any but Milton's conclusion. Over all of these pieces — Is it fanciful to think it? — hovers the kindly shade of Matthew Arnold.

Spreading Time: Book I ends with a coda which, the author explains, is drawn from a letter he wrote on New Year's Eve, 1949, an assessment of himself. At the milestones we all pause and rest and are weary, even discouraged — the burden of life, many doubts, the fleeting years, the curtain hung over our futurity, misgivings a-plenty: these all combine to weaken our resolve. Such sombre reflections Birney expresses in the *Coda* — but

he rouses, and in gentle irony closes his book with *Come in, 1950!*

Having found *Book I* to be a source of delight and instruction we may adopt the form of his welcome to the year and say in all sincerity *Come in, Book II!*

EDMUND MORRISON

L'EPOCHE JANSENISTE

MARIE MORIN, *Les Annales de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal 1659-1725: Histoire simple et véritable.* Edition critique par Ghislaine Legendre. Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.

MARIE MORIN (1649-1730), que d'aucuns tiennent pour le premier écrivain ou le premier historien canadien, aura dû attendre patiemment environ deux siècles et demi avant de voir paraître son *Histoire simple et véritable de l'établissement des religieuses hospitalières de Saint Joseph en l'Isle de Montréal diste à présent Ville-Marie, en Canada, de l'année 1659.* ... Tel est le titre complet du manuscrit que les Presses de l'Université de Montréal viennent de publier (1979) dans son texte intégral pour la première fois. Il fait désormais partie de la collection "Bibliothèques des Lettres Québécoises." Je lis par bonheur ce qui suit sur l'élégante jaquette de cet ouvrage d'érudition: *Les Annales de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal 1659-1725 Histoire simple et véritable Marie Morin Edition critique par Ghislain? Legendre.* Ce livre n'aurait probablement jamais vu le jour sans le concours du Conseil des Arts de la région de Montréal, du ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec et du Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines du Canada; il fait honneur tout ensemble à son auteur, à la Collection et à la Maison d'édition, car il est présenté avec beaucoup de finesse et de goût, de préci-

sion et de savoir-faire. Marie Morin elle-même ne pourrait en croire ses yeux si elle pouvait voir aujourd'hui son texte aussi copieusement annoté et superbement édité.

Histoire simple et véritable comprend, outre quatre hors-texte: Carte du gouvernement de Montréal, deux pages manuscrites empruntées aux *Annales* et le Plan de Montréal (1675-1687), une Introduction à la fois détaillée, limpide et substantielle, le texte complet de Marie Morin, des notes critiques, des leçons non conservées, un index des noms, une liste des noms de lieu (Canada) et un glossaire. Plus qu'il n'en faut pour faire les délices des exégètes de la petite histoire, des grammairiens et des lexicologues. Les notes en bas de page sont aussi instructives et précieuses que les notes critiques, rejetées à la fin de l'édition du manuscrit.

On trouvera dans l'Introduction tous les renseignements indispensables à la lecture et à la compréhension de l'*Histoire simple et véritable*: la description du manuscrit (317 pages, 31, 5 x 20, 5cm: 32 lignes par page), le plan détaillé, chapitre par chapitre, du texte original de Marie Morin, la chronologie des principaux événements, une bibliographie choisie (où l'auteur a sans doute oublié de mentionner le *Dictionnaire des Oeuvres littéraires du Québec*), et des remarques sur la langue et le style du XVIIe siècle. Ce qui y manque le moins, c'est la clarté et la précision, avec une pléthore d'alinéas, de titres et de sous-titres en caractères gras, de dates et de parenthèses; se qui facilite énormément, une fois qu'on a accompli ce steeplechase, la lecture intégrale d'affilée du manuscrit, dont les pages sont si habilement numérotées et annotées.

Lecture faite, je vois en Marie Morin un chroniqueur, un anecdotier — un événement en appelle un autre — un sourcier, un mémorialiste, un annaliste à ses heures de sa communauté, de son milieu et de son temps; elle n'a rien de l'historien de métier, encore moins de l'écrivain authentique. L'auteur, doué d'une heureuse mémoire, a entendu beaucoup de propos, de récits et d'histoires. Ses sources sont surtout orales. Impossible de les mettre à caution. Il n'y a rien de neutre ni de restrictif dans ce qu'elle écrit. Sans doute fait-elle un choix parmi les événements qu'elle rapporte. Et c'est son droit. Elle a beau écrire "ce qui se passa de plus remarquable dans l'année 1661" ou 1670, elle se garde bien plutôt d'employer le mot annales; en fait je ne l'ai pas relevé sous sa plume. Elle préfère les mots suivants: histoire, détail, narré, petit recueil, ouvrage, remarques, discours, dans l'acception latine du mot dissertation, comme l'emploie Bossuet dans son *Discours* (dissertation) *sur l'histoire universelle*. Ce qui compte pour elle, c'est Montréal, c'est une communauté civile nouvelle, c'est une communauté hospitalière nouvelle. Aussi son texte est-il le premier à avoir jamais été écrit sur Montréal, sa fondation, son établissement, son développement; pas un mot de l'exploit de Dollard des Ormeaux (1660), ni du tremblement de terre (1663) ni du massacre de Lachine (1669). Environ 125 pages de son manuscrit sont consacrées à Montréal; autant le sont à l'Hôtel-Dieu et aux premières religieuses fondatrices. En bref, son but est de justifier la fondation de Montréal et celle de l'Hôtel-Dieu; ces deux créations sont étroitement unies, l'une n'existe point sans l'autre. Fort importants sont les Appendices.

Dans la Préface (1-23), il est presque uniquement question de Montréal et des religieuses de France. D'ailleurs, à ces dernières, l'auteur consacre des portraits tantôt de 23 pages, tantôt de 38, et cela toujours suivant un plan uniforme composé de cinq parties. Elle ne néglige pas pour autant les jeunes religieuses canadiennes qu'elle a bien connues. Ce qui

l'intéresse au plus haut point, ce sont les acteurs de l'histoire; elle conçoit l'histoire un peu comme une mémoire collective. Elle tient les acteurs, c'est-à-dire les personnes d'oeuvre, les fondateurs, pour des modèles à proposer. Aussi son but n'est-il pas seulement de recréer ses consoeurs de France, lesquelles n'ont jamais lu une ligne d'elle, je présume, mais aussi de justifier les fondations. Cela est si vrai que les deux tiers de son manuscrit sont des portraits de créateurs, de fondateurs. Elle consacre peu d'attention au récit proprement dit; les rapports entre les faits, l'étude des causes et des conséquences ne semblent guère la préoccuper. Esprit vif et pénétrant, femme de coeur et de tête, aussi profondément croyante que débordante d'activité, plusieurs fois économe et supérieure de sa communauté, c'est dans ses loisirs qu'elle commence à 48 ans à écrire cette *Histoire simple et véritable*. Elle sympathise beaucoup plus avec Maisonneuve qu'avec Jeanne Mance — son silence sur cette dernière est pour le moins curieux — avec M. de La Dauversière — témoin l'émouvante lettre de l'abbé de Faucamp qu'elle cite au complet sur la mort du co-fondateur de Montréal — qu'avec Monseigneur de Laval.

Ghislaine Legendre a fait une oeuvre utile en éditant de façon aussi judicieuse cette *Histoire simple et véritable*, qui est un récit d'époque janséniste, héroïque, une tranche d'épopée, haute en couleur, où l'on voit à l'oeuvre des fondateurs et des fondatrices, des personnages et des amazones, des saints et des saintes.

MAURICE LEBEL

LIES AND GRACE

AUSTIN CLARKE, *Growing Up Stupid Under The Union Jack.* McClelland & Stewart, $13.95.

WILLIAM KURELEK, *Someone With Me.* McClelland & Stewart, $14.95.

THE MEMOIRS OF AUSTIN CLARKE, fiction-writer, and William Kurelek, artist, are quirky relics. Clarke's first installment of autobiography is a sly satire on colonialism in Barbados, in which the target is as much Clarke's own boyhood naiveté as it is the overpowering shadow of England's imperial influences. Kurelek's posthumous autobiography is a spiritual adventure, focussing as it does on the artist's psychological maladies and culminating in his religious conversion to Catholicism that removed the shadows of depersonalization and chronic depression.

Clarke's is superior in style, texture, and incident, and maintains a balance between fleeting notes of anger or condemnation and those of sturdy endurance or lyrical celebration. Clarke was a schoolboy in Barbados during the Second World War when threats of German invasion heightened the atmosphere of theatricality on the island. Born to be local "characters" — just as Trinidadians were in V. S. Naipaul's fiction and non-fiction — Barbadians loved to dramatize themselves. They sent King George VI a cable: "Go on, England. Little England is behind you," failing to recognize the colonial irony. While the Nazis inflamed the imaginations of schoolboys (a local watchman became Hitler; a white headmaster, Himmler or Goebbels), Barbadians scarcely recognized the more serious danger of the English.

The years 1944-1950, spanning Clarke's admission to Combermere School and, later, his entrance to Harrison College, were an "Union-Jacked time" when he lived as if he were in an English countryside. A "dreaming fool" in love with English literature, young Clarke adopted English customs and attitudes quite out of sympathy with indigenous ways of his native village of St. Mathias. He was split down the middle by the paradox of being a "black Briton." At school, he learned to be white, singing "Rule Britannia" and "White Christmas," studying Virgil, Milton, and pastoral poetry, thinking that 1066 was the beginning of all civilization, and playing cricket, the gentleman's game. His headmaster always dressed in white and wore a tie that had no tropical colour in it, and when he spun a globe on its axis, he impressed Clarke and classmates with the red of the British Empire: "So large an empire, to which the headmaster told us we as free people belonged! Our empire!"

This Englishness was a lie, for the Marine Hotel was carefully segregated, some of the whites trained dogs to attack blacks, and visiting English sailors kicked boys in their shins and called them darkies. As Churchill made his war appeals on the BBC, military cadets at school went through outmoded drills with defunct Boer War rifles whose firing pins had been ripped out. Despite choruses of "God Save The King," His Majesty never appeared at any island ceremony.

At home in his village, Clarke, the illegitimate son of the hardworking but poor Miss Luke, struggled to comb his thick "nappy" hair with fine-toothed tortoise-shell combs imported from England, and learned uplifting Protestant hymns. But nothing taught him how to cope with the squalid poverty around him, the centipedes and cockroaches, vicious dogs, women brawling in the streets, religious fanatics, and sexually promiscuous neighbours. While he was reading about Wordsworth's leech-gatherer, village fools and old women were picking welts and "sea beefs" before being packed

off to a mental hospital. The stigma of his illegitimacy and colonialism made him identify with the Israelites and Shylock, yet he violated himself by turning away in embarrassment from his poor grandmother, deformed by age and labour, who visited him at school.

Perhaps this is precisely what Clarke means by his title, *Growing Up Stupid Under The Union Jack*. His "Cawmere" snobbery did not win him approval in fashionable Belleville Avenue; and his cringing embarrassment left a damning soul-taint. The next autobiographical installment will probably show how his colonial stupidity began to wear off.

William Kurelek's problems were those of a crystal soul threatening to shatter under the weight of a prairie boyhood ruled by hard-driving Ukrainian parents. Born in 1927 on a farm in Whitford, Alberta, Kurelek was a dreamer, not a practical farmhand. He struggled with tractors and frozen water-pipes, was abused and beaten by his father, whose brutality gave young William a "concentration camp mentality." Kurelek's mother was hardly an ally. She, like the father, was hostile to the English that William and his brothers and sisters were learning at school. Both parents were against "book learning," and were baffled by William's desire to be an artist. Unable to win his father's love or understanding — for which he competed unsuccessfully against his brother John — William rebelled at nineteen. But this was a compromised rebellion. He refused to go with his family to a New Year's dance, had to give in angrily, and was saved only by a sudden snowstorm.

Depression, depersonalization, and eye problems arrived early. He began to experience powerful persecution fantasies which were expressed through sacrificial, masochistic images in his art. Inspired most by Brueghel and Bosch, he indulged in allegorical "psychological paintings"

that were signals of his own psychic problems. His pictures on Doomsday themes were cries for help. One showed a bird flying across the Atlantic with a bag around its head. It was captioned: PLEASE HELP ME PLEASE HELP ME — PLEASE HELP. His despair made him identify with Van Gogh. He also felt allied to Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, although his "essentially plodding farmer's intellect" created an inferiority complex, especially at school and, later, at the Ontario College of Art where he studied under Shaeffer, Hagan, Parker, and Friefield, and worked in the company of colleagues such as Graham Coughtry who seemed much more gifted than he was.

In London, England, he was treated at the Netherne Psychiatric Hospital in 1955, but found scarcely any doctors who were able or willing to deal with his problems. It was only when he discovered Roman Catholicism that he was able to solve his psychic maladies. His pictures changed. They became realistic and pastoral, and expressed his sanity and "wholesomeness." The "someone" who was with Kurelek was God — the ultimate father-substitute whom Kurelek had found briefly in Father Mateyko at high school.

His entire life seemed to be a search for grace, which explains in part the awkward, stumbling form of the book. The rural scenes have a horse and buggy earnestness as they record the familiar struggles of farm life — a grasshopper plague, barn burning, feuds and racial conflicts at school, and family life that was as austere as it was insensitive to his artistic yearnings. The psychological sections have a stiff, clinical dryness, as Kurelek speaks of his quest for a kindred soul, his hallucinations, shock treatments, and anxieties about homosexuals and leftists. He tells us little of his wife and children, and on the subject of his art he is only slightly more revelatory, telling us only that he learned the Nicholaides method of drawing and explaining some of the allegory in the disturbed "message paintings" of his illness. Abruptly in Chapter 12, he tells us of his religious conversion, and although much of his Christian philosophy seems naively optimistic, his passages of spiritual meditation and self-consolation are moving in their awkward way. He subscribes completely to what he calls the "divine economy" and writes sanguinely that "no good that is done is ever lost." Believing with Alfred Noyes that "exquisite beauty" does not make "mere evolutionary sense," he sees life and art in religious terms, taking what he calls "the comprehensive Christian attitude to the world," whereby he spurns the bad, enjoys the good, and practises moderation. It is simple to mock his position by withering irony, and to pick holes in its specious metaphysic, but somehow, I feel, that such an assault would be irrelevant to one who made a leap in the dark and survived nightmarish rumination. Grace burned like a live coal on his tongue, and this rescued his story from tragedy, despite his untimely death by cancer.

KEITH GAREBIAN

A SEA OF LIFE

VERONICA STRONG-BOAG, *A Woman with a Purpose. The Diaries of Elizabeth Smith 1872-1884*. Univ. of Toronto Press, $25.00; paper $10.00.

EVER SINCE THOSE Sense and Sensibility sisters, Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie, recorded their pioneer experiences in journal form, the diary has been a central archetype in Canadian literature. Elizabeth Smith's diary, the latest volume in the Social History of Canada series, is a delightful addition to the genre. Veronica Strong-Boag has

edited Elizabeth's journal, and written an introduction which, while scholarly and well-footnoted, implies that the diary is interesting primarily because of Elizabeth's "late Victorian feminist consciousness." This pigeonholes the diary as a feminist document, when, in fact, like all good journals, its intrinsic value is literary, revealing as it does all the complexity and contradictions of individual personality. A really good diary, as Marie Bashkirtsev realized in her *Journal d'une Jeune Artiste*, should be written "as if no one in the world were to read it, yet with the purpose of being read." Elizabeth Smith's embodies both the necessary candour, and the necessary sense of form.

The diary begins when Elizabeth is thirteen, living on the farm near Winona, Ontario, which would later launch her brother Earnest into the E. D. Smith jams-and-jellies business. The diary chronicles Elizabeth's school-days, including her teacher-training in Hamilton and Ottawa, her medical training in Kingston, and her sporadic sessions of school-teaching. Elizabeth's spelling and punctuation are erratic (faithfully preserved by Strong-Boag) and her metaphors often hackneyed -- she is particularly partial to sea imagery — but she can turn a neat epigram and has a remarkable ability to see not only the close texture of one-day-at-a-time, but to stand back and see the emerging figure in the carpet of girl-becoming-woman.

One diary entry for July 1880 pictures Elizabeth leaning on the railing of a Lake Ontario steamer, "looking at the water rather through the water into myself," but it is her diary, not Lake Ontario, which forms the clearest reflecting pool for the self. She perceives her volatile temperament ("I think I am about as full of moods as Canadian winters"), her teen-age narcissism ("how egotistical is youth"), her need to excel in everything she does, her "eager haste to set

the world at defiance to paddle my own canoe." Gradually she shifts her level gaze from self to others: "I have found a clearer insight to others by a previous study of self." She has a keen eye for the ridiculous, and her humour is dry as chokecherries. Of a member of Parliament who pays her a cousinly call in Ottawa, she observes: "I think he had had overmuch wine for desert. If he is a sample of the energetic (?) politician pity the country — pity us all." She gives a particularly caustic account of the opening of Parliament where members' wives, in full evening dress, are "decidedly fleshy," and all "agreed in one thing & that was to leave their dresses off the upper part of the body & let two or three yds come creeping after them on the floor."

At the beginning of the diary, thirteen-year-old Elizabeth is already fired with a Christian zeal to do good, but vague about the form it will take: "I want to be good. I want to be a christian & a noble true-hearted woman." She castigates herself for "drifting idly on a sea of pleasure," but there is no doubt that pretty, vivacious Elizabeth enjoys her social round of temperance picnics, sleighing parties, dances that sometimes last till dawn, and parlour socials where Elizabeth plays and sings and recites "Mary Queen of Scots" to wild applause. She has plenty of beaux and is an accomplished flirt, laughing at the lovesick antics of her poor suitors, referring to them as "that great donkey" or "that great cream faced loon." When the Principal of the Ottawa Normal School forbids the men students to talk to the women, in or out of class, Elizabeth resolves to "practise the language of smiles with a diligence." "I like gentleman friends and they like me and there's an end 'out," admits Elizabeth with her usual honesty. "Well & I like to get ahead of the other girls — thats a confession."

Elizabeth begins her first teaching job at Speyside "with all the energy hope & fear that a diver takes in his first plunge" but soon hits a rocky bottom of boredom and disillusionment. At one country school she has forty pupils of all ages — "oh the worry and bother and dirty faces that one has to encounter" — and is "tired of battling with overgrown boys," including one lout who is taller than she is, and only one year younger. In April 1880, Elizabeth and three other young women launch themselves into the treacherous seas of Queen's Medical School, where, until their arrival, only males had sported. "We are adrift — on the sea of study. God help us to win the day," prays Elizabeth. Her amorphous Christian idealism has now crystallized. Henceforth she will "concentrate all my forces, mind & body on my one aim, a successful career in my chosen profession," and will "throw off all trammels of shallow fun" and become "a woman with a purpose." "When in my daily tasks," she writes, "I find myself displaying nervousness & the false timidity so inherent to girls of today I must school myself to do away with nerves entirely." Now she "must only think as one possessing brains — must forget that I am a woman." Her first dissection of a cadaver "would have been terrible . . . had I not taught myself will power," but she doesn't faint and, afterwards, even tucks away a hearty dinner.

The seas grow rougher in 1882, when the men, both faculty and students, wage a cruel war aimed at forcing the four women to leave. Elizabeth is angry and bitter, hating them "individually & collectively for their unkindness, injustice, unmanliness, their cruelty, their jealousy, their spite." The winds are frightening in their force, but Elizabeth weathers the storm, scudding swiftly ahead from idealist to realist, from youth to maturity.

Towards the end of the diary, Elizabeth meets her future husband, Adam

Shortt, who was to become one of Canada's leading political economists. The journal ends as Elizabeth begins her final year of medical training, but Strong-Boag's introduction adds a coda of ironic note: Elizabeth graduated in 1884, took up general practice in Hamilton, married in 1886, and thereafter paddled safely about in the shallows of wifehood and motherhood, never resuming her medical practice.

"I am a woman now, & so changed from that unsettled irregular immature young person," writes Elizabeth at the very end of her diary. She is conscious of how far she has come, just as Susanna Moodie was, putting the finishing touches to *Roughing It in the Bush* in 1852, when she was twenty years downstream from the immature self which had begun the journal. For both Elizabeth and Susanna, the choppy ambiguities of personality are smoothed out only in the slipstream of their propelling irony, their detached vision of the self. Elizabeth Smith's diary is convincing testament to the clarity of that vision.

MARIAN FOWLER

LITERARY PEN-PALS

My dear Mr. M: Letters to G. B. MacMillan from L. M. Montgomery, author of Anne of Green Gables, ed. Francis W. P. Bolger and Elizabeth R. Epperly. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, $14.95.

IN THE EARLY YEARS of this century a Philadelphian lady with literary interests, Miriam Zieber, conceived the idea of initiating a network of pen-pals among writers with similar interests. A young Canadian who had published some poems and stories in American journals was invited to become a member of what Miss Zieber called "an exclusive circle of writers" and her name was passed on to an Alberta homesteader and a journalist living in the Scottish town, Alloa. In this way began Lucy Maud Montgomery's lifelong correspondences with Ephraim Weber and George Boyd MacMillan. Some of the letters to Weber were subsequently published in 1960 by his friend Wilfred Eggleston as *The Green Gables Letters (From L. M. Montgomery to Ephraim Weber, 1905-1909)*. Now the letters to MacMillan, discovered by Mollie Gillen in a trunk in Alloa and used as a basis for her Montgomery biography *The Wheel of Things* (1975), are made available in a well-edited selection. Begun in 1903 and continuing until four months before her death in 1942, the letters span Montgomery's adult life and reach back, through recollection, to her own childhood and the history of her family.

These are not the self-consciously witty and pontifical letters of an Evelyn

NOTICE

SSHRCC has awarded Carleton University a Major Editorial Grant to help fund the preparation of scholarly editions of major works of English-Canadian prose. Works now being edited include *The History of Emily Montague*, *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder*, *Stepsure Letters*, *Roughing It in the Bush*, *The Canadian Crusoes*, and *Wacousta*. The editors would be pleased to hear of rare editions, papers, manuscripts, and memorabilia which might be relevant to this project. Please contact:

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Waugh, written with publication in mind. Rather they are the kind of letters one would write to and hope to receive from a friend with whom one shared common interests but not a common way of life. According to Montgomery's son, Dr. Stuart Macdonald, her rigidity and sensitivity prevented any easy camaraderie in the family. Yet the letters reveal a woman who is charming, tolerant, curious, humorous, passionately devoted to friends, cats, and the land of Prince Edward Island, and not unwilling to confess her proneness to depression, her questioning of religious orthodoxy, and her awareness of her own shortcomings. It's as if the geographical distance between the correspondents, the lack of physical contact (they met only once, when she went to Britain in 1911 on her honeymoon), make it possible for her to pour out her heart. A revelatory confession written on April 1, 1907, tells of her love for a young Bedeque farmer, Herman Leard:

> I loved a man — let us call him A — once. It was emphatically the love of my life. Yet mark this — *I did not respect him* — I did not *admire him in the least.* Before this experience I would have laughed at the idea that one *could* love a man they didn't respect. . . . I would not have *married* him for anything. He was my inferior in every respect. This is not vanity on my part at all. He simply was. He had no brains, no particular good looks, in short, nothing that I admire in a man. Yet I loved him as I never can love any other man.

The difficulties of coping with her grandmother who cannot "see anything from any point of view but her own" and the later disadvantages of living in a manse where "one never has a sense of *permanency*" are confided, as well as her attitudes to a large circle of relatives and friends. Where her immediate family is concerned she is more reticent. We hear nothing of the long Tennysonian engagement to the Reverend Ewen Macdonald and though the letters from Norval (1926 to 1935) darkly hint at domestic troubles, it is only in her very last letter, written on December 23, 1941, that she admits,

> This past year has been one of constant blows to me. My oldest son has made a mess of his life, and his wife has left him. My husband's nerves are worse than mine even. I have kept the nature of his attacks from you for over 20 years but they have broken me at last.

In 1922, Montgomery writes, "to me, letters are much like *soup*, in that they always seem to be improved in flavor when 'warmed over.' " They are also like soup in their variety and comprehensiveness. This is a voluminous correspondence on a scale that has almost become obsolete. There is a good deal about her books and her relationships to her publishers, including her long drawn out lawsuit with the Page Company. There are the rhapsodic nature descriptions so familiar to her readers. There are many references to national and international events. The two World Wars greatly oppressed her. She was horrified that "a man would throw away the crown of the greatest empire of the world because of his infatuation for a middle-aged divorcee with two living husbands!" One of the most powerful effects of the letters is their ability to convey a sense of passing time. An early letter refers to bicycles. Daylight saving time is introduced. The Macdonalds acquire a car and a movie camera. The voice of King George V is heard on the radio and in 1936 even television is foreseen — "I never cease to marvel over the radio. It does seem like witchcraft and I suppose the people who 'hear' will also 'see' in twenty more years." In 1929 she writes "New inventions crowd on each others heels — each one more amazing than the last. But the trouble is — no one is happier or better because of them."

The criticism suggests another aspect revealed by the letters — the fact that technological progress was combined with the persistent influence of Victorian manners, morals, and attitudes. Montgomery could never escape from her Presbyterian upbringing, from her belief in duty and usefulness, or from her conviction that talent is a gift of God, to be used for moral purposes. The examination of social, philosophical, and religious problems is one of the most useful functions the letters serve.

The editors of *My dear Mr. M.* are to be commended. Every selection is of interest. Excisions have been made so skilfully that the seams do not show. Annotation and editorial comment is rightly kept to a minimum. What we have, in effect, is autobiography, the authentic voice of Lucy Maud Montgomery describing her life and views to a friend. The result is far more lively and intimate than that achieved by any of her biographers.

MURIEL WHITAKER

A CHOICE OF GREATS

GEORGE WOODCOCK, *100 Great Canadians.* Hurtig, $12.95.

GEORGE WOODCOCK is nothing if not prolific. In 1980 alone he published a collection of essays, *A Picture History of British Columbia*, and *100 Great Canadians*, thus consolidating his reputation as man-of-letters and his place in the coffee-table school of historians, which he had joined only two years before with *Faces from History*. That book, however,

had reduced Canadian history to texts for photographic portraits. In *100 Great Canadians*, our history is again limited, but only by the availability of portraits of whatever sort and by the title itself.

The "100" probably owes something to tradition. As for "Great," Woodcock, granting that he can name no Canadian Mozart, Tolstoy, or Michelangelo, defines the word somewhat condescendingly in a cliché, "the right people at the right place in the right time." Woodcock's "Canadian" is even less precise and includes native-born — including Eskimo, Indian, and Métis — and immigrant — both European and American. Admittedly "Canadian" is hard to define. In addition, the DCB (IX) with an entry for Horace Greeley may also offer some excuse for the appearance of Colonel By, and even of Jacques Cartier, in *100 Great Canadians*. Yet, in a general way, the book reflects something of the attitude of Woodcock's *Canada & the Canadians* (1970), which proclaimed that Canada neither had nor wanted heroes.

Although the mantles of greatness in *100 Great Canadians* bunches a bit in central Canada, Woodcock does select from the country at large and from all periods of its history. Nine profiles are of native peoples, fifteen of women, twenty-four of French-Canadians, six of ecclesiastics, twenty of artists of various kinds, and twenty-four of politicians of many different views. The rest of the collection comprises athlete, educator, inventor, engineer, surveyor, mountain climber, soldier, business man, and even murderer. The traditional favourite, the military man, who figures so largely in Colonel Stacey's list of (eleven) great Canadians, gets short shrift in Woodcock's book. No Wolfe, Montcalm, Currie, Bishop and their like appear on its honour roll. Besides, only four all told — Brant, Brock, Tecumseh, and McNaughton — find places on it. The business man, who dominated Lonn's *Canadian Profiles* (1965), fares little better with only five representatives, Cunard, Simpson, Fleming, Beaverbrook, and McGillivray.

By its very nature *100 Great Canadians* is open to criticism regarding those selected and those omitted; yet those chosen make good sense as nation builders — Howe, Macdonald, Laurier for example — or good copy as legendary figures as Riel, Mackenzie, Dunlop, Dumont, Begbie, and Amor De Cosmos demonstrate. All told the author tries to strike a balance between his anarchistic sympathies and the view that history is the shadow of officialdom.

Woodcock is strongest on writers. He discusses them from a knowledge that gives his sketches authority. Despite his several books about Canada, however, he is a chronicler, not a historian, and many of his other sketches are of interest largely in revealing whom he, as a noted *littérateur*, finds great. For the most part the profiles are popular history centring on traditional public images, and, as with Bell, McGee, and Ryerson, for example, give little indication of the complexities of interpretation their lives involve.

As a coffee-table book, *100 Great Canadians* is not unduly ostentatious or bulky. Its entry-titles are catchy, but not cute, and it avoids large, gaudy pictures. Unfortunately, the entry-titles carry neither names nor dates, and some of the latter are not even included in the text. Some "Greats," too, whom Canada honoured as "Sirs," have ironically lost their titles in *100 Great Canadians*. To continue, all portraits are in black and white and poorly reproduced. The book has neither index nor bibliography, and the text badly needs an editor's pencil. Catharine (Traill) turns up as Catherine; *Adventures With the Idle Rich*, as *Adventures of the Idle Rich*; *The Literary Gar-*

land and *British North American Review*, as one magazine; and Canada Cement, as Canadian Cement. The date of publication of *The Descent of Man* and of Martha Black's birth are wrong, and that of Macmillan's death appears in two consecutive sentences. Pauline Johnson never gets credit for *Flint and Feather*. "Insofar as" becomes four words, and "comprised of" always serves for "composed of." French spelling gives much trouble. "Maisonneuve" reads "Maissonneuve"; "Gonzalve," "Gonsalve," and "Ramezay," "Ramézay." "Québec" is always carefully accented; "Montréal," never.

Woodcock came to this work through *The Canadians* (1979) and drew on it and *Faces from History* for much material. If he does not quite enjoy the delight of self-plagiarism, he at least benefits from the ease of recycling, for twenty-eight biographies in *100 Great Canadians* had already appeared in shorter versions in *The Canadians* and forty-eight in scarcely altered versions in *Faces from History*. For any one who knows Canadian history, but especially for any one who knows Woodcock, *100 Great Canadians* is irritatingly *déjà vu*.

ALEC LUCAS

FOR SHEILA WATSON

DIANNE BESSAI and DAVID JACKEL, *Figures in a Ground: Canadian Essays on Modern Literature Collected in Honor of Sheila Watson*. Western Producer Prairie Books.

WILL IT ALWAYS BE TOO MUCH to expect to ask for honesty in festschrifts? What I would like to see would be something like the following: "We asked various old friends, colleagues and students of x to contribute to a volume in his/her honour. We rejected the ones which were bad and were left with this bunch. We know it is a heterogeneous lot but that's the festschrift business."

But no. The editors must continue to provide the illusion that there is something which holds the whole thing together, besides the occasion. The title suggests what Bessai and Jackel suppose this to be. The essays are all Canadian and are all on modern literature. At least all the essayists are associated with Canadian universities, except for one. As for citizenship I have no idea. But they all discuss modern literature, although Robin Mathews is concerned with the nineteenth century and treats contemporary material only in passing. And Rudy Wiebe is dealing with legend, often in decidedly un-modern forms, albeit the seed of the legend, the death of Albert Johnson, the "mad trapper," happened only fifty years ago.

Perhaps modern is meant only to delineate the twentieth century. And literature is to mean anything which can be read. Even then one has trouble with the inclusion of drawings by Norman Yates. In the preface, Bessai and Jackel state,

> In organizing the collection we have been guided, appropriately, by Sheila Watson's own belief that studies of Canadian literature must find their proper and unself-conscious context in a larger concern — the study of modern literature in English. Too much recent criticism in Canada has, in our view, suffered from the facile use of 'modern' and 'Canadian' as distinguishing terms, as if the two categories were incompatible rather than mutually illuminating.

Yet only in a very few essays is there much concern for what is modern or for what is Canadian. Those essays which do not discuss Canadian subjects seem typical examples of the universal academic. I am sure some ardent patriots could find identifiable maple-leaf tinges but I would be very hard-pressed to tell whether the writer of a piece on Wyndham Lewis came from Canada, the U.S., Bri-

tain, Nigeria or the University of the South Pacific.

But there is, in a strange way, something which brings most of these pieces together. In the preface, Bessai and Jackel state, "This present collection of essays is offered by us as both a tribute to Sheila Watson and as a collaborative reflection of the wide range of her critical, scholarly and creative interest in modern letters." In the essays there are quite a number of references to Watson herself, as a novelist and as a critic. This seems less a generous obeisance than an honest reflection of the way she has turned certain minds around.

This is quite clear in the essays on Wyndham Lewis. In many ways Lewis seems a rather arcane interest today but Watson has kept him well alive for her students. One, Paul Tiessen, does a very fine job of using Lewis to explore the connections between modern literature and film. None of his comments seem like revelations but he is able to bring things together in such a manner as to bring great clarity to an often confusing subject.

Quite a different influence is found in the dialogue between Diane Bessai and Robert Kroetsch. The title, "Death is a Happy Ending: A Dialogue in Thirteen Parts," might suggest the all too apparent tendencies to pretentiousness. Kroetsch's diffuse "post-modern" conversation needs a strong weight to hold it down but Bessai often seems ready to float along, although in a less consciously elliptical fashion. Still, the piece is highly illuminating in demonstrating how close Kroetsch is to Watson's *The Double Hook*. His comments should provide a profusion of hints for some graduate thesis on sources for Kroetsch or on influences from Watson.

Various other pieces are good or bad in their own ways. For me, Michael Ondaatje's "Garcia Marquez and the Bus to Aracataca" simply shows the way that the influence of someone like Marquez can lead even an excellent writer to confusion. F. T. Flahiff's "*The Great Gatsby:* Scott Fitzgerald's Chaucerian Rag" seems to recall the common tendency of comparativists to generalize about connections. Most of the links which Flahiff finds between *Gatsby* and *Troilus and Criseyde* could also be found in many a dime-store romance. Pandarus was not the first pander, nor Nick Carraway the last.

In a more positive vein, Marshall Mcluhan provides a fascinating analysis of Eliot's use of classical rhetoric. The rigid yet illuminating traditional approach shows a very different side from the messenger of the media. Fred Cogswell shows his broad insights in a brief yet wide-ranging commentary on Canadian little magazines. One would only wish that he had dwelt more on his own personal experience.

Robin Mathews and Eli Mandel give fine examples of their usual critical tendencies, Mathews stridently political and Mandel tentatively structural. Both are well worth a read, although Mathews's position might be better understood as presented elsewhere, in his own *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution.* A third work, also on Canadian literature, vies in my mind with those by Tiessen and Mandel for pride of place. This is Dick Harrison's "Cultural Insanity and Prairie Fiction." Like Tiessen, it represents "what oft was thought but n'er so well expressed," in a quite definitive refutation of the role of the American frontier thesis in Canadian literature.

A diffuse lot, which the editors' groupings of "Discoveries," "Exploration," and "Identities" do very little to bring together. For most readers, the articles will cover too large an area for the book as a whole to be of much use. But for those interested in the ramifications of the

presence of Sheila Watson on the Canadian scene, there are some very interesting things here. And we should not forget that the justification for this, as for any other festschrift, is simply to honour. Sheila Watson is a seminal writer and a seminal person. She deserves it.

TERRY GOLDIE

TIME'S MYSTERIES

PATRICIA JOUDRY, *The Selena Tree*. McClelland & Stewart, $14.95.

VICTORIA BRANDEN, *Mrs Job*. Victor Gollancz, n.p.

JAMES HOUSTON, *Spirit Wrestler*. McClelland & Stewart, $14.95.

ALTHOUGH THESE THREE NOVELS differ considerably in content and technique, they are all concerned with the same perennial theme — the poignancy and mystery of the passing of time. The present is a bewildering chaos, the future a fearful unknown. Hopefully, we turn to the past, for hints of who we are and who we may become. To paraphrase T. S. Eliot, we know so much more than our ancestors: they are what we know.

Patricia Joudry's *The Selena Tree* is a family saga, portraying four generations in the Pollack family during the years 1900-1956. The story begins with Sophia da Silva, a beautiful opera singer who is stranded in a drab Alberta town. She eventually marries Emery Pollack, the local storekeeper, and spends the rest of her unhappy life in a bitter struggle with her husband and his shrew of a mother. The novel is essentially an attempt to reveal the effects of this conflict on subsequent generations. Joudry's material is inherently melodramatic, but then, so is much of Faulkner's. What Joudry lacks is Faulkner's skill at transforming melodrama into art. Her people are flat caricatures, mere vehicles for her endless pronouncements on Fate, and something called "the burning centre of life." (In her 1977 autobiography, *Spirit River to Angels' Roost*, Joudry informs us that she once saw herself as the spiritual bride of George Bernard Shaw, through whom Shaw dictated his posthumous plays. *The Selena Tree* is no less pretentious.) Joudry's rhetoric is always exaggerated, and often extravagantly silly, particularly in her sex scenes. Here, for example, are Sophia and Emery "pleasuring" (Joudry's word) each other:

> The great feast before him, he feasted! Ambitious and deep-buried desires sprang to mind one by one. Conspiratorially she assisted; she led him. She amazed! She amazed! He thought once: if his mother could see! . . . and laughed exuberantly into her somewhere flesh.
>
> O unrestrained, uncorseted love! Freedom from every restriction! . . .

Enough. *The Selena Tree* is a chore to read and a relief to finish.

Mrs Job, by Victoria Branden, is a much more successful attempt to explore the meaning of time. Branden expresses her fascination with the past through the memories of her middle-aged narrator, Meredith Doyle / Poole / Harcourt / Rideout, a lady with many identities and many troubles. "Don't tell me that God is dead," she exclaims, "somebody up there hates me." As her waistline expands and her options diminish, Meredith recalls her past in a complex series of flashbacks, hoping to find the precise moment when her life began to sour. Branden handles this familiar, almost trite situation brilliantly.

Her novel resembles a Restoration Comedy, with a large cast of not entirely likeable characters sent racing through their paces at dizzying speed. No plot summary could do *Mrs Job* justice, but it seems that Meredith's problems began when she fell in love with Nicholas, the back of whose neck moved her deeply. Soon pregnant, but unable to marry

Nicholas because of Bridgie, his mad Irish wife, Meredith married Kenneth instead, in order to appear "respectable." Her marriage with Kenneth was not ideal. "Kenneth would have been a wonderful husband," she reflects, "if only he'd happened to be heterosexual." Now, in the present, Nicholas is dead and Meredith is alone. Her child, a lout of sixteen, has run off, probably to join Satan's Choice. A most unliberated woman, Meredith longs for a man's company, but meets only "oddballs and neurotics and drunks and clinging vines, lame ducks and fainting robins." Here, as in a Restoration Comedy, beneath the zany surface we sense a terrifying emptiness, in the lonely hearts of characters unable to give or receive love. But Meredith does not despair. "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness," she observes, and as the novel ends, she is looking forward to her next adventure. And why not? "One day, as Virgil says, we will be glad to have remembered even this."

In *Spirit Wrestler*, James Houston travels far back in time, to when the Inuit — "the people" — still roamed free on the wild earth of Canada's northern frontier. Indeed, in Houston's work the Canadian north is not a frontier but a living force, cold, deadly, implacable, yet almost unbearably lovely. In this setting he places Shoona — a shaman, who, in his visions wrestles with demon spirits on behalf of his people. A shaman is "one who turns things into shadows." In his ecstatic trances he leaves the mundane world behind, and journeys to an unknown country, where, as Margaret Atwood writes in "Procedures For Underground," "you learn / wisdom and great power, / if you can descend and return safely." But Houston's shaman pays a terrible price for his visions. Feared rather than loved, he must live alone in a most lonely land, without the comfort of family or friends. Because of his sacramental belief in the unity of all living things, he is even unable to kill for his food: "I knew then that I would never fire a killing slug of lead into the body of another animal. I feared too much the power of their wandering souls."

Houston takes great risks in allowing Shoona to tell his story in his own words, but the shaman's language is never too stilted, and never deteriorates into the pidgin English of Hollywood Indians. Thus, Shoona describes the approach of winter: "It was that awesome time of year when the moon rises like a wind-burned face and sets the autumn darkness all aglow, and the heather on the tundra shimmers like the guard hairs on a wolf." The diction is elevated slightly, to reflect the speaker's dignity and power, but the similes are firmly rooted in the northern landscape. "Shimmers" is simply perfect. When winter ends, Shoona eagerly awaits the exuberance of spring: "After the long winter you could feel your soul singing deep inside you."

Much of Shoona's story suggests that he may be only a trickster, preying on the gullibility of others. Alternatively, he may in fact be a shaman, but a "destroyer," rather than a "healer" — one who can harm, but not heal. His very name means "What-is-it?", and Houston makes no final judgments. An almost hypnotic tension slowly builds, as Shoona's activities isolate him irrevocably from his people. We share his bewilderment and pain as he becomes aware of his fate: his morality reminds us of our own. "Man knows his death is bound to come," one character tells him, "but we believe the animals are not burdened with such thoughts. That is their good fortune."

Whether Shoona is a fraud or a prophet, one thing is certain. The culture and the world-view he represents have all but vanished, and we are the poorer for it. Houston has devoted much of his life to exploring and recreating the lost

world of the Inuit. Now, in *Spirit Wrestler*, a novel rich and resonant with life, he has given us their elegy.

PETER KLOVAN

NOT GETTING THERE

TOM WAYMAN, *Living on the Ground: Tom Wayman Country*. McClelland & Stewart.

WAYMAN QUOTING KEATS? Holy four-letter word! But it's true; in the prose Afterword to *A Planet Mostly Sea* (1979), and more recently in the prefatory poem to *Living on the Ground*, Canada's fabled beer-parlour poet becomes, if momentarily, a fundamentalist aesthetician. In "What Good Poems Are For," Wayman suggests that, "like plants / on a sunlit windowsill / of a city apartment," poems are intended to create "a brief moment of enjoyment." In the prose theorizing, Wayman differs with Keats on the notion that "Beauty is truth"; but he endorses, and he believes his writing exemplifies, the second half of the English Romantic's syllogism, that truth is beauty — "always." Sketchy and vulnerable as this claim is, it is a least consistent with Wayman's earlier pronouncement that "If someone can talk, they can write." Write poetry? Write well? Write works of art that endure, that go beyond mere momentary enjoyment to "put down roots in someone's mind," as Wayman himself phrases it in the conclusion of "What Good Poems Are For"? Wayman runs out of the stadium.

Self-confessed reality junkie and the heir apparent to Al Purdy and Milton Acorn, Tom Wayman turns in a predictably smooth, readable, humane performance in *Living on the Ground*. Once again the writing is unpretentious, colloquial, accessible. In this new collection Wayman is noticeably less funny and less clearly committed to leftist political solutions — making him for the eighties something of a rebel without a cause; but stylistically his work remains even. To view it differently, Wayman has been accused of not progressing as an artist and, with few exceptions, the poems in this sixth book do not shake for me the conviction that Wayman is essentially a one-good-read poet.

The book begins with a group of poems subtitled "Homesteading," which were written in the summer of 1975 when Wayman and his friend Garrison drove from Vancouver to Fort Collins, the small town in rural Colorado where Wayman had taught for a year in the late sixties after finishing his stint at graduate school in southern California. Born in 1945 (so now turned thirty), Wayman reunites with other friends from the heady days of the SDS, student radicalism, anti-war protest, and social ferment. "What sort of people had we become at this distance from the '60s?" he asks. Garrison, Adamson, Lechner, Burnett, Davidson, Duquet, Smilie, Thompson — each man casts his image onto a different poem, but none comes sharply into focus. In "Fort High" (which begins, predictably, "I pull the tab on another beer"), Wayman's record is a blur: "the people in the room work as carpenters, / journalists, fence-builders, hustlers / of a dozen jobs or at nothing." In the background hover scraps of stories about war atrocities witnessed, election races lost, divorce, unemployment, loss of direction. There are no happy pastoral hippies and no Abby Hoffman-type converts to big business. Striking a note of sobriety in the boozy fog surrounding them all, Wayman remarks:

> These are the people
> I once believed were going to change America
> according to the books we read, the organizations
> we lived in. Now it seems their achievement
> is to be living their lives just like anybody.

At their best, these poems (such as the prize-winning "Garrison") sing in celebration of the rare individuals who manage not simply to conform and buckle under but who, defying the odds, keep "running towards Jerusalem" with the hope for social amelioration still burning inside. But often the lines are tedious, dull, and sprawling as they list the routine facts to be found in any ordinary work resumé, and the conclusions frequently fizzle.

The second section, "Looking for Owls," gives a more random sampling of "the conditions and quality of contemporary life" which Wayman has staked out as his territory. Many poems centre on the experience of travelling the interstates and highways of the western U.S. or Canadian prairies. These new works reinforce, but rarely go beyond, the early image of Wayman as "The Freeway Impressionist." Wayman's male friends, though numerous, do not seem capable of touching his life into significance, while women, children, and family members are almost wholly absent. In one of the more introspective of these on-the-road poems, entitled "Pulling Out to Pass," the autobiographical persona muses that "as I grow older / nothing I get is what I thought it would be / when I wanted it."

The title of the book comes from a line in one of its best poems, which bears the unwieldy heading, "Listening to Country Music in the Cabin of a CP Air 747 Jumbo en route Toronto to Vancouver." Country music, with its woeful themes, is the ostensible subject. The music, "despite the banality of the words / and predictable tune" catches "the harshness / in ordinary things" and resonates with Wayman's own unhappy mood, his

> disappointment in all
> that was promised, that even some of the songs
> promise: how it was to have been
> to have finished school, to marry,
> to have steady work, own a house,
> to have children. . . .

The music, "ephemeral, but enduring," sums up for him "what it so often is like / living on the ground."

As if to illustrate this generalization by particular example come the eleven poems of "D" — poems about Wayman's poet-friend Dennis Wheeler, his suffering with leukemia, and his premature death in Vancouver in 1977. The series culminates in an open letter, the poem "Farewell to Wheeler without Saying Goodbye" and the elegy "La Lluvia de tu Muerte" ("He died in the rain and the world got smaller"), a quietly moving poem influenced by one of Wayman's constant heroes, Pablo Neruda.

The final section, "The Uses of the Country," returns to scrutinize the rural Canadian scene as one of the various settings for that random mix which is everyday life — violence, ignorance, intolerance, hard work for inadequate returns, madness, death, and a pitiably few redeeming touches of tenderness and love. When he attempts objective descriptions of nature, Wayman often produces still life canvasses, devoid of accurate, pithy detail. But starkness of style merges splendidly with steeliness of subject in "The Calf," whose theme of wanton slaughter, as well as its central image, recalls Layton's "Bull Calf" of the war years. The main character is Pat Howard, a likeable misfit who moves between life on his father's farm in Saskatchewan and in the construction industry of Vancouver. While showing great tenderness in nurturing a maimed calf (which is eventually shot for being "out of the ordinary" — a victim of the rural neighbourhood's customary, hard-nosed insistence on conformity), Pat grows ruthlessly and wildly destructive towards himself; he commits suicide in the end.

"The Calf" is a compelling, compassionate, and finely observed narrative, but pride of place is reserved for "Teething." This is a rare poem on the subject of fatherhood, of nurturing manhood; it offers a startling contrast to stories of boozing, jogging, fucking, fighting, and camping — the full run of *macho* subjects I equate with Wayman — but it is not without precedent in his work. "Teething" has connections with "The Kiss and the Cry" from *Money and Rain* which first articulated "the hoarse masculine agony" a lover experiences when his two-year relationship to a woman is terminated. The man reborn from the crucible of his pain seems to be given another incarnation as father, rocking with a fretful infant in a winter night. Here Wayman ultimately finds a haunting voice for his tragic vision of lost youth, lost idealism, the hopefulness of the sixties, all *temps perdu*.

> the chair
> rocks out a decade of meetings, organizations,
> sit-ins.
> It rocks out Chicago, and Cook County Jail.
> It rocks out any means necessary
> to end the War, fight racism, abolish the
> draft.
> It rocks out grad school and marriage.
> It rocks out Cambodia, and at last
> jobs, a new country, and a child.
> But the chair
> falls back each time
> to the centre of things. . . .

Suddenly in the dark winter night, the cry of the child in pain becomes the "Cry of the world."

Living on the Ground may be Wayman's *Rasselas*: human dissatisfaction casts its shadow everywhere. There is not much humour in this work (though no one should miss the hilarious "Metric Conversion"). The work of Frederick Philip Grove comes to mind, not only because the precise prose sketches of *Over Prairie Trails* compare favourably with some of the loose poetry of Wayman describing the rural west of Canada, nor because he was connected with Winkler, Manitoba, the destination of the trip Wayman depicts in "Travelling Companions," but because both men seem to be questing, in their separate ways, for a domestic island in the wilderness. The poet who, back in 1973, wrote, "You want to go somewhere and call it home and lie down," so far has not got there.

WENDY KEITNER

ANALYST

NAIM KATTAN, *Le rivage*. Editions Hurtubise HMH.

NAIM KATTAN, *Ecrivains des Amériques*, tome III (l'Amérique latine). Editions Hurtubise HMH.

IN THESE TWO BOOKS, Naïm Kattan continues his two-fold contribution to literary life in Canada. In the third volume of his very personal analysis of the works of the *Ecrivains des Amériques*, Kattan the literary critic turns his attention to Latin America (the two previous volumes are devoted to the literatures of the United States and English Canada). Unlike most critics who are interested in the literatures of the Americas, Kattan brings to his critical activities the view-point of someone who was not born in this hemisphere and who is therefore in a position to analyze objectively that which is truly *American* in the literatures of North, Central and South America. Born in Baghdad, Kattan studied in Paris and his view of literature has been enriched by his varied international experience of literary creation and criticism. The cosmopolitan nature of Kattan's literary background also comes out very clearly in his third collection of short stories entitled *Le rivage*. The subject-matter of the stories in this collection is, however, much more Canadian than, for example,

that of his two novels, *Adieu, Babylone* (1975) and *Les Fruits arrachés* (1977), or of his two previous volumes of short stories. These new stories are set primarily in various Canadian cities from Wolfville to Vancouver. However, an international flavour is maintained because most of the characters are either immigrants or native-born Canadians who travel extensively. In the final analysis, Kattan's main theme in these stories is communication on a very personal, human level, and the problems which human interaction can cause, regardless of the cultural origins of the individuals involved.

In his survey of Latin-American writers, Naïm Kattan examines works by well-known writers such as the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez and the Guatemalan Miguel Angel Asturias, as well as by lesser-known figures from many countries, including Brazil and Cuba. It is at the same time a wide-ranging survey and a very selective analysis of Latin-American prose fiction and autobiography. Although all the works discussed are quoted in the French translation, Kattan often provides a perceptive and sensitive analysis of the work of the authors he has selected. While he does frequently discuss aspects of these works relating to style and narrative techniques, he is interested primarily in the thematic preoccupations of these writers, particularly as they reflect Latin-American culture. Kattan points out the differences between Latin-American and other "American" literatures, noting that North-American literature in English reflects a culture which is essentially Protestant, Anglo-Saxon, and Germanic, and Latin-American literature a culture which is Latin and Catholic, with strong Indian and even Arabic influences. Many of the themes and other elements of the works analyzed are remarkably similar to those found in Québec literature. The themes of exile, alienation, and the links between sexuality and violence are very familiar to the reader of contemporary Quebec literature, as is the idea that poetry is in many ways "une tentative révolutionnaire."

At the end of the introduction to *Ecrivains des Amériques* (III), Kattan expresses the hope that by following him in his literary travels, the reader will be able to understand better not only the culture of the Americas south of the Rio Grande but also "our" own America. Throughout this survey of modern Latin American literature, he consistently presents the texts he has chosen as reflections of the society in which they were produced (this task is facilitated by the fact that many of the works discussed could be classified as novels of social protest). In his attempt to outline the principal characteristics of Latin-American literature, as opposed to North-American literature, Kattan tends to de-emphasize the creative and visionary aspects of some of the works, and several times runs the risk of succumbing to the referential fallacy. Only occasionally does the concept of a created world, an *univers romanesque*, come into play, and each work is examined almost exclusively from the point of view of the representation of reality. Despite such limitations, this third volume of *Ecrivains des Amériques* is a significant contribution to our understanding of an important literature which has much in common with Quebec literature.

The title of Kattan's latest collection of short stories is an allusion to the main thread which runs through all of the stories, as well as a continuation of the biblical allusions in the titles of the previous collections, *Dans le désert* (1974) and *La Traversée* (1976). All of the twelve stories in this collection recount what are often very short episodes in the lives of characters who meet and who are later driven apart by their inability to communicate with each other. Unable to express their feelings and needs, they re-

main, metaphorically, on "the shore." The first three stories, "Les Adieux," "Le Médecin," and "Une Femme généreuse," are all variations on the theme of marital infidelity. In "Les Adieux," the most interesting of the three, the protagonist George goes to Paris with his cousin's wife. Despite the mutual attraction, the relationship ends sadly at Charles-De-Gaulle airport, where the two separate without really knowing why. A similar situation is the basis of "Les Murs de Berlin," the story of the misunderstandings and conflicts between a man and his mistress which surface while they are sightseeing in Berlin at the time of the murder of the West-German industrialist Schleyer. The two most technically innovative stories are "Les Comptes," in which a brother and a sister reminisce about the jealousies and rivalries of their childhood and "Le Sommeil," in which an elderly woman daydreams about the marital problems of her children and grandchildren. Both stories use point of view much more successfully than the rest of the stories in the volume. The last two stories, "Les Édifices" and "L'Attente, emphasize the solitude which every individual in modern society experiences. "Nous sommes seuls," says the self-made millionaire named Sam to the Narrator of "Les Édifices." Throughout the collection, the difficulties of interpersonal relationships, even among sensitive human beings, are constantly illustrated in a moving manner, unmarred by sentimentality or sermonizing.

The settings of these twelve stories are so varied that one almost has the impression that Kattan is trying to take the reader on a cross-country tour, with occasional excursions to other countries. Only three of the stories are set in Quebec (primarily Montreal, the Laurentians, and the Eastern Townships); three take place in the nation's capital, one in Toronto, the others in various locations inside and outside Canada. The characters come from equally diverse backgrounds and professions, ranging from Julian Bard, the aging classics professor who receives a series of enigmatic letters from relatives and former acquaintances in "Les Messages" to Mimi, the Egyptian-born salesgirl who works in Eaton's in Vancouver, and who has lived in Paris, Buenos Aires, and Rio, in "L'Attente." At the level of narrative techniques, most of the stories are in many ways more traditional than some of Kattan's earlier works, such as a number of the stories in *Dans le désert*, in which he experimented with a variation of the stream-of-consciousness technique. The significance of Kattan's short stories, and particularly of his latest collection, lies less in the area of technical innovation or stylistic experimentation than in the area of psychological analysis. In what are often very short, carefully constructed narratives, Kattan analyzes some of the fundamental problems of human relations, providing the reader with fiction which is both entertaining and thought-provoking.

RICHARD G. HODGSON

RICH AND DANGEROUS

TOM MARSHALL, *The Elements*. Oberon.

ROSALIND MACPHEE, *Maggie*. Coach House.

ALLAN SAFARIK, *The Naked Machine Rides On*. Blackfish.

TOM MARSHALL, in the preface to an earlier book of poems, *The White City*, insists that "the world remains, as always, rich and dangerous," adding that many "are now at home, frightened no longer ... content to be dust here." This sense of a strange, fearsome, vital world emerges in Marshall's poetry (gathered here from his previous four volumes) and in the poetry of relative newcomers Rosa-

lind MacPhee and Allan Safarik. What affirmation there is is tentative and unpresumptuous, acknowledging the dangers.

In *The Elements*, Marshall selects large portions of the four connected books, *The Silences of Fire*, *Magic Water*, *The Earth-Book* and *The White City*, which have appeared since 1969. (Incidentally, since this is a collection, a table of contents or index would have been welcome.) The four elements — "the driving fire of vision," "the cruel sanity of the sea," the harsh physical realities ("the crack-up") of earth, and the transcendence of air — provide an organization for Marshall's mental universe, without always explaining (as is apparently intended) the presence of individual poems in particular parts of the book. Marshall is a poet haunted by scraps of memory and particularly by impressions of the physical landscape, of trees, parks, islands, sun, and snow. This is imagery, though, used with intellectual precision, pressed into the service of definition, with its lushness in some ways curtailed, as Marshall builds a complex, all-encompassing, ultimately mystical vision of the universe. The world he creates, for all its defeats, is large, serene, and full of grace. Despite obscurities or, at the other extreme, occasional complacencies in the poetry, one attributes a coherence and profundity to this vision. One accepts, even, the assertions of a transcendent harmony, unity, and meaning in reality. Marshall achieves this through the honesty and delicacy of his images — "a single room made of many windows / opening and closing their eyes of cold snow"; through humour — "(Cool as a basilisk, I / descend, gin and tonic in hand)"; and particularly through a confident, at times exultant serenity of tone — "History is real, do not / misunderstand me, but history is also unfolding, a rearrangement, a / complex flowering within this good and simple light."

The Elements contains a large proportion of the earlier works, including many poems favourably received when they appeared. Excerpts from several of the longer, less successful poems for several voices, while disconcerting as fragments from larger wholes, do have their own coherence here. As the cover proclaims, this is Tom Marshall at his best. And yet, I have reservations. Marshall mocks the young lyric poet for his "bungled agonies" that parody real pain; his own poetry sometimes lacks emotional power. It can be oblique or downright obscure, demanding persistent intellectual effort but yielding sometimes only an intellectual comprehension and so, despite its real merit, reducing its power to compel once the book is closed.

By its very nature, Rosalind MacPhee's *Maggie* is not susceptible to the same weakness. Here we have the interior monologue of Maggie Tupling as she moves towards breakdown, turns away from her thesis on black holes, her doctor-husband, and her two girls, and towards suicide; and recuperates in a mental hospital, all the while irreverently challenging a finite and childish God whom she sees as having retreated to his own black hole. Unlike her husband, Maggie cannot accept chaos as a necessary evil. Her monologue, characterized by a manic energy and sprinkled with scientific metaphors reflective of her graduate work, conceals an undercurrent of despair beneath sceptical bantering and rueful self-mockery. The weakness of *Maggie* is the other side of its strength; the wit, defiance, and intractability which establish a complex and engaging protagonist and keep the maudlin at bay can create problems of tone, heavyhanded attempts at cleverness and humour:

> And the house? I'd mail it
> to the children
> but there's the problem of string
> and paper.

The irony can become heavy, the evidence of schizophrenic incoherence sometimes lacks subtlety, and, most seriously, the expression of Maggie's anguish can be excessively flippant:

> please God, Mr. Ticket Master,
> one ticket
> on the Go-As-You-Please-Train.

Nevertheless, the obliqueness by which MacPhee characterizes Maggie's situation simply through her random thoughts is on the whole successful and suggestive. The author wisely concentrates on the subjective experience of being overwhelmed even by "the methodologies / of washing my face, brushing / my hair" rather than attempting to define objective causes. The sadness does edge out poignantly from under the flippancy:

> Are there some
> who never make it? I ask.
> It happens, he replies.

Maggie, and MacPhee, perceptively identify false destinations on the road to recovery — the self-consciousness of moping adolescence, fearful of reprimands, for instance — and lyrically capture the psyche's tentative gropings back to reality:

> I need to squat on a runway
> each morning before 7:00
> slowly filling with sun.
> Yet I look into your eyes
> and tell you
> my wings
> are caught up in my sleeves.

MacPhee has chosen a subject matter and a point of view which run the risk of derivativeness, self-indulgence, and banality, and has achieved instead an originality demonstrated, for instance, by the quirky extended image of Maggie climbing the spiral staircase of DNA in quest of a miracle, with God following at a respectable distance.

Allan Safarik, in *The Naked Machine Rides On*, has much more in common with Marshall than with MacPhee. Strong, like Marshall, in physical descriptions of nature, he uses images that are more detailed and particularized, evocatively depicting a summer city storm in "Marijuana Flowers," or the end of summer stars in a poem by that name, or the West Coast shoreline. There is a wary watchfulness in Safarik's approach to his subject, whether the natural world or (more rarely) domestic realities, which highlights the freshness rather than the familiarity of whatever he is documenting. Influenced by imagism, he runs the risks of being too elliptical, even syntactically confusing, and of pursuing originality of perception and metaphor to excess, so that the reader must run to keep up with the flood of revelations. Like Marshall, Safarik can be excessively cerebral and enigmatic, dangers exemplified by "Between a Man and a Woman Was a Sail of Skin":

> for BTB
>
> Ocean & sky have empathy
> as bird and bird have
> common wing
>
> A fire after dark
> is a hole is a star
> is an illusion
> as clear as wind
>
> the stone is
> as the fossil
> inside was alive
> a shape *imprinted*
>
> an uncommon fragment
> in a well
> deeper than its water.

And yet, in another poem, at the end of a series of exotic and striking metaphors for fireflies and a description of a child gathering them in a jar, we can also find the restraint and simplicity of

> He could not keep them long;
> The sadness shone through him.

All three poets, Marshall, MacPhee, and Safarik, show promise in their skill

with word, line, and image, in their awareness of complexity.

HELEN HOY

NAVEL-GAZERS IN ACADEME

SAROS COWASJEE, *Nude Therapy*. Borealis.

M. T. KELLY, *The More Loving One*. Black Moss Press.

JOHN METCALF, *General Ludd*. ECW Press.

NUDE THERAPY, by Saros Cowasjee, does not deliver the flesh promised in its bizarre cover story and provocative picture cover. Its dozen stories are a random collection of rags and bones, the narrative experience of the outsider in exile. They are a record of never belonging at home or away, but the narrator is never realized as a focus for sympathy. He is absurd, angry, and outraged, but never engaged.

Caught as he is between east and west, the narrator, who changes his skin but never his point of view, becomes his own metaphor for alienation. His formal, anachronistic English points to the inner man struggling with cultural estrangement. Even the Indian stories are rendered with the exile's foreign vision.

Although the short story form demands a telescoping of the longer narrative, Cowasjee wrestles clumsily with the conventions of reduction. The inventor is too obvious, making loose with the obvious kinds of ironies that some find hard to forgive even in the novels of Thomas Hardy.

The stories in *Nude Therapy* are based on the premise that "our problems lie in the betrayal of the primal state of man. We drape ourselves in a tower of clothes which leads to personal isolation. . . ." No argument there, although the words are just another tower of clothes obscuring our experience of this primal exercise.

I am not sure if this novel and the two following were intended for review as a piece for reasons of economy or because the central character in each happens to be an academic, that peculiar breed that teaches between grants to support a word habit. I wonder how much fascination university politics and the sex life of lecturers holds for the general reader.

Reading *The More Loving One* is like looking through a window on a sunny winter day and discovering the glass is greasy and covered with fly specks. Anticipating a white radiance, we are treated instead to a minutely observed, ultimately repulsive landscape. Kelly's is an almost Swiftian view of the universe seen up close and ugly, saved from misanthropy only by tolerance. We are what we are, like it or lump it. No formula for salvation is even suggested. We persevere.

The More Loving One consists of a novella, the title story, and three short stories with a common theme, human relationships forming and dissolving like amoeba reproducing, almost without design. Loose contracts of the flesh are made and broken as reality intrudes on sexual idealism. In the novella, John, our horny academic, splits with his overbearing sculptress wife, Judith, to pursue the chimera that is Anna. Once Anna takes a gander at the boil on his behind (the vicissitudes of a sedentary lifestyle), it's all over. And so on and so forth in the ensuing stories; always the disillusionment.

Kelly gives us the compulsive's view of reality, life observed beyond the abstractions of love and loyalty, on the edge of madness. Ugliness is a dangerous fascination. It kills love and compassion. This book is a hard read because one image is driven in after another, possibly to the detriment of the narrative. The senses are bombarded in prose coiled as tight as a spring, particularly in the novella, which is held together by the clean lines of

Judith, the deserted wife who betrays her husband's intention to portray her as the too solid antithesis of his dreamlike (read vapid) Anna.

In *General Ludd* we have a professor of a different colour. John Metcalf is able to make the big jump from the particular to the universal, making James Wells, his poet, teacher, and shit disturber really heroic in his refusal to conform to the heartbreaking demands of modern society.

Humour is the vehicle of the poet's descent through the ivy corridors to the crazy ward (Loony Toons). Finally, we recognize laughter as insanity and insanity as reason in an unreasonable world.

The title, for our information, comes from the Luddite Movement of nineteenth-century syndicalists who took their name from an apparently crazy villager who thought he could oppose the Industrial Revolution singlehanded.

Jim is crazy the same way. He defends the privacy of his own mind, choosing his colleague Kate (plastic-coated defender of the status quo for her own reasons) for his inamorata and chief adversary. It is Kate who finally has him committed.

In the right tradition of the tragic mode, drunken comedy with Kathy degenerates into pathos as Jim discovers he is the last idealist in the world of Loony Toons, which is everywhere except in the decent rural existence she rejects because it is an uncomfortable anachronism. Her world is fast food and tenure.

General Ludd is a savage and funny satire of Canadian academic and literary life with its necrophilic dependence on the inert body of government, the not-so-benign Big Brother of all who require money in exchange for art. Jim does not fit, ergo he is eliminated. He is the sensitive man who is caught in the machine, whilst he is putting sugar in it; he is the certifiable prophet, ultimately made sane by his intelligent observation that we are all living in a comic strip.

It is the leaven of malice that separates this ivory tower epic from the rest.

LINDA ROGERS

LYRIC AND SOCIAL

DENNIS COOLEY, *Leaving*. Turnstone, $3.00.

TERRENCE HEATH, *Interstices of Night*. Turnstone, $5.00.

DOUGLAS SMITH, *Scarecrow*. Turnstone, $5.00.

GORDON TURNER, *No Country for White Men*. Turnstone, $5.00.

TOM WAYMAN, *A Planet Mostly Sea*. Turnstone, $5.00.

IN ITS BRIEF HISTORY, Turnstone Press has established a reputation based on two things: the fine quality of its production, and its dedication to prairie regionalism. In this selection from its recent publications, there have been some changes made. The showpiece books, with their beautiful paper and commissioned illustrations, are gone — sacrificed to increased production. And the publication of Tom Wayman's latest lot of "industrial poetry" and Gordon Turner's exploration of life in native settlements in northern B.C. and the North West Territories signals a willingness to relax the regional concentration of past offerings, though Heath, Smith and Cooley continue to carry the banner of "prairie poetry." As what Kroetsch has called "the hovering care of place" can easily wear thin through sheer repetition, it is to the editors' credit that this thinness has not yet plagued their offerings. In Smith's *Scarecrow*, Heath's *Interstices of Night*, and Cooley's *Leaving*, "the harp is strung with grass" (to use Heath's phrase), but the poets' distinctive voices and varying skills reshape their common song. Still, the broader range of theme and subject-matter in these books is a positive step, and, if Turnstone's claim

that they are "as proud of the design of these books as they are of the poetry" is no longer quite appropriate, the less elaborate formats set off the verse adequately.

Dennis Cooley's *Leaving* (in the Chapbook series designed as a forum for new poets) is very much a first volume: its imagery often straining the limits of the page in an attempt to take the metaphysical leap necessary, for example, to relate solar eclipse to an italic subtext, or a child's tentative exploration of a piano keyboard to "DNA unravelling / its acid sentence" in the months before her birth. Cooley is less self-consciously artistic (and more successful) in charting memory pictures of his father ("you a sunburned farmer born to the prairies / held hard to the place"), or the scene at his uncle's funeral, for in these poems he comes more directly to the central theme of the book — a theme acknowledged in the title chosen for the volume. The book is full of "leavings": light leaves and returns with the eclipsed sun ("the solution delivered from lunar tug"); the poet's daughter leaves the womb to enter "the hardened grammar / of our lives"; his uncle, in death, leaves an aging group of friends and family who, in turn, leave "the earth to swallow this man / this man to swallow the earth." And the poet demands, with the British sojourner in the title poem ("A Poem for You: Leaving Winnipeg") "some words to wear" — a reading of these patterns, which in the parable of an October garden in the last poem of the book is finally seen to be implicit in the relentless cycle of the year.

Robert Kroetsch observes in the promotional blurb on the back cover of *Scarecrow* that "Landscape for Douglas Smith is a kind of musical instrument," and, given the potential and limitations of such an instrument, he plays it with some mastery. The key to Smith's technique here is an almost surrealistic attention to sensual impressions — sound, sight, taste, touch. Morning is "a bruised / finger of wind" ("Bird Lake"); neon "pulls our eyes up the side of tall buildings" ("Nutrition"); and, in a fresh variation of that favourite illustration of the geometric simplicity of the prairie, rails do not merely define perspective but hold "the sun at spearpoint on the horizon" ("Walking ... by Railway Tracks"). In "On the Road to the Last Dry Town in Manitoba," this same fine fingering creates whimsical visions of gin and tonic in a prairie sunset; in "Driving North in the Winter," details "lacquer the air with exquisite desire"; in "City Limits," the sensations of a summer day, and the ever-present wind, "convert silence / into the voice of my childhood." At other times, the result is less satisfying because less completely realized. We are given sparks of poetry rather than fully developed lyric statements: Blakean proverbs (e.g., "Trust the stone / He who knows nothing knows this," "Women and worms both love apples"), and the verbal equivalent of watercolour sketches.

However, it is in the final (and title) sequence that Smith will either hold or lose his readers. Here, with the same intensity which characterizes the rest of his poems, he has written a dramatic monologue for a scarecrow. More properly, it is a passion play about the "saint" of the prairies, a new Christ (and, to quote Camus, "perhaps the only one that we deserve"): "made in the image of man," "his failed miracle."

Heath in *The Interstices of Night*, like Smith in his "Scarecrow" sequence, has ambitious plans which, however successfully executed, demand and hold (or lose) our attention by their sheer intricacy. Some may give up before the code is broken, and in Heath's case this will be particularly lamentable. As the title of his book indicates, Heath is concerned here with the "interstices" of experience — the

"intervening spaces, chunks, crevices" in which we live so much of our lives despite our devotion to clarity. Accordingly, he explores the dissonance between day and night, birth and death, life and dreams; and the alarming sense that "the passing things are forever" ("Now") dominates the book.

Perspective in these poems seems slightly off-kilter as the poet — "time-consumer" — wonders what the world would be like "if" . . .

> If I did not have to remember
> Where people had wanted to go, did go
> If I could reconstruct no point
> That should be reached or left,
> If everything could be as it is
> Here
>
> ("Prairie Trail")

But this is not as esoteric as it might sound, as Heath's philosophical conclusions are, almost without exception, grounded for us in some concrete image or situation, or in the middle sequence of the book ("black / white sonnets") in a series of sketches, of a single room (with a window, flowers, a cat) which serve gradually to "recode" both the speaker and his audience to an awareness that "I control the paradoxical powers," "I am a thin grey line between day and night." The tight-rope walk between abstraction and experience is both part of the fascination of the book and an illustration of the poet's theme.

Now, in a complete change of tack, we come to the poetic journalism of Tom Wayman, whose purpose (in the words of the manifesto included in *A Planet Mostly Sea*) is to portray accurately "the conditions and quality of our contemporary life." In the first of the two sequences in this volume, "Asphalt Hours, Asphalt Air," Wayman offers his readers a poetic documentary on the factory-based society of Windsor, Ontario. For Wayman's fans this will be nothing new; the dehumanizing effects of our industrial society, the manipulation of the individual by government, management and unions, is one of his favourite topics. In this respect, George Orwell has been an obvious influence, and the master's obsession with drawing an accurate portrait of the common man, and with analysing his potential for manipulation has become the student's. Thus, Wayman's credo, included in a postscript to the book, is a slightly revised version of "Politics and the English Language." And the painfully exact picture of the lives of automobile workers in "Asphalt Hours" culminates with a description of a politician speaking at a public rally (but willing to desert ideology for convenience at the earliest opportunity), and with an image borrowed from Orwell's nightmare prophecy of life under the benevolent guidance of Big Brother:

> Perhaps I loath them
> because they are that part of ourselves
> that keeps us children,
> looking to someone other than ourselves,
> bigger than ourselves, to redeem us.
>
> . . . .
>
> And yet when we turn to each other,
> many times we recognize only the powerless
> and lash out: what we offer ourselves
> is a human fist
> smashing into a human face
> — male or female — a tiny model
> of what our days feel like.

This realization — that the juvenile behaviour of the men in the factories, the violence and strict observance of rules at home and at work, grows out of a sense of helplessness — is the centre of the sequence. As the details accumulate, we are made aware of the pressures exerted by the perpetual noise, and the perpetual surveillance by the company. Wayman's response, predictably, is to sound the battle-cry of "solidarity":

> Out of all our imperfections,
> fears, distrust, we must for our own lives
> stand together against the owners of our
> time.

Heavy going, but effective. This is what Wayman does best, and the preaching is carried by the voices of the people he describes — individual and true.

In the second sequence, however, he is less successful. The description (here of Long Beach) is detailed and accurate, and the identification of the sea as a "furious washerwoman / throwing out / pail after pail" is attractively whimsical. But these bear the weight of Wayman's philosophizing badly. He is still striving for an "accurate knowledge of what this world is like," but the chosen target — the sea in "a planet mostly sea" — is perhaps too broad to be considered without an element of bathos sneaking in.

Finally, Turner's *No Country for White Men* is the prize of this group of books. In saying this, I by no means wish to underrate the craftsmanship of Smith or Heath, or Wayman's documentary skills. Turner's book does not presume as much as these: it is simply a grouping of poems, roughly chronological in order, in which the poet recreates his experiences in northern Indian and Eskimo settlements. There are no carefully contrived sequences here. But what there is is a carefully drawn picture of another culture, effective largely because Turner does not pretend complete understanding. He is an outsider throughout — "another explorer / rediscovering memory in an alien land"; he is "the teacher" trying to instill in his students an appreciation of their own culture according to the requirements of school curriculum.

In these roles, he witnesses the changing values, the decaying hopes, as dreams are exchanged for "the jabbering of village dogs" in "The Cabin," and the old ways are remembered with nostalgia in "Each Mouthful of Forget." The white man's culture is feared and nonetheless accepted, manifesting itself in "oil on snow," "bought jeans," and children embarrassed by their heritage. Sometimes, Turner seems to capture the vocabulary — simultaneously concrete and mystical — of the people he describes. For instance, in "I Watch an Eskimo Girl Dance," the dance becomes a seal hunt, the girl a hunter, the "I" a hunter of the girl. In the lovesong "I Want the Whole Bird," he is aware of the possibility of integration: "Death of my South would free me for the Spring." Yet, at other times, he is painfully aware of his limitations, his inability to dance naked down the street, "though I sensed that naked and dance / were a must." In the book as a whole, a pattern is traced from awkward description, through attempts to assimilate and interpret, to an acceptance of differences, fear and withdrawal, and (perhaps) a measure of understanding made possible for us in the subtle blending of Smith's lyricism and the strident social consciousness of a Wayman.

ELIZABETH POPHAM

TUNING WORDS

STUART MCKINNON, *Mazinaw*. McClelland & Stewart.

ANN YORK, *In This House There Are No Lizards*. Sono Nis, $5.95.

BERT ALMON, *Blue Sunrise*. Thistledown, $14.00; pa. $6.95.

KENNETH MCROBBIE, *Hole*. Fiddlehead, n.p.

BOOKS ONE IS GIVEN TO REVIEW inevitably line up for comparison. One measures their stature, weight and so on. Pairing takes place if one has a set of four. In this case, *Mazinaw* and *In This House There Are No Lizards* go together. At least, both books use aboriginal legend to get them underway.

Mazinaw is a poetic history set in the town of that name. It starts with the title poem, giving us setting and context. "Mazinaw is the Algonquin for Picture

Writing Book" we're told. The next poem gives us the pictographs of Rabbitman, Skink, Turtle, and Heron, and after that the rest of the book is coloured in with the lives of notorious or celebrated citizens: Mary (the mystic) Merrill and her husband, George; finally it centres on Mary's formidable sister, Flora of Mazinaw, "the stout bride of the ballot box," Canadian suffragette and activist. The ingredients guarantee Canadian interest — all those mythopoeic elements and first citizens (stolid George and starcrazed Mary, suffragette Flora — feminist and socialist) — the book is both topical and historical at once. But the boon is also the bane of the book. Documentary interest is often allowed to take the place of the poetry.

It could be argued that the events, or the historical and human matter itself is enough — thus transferring to poetry the criteria so often applied to prose: that it be a clear window in terms of style, giving direct access to what's inside or outside. Stuart McKinnon intends this to a degree, but basically he wants to use the pace and texture of poetry and prose to offset each other, giving it all the multifaceted advantages of both (diary form, letter, speech; plus stanza and verse). But it does succumb to the danger of the prose, of the content consuming it, leaving it locked between passable pedestrian poetry and very interesting history, the language dulled by the dogged reportage of facts: "Though he lost Mary, money and family / down fantastic shafts of Billa's mine / George kept going back / to hills north of bridgewater / looking for good specimens / in bald rock lately / uncovered by lumber barons."

The poet shines when he does what only poetry can do best — tunes the language for maximum effect, making tonal and thematic sweeps between the social and spiritual plains and podiums. But it's the inclusion of the other stuff that needs questioning — the flat veracity of quasi-history, those exercises in selective detail only, that haven't the mouth-to-mouth of language or imagination to make them move.

Overall the book has a simple and satisfying structure. It gives the same sense of unity that Ann York has in *In This House There Are No Lizards.* Not all of Ms. York's book has it, I'm sorry to say, but it is definitely there in Part I, which carries the main title of the volume. Part II is another matter, almost another book in terms of accomplishment.

That first cycle of poems — from the legendary creation of night and day by the Australian aborigine goddess of the sun, Bela, up to the white man's first setting up his campfires in starry space — is superb. Sinuous, alert, focused, like the lizard which is its central image. It's when York gets into the more difficult area of the emigrant/immigrant experience that the book becomes jumbled between a strong and understandable desire to fix personal landmarks (death of a mother, a brother) and to record powerfully and truthfully the sense of distance and displacement which straddles two continents — Australasia and North America.

Not that the personal poems don't contribute to that sense of being cut adrift in space, of loneliness, but I believe Ann York made a strategic mistake by beginning Part II with "Family Album." "Distances" is the correctly chosen title to the section. But I feel "The Man With Ocean In His Eyes" might have been a more appropriate poem for setting it up. It ends: "I know that look, I thought, / as vast and rambling as the oceans / you'll forever cross, along whose shores / the shadows of great evergreens subdue the sands." With this poem providing the beginning and the poem, "Distances," the end, the thematic linkage would be made intact and unbreakable. The personal

migration could then have fitted into the larger perspective, with the book's last lines resonating as they do: "And yet / it isn't new to me / this distance between minds / the country I have left / is also vast."

The effect of this and other poems on me rivals that of V. S. Naipaul's work in prose. York has this and other sterling qualities: a sharp eye, wit, charm, and lines that are repeatable for their truth and simultaneously sinuous and sensitive beauty.

It's interesting to note the stylistic shift between the prairie and the Pacific in Ann York's work. She arrived in Edmonton and has been in Victoria for this past number of years. I say this because certain poems ("This Alberta, Will It Be Love") might have been written by Bert Almon, who sets up his decent, wholesome (prairie?) sensibility in the first poem of *Blue Sunrise* (appropriately designed in blue and white). The poem is "For Nancy Going to War." He picks her up hitching with her dog, Maggie, and he senses the temper and the tastes of our time already passing with her ("Do you like brown rice?" she asks). When he leaves her off, he worries about "the pirates / slave merchants on the roads" and "wishes Nancy had more armour / Maggie was a little fiercer." You can be sure of small, meticulous and feeling observances from Bert Almon in the rest of *Blue Sunrise.*

The second poem gives us the title and the theme, the care for the small interconnected elements of life: human, animal, mineral; huge and small. The fourth poem gives us the poetic credo affixed to the work of a potter: "you might call his pains excessive, but he'd call them just enough." Modest, painstaking poems might be the total prospect then — a crushing congruency of blue from cover to cover. And true, he can opt for careful adequacy. "A Man in a Small Town" is exactly that. But many of the poems are too fine to fall flat. Among such, "Remedial English" — one of the best I've read on the Boat People and Chinese immigrants: "Marking — / the red pencil is an oar blade coming down hard / on hands that cling to the side of this small boat."

However, in the second half of the book, an increasing number of poems become forgettable because of the monotony of tone and form. He has a poem about himself escaping into monochrome, and there is the accompanying danger of the book doing just that.

If Bert Almon and Kenneth McRobbie were to pair off, they'd be the odd couple indeed. McRobbie is as dramatic and dark as Almon is blue and predictable. What fable then does McRobbie see for our time? Is it all in the first poem, "The Politics of Jaws"? — "Let's get on with it. / The big money's in horror. / It's got our vote."

But it isn't all black hole hysteria, or even as gimmicky as it appears — with the attempt to fit a hole into everything and every poem whether it needs one or no. In fact, the first poems state sensationally what he pursues elliptically and elegantly elsewhere. The horror of eating and being eaten by the voracious void is redone beautifully in "Ring of Clear Moisture": "the motion of my hand / responsive, yet unwilled / in an ellipse, that's all of nature's / to and from my face."

"Even the Hole Burns Away" takes the lengthening white hot hole that is a candle and follows it all the way down for the bright way it tells the same truth: "Easiest said of a candle, that growth is downward." McRobbie is as close to Henry Vaughan and the metaphysicals as he is to Edgar Allan Poe or Francis Ford Coppola.

The book has a happy end. Descent into the hole has its regeneration on the

other side. We come out "with more mass energy than before," "for every half-particle that plunges in / the other half escapes / back / to infinity."

The elliptical turn of mind can torture and tease, but it is never complacent, and McRobbie is capable of achieving high contemplation in the middle of his maelstrom. On average, he's more difficult, dramatic and daring, everything that his partner in this review isn't. Yet both are writing to us out of the great flatlands — which would destroy any budding thesis I may have had earlier, that all writers on the prairie grow to sound like each other.

GEORGE MCWHIRTER

MOWAT COUNTRY

PETER DAVISON, ed., *The World of Farley Mowat: A Selection from His Works.* McClelland & Stewart, $16.95.

"MOWAT COUNTRY," writes Peter Davison in introducing this anthology, "is a land of isolated men and tiny settlements, and of entertainment and laughter as predatory as the need for food." It is "distinctively northern," ranging from the icy Arctic islands to the wind-swept tundra of Keewatin. Yet it is also a "world" which encompasses a dog's rambles in Saskatchewan, a young soldier's initiation to battle in Italy, the exploits of salvage tugs in the North Atlantic, the suffering and death of a whale off Burgeo, Newfoundland, and much else besides. Above all, it is a world of rugged adventure and comic hi-jinks, brought to life by the pen of an exuberant storyteller.

For nearly thirty years Farley Mowat has been one of Canada's most popular writers. Sales of his books number in the millions across North America and in some eighty foreign language editions. Television and film adaptations of his work testify further to his commercial success. Despite his popularity, however, Mowat has received scant attention as a serious writer: brief studies by Sheila Egoff (of his children's books) and by Alec Lucas (of his *oeuvre*) are notable exceptions, inasmuch as each critic argues convincingly about the body of ideas and craftsmanship in the author's work. More commonly, academic reviewers regularly charge that Mowat misuses facts, advances outrageous opinions, writes in a graceless style, and recycles his old work between new covers. Mowat, of course, disputes these charges with considerable panache, and shows much the same sort of disdain for pundits as he does for boondoggling politicians and bureaucrats.

For his part, Davison believes the best way to evaluate Mowat the author is to understand Mowat the man. By arranging his selections — excerpts from about half of Mowat's twenty-six books — in the order of the "actual experiences" rather than in the order of writing or publication, he hopes to give the reader a kind of autobiographical portrait of Farley's personal growth, of his motivations as a writer, and of the nature of his passionate concerns.

For instance, the opening selection from *The Dog Who Wouldn't Be* not only recalls a part of Mowat's youth in Saskatchewan but is also revelatory of a consistent theme in his work: his very real sympathy for the underdog! It may well be true, as Davison suggests, that the sobering experience of war and his brief sojourn living in the Barrenlands among the Ihalmiut people were the spurs to Mowat's decision to write. In any case, when he launched his career with *People of the Deer* in 1952, it was with the intention of exposing negligent and short-sighted policies which had permitted starvation and disease to kill off the native peoples, and which had

allowed the North to be pillaged by avaricious southerners. Clearly, Mowat had become an advocate for the common man, a fervent ecologist, and a prophet of northern development.

Over the years Mowat has conducted his campaign of exposé-cum-plea with considerable skill. Never losing sight of the popular writer's need to entertain his audience, he has usually used intelligent *means* to achieve his *ends*. In the 'northern' books, such as *Never Cry Wolf*, the 'Top of the World' trilogy, and *Sibir*, he has made use of humour, scientific observation, clever editing and commentary, and a personal 'I-was-there' point of view to forward his objective of educating his readers — not merely alarming or pacifying them. And in the two books he wrote for a salvage company, *Grey Seas Under* and *The Serpent's Coil*, he did more than just capitalize on a history of routine (if hazardous) commercial operations: he told thrilling tales of adventure at sea, involving real heroes — such as Captain Harry Brushett and his Newfy crew — and in the event reminded us of the marvellous integrity of ordinary life.

Many readers of Mowat quite naturally associate his work with Newfoundland, especially in the light of his success with *A Whale for the Killing*. Davison's view of the matter is that the 1967 tragedy of the trapped whale "deepened [Mowat's] sense of mystery about the animal world and darkened his disenchantment with his fellow man." But the fact remains that the author has always been conscious of the plight — and sometimes, the bathos — of living organisms. Creatures and things as disparate as the whale, Newfoundland sealers, the 'boat who wouldn't float,' and the Eskimo woman, Soosie, are, in Mowat's world, avatars of primordial existence which deserve our respect, and love. This is the serious aspect of his work.

As an introduction to Mowat, Davison's collection is uneven and not totally representative; for example, there are no selections from his children's books. On balance, however, it is a book which will likely be appreciated by both the avid Mowat fan and the casual reader. A final point: it is supplemented by an unusually detailed bibliography of Mowat's works.

ERIC THOMPSON

DANS L'OUEST

DONATIEN FREMONT, *Les Français dans l'Ouest Canadien*. Les Editions du Blé.

HELENE CHAPUT, *Donatien Frémont: journaliste de l'ouest canadien*. Les Editions du Blé.

DANS SON INTRODUCTION au livre de Frémont, Hélène Chaput fait remarquer que la ré-édition de l'ouvrage *Les Français dans L'Ouest Canadien* célèbre le 75° anniversaire des provinces-soeurs, la Saskatchewan et l'Alberta. Paru d'abord en 1959, ce livre réunissait une série d'articles publiés dans deux hebdomadaires: *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* de Prince Albert et *La Liberté* de Winnipeg.

Frémont avait fait partie de la vague de colons français venus au pays au début de siècle. D'abord défricheur au nord Winnipeg pendant une dizaine d'années, il se tourne vers le journalisme où il fait carrière pendant un quart de siècle avant de quitter l'Ouest en 1941. C'est donc en connaissance de cause et avec un certain recul qu'il assume la tâche de faire l'histoire de ses compatriotes-colons. En remontant jusqu'à 1854, il recueille patiemment leurs noms, celui de leur épouses, de leurs enfants de la ville (et département) de leur provenance, et enfin, de la paroisse canadienne où ils s'installent. (Très utiles sont les cartes provinciales et de l'époque situées au cours

du récit.) Frémont suit de près les péripéties de ces familles en prise avec les éléments rebelles d'une nature d'autant plus implacable qu'elle leur était inconnue. Il donne, quand il le peut, les noms et domiciles des descendants.

Eu même temps, Frémont illumine le rôle-clef des missionnaires: fondateurs de paroisses, tels le P. Gaire dans les prairies, le P. Pandosy en Okanagan, historiens-ethnologues tels les PP. Maurice et Le Jeune en Colombie-Britannique, et l'abbé E. Petitot, savant du Grant-Nord. Il n'oublie pas pour autant l'apport des intellectuels. La polémique acerbe qu'il avait lancée contre Constantin-Weyer (qui s'est vu décerner le Prix Goncourt en 1928) ne l'empêche pas d'avouer que celui-ci avait porté "l'Ouest canadien sur le plan de la littérature française." Il signale aussi Georges Bugnet, qui, à force de courage et de ténacité, réussit à mener de pair la vie d'agriculteur et celle d'écrivain. (Cet homme remarquable a été décoré à l'occasion de son centenaire en 1979 par sa province d'adoption — l'Alberta.)

Le pionnier, s'il n'est pas héros de par sa nature, risque bien de le devenir. Le récit fidèle de sa vie journalière devient, sous une plume habile, une aventure passionnante. Aussi Frémont tient-il son lecteur en haleine, mais on le sent soucieux de n'oublier rien ni personne. (Ses appendices suppléent aux quelques lacunes.) Les noms et les événements s'en tassent, appuyés d'hyperboles, ce qui fait que les grands actes sont parfois submergés. Une pécadille, car malgré tout, Frémont charme par la limpidité et le brio de sa chronique. Elle fixe, remarque Chaput, dans son livre sur Frémont, "une atmosphère . . . que les ans auraient infalliblement estompée." En dotant la ré-édition de ce livre d'un Index et d'une Table des Matières, Chaput l'a transformé en une véritable encyclopédie qui plaira non seulement aux descendants des protagonistes — des deux côtés de l'Atlantique — mais aussi à l'historien-sociologue et à tous ceux qui aiment l'aventure vécue.

Le public de Chaput (*Donatien Frémont: journaliste de l'Ouest canadien*), sera sans doute plus restreint, mais ceux qui s'intéressent à l'histoire du journalisme francophone de l'Ouest ou à l'oeuvre et à la pensée de Frémont y trouveront une source abondante. La documentation est impeccable, et surtout, bien organisée. Chaput trace la genèse du journal francophone dans l'Ouest à partir de l'éphémère *Courier de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Victoria, 1858) jusqu'à *La Liberté* qui célèbre bientôt ses 70 ans. Voilà le cadre où Frémont fera carrière pendant 25 ans à partir de 1916. Rédacteur de *La Liberté* il fait non seulement l'éditorial, mais il rédige sous plusieurs pseudonymes presque tout le journal. Il a quelquechose à dire sur l'agriculture, la politique, la langue, les écoles, la famille; il fait la critique de livres, de conférences et de théâtre. Il donne lui-même des centaines de conférences à l'Alliance Française, à la Société Royale (qu'il présida un certain temps) et à la radio — dont une centaine seront diffusés Outre-Mer. Bref, cet apôtre de la plume et de la parole se rend partout où on l'appelle.

Entre temps il publie une foule d'articles dans diverses revues, une brochure et cinq livres, dont un — *Sur le Ranch de Constantin-Weyer* où il vint à la défense de ses compatriotes, des Métis et de Louis Riel en particulier — lui valut une querelle littéraire qui se répercuta des deux côtes de l'Atlantique pendant près d'une année.

En 1941 — il a maintenant 60 ans — Frémont quitte l'Ouest pour Ottawa où il s'occupera de publications et de radio au Service de l'Information, puis en 1947 il passe à la rédaction du *Canada* de Montréal. Entre 1949 et 1951 il participe

à une enquête pour la Commission Royale et en 1959 il publie son dernier ouvrage, *Les Français dans l'Ouest canadien*. Il meurt à Montréal en 1967.

Frémont, on l'a vu, s'est prononcé sur une multitude de sujets et Chaput, par le truchement de citations et de paraphrases, nous présente l'éventail de sa pensée — un tour de force, vu l'énorme matière qu'elle avait à manier. A la lecture suivie, cette partie importante du livre s'étend en longueur malgré le ton allègre qui relève le récit. Mais Hélène Chaput a le don par excellence de l'organisation, ce qui donne à l'ensemble une certaine souplesse; on a vite fait de trouver le chapitre et la référence voulus. Inutile, toutefois, de chercher une analyse critique, car c'est le panégyrique du disciple.

Une bibliographie détaillée de quarante-cinq pages clôt le livre. Chaput y fait le bilan de l'oeuvre entière de Frémont: livres, articles de revues, manuscrits de conférences et de causeries. Elle a méticuleusement fouillé la critique littéraire faite sur les livres de l'auteur et cette liste, dressée chronologiquement, donne un aperçu du rayonnement de son oeuvre. Enfin, et surtout, dans sept appendices thématiques elle a recueilli, intitulé, daté et classé chacun des articles de journal de Frémont, travail herculéen et onéreux qui fixe une oeuvre éphémère.

Ce livre mérite bien le Prix Champlain qui lui a été décerné en 1977. Non seulement il permet d'observer l'évolution de la pensée de l'auteur, mais aussi il donne accès à une tranche d'histoire d'un pays en pleine effervescence de développement. Ce que Frémont avait fait pour ses compatriotes, Chaput l'a fait pour ce journaliste-pionnier. Ces deux livres ajoutent une précieuse documentation aux sources historiques et sociales qu'on est en train de recueillir aujourd'hui.

SIMONE KNUTSON

TURNED TRIADS

VALERIE RAOUL, *The French Fictional Journal: Fictional Narcissism/Narcissistic Fiction*. Univ. of Toronto, $12.50.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO Romance Series continues its distinguished career with this meticulous and exact study of the sub-genre of the fictional journal. Dr. Raoul's book is a model of logic and clarity, drawing fine discriminations among categories in terms of the "subjugation of one set of conventions, those of the diary, to another set, those of the novel, and the interference of each of these 'codes' in the functioning of the other."

The journal form is seen as *intrinsically* metafictional: "the fictional journal has to show the production of the written text (the diary), as well as the end product. Whereas the monologue intérieur disguises the process of writing involved the fictional journal emphasises it."

Again and again the argument works triadically to cover every logical and empirical possibility. The grammatical model of nominative-accusative-dative, like the crucial subject-object relationships, I-me-to myself, are triangularly diagrammed, as imaged in mirrors or in the 'dédoublement' of the narrator. "The instances of self-reading fall into *three main categories*" (italics mine). "The journal may, of course, be intended for someone by whom it is read, actually be read by someone within the récit for whom it was not intended, or be intended for someone who does not read it." "Three types of diary-novel emerge, according to which temporal aspect is emphasized."

Though the apparatus and the critical dialect are not as overwhelming as in many books of this type, the reader would be well-advised to refresh his

memory on the various compounds of "diegetic," all essential to the argument, in senses largely derived from Genette's theory of narrative. The 'narcissism' of the title, incidentlly, is more a catchword than an analytic principle.

The analyses of texts are subordinated to the description of the mode; any one text will be referred to under several different headings. Some of these descriptive sections seem a little dry, either shorn of examples, or with the reinforcing examples tucked away in footnotes; the one consecutive analysis, of Chardonne's *Eva*, illustrates the theory (as intended), rather than analyzing the text. The works discussed are in any case of very uneven quality and interest — a common danger in generic studies.

The last section in the body of the work, "Variants," opens up the real possibilities of these analytical devices for criticism of texts: complex examples from Beckett and Sagan raise problems less convenient for establishing the theoretical scheme than the "purer" cases dealt with up to this point, but for that very reason, providing a more challenging test of its value. Further development of them might have given a more dynamic conclusion to what, by its nature, is a somewhat static, schematic topic, but essentially the reader is left to follow out these possibilities for himself.

A slight hint of a sequel, to deal with the apparently both numerous and significant Québécois examples of the fictional journal, raises great hopes, combined with a touch of regret that a mode by no means confined to francophone literature cannot be discussed in slightly more comparative terms. So rigorous is the author's exclusion of the non-francophone that she will not even *name* (in her amazingly thorough and useful bibliography of secondary material on the fictional journal) the English and German texts that one critic has chosen to compare with Butor's *L'Emploi du temps*. Were this principle made more elastic in the hoped-for companion volume, the basic scheme might prove helpful with the rich ambiguities of, for instance, *As for Me and My House*.

P. MERIVALE

**** ANTHONY ALPERS, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield*. Viking Press, $16.95. This is perhaps the best book on Katherine Mansfield yet written, almost obsessively researched and packed with interesting and revealing detail, not all of it well-assimilated. Yet it is far from a perfect book. Alpers, himself a New Zealander like his subject (though he has long taught at Queen's University), produced an earlier book on his present subject — *Katherine Mansfield, a Biography* — in 1953; and he is good on Mansfield's New Zealand origins and the claustrophobic colonial world in which she grew up. But his rootedness in that very society has made him rather obtuse in understanding the expatriate phases of Mansfield's life and of her English and European associations. He has almost no conception of the complexity of English class relations. For example, he talks of Mansfield's husband, John Middleton Murry, whose father was a minor civil servant, as being "proletarian" in origin; Murry, of course, was lower-lower-middle class, but D. H. Lawrence *was* "jumped-up" proletarian, and this, more than Alpers' suggestion of a frustrated homosexual urge on DHL's part, explains their eventual mutual antagonism. Still, Alpers is fairer to Murry, and more understanding of the predicament of anyone married to a wayward, insecure, and dying genius like Mansfield, than most other writers have been, and his fairness shines in comparison with — say — Huxley's brutal treatment of Murry in *Point Counter Point*. Having known Murry in the later years of his life, this writer believes Alpers must be commended for his compassion, to Murry and to Katherine alike. His pompousness of style is another matter, and less to be appreciated.

G.W.

opinions and notes

CRAWFORD'S MOVE TO TORONTO

DOROTHY FARMILOE STATES in her recent note: "I. V. Crawford: the Growing Legend" (*Canadian Literature*, 81, p. 144) that the date of Crawford's removal from Peterborough to Toronto is still uncertain. In this regard, I would like to call the attention of your readers to a significant piece of information that I published (although without calling attention to its biographical significance) in my note "Crawford and 'The Fleshly School of Poetry'" (*Studies in Scottish Literature*, 13, p. 278). This is the date June 20, 1876, when Crawford joined the Toronto Mechanics' Institute, precurser of the Toronto Public Library. The significance of this date in establishing when Crawford arrived in Toronto becomes apparent upon considering the suggestion by both Farmiloe and Mary F. Martin ("The Short Life of Isabella Valancy Crawford," *Dalhousie Review*, 52, no. 3, p. 395) that Isabella Valancy moved with her mother to Toronto after the death of the poet's sister Emma Naiomi. Emma died in Peterborough on January 20, 1876, and was buried on January 22. That the move to Toronto occurred about four to five months after Emma's death, close to the date of June 20, 1876, is strongly indicated by several considerations. Crawford is unlikely to have joined the Mechanics' Institute before permanently settling in Toronto, some seventy miles from Peterborough. Nor, given Crawford's literary inclinations and her straitened economic circumstances, would the poet have long delayed gaining access to a library once she was in Toronto. Thus we can conclude with some confidence that Crawford arrived in Toronto at some time in May or June of 1876. Such a date squares with the likelihood that two women experiencing financial difficulties in Canada in the 1870's would if at all possible wait for the onset of warm weather before moving to a new city.

JOHN OWER

NEW LIGHT ON CRAWFORD'S EARLY YEARS

> And many know full well
> The busy busy cell
> Where I toil at the work I have to do:
> Nor is the portal fast
> Where stand phantoms of the past
> Or grow the bitter plants of darksome rue.
>
> — Isabella Valancy Crawford,
> "The Hidden Room"

WHERE DO A WRITER'S images come from? What soil nourished the "bitter plants of darksome rue" in Isabella Valancy Crawford's life, a bitterness that, however modified, crept into her poetry? In "The Hidden Room," the poet hints at revelation, then gently changes the subject, leaving us to speculate about the identity of the phantoms in her past. She left nothing of a personal nature to satisfy our curiosity — no diaries or journals, no letters to or from friends, no autobiographies. Almost all of what we know of Crawford's private life while she lived in Paisley and Lakefield has come from handed-down accounts left us by persons who lived near her at that time but who did not necessarily know her well. Such reminiscences, written years later, were bound to be affected by time and the poet's later reputation, which leaves their

objectivity and accuracy open to question.

The picture "Antrim" gives us of Isabella during the Paisley years is one of a pretty little girl dressed in "hoop skirt of tartan plaid with dainty frilled pantalettes, beaver cloth coat and blue satin hat" skipping along beside her equally well-dressed parents on their way to church while Maggie the faithful nurse brought up the rear with a younger child.[1] The Crawfords appeared to be affluent. They lived in a new house "much larger" than most of the other 40 dwellings on the main street .When death visited the household to claim one of the children — very few pioneer families escaped this experience — there were kind friends and neighbours to help the Crawfords through their period of sorrow. From the first day to the last of their stay in Lakefield, insists the writer, Dr. Crawford and his family enjoyed the "friendship, sympathy and regard of the villagers." This article, and others like it, is misleading — not for what it tells us but for what it leaves out. It evades, with misdirected protectiveness, the startling truth of why the Crawfords left Paisley.

A more realistic note appears in this Letter to the Editor which was published in *The Paisley Advocate* in 1928:

> With reference to the late Miss Isabella Valancy Crawford, one of Canada's gifted poets, who was a resident of Paisley 70 years ago, and of whom E. S. Caswell solicits information regarding the family: I would like to say that, having been one of the doctor's patients, I remember well and have not forgotten the day he was called from town to place shingles on a broken arm of mine. I was then eight years of age, ... I was too young to remember any of the doctor's troubles.[2]

It has been assumed, up to now, the doctor's "troubles" consisted of his drinking and his incompetence as a physician, both of which — again, this is an assumption — accounted for the family's poverty and the fact that they moved a great deal. They left Paisley in the summer or fall of 1861[3] and we know from credit entries in the Sherin day book[4] that they were in Lakefield by November of the following year. There some of Dr. Crawford's problems were common knowledge according to the anecdotes in the scrapbook compiled by Florence Atwood, granddaughter of Catharine Parr Traill who knew the Crawfords in Lakefield:

> Dr. Crawford was the first doctor to reside in Lakefield and from what I can gather, not a first class one. There was a Mr. Squire who got shot in the leg while drawing his gun from his canoe. Dr. Crawford attended him and, it is said, made a great bungle of it — eventually he amputated the leg and then higher up. After a great deal of suffering Mr. Squire died. Mother ... thinks Dr. Crawford took too much milk punch.[5]

("Putting it mildly!" added Mary Traill in an aside to the entry.) This account gives us a glimpse of one of the "phantoms of the past" in Isabella's childhood: the alcoholism of her doctor-father who was not very highly regarded by his fellow townspeople. Now, for the first time, another of those phantoms can be examined, this time not through hearsay accounts but in the cold hard light of evidence taken from the newspaper files of 1865-67. What the evidence discloses is that Dr. Stephen Dennis Crawford was an embezzler of public funds.

Documentation to support this statement begins with a writ of *Fi Fa* dated December 15, 1863. The date is noted on a deed poll registered at Goderich, Ontario some two years later:

> Whereas by virtue of Her Majesty's writ of *Fiere Facias* issued out of the Court of Common Pleas for Upper Canada in the suit of the Corporation of the Township of Elderslie against Stephen D. Crawford, F. H. Lynch Staunton, Enoch C. Dowling and Robert Gilmour dated the fifteenth day of

> December A.D. 1863, and delivered to me the same day, I was commanded among other things that of the lands and tenements of the said defendants in my Bailiwick I should cause to be made the sum of one hundred and nineteen pounds, nineteen shillings and eight pence — being the damages and costs awarded and taxed to the said plaintiffs in the said suit.[6]

It is evident from this document that the Township of Elderslie, which includes the village of Paisley, was suing Dr. Crawford and the other defendants for the recovery of monies and damages amounting to something over $500, the pound being worth about five dollars at that time. No transcript of the court case has been found. If, as is possible, a circuit judge presided, a transcript may not have been preserved. We may never know all the details of the case, but the shock waves from it were recorded in the old newspapers of the era. The story began to leak into print four years after the doctor and his family left Paisley.

While the Crawfords were struggling to establish themselves in Lakefield and not making much of a go of it, a weekly newspaper, *The Paisley Advocate*, began appearing in Paisley. Scattered among the birth and death announcements, current market prices and a sentimental poem or two, were the minutes of the various village and township council meetings. At a meeting held on March 15, 1865, the proceedings of the Elderslie Township council contained a reference to a report submitted by a commission appointed sometime earlier to investigate the township accounts. No details of the report were made public at that time, but several other references to it showed up in the minutes of subsequent meetings. During the council meeting that took place on March 15, 1865, the following motion pertinent to the Crawford case was made:

> Moved by Mr. Bearman, seconded by Mr. Dobbin, that the Reeve be and is hereby instructed to communicate at once with Mr. Cameron, our solictor in the Crawford suit, to postpone the sale of the securities' property in satisfaction of the judgment on said suit until the fifteenth day of June next by reason of the distressing circumstances of Mrs. Dowling's present condition, and in the meantime that every available effort be made to satisfy the claims of said judgment out of any portion of Crawford's property comeatable in the premises, so far as said proceedings will not be prejudicial to the claims of judgment in question. Carried.[7]

On April 10, 1865, an interim report compiled by the investigating committee was submitted to council. This account was published in *The Advocate* four weeks later:

> Your committee of Council appointed at last meeting to report upon and recommend the most advisable course to pursue in connection with the report submitted by the Commission appointed to investigate the township accounts. 1. Having carefully examined the report in question, your committee find that the absence of necessary documents to pursue the investigation is much complained of to arrive at any accurate conclusion. Therefore your committee concluded to correspond with the late Treasurer, S. C. Crawford Esq.; the Prov. and United Counties Treasurer and the Receiver Generals department for the purpose of obtaining those documents, the want of which is complained of; and as much other information as possible.
>
> Being now in receipt of several documents, amongst which your committee find the Collector's Roll of 1859, containing valuable information on the subject, your committee would recommend that the report be returned to the Commissioners for amendment, accompanied by said documents, with instructions to make out a new report as concise and pointed as circumstances permit, for publication at the earliest opportunity.
>
> In conclusion, your committee would state that in the event of further documents being required to enhance the investigation, they will spare no effort to comply with the request.
>
> All of which is respectfully submitted,
>
> John Gillies, Chairman.[8]

Two pieces of the puzzle now fit into place. Dr. Crawford was treasurer of Elderslie Township (this is firmly established in a following quotation) and he evidently went off with the account book or books when he left Paisley. If we read between the lines correctly, he later returned them at the request of the investigating committee. It was not unusual for record keepers to take such documents away with them. Mr. F. Fetherstonhaugh, church warden and friend of the Crawfords, disappeared from Paisley with the records of the Anglican Church, making its early history difficult to trace with any accuracy. And Richard Goldie, first editor of *The Paisley Advocate*, kept only one copy of each issue, which he took to Sioux City, Iowa, when he moved there after selling the newspaper. However, the early copies were later returned, most fortunately for us, for they contain the history being recounted here.

The two excerpts from the council proceedings (the record books have again disappeared) do not tell us nearly enough of what was going on in the background of the Crawford case. Apparently the editor of *The Advocate*, who was not native to the region having moved there only when he established the newspaper, felt the same way. After much prodding and digging on his part, he came up with the following editorial published in *The Advocate*, September 14, 1866, under the caption, "Dr. Crawford's Defalcations":

> It appears from what we can learn that Thomas Orchard was treasurer in 1858 and 1859. At the close of the latter year, he desired an increase of salary, and threatened to resign if he did not get it. The council took him at his word, accepted his resignation, and advertised for another treasurer. Dr. Crawford was the only applicant. He was appointed to the office and proposed as his sureties, Messrs. F. L. Lynch Staunton, Robert Gilmour and E. C. Dowling, who were accepted as such and bonds duly executed. With such an array of worth, it might have been thought that the township was secure to any amount. But after two years service Dr. Crawford left the village, and it was found, after an investigation, that he was owing the township something like $500. His sureties having practically repudiated their responsibility, the Council employed a lawyer to sue for the amount and after paying the whole of the law expenses amounting to over $200, and obtaining judgment against the parties concerned, the entire result is that a lot of land belonging to Dr. Crawford has been turned over to the council and is now held in trust by the lawyer. Why it is not at once sold, and the actual loss to the township from the default of the treasurer and the repudiation of their obligations by his sureties ascertained, it is for the council to make known.

Going back now to the council minutes of March 15, 1865, we note that, although the writ was issued in December 1863, the sale of Dowling's properties was ordered postponed until June 1865, due to the "distressing circumstances" of Mrs. Dowling's condition. The circumstances referred to are a human interest story in themselves. Enoch Dowling, Dr. Crawford's former friend, was ruined. Following the custom of going after the wealthiest bondsman, all his properties were seized to satisfy the judgment in the Crawford case. His holdings were extensive. They are listed on the deed poll as consisting of an entire subdivision along with a number of other properties, some on the main street of Paisley. All of it was seized by the sheriff and sold to Lewis A. Moone, a Goderich lawyer, for the sum of $225. When we consider that Sidney Crawford, the doctor's wife, mortgaged one property for $500 (more of this in a moment) and knowing that property was not cheap in Bruce and Huron Counties following the land rush of the '50's, we are probably justified in concluding that some collusion was taking place behind the scenes between the sheriff and lawyer Moone. Mrs. Dowl-

ing's distress, referred to in the council minutes, was occasioned by her husband's recent death. It is thought, in Paisley, he committed suicide.[9]

A few other references to the Crawford affair were mentioned in *The Advocate*, and then, at the regular meeting of the Elderslie Township council, held on April 1, 1867, the following motion was made and carried:

> Moved by A. E. Nobel, seconded by N. McKechnie, that the action of the reeve in the sale of Dr. Crawford's lot be confirmed.

That might have been the end of the Crawford affair as far as the village was concerned, except for one other detail. In the fall of 1866, Mr. W. C. Bruce was nominated for the position of deputy reeve of Elderslie Township. His was not an auspicious beginning for a career in politics. He was forced to defend himself in the pages of *The Advocate* against charges of election irregularities. He denied he had ordered whiskey brought to the nomination meeting; denied he had been implicated in a road grant scheme involving fraud; denied he had earlier received money from Dr. Crawford knowing it to be township funds. In his refutation he appended this note purportedly written to him by F. Fetherstonhaugh:

> Dear Sir:
> In a conversation held some years since with Dr. Crawford, he told me that he was wrongfully accused of having paid township money to you and that the money which he had paid you was the proceeds of a mortgage, and I think also, as well as my memory serves, that he had some of it from the old country.[10]

W. C. Bruce was, among other things, a moneylender. His advertisements in *The Advocate* scream "MONEY! MONEY! MONEY! to lend." It is possible — highly probable, even — Dr. Crawford had borrowed money from him to maintain the style of living noted in the "Antrim" article. Dr. Crawford's income, taking into account the fact that country doctors were paid mainly in potatoes or other farm produce, could not have been large — and the township funds were at his disposal. In the suit against Crawford, the township lawyer would have had no trouble putting two and two together with those facts.

From first to last, however, the entire episode involving Dr. Crawford and the township funds raises more questions than it answers. How much, for example, did the doctor's "defalcations" actually amount to? There are a number of discrepancies in the two separate and very lengthy reports compiled by the investigating committee and published in full in *The Advocate* on September 7, 1866. The figures in these reports do not add up to the $500 quoted by the editor who evidently accepted the amount set by the court. It might be noted in Dr. Crawford's defense that the keeping of township accounts in a pioneer community was a hit and miss affair at best. No audit of the books was done at the time they were handed over to him by Thomas Orchard and some of the shortages may have been passed on at that time. Short of a reopening of the entire case, we may never know for sure just how much Isabella Valancy Crawford's father actually misappropriated, but it seems certain he was responsible for some of the missing funds.

A number of the unanswered questions centre on the court case itself. Was there a trial? Did Dr. Crawford appear in court to defend himself, or did he bolt and run before the case was heard, leaving his bondsmen to face the consequences? According to the 1905 commemorative issue of *The Advocate* (which made no mention of the scandal we have been investigating) the Crawfords left Paisley in August or September of 1861. The deed poll was dated

December 15, 1863. If these dates are correct, and if the court case was heard between these two dates, it looks very much as if Dr. Crawford did not wait around to answer the charges. In any event, the judgment went against him.

One other puzzling item connected with the episode is the $500 Mrs. Crawford received for the property she mortgaged in March of 1861 to a Thos. Brighty of Southampton. What happened to this sum of money, coincidentally the same amount as *The Advocate* accused Dr. Crawford of embezzling? Was this the mortgage money Fetherstonhaugh maintained the doctor gave to Bruce? If Dr. Crawford — assuming his wife placed the money at his disposal — had $500 in cash, why were his benefactors not reimbursed? Was he so deeply in debt he could not extricate himself even with that amount? Why did the Crawfords callously abandon their former friends, the Dowlings? The implications here concerning Dr. Crawford's character are disturbing, to say the least.

Finally, where *were* the Crawfords during the winter of 1861-62 before they were discovered poorly off at a country inn north of Kingston and invited to move to Lakefield?[11]

As fate would have it, the Crawfords resettled in the one place in Upper Canada with strong ties to Paisley. Many of the Paisley pioneers — the McDonalds, McGregors, Balfours and others — came originally from the Peterborough area.[12] In her diary, Mrs. Traill wrote that Isabella came to call with a Miss Valentine[13]; the Valentines of Paisley owned the first mill there. As the roads improved, there were bound to be trips by Paisleyites to visit relatives and friends "back home." It is my guess the shocking news of Dr. Crawford's "defalcations" eventually followed him to Lakefield to spell *finis* to a career that was already faltering.

Did Isabella, just entering adolescence in 1861-62, know of her father's disgrace? She was an intelligent girl; the family was close-knit. It is difficult to believe she could have remained ignorant of the affair for very long. She certainly experienced, along with the other members of her family, the disastrous effects of her father's actions. The few short reminiscences about the Crawfords passed down to us mention the poverty and the repeated moves to ever smaller and meaner living quarters. These two factors, plus the deaths of a large number of siblings, seemed more than enough to account for the "sorrows" obliquely referred to in Crawford's poetry. But now we have another and much more cogent reason to account for the images that appear in lines like the following:

> What is there in this blossom hour should knit
> An omen in with every simple word?
> Should make yon willows with their hanging locks
> Dusk sybils muttering sorrows to the air?
> — "Curtius"

The temptation is strong to analyze other poems in the light of the disclosures above. Except for those who believe the poem should stand alone without biographical references, the new information will help explain the curiously flat air of dismissal in "His Clay" written just after the death of her father. The weaknesses of the speaker in the poem (Dr. Crawford) can be seen in a new light.

One of the strangest aspects of Dr. Crawford's mishandling of the township funds is the conspiracy of silence surrounding the whole episode in later years. When Maud Miller Wilson prepared her biographical sketch for *The Globe*,[14] she interviewed persons who had known the Crawfords in Paisley and who must have known of the doctor's disgrace. Did none of them talk about it, or

was it Mrs. Wilson's decision not to include any mention of it in her article? The same questions arise regarding the "Antrim" article. It is as if these early biographers did not want to darken the poet's bright image in any way after her death by dragging up ghosts from the past. Ghosts, however, usually refuse to stay out of sight in hidden rooms. They return, in this case not to haunt Isabella Valancy Crawford's poetry, but to illuminate it.

NOTES

[1] "Old Paisley Landmark Once Writer's Home," *London Free Press* (July 2, 1927), n.p. "Antrim" was the pen name of Mrs. Annie Sutherland whose grandfather, Samuel Rowe, built the large house the Crawfords lived in on the main street of Paisley.

[2] R. W. McMorran, *The Paisley Advocate* (November 5, 1928), n.p.

[3] An article in a commemorative issue of *The Advocate* (February 20, 1890) states: "Early in 1861 Dr. Hill came to share with him [Dr. Crawford] the honor of keeping the settlement in good health, and in September of the same year Dr. McLaren. When Dr. McLaren came to Paisley, Dr. Crawford had just left."

[4] The Sherin Papers in the Bata Library at Trent University list purchases made at Sherin's store by Dr. Crawford in November and December 1862. This indicates the Crawfords were in Lakefield then, although the date of their arrival has not been determined. Trent University Archives, Sherin Papers (B-81-002), Day Book 2, 5 Dec. 1862.

[5] A copy of the original quotation was sent to me by Mary Forster Martin, Brentwood Bay, B.C., who received the copy in a letter from Mary Traill, another granddaughter of Catharine Parr Traill. The present whereabouts of the Atwood scrapbook are uncertain. Mr. John Twist, historian of the Anglican Church in Lakefield, assumes they were sent, on the death of Miss Florence Atwood, to the public archives in Ottawa.

[6] A copy of the deed poll was given to me by Mr. Eric Parker, chairman of the Paisley Heritage Advisory Committee. Credit for uncovering the story of Dr. Crawford's embezzlement must go to Mr. Parker. He came across it while going through old newspapers and very generously shared the information with me. He also made available to me microfilm copies of the early issues of *The Paisley Advocate*.

[7] *The Paisley Advocate* (May 12, 1865), p. [1].

[8] Ibid., p. [3].

[9] This opinion was passed on to me by Mr. Parker who has extensively researched Paisley's early years.

[10] *The Paisley Advocate* (January 11, 1867), p. [1].

[11] The two brothers who discovered the Crawfords at the country inn north of Kingston are thought to be the sons of Colonel Samuel Strickland, brother of Catharine Parr Traill. The incident is contained in a letter included with documents collected by Frank H. Dobbin in the *Peterborough Medical Association* records (Peterborough, 1921-22).

[12] Norman Robertson, *History of the County of Bruce* (1906), p. 367; The Bruce County Historical Society is located at Eskadale Farm, Tiverton, Ontario.

[13] Entry for November 20, 1863. Mr. John Twist of Lakefield has a copy of the unpublished, unpaginated diary.

[14] "Isabella Valancy Crawford," *The Globe* (April 22, 1905), p. 2.

DOROTHY FARMILOE

LA MORT ET L'INHUMATION DE LOUIS HEMON

UN TRAIN DE MARCHANDISES quittait la gare du Canadien Pacifique à Chapleau, Ontario le soir du huit juillet 1913. Le mécanicien de la locomotive se dirigeait vers le village ferroviaire de White River situé à quelques centaines de kilomètres au nord-ouest de Chapleau. Louis Hémon, l'auteur de *Maria Chapdelaine*, se promenait le long de la voi ferrée avec son compagnon de voyage Harold Jackson. Les deux jeunes gens tentaient de

rejoindre un chantier de construction afin d'obtenir du travail. Ils causaient quand le train est passé dans un virage. N'ayant pas eu le temps de quitter la voie, Hémon et Jackson furent frappés par le train et tués instantanément.

A la suite d'une brève enquête médicale et judiciaire, le village de Chapleau et la Compagnie du Canadien Pacifique ont enterré, le dix juillet, les victimes de l'accident dans les deux cimetières locaux. Louis Hémon, ayant un nom français, fut inhumé dans la section pour les indigents du cimetière catholique de Chapleau. On a enterré Jackson dans le cimetière protestant parce qu'il avait un nom anglais. Après tout, il ne s'était agi que de deux chemineaux étrangers qui avaient séjourné pendant quatre jours à Chapleau avant leurs morts. Telle fut la fin tragique de Louis Hémon, aventurier et romancier, qui avait voulu se rendre à Winnipeg au Manitoba.

Les mystères qui ont circulé autour des circonstances de la mort et de l'enterrement de Louis Hémon ont posé des problèmes aux historiens de la vie et de l'oeuvre du romancier. M. F. W. Osborne et Alfred Ayotte ont fait des recherches sur ces problèmes en 1938 au cours des célébrations à Chapleau du vingt-cinquième anniversaire de la mort de Hémon. Osborne a publié l'article "How Hémon Died" dans le *Winnipeg Free Press* en octobre, 1939. Ayotte et son continuateur Victor Tremblay ont fait une étude minutieuse et très complète de la question dans le chapitre XV "A Chapleau et ses suites" qui fait partie de *L'Aventure Louis Hémon*, ouvrage publié en 1974.

Dans cette biographie définitive de l'auteur de *Maria Chapdelaine*, Ayotte et Tremblay citent et étudient plusieurs témoignages d'individus qui ont eu affaire à la mort et à l'enterrement. Ils analysent de plus, la correspondance de la famille Hémon qui se rapporte aux obsèques de Louis. Malheureusement, Ayotte et Tremblay n'ont pu terminer, à la fin de leur biographie, l'étude de quelques détails sur la mort du romancier. Alfred Ayotte est mort avant d'avoir complété ses recherches. Il existe à la fin de *L'Aventure Louis Hémon* quelques lacunes et obscurités quant à la rédaction de l'acte de décès et quant à l'emplacement exact de la tombe de l'auteur. Cet article tentera de préciser, de compléter et d'éclaircir quelques-unes de ces lacunes et de ces obscurités.

Dans les dernières pages de *L'Aventure Louis Hémon*, Victor Tremblay déclare que le texte rédigé par Ayotte se termine brusquement. Il pose par la suite, des questions au sujet des démarches faites par Félix Hémon, le père de Louis, après la mort de son fils. Tremblay cite une lettre de Monsieur Hémon qui indique que ce dernier ne comprenait pas clairement toutes les circonstances qui ont eu lieu au cours des funérailles de Louis.[1]

Dans cette lettre du 4 février 1916 provenant de Paris et adressée au Consul général de France à Montréal, Monsieur Félix Hémon déclare que:

> mon fils Monsieur Louis Hémon est mort ... le 8 juillet 1913 près de Chapleau (Ontario) ... Il a péri en même temps qu'un jeune homme nommé Harold Jackson.
>
> Le Ministère des Affaires Estrangères nous a remis copie de l'acte de décès de mon fils, et M. Sheahan, coroner de Chapleau, nous a envoyé également un certificat de son décès.[2]

Monsieur Hémon ajoute dans sa lettre au consul que le docteur Sheahan s'était mis à la disposition de la famille "pour faire ériger une tombe au cimetière de Chapleau."[3] Il n'a malheureusement jamais obtenu de réponse du coroner qui avait examiné les corps de Louis et de Jackson pendant l'enquête judiciaire.

Par conséquent, Monsieur Hémon a tenté d'entrer en communication avec le Père Gascon, le curé de l'Eglise du Sacré-Coeur de Chapleau qui avait pro-

cédé à la cérémonie religieuse des funérailles de Louis. Il résume la réponse du curé comme suit:

> Le Père Gascon nous répond . . . qu'on ne retrouve pas l'acte de décès de mon fils sur les registres de l'état civil de Chapleau, et qu'il est impossible de connaître l'emplacement exact de la tombe.[4]

Le père de Louis affirme qu'il ne peut pas comprendre cet état de fait puisque les certificats de décès qu'il détenait de la part du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et du coroner Sheahan indiquaient que Chapleau était le lieu de sépulture.

En terminant sa lettre, Monsieur Hémon avoue qu'il trouve ces difficultés pénibles. Il se demande d'où pourrait venir le problème:

> Peut-être la difficulté provient-elle de ce qu'on aurait enterré mon fils en même temps que Harold Jackson.[5]

Il avait fait ces démarches, explique-t-il au consul, parce qu'il voulait qu'un monument funéraire fût érigé sur la tombe de Louis.[6]

Victor Tremblay fait les remarques suivantes sur le contenu de la lettre de Félix Hémon:

> Le silence du médecin (Sheahan) est pour le moins étrange; quant à l'absence de l'acte d'inhumation dans le registre d'état civil de Chapleau, elle est bien vraie, comme écrit le curé Gascon et comme nous l'avons constaté, mais elle est due à une négligence de la part de celui-ci . . .[7]

Le Père Gascon avait le devoir d'inscrire l'enterrement dans le registre d'état civil selon Tremblay. La famille Hémon avait donc raison d'être étonnée et de rien comprendre aux événements qui avaient eu lieu à Chapleau.

Monsieur Hémon n'a jamais reçu de réponse satisfaisante de la part du curé Gascon. Il a dû prouver de façon sûre l'identité de sons fils en confrontant à Paris, des écrits trouvés sur la personne de Louis par la Compagnie du Canadien Pacifique avec la lettre qui accompagnait le manuscrit de *Maria Chapdelaine*. Le jeune écrivain avait adressé ce manuscrit au journal *Le Temps* deux semaines avant sa mort.[8] La pierre tombale qui se trouve sur la fosse de Louis a été posée en 1920 par la Société St. Jean-Baptiste de Montréal à l'endroit du cimetière catholique de Chapleau indiqué par le Père Gascon et ses souvenirs personnels. La documentation recherchée par Monsieur Félix Hémon n'a jamais été découverte.

L'auteur de cet article a essayé de résoudre les problèmes mentionnés plus haut par Ayotte et Tremblay en faisant récemment des recherches à Chapleau. Il a examiné les registres mortuaires du village de Chapleau, de l'église unie Trinity et de l'église anglicane St. John's afin de vérifier si les noms de Louis Hémon et de Harold Jackson y étaient inscrits. Les registres de l'église catholique du Sacré-Coeur ont été vérifiés pour voir si le nom de Louis Hémon avait été enregistré.

L'administration du village de Chapleau n'a pas inscrit les morts de Hémon et de Jackson dans les archives de la mairie.[9] Selon Monsieur W. Simpson, greffier adjoint de Chapleau en 1976, c'était la responsabilité du coroner ou du médecin et non celle du pasteur religieux d'envoyer les renseignements nécessaires à la mairie. Le greffier devait par la suite transcrire ces renseignements, accompagnés de la signature du médecin en question, dans les registres locaux. Enfin, tout cela devait être transmis au Bureau des Archives provinciales des actes de l'état civil pour la province d'Ontario à Toronto.

Les registres mortuaires de la mairie du village de Chapleau contiennent les rubriques suivantes: Nom, Raison de la mort, Certificat médical. Beaucoup d'enregistrements trouvés dans le Livre Deux, 1909-1922 portent la signature du doc-

teur J. J. Sheahan, le médecin qui a examiné les dépouilles mortelles de Hémon et de Jackson. On peut trouver des inscriptions de mortalité qui se rapportent aux mois de juin, juillet et août, 1913. Plusieurs morts causées par des accidents sont notées soigneusement entre les années 1909 et 1917. Il existe même un enregistrement anonyme inscrit en 1911 intitulé: "Homme inconnu — Tué sur la voie ferrée par un train."[10]

Ces recherches des archives mortuaires de Chapleau indiquent clairement que le docteur J. J. Sheahan, médecin pendant l'enquête médicale de Louis Hémon, a négligé de compléter toutes ses fonctions. C'était son devoir et non celui du Père Gascon d'adresser la documentation requise au bureau des registres de l'état civil du village. Il se peut alors, que cette erreur de détail commise en 1913, explique le silence du médecin envers les demandes répétées de M. Félix Hémon entre 1913 et 1916.

Personne ne soupçonnait que Louis Hémon deviendrait un romancier célèbre après sa mort. Chapleau n'était au début du vingtième siècle, qu'une gare d'embranchement ferroviaire perdue dans la forêt boréale du nord de la province d'Ontario.[11] Plusieurs personnes mouraient avec violence au cours d'accidents de chemin de fer dans cette région. La Compagnie du Canadien Pacifique, avec l'assistance du coroner Sheahan, avait averti la famille Hémon de la mort de Louis. Le verdict de l'enqête médicale avait été envoyé à M. Félix Hémon. Quant à eux, la mort d'un vagabond inconnu avait peu d'importance et la question fut vite oubliée.

Le Père Gascon, qui selon Victor Tremblay avait eu le devoir d'inscrire le nom de Louis Hémon dans le registre de l'état civil de Chapleau, n'a pas, d'autre part, enregistré le nom du défunt dans les dossiers de sa paroisse. Une vérification des livres d'enregistrement paroissiaux met ce fait en évidence.[12] C'est dans l'exercice de cette fonction que le Père Gascon a manqué d'assiduité. D'après le Père Dubé, prêtre paroissial de l'église du Sacré-Coeur en 1976, il n'existe aucun acte de sépulture pour Louis Hémon.

Enfin, l'auteur de cet article a scruté les registres des deux églises protestantes de Chapleau pour voir, surtout, si les pasteurs de l'époque avait documenté l'inhumation de Harold Jackson, le compagnon de Louis. Comme nous l'avons dit, les autorités du Canadien Pacifique et du village de Chapleau avaient fait enterrer les deux hommes en même temps. Il s'agissait d'établir un lien possible entre les deux événements.[13]

Qui était le nommé Harold Jackson qui fut tué avec l'auteur de *Maria Chapdelaine*? Personne ne sait où et quand Louis a rencontré ce compagnon. Allan McAndrew a fait mention de Jackson dans son livre sur la vie et l'oeuvre de Louis Hémon, publié à Paris en 1936.[14] Il n'a pas donné de précisions. D'après Ayotte et Tremblay, les dossiers du Canadien Pacifique sont demeurés presque muets sur cet homme. On le disait d'origine australienne.[15] Jackson parlait un français appris au Canada. D'aprés un des villageois de Chapleau interviewé par Alfred Ayotte, le compagnon de Hémon connaissait les villes de Montréal et de Québec et en plus, la région du Lac Saint-Jean:

> C'étaient deux types (Hémon et Jackson) du même calibre, faits pour s'entendre.[16]

Il n'existe aucune mention de la sépulture de Harold Jackson dans les registres paroissiaux de l'église unie Trinity[17] ou dans ceux de l'église anglicane St. John's[18] les deux églises protestantes qui se trouvaient à Chapleau en 1913. D'après le Révérend Ivey, pasteur de l'église St. John's en 1976, il était possible d'inhumer un individu, sans un ser-

vice confessionnel, dans le cimetière protestant.[19] Il se peut alors que Harold Jackson ait été enterré par un laïc. De toutes façons, la mémoire de cet homme est presque détruite par l'oubli. Personne n'a érigé de monument sur sa tombe dans le cimetière protestant de Chapleau. Seul le fait d'avoir été le dernier ami de l'auteur de *Maria Chapdelaine* nous le rappelle aujourd'hui. Ainsi, la poursuite du rapport possible entre les enterrements des deux hommes, mentionné par Monsieur F. Hémon dans sa lettre au consul, ne jette aucune lumière sur l'inhumation de Louis.

Faute de documents de sépulture à Chapleau, on peut conjecturer que Louis Hémon et Jackson, étant des indigents inconnus, ont été ensevelis dans les fosses communes du cimetière catholique et du cimetière protestant.[20] Il existe en effet un bon nombre de ces fosses sans signes d'identité dans les deux cimetières. Une série de fosses anonymes et sans délimitations précises se trouvent à la gauche de la tombe de Louis Hémon. Aucun plan de l'ancien cimetière catholique n'a été dressé par les autorités religieuses de l'église du Sacré-Coeur. Puisque la pierre tombale que l'on trouve de nos jours sur la fosse de l'auteur de *Maria Chapdelaine* a été située d'après les témoignages de l'abbé Gascon; il se peut en conséquence, qu'on l'ait posée au mauvais endroit. De plus, il est tout à fait possible qu'on ait enterré Louis Hémon dans une fosse qui contenait les restes d'une autre personne. On inhumait souvent, à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle et au début du vingtième siècle dans le nord de la province d'Ontario, deux ou trois chemineaux dans une seule fosse.[21]

En somme, les rapports qui documentent la mort de Louis Hémon sont de caractère privé plutôt que public. D'abord, A. McAndrew a cité en 1936, la traduction du verdict rédigé en anglais par le coroner Sheahan et la Compagnie du Canadien Pacifique. Il a puisé le texte de ce rapport classique dans l'article de D. Potvin intitulé "La Mausolée Hémon," publié en août 1919 dans *Le Terroir* de Québec.[22] Ensuite, Alfred Ayotte a découvert et vérifié le restant des rapports composés au Canada sur la mort de Hémon dans les bureaux de la Compagnie du Canadien Pacifique à Montréal.[23] Ces documents font partie des dossiers privés de la compagnie.

La mort et l'enterrement de Louis Hémon n'ont pas été documentés d'une manière formelle et rigoureuse au Canada par les autorités responsables. Les archives publiques et paroissiales du village de Chapleau, tout en ne dévoilant rien au chercheur qui veut préciser les circonstances de l'inhumation de Hémon, mettent en lumière les faits suivants. D'une part, l'abbé Roméo Gascon a négligé d'inscrire l'enterrement de Louis Hémon dans les registres mortuaires paroissiaux. D'autre part et de plus grande importance, le manque d'inscription dans les registres de l'état civil de Chapleau provient non pas de la négligence du Père Gascon, mais de celle du docteur J. J. Sheahan, coroner de la région. Puisque le médecin Sheahan a manqué d'application, le gouvernement de l'Ontario n'a pas enregistré la mort de Louis Hémon dans les archives provinciales.[24]

Les particularités de la mort et de l'inhumation de Louis Hémon demeureront sans doute à jamais obscures et contestables. Cependant, cette fin mystérieuse convient tout à fait à la vie de Louis, aventurier taciturne que l'inconnu attirait et qui aimait être en route. On n'a qu'à lire la biographie d'Alfred Ayotte et de Victor Tremblay, les deux chercheurs qui n'ont pas eu le temps de déterminer la négligence du docteur Sheahan, si l'ont veut se renseigner sur l'existence fort intéressante de l'auteur de *Maria Chapdelaine*.

NOTES

[1] Alfred Ayotte et Victor Tremblay, *L'Aventure Louis Hémon* (Montréal: Editions Fides, 1974), pp. 372-73.

[2] Ibid., p. 372.

[3] Ibid., p. 372.

[4] Ibid., p. 373.

[5] Ibid., p. 373.

[6] Ibid., p. 373.

[7] Ibid., p. 373.

[8] Ibid., p. 374.

[9] Births, Marriages, Deaths, Book Two, 1909-1922, Town of Chapleau, District of Sudbury, Chapleau, Ontario.

[10] On peut trouver d'autres inscriptions anonymes ou quasi-anonymes dans les registres de Chapleau. Elles sont souvent accompagnées du nom du médecin qui a certifié la mortalité en question. Louis Hémon et Harold Jackson portaient avec eux des documents d'identité quand ils sont morts. Il est alors surprenant que leurs noms n'aient pas été inscrits dans les registres publics de Chapleau en 1913.

[11] Le village de Chapleau, demeure même de nos jours un endroit isolé. Il est situé le long de la voie ferrée du Canadien Pacifique entre Sudbury, Ontario et White River (près du Lac Supérieur), Ontario.

[12] Registre des baptêmes, mariages et sépultures, Volume III, le 22 octobre, 1911-le 30 décembre, 1917, Eglise du Sacré-Coeur de Chapleau, Ontario.

[13] M. Félix Hémon avait signalé dans sa lettre de 1916 au consul de France que ses difficultés seraient peut-être provenues du fait qu'on aurait enterrée son fils en même temps que Harold Jackson.

[14] Allan McAndrew, *Louis Hémon, sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: Jouve et Cie, 1936), pp. 80 et 81.

[15] Ayotte et Tremblay, p. 345.

[16] Ibid., p. 352.

[17] Church Record Book, 1911-1917, Trinity United Church, Chapleau, Ontario.

[18] Church Records, 1911-1917, St. John's Anglican Church, Chapleau, Ontario.

[19] "Il n'y avait pas de cimetière public à Chapleau en 1913. Le nouveau cimetière de Chapleau a été fondé en 1936."

[20] "L'ancien cimetière protestant est situé à côté de l'ancien cimetière catholique dans la partie est du village de Chapleau, près de la rivière Nebskwashi."

[21] Vincent Crichton, *Pioneering in Northern Ontario, History of the Chapleau District* (Belleville: Mika Publishing Company, 1975), p. 314.

[22] Allan McAndrew, p. 80.

[23] Ayotte et Tremblay, pp. 358-65.

[24] Office of the Registrar General, Province of Ontario, Search Notice 201452, Index — Death, Period 1911-12-13-14-15, Government of Ontario, April 18th, 1977, Toronto, Ontario.

BERNARD LANGDON-LEMIEUX

DRUMMOND — THE LEGEND & THE LEGACY

On April 8, 1907, in its obituary tribute to Dr. William Henry Drummond, The Montreal *Daily Star* cites "the quaint humor and tender pathos of his poems."[1] That summary phrase, with one major exception, typifies almost the complete canon of critical analysis devoted to a poet (1854-1907) whose dialect verse was read with interest and delight in the United States, England, and, according to the newspapers, across the length and breadth of Canada. The sensitivity of the interest and the nature of the delight were not an issue to Anglo-Saxon readers in Drummond's era; they were eager, from all reports, for the habitant stereotype. At a Drummond reading in Massey Hall, December 20, 1905, President Loudon of the University of Toronto "said he would rather be the author of 'Johnny Courteau' than the owner of the richest silver mine in Cobalt." To be sure, Louis Fréchette, the best-known of the French-

Canadian poets, assured readers (in a French Introduction to Drummond's first volume) that Drummond's representation of "my unlettered compatriots" was "accurate" and without "the faintest stroke of the caricaturist." Moreover, he went on to say that Drummond "cannot fail to benefit them [the habitants] — and consequently their countrymen — with a most desirable increase of esteem on the part of our English compatriots who have not studied them so clearly as Dr. Drummond."

In retrospective view, however, Fréchette's leap of esteem from habitant "consequently" to all French-Canadians is surely suspect; the Montreal *Star*'s obituary tribute labels Drummond the "Poet Laureate of French Canadians," a designation that obliterates in one phrase the work of Fréchette and all his French compatriots. Toronto's *Mail and Empire* obituary comment praises Drummond's receptivity "to the silent appeal of a primitive people" — i.e., French-Canadians. And the New York *Evening Sun* managed to extend the pejorative sweep slightly by its declaration that Drummond put into his books "everything that was characteristic of the most interesting side of the old life of the Dominion."

About Drummond's 'close study' of the habitant, even the contemporaneous obituary articles express divergent opinion. The Montreal *Star*, whose editor had been a friend of the poet, noted that Dr. Drummond's medical practice had been in Montreal mostly, that his scant country experience "was not among the French-Canadians but among the Highland Scottish."

> He spent some time among the lumber camps and in the woods, but it is said that in those places he did not come in contact with the people he described with such perfect fidelity. Therefore, it must be said that Dr. Drummond, like all true poets, was inspired.

In far-off England, nonetheless, the London *Spectator* was able to inform its readers: "Both the matter of his poems and the manner of their diction were collected and collated during the never-ending journeys of a country-doctor in Quebec." And in Boston, an unidentified newspaper declared: "They [the poems] were originally scribbled on a block of paper held on the author's knee, often by a campfire . . . "

Irrespective of the way they came about, the responses to Drummond's poems and to the stereotype of the habitant were overwhelmingly positive. The Boston newspaper that evoked the campfire muse was basically accurate in reporting: "later, begged, borrowed or purloined by friends, many of them [the poems] drifted into print and became popular without the author's name and with no trace of their parentage. It was the poet's wife who carefully collected all these earlier poems . . . and so made possible one of the best-selling books of poetry in recent years."

The popularity of the poems encouraged public comment which in its breadth of enthusiasm tends to reveal various biases of the time that otherwise would be unnoticed or unrecorded. Surprisingly, however, the summation of the poet's significance for his own era, and perhaps ours, is generally consistent throughout an amalgam of Drummond's press clippings, the unpublished biography of his wife, and the most sustained academic analysis of Drummond's verse (by R. E. Rashley in the *Dalhousie Review*, 1949).

Perhaps it was the sheer popularity of the poems that preserved them from what seems now to be the questionable associations of their exponents. The Folklore Club of Montreal, for example, for its meeting of January 16, 1896, matched "Dr. Drummond's reading of seven new poems" with a "Dr. Johnson" (Montreal *Star*) talking "on superstitions of the

Negro race" in Africa and Jamaica. In a brief report, the Montreal *Herald* said: "Every distinctive trait and characteristic of this people [the French-Canadian] was shown to perfection by Dr. Drummond and splendidly rendered." As for the talk by "Dr. Johnston" [*sic*] the subheadline told of "caterpillars a favourite diet, and the doctor had to eat them." Further afield, an example of selective reading provides an interesting imperialistic inversion of "The Habitant's Jubilee Ode." In the poem, the habitant advocates regarding England as a foster mother: "Is it right you don't call her moder, is it right you don't love her too?" A British comment in a letter, from Lees Knowles, in the *Cambridge Review*, is reprinted in Toronto's *The World*, June 16, 1907: "The poem which, I think, appealed to us most was 'The Habitant's Jubilee Ode' which beautifully describes the kindly feeling of England towards the French-Canadians. . . ." Selectivity of another kind is practised by the Boston *Globe* which, for a conclusion to its obituary feature, believed it fitting to quote the kindly feelings of one of its feature writers who had once toured Quebec's habitant area and reported the praise of a village priest, an Irishman, for Drummond:

> No other man has ever pictured the real habitant, no one has understood the simple, trusting, childlike nature of these people, their love of the river, the rapids, the birds, and all the beautiful things about them. Those poems have been an inspiration to me. I know them by heart, every one, and I'll venture to say that you can't visit the room of a village priest throughout the province of Quebec without finding Dr. Drummond's poems somewhere about the place.

What in 1907 the *Globe* omitted was the distinction that its writer, Ellene Foster, had made in the original article six years earlier (April 10, 1901), a distinction between the picture of "the real habitant" she obtained in her pleasant tour of rural Quebec and the experience of the French-Canadians "who find employment in the factory towns of New England." Of these latter, she says:

> We have studied his characteristics, we are familiar with his patois, and when the habitant is mentioned we shrug our shoulders. Ah, that is where we are mistaken, for as widely different as the time-honored chalk is from the cheese are the habitant and the French-Canadian in our mills.

A gloss on the village priest's view of the habitant, as quoted by Ellene Foster, is provided, for those who wish it, by another Irish priest, "Rev. Father Frank O'Sullivan" who told the Catholic Literary Association of Peterborough:

> The French-Canadian farmer belongs to the good old Catholic stock that came out with Champlain . . . He may not know very much, it is true, about geometry, trigonometry, zoology and the other ologies that our Ontario educationalists try to cram into children's heads before they can read and spell, but I will venture to say that he can tell more about God and his own immortal soul, and say his prayers better, than many a graduate of our Collegiate Institutes.[2]

A politician-journalist of the time is one of the few commentators to betray some sensitivity, initially at least, to the French fact. In a column in the Toronto *Sunday World* (January 2, 1897), about Drummond's first volume, *The Habitant*, he begins:

> I do not know that all my French-Canadian fellow-countrymen will give me the credit of being more than friendly to their race and a lover of their province. They have seen me and others with me, from the English provinces, opposing the passage in Parliament of an act regarding education coercive of Manitoba.

Before getting to his review, however, he says, "let me tell a story" — a story, as it turns out, about meeting a New Englander on a sleeper train to Montreal who said he liked "Lower Canada . . .

because you can get there a sixteenth-century civilization with a feudal service ... The people are so different and yet so hospitable and friendly." The writer, one "W.F.M." goes on blandly:

> The statement, 'a sixteenth-century with a feudal service' was certainly a striking off-hand deliverance and made a great impression on me, partly by reason of its force, partly as confirming my own observations.

Drummond's focus on the habitant, whether as feudal or angelic, was a breakthrough in Canadian literature. As the *Globe* of Toronto said on February 16, 1899 (and as Professor R. E. Rashley would argue more extensively and specifically fifty years later):

> he succeeds in making a most charming picture of materials hitherto despised as far as literary purposes are concerned. His habitant speaks the broken English dialect, helplessly and hopelessly incorrect in its grammar and syntax, but in the hands of Dr. Drummond an admirable instrument for the realistic delineation of the character of his types.

That Drummond's characters were types — special cases in particular circumstances — and not *the* type of French-Canada was discerned more readily in Quebec than elsewhere in the world. An editorial in the *News and Advocate* of St. Johns, Quebec (February 3, 1899), noted:

> Dr. Drummond has given us a type, but a passing type. It is local and temporary, and is dependent upon boundary and atmosphere and environment. It is fascinating to a degree, and we owe the doctor a debt of gratitude for his charming studies, which are at once whimsical and pathetic and undeniably veracious.

The editorial writer proceeds to find fault not with the potential for misconception in Drummond's portraits but with their regional limitations:

> What we should seek for is the abiding type which will stand for the vital features of a single nationality. How long must we wait for this common type which, whether limned in prose and verse, shall be instantly and universally recognized as standing for what is essentially Canadian! Are we singing localities while awaiting that amalgam which shall create the strong national figure ... — courageous, facing the future with confidence, containing within itself the best features of the Celtic and the Anglo-Saxon, and illustrating, in physique and mentality, the grandeur of our mountains, the poetry of our lakes and rivers, the wholesomeness, (moral as well as physical), of our bracing climate!

This nationalist opposition to "singing localities" was, one suspects, not widespread; Goldwin Smith's comment in a letter to Drummond (July 16, 1902) gives the counter-view. After praising Drummond's poetry for its creation of interest in a small nationality, Smith says: "I believe in variety and free development, not in having everything rolled flat."[3]

Comments in the French-language press of the time focus much more precisely on the linguistic and racial issues. "Mme. Dandurand" in *La Patrie* (December 15, 1901) says of the habitant characters of Drummond:

> There is, it seems, this fear that the language used by them will by its nature create for outsiders a false impression. This very special language is confined to a particular group in our population (which is) merged in common employment with workers of the English race lacking the ability or the will to understand the French language. (my translation)

The point, obvious but unacknowledged in the English press, is still not pressed home here: the habitant — "unable to read his own language," as Fréchette's Introduction says, "helplessly and hopelessly incorrect" in English as the *Globe* said — nonetheless had learned to be understood by his Anglo companions, whereas the Anglo incompetence was total. From this, Mme. Dandurand ultimately draws the conclusion that "cet

idiôme bâtard" is a victory of a kind since it has invaded and "crippled the language of the conqueror":

> This jargon has for the ear a strange fascination and a certain musical fantasy and parody. It has the attraction of the comedy of travesty. It should be said that nothing in the world is less classical. Now the extraordinary vogue of the books of M. William H. Drummond in the United States as well as in Canada causes some of us to fear lest everyone impute to the mass of French people in the province of Quebec that bastard idiom.
>
> Sincerely we believe there is no place for alarm on that subject. The crippling of the language of the conqueror — after a century and a half of contact — by Jean-Baptiste Canayen, marks instead the inalienability of his French spirit, his faithful attachment to the speech of his brothers.

Mme. Dandurand sees Drummond's work as an attention-getter: for the French in North America, and, therefore, an opportunity for New France writers to extend the Anglo-Saxon's education:

> Suffice it to say that the sympathetic heroes and heroines of *The Habitant* and of *Johnnie Courteau* call to American [attention] the existence of the French-Canadian people. Since the days when the name of the French-Canadian nation rang in the four corners of the continent like a thunderbolt which accompanies the light of a formidable sword, there has been a period of obscurity. Our ancient rivals may have thought that we also had sunk into obscurity or had been assimilated. The wall of forgetfulness and indifference which the years have raised between us and them, M. Drummond attacks with a noble gesture. The popular stories of New France open hearts for us, conquer sympathies for us. The breach is now open; it is for us to enlarge it. It is for us of the French with our works and our masterpieces to follow the friend of the French-Canadian.

After Drummond's death, *La Patrie* is quoted (presumably in translation) by the Toronto *News* (April 13, 1907), and again there is greater precision about Drummond's subject matter and more restraint in the praise:

> It is interesting to note the opinion of the French-Canadian press. *La Patrie* says of his work: 'He succeeded in sketching in verse, half-English, half-French, some of the better types of our country people, showing their frankness, sincerity and ability in his truly French-Canadian heroes. A great admirer of our race, he exhibited in his verse their attractive qualities and their inexhaustible good-nature and vivacity. For this we owe him certainly an acknowledgement.'

A stronger note of grateful appreciation runs through a general-summary article by "Pierre Lorraine" that appeared in a series of installments in *Le Journal de Francoise*. The article emphasizes the general notion that Drummond's dialect verse was his best:

> each time that he was unfaithful to the bizarre language that he had created initially; each time that he wished to clothe his more general ideas in a more chastized form, the spirit of his subject matter is lost; and he does not gain in elegance that which he has lost in emotion and picturesqueness. The same thoughts are there, but the expression that refurbishes them no longer moves us. It is as if a marvelous bagpipe-player who controls at will our tears and laughter undertook to execute the same melodies on an instrument with which he is not familiar; we remain unwarmed.
>
> The English poems of Drummond are certainly beyond the ordinary, but if he had written only that, he would remain in amateur's clothing instead of that of a national poet. (my translation)

In the only major analysis of Drummond's work that I located, R. E. Rashley, in a 1949 *Dalhousie Review* article, similarly upholds the value of Drummond's use of habitant patois, suggesting that the poet's deliberate choice and sustained practice demonstrates "that the patois satisfied a felt need."[4] The carefully controlled manipulation of the patois enabled Drummond "to translate the rude life into an equally rude verse with a possibility of equal vigour." The result was an "escape from a damaging

conventionality of language that had reduced poetry to insignificance":

> His needs are certainly restricted, but he gains a style very adequate to those needs, and, indeed much more adequate than his own English style. It is a freshened, renewed language, a genuine discovery and a successful escape from a predicament. It denied Drummond exactly what was achieved by the other poets of the period, grace, elegance, polish; but it gave him humanized substance, exactly what they were denied.

Drummond's refurbishing of poetry:

> was not done without the application of some intelligence on Drummond's part. He did not, as his Preface suggests, simply let his friends 'tell their own stories in their own way'. There was, of course, no 'way'; the overlappings of the two tongues varied even in the individual from time to time and from subject to subject. Drummond found in the patois as it was spoken a new emphasis in words, an increment of sentiment, perhaps, or of humour, an animation that was attractive, and in working for these effects he took the patois as a guide but followed his own needs in creating his speech. Spellings and pronunciations, the percentage of French, and degree of distortion vary from poem to poem and within poems. There is evidence of control . . . the accent is softened, the explosive and emphatic elements of French are reduced, and what is retained is usually the slurred or broken consonants and the changed vowels; and in his best poems, not in large proportion.

Rashley argues that poets such as Carman, Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott escaped from the limitations of the era's dignified poetic conventions in ways "that lead them further and further away from the needs of a flesh-and-blood world to the borders of humanity." He cites "Lampman's escape into a formal style . . . Carman's into music . . . Duncan Campbell Scott's into austerity."

Drummond's escape into patois, Rashley says, is accompanied by a focus on "the conventionalized group-reaction":

> it is only in communal material, in situations where the group spirit is alive, where man is in contact with man, or with nature through the group senses, that this style takes on life and becomes something more than broken English . . . The restriction imposed is that Drummond can approach his material only through a generalized concept, through the group consent.

The biography of the poet written by his widow corroborates in the main Rashley's implications about Drummond's predilection for the group spirit, and, perhaps, the distancing he achieved by patois. The biography reports that for a number of years, Drummond, as an independent adult and medical doctor, shared adjoining houses in Montreal with his mother and two married brothers. His immersion in habitant and voyageur language and lore appears to have begun when he was fifteen and was stationed as a summertime telegrapher at Bord-à-Plouffe. He worked there six summers and, one can speculate from casual scattered references in his later letters and from a phrase or two of May Drummond's that expressions in dialect became a playful mode of domestic discourse. (In a letter from Vancouver, September 3, 1901, for example, he tells his wife of meeting a man who "I remember when I was a 'small boy on de farm' "; and when his popularity as a writer forced a decision as to whether he continue as a doctor May Drummond writes that "he must choose, as he himself said: 'which side de cat she jomp on de fence'."[5]

Nevertheless, a number of references makes clear that, like most wirters, Drummond wrote from personal experience and emotion — even when the resultant poem is alive with habitant language and setting. " 'Little Bateese', almost as popular as the famous 'Wreck', was inspired by his son Barclay, a mischievous youngster of five who was also the prototype of 'Dominique'. . . ."[6] The account in "The Last Portage" of a lumberman being led by the ghost of his son through a dark night to "de boss on

de camp" was written after "our little son William Harvey died of tubercular meningitis at the age of three and [a] half years. The blow almost broke his father's heart, for he worshipped the beautiful child, so quiet, gentle and affectionate." The little boy, according to his mother, had "shadow playmates" with whom he played and talked. "He was always surprised when I was unable to see the 'little blue girl' who accompanied him on all his walks, or the other children with whom he played games on the floor."[7]

> 'An' oh! mon Dieu! w'en he turns hees
> head
> I'm seein' de face of ma boy is dead —
> Dead wit' de young blood in hees vein —
> An' dere he's comin' wance more again
> Wit' de curly hair, an' dark-blue eye,
> So lak de blue of de summer sky —
>
> (The Last Portage)

A dog owned by William Henry Parker, Drummond's partner in a hunting and fishing club in the Laurentians, was named 'Boule'; "beloved of the Commodore [Parker] it was despised by the Doctor by whom it was nevertheless immortalized in the poem of the same name."[8]

"Le Vieux Temps" (of which the *Midland Review*, Louisville, Kentucky, said, "For truth, sincerity, simplicity and idealization no such poem as this has ever been written in America"), "was composed during my convalescence from a serious illness which . . . lost us our first child, a boy."[9] "Little Lac Grenier," of the poem so entitled, was Drummond's own favourite fishing spot, even though the fish there were small. His widow thought he liked, more particularly, the solitude and the setting — "a tiny sheet of water set like a gleaming jewel on the summit of a high hill. Surrounded by tall pine trees. . . . "[10]

Along with Drummond's sincerity in a number of his poems, the biography offers evidence about his sincerity, and consequently identity, as a Canadian. He emigrated from Ireland with his parents at the age of 10; but it was thirty-eight years later, 1902, before Drummond, as a poet and physician of some eminence, took advantage of an offer of a free passage to visit England (for the Coronation), Scotland and Ireland. In his letters to his wife, he expresses dislikes of most things English: the meat, the mushrooms, the peaches (too expensive), London's Strand — "all pleasure and vice . . . My God, what a beautiful thing purity is, or even comparative purity"[11] — the railway accommodation — "the worst, I think, in the world"[12] — and the silent unhelpful passengers. In Scotland, he admired the vigorous health of the men, though not the general humourlessness, and found all the women ugly. Ireland was "priest-ridden to an extent I never dreamed of. . . . I can't go any further touring, not even to my own birthplace; would be too painful — let me dream of it as it seemed in my boyhood days."[13]

As Drummond summed it up in one letter: "the trip will have taught me a lot, but all the same *Je dis Canada pour moi*, and you can tell that to anybody you like."[14] In another letter, he said:

> I don't believe the English people will ever appreciate my things — they are really very slow to see humour in anything outside England. Clever people too, these Londoners, and just as eager to grasp a dollar as any Yankee, but in some way they are behind the times.[15]

"I am glad we live in Canada," he said — "haven't seen any place on this side I prefer to Montreal and I'd rather have my boys brought up in a country where for practical purposes all are equal."[16]

After his death, Drummond was praised — perhaps undeservingly, since he earned his living as a physician — by a Toronto newspaper for not moving to the United States "as, alas, so many of

our Canadian writers have done, moving over to the great republic to be nearer their nourishment."[17] For Drummond, it seems clear, the nourishment for his poetry came from all the things in his life that he prized. In general, there was Canada, the outdoor life, and the independent unlettered farmers and lumbermen on the Quebec frontier, his paternal concern for his own young family and his physician's concern for all human beings. In particular, there was the patois he heard in the summers of youth at Bord-à-Plouffe as well as the emotions he experienced in common with all races and classes. It seems not too much to say that the consensus of Rashley's academic analyses, May Drummond's biography, and the obituary notices in newspapers at home and abroad agrees with E. W. Thompson's line in his commemorative poem which labels the poet "Everybody's friend."[18] That Drummond also managed to produce some enduring poems is a pleasant testimony that literature and life can draw strength from each other without either delving deeply into anguish.

Drummond's general theme was described in the "Book and Beaver "column in the *Montreal Standard* (April 30, 1907) as "man, and the primary sanctities of the home" in contrast to the "note of refinement" in Lampman, Roberts, Carman, Campbell, the Scotts . . . " "and their theme generally is nature-worship, pure and simple, the delight of the few."

> That is why his [Drummond's] verse comes home to the business and bosoms of all men. He has the sympathetic insight that comes from the true brotherly affection of a living man for living men. He has humor, that presence of sanctity and balance, whereas our Canadian muse is too dignified or too sad to glance in the direction of Burns' old crony, Fun. . . . The 'net result' is that 'The Wreck of the Julie Plante' gives pleasure to thousands, for whom [Lampman's first volume, 1888] *Among the Millet* is a book with seven seals. It would be a narrow-minded critic who could think this a matter of regret."

To what extent Drummond himself would agree with the priority in this summation is doubtful. According to his wife, the doctor was reluctant to consider himself a literary man. "He often expressed regrets that Archibald Lampman was obliged to slave in a government office instead of employing all his time and genius to the glory of literature."[19] Nonetheless, the widespread popularity of Drummond's verse — miners in Cobalt could quote poems from memory[20] — made its own contribution by helping to break up the stereotype of poetic convention at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although Drummond and his poems may not have moved critics to much comment, both were front-page news at his death and both broadened the general public's notion of poetry and extended for many readers their receptivity to literature.

NOTES

1 The press clippings referred to in this article, unless otherwise specified, are contained in May Harvey Drummond's scrapbook in the Osler Library, McGill University, Montreal.

2 Reported in the *Daily Evening Review*, Peterborough, April 16, 1898 in the Drummond scrapbook.

3 Collection of Drummond letters, Osler Library, McGill.

4 R. E. Rashley, "W. H. Drummond and the Dilemma of Style," *Dalhousie Review* 28, No. 4 (Jan. 1949), 387-96).

5 May Harvey Drummond's unpublished biography of her husband, p. 130 (Osler Library, McGill).

6 Biography, p. 141.

7 Biography, p. 238.

8 Biography, p. 177.

9 Biography, p. 97.

10 Biography, p. 145.

[11] Biography, p. 189.

[12] Biography, p. 197.

[13] Biography, p. 207.

[14] Biography, p. 190.

[15] Biography, p. 197.

[16] Biography, p. 207.

[17] The clipping, unidentified, is labelled: Toronto, April 8, 1907; in Drummond scrapbook.

[18] Thompson's poem is included in *The Great Fight*, the posthumous volume containing Drummond's last works.

[19] Biography, p. 131.

[20] J. F. Macdonald, *William Henry Drummond* (Makers of Canadian Literature series), Ryerson, n.d., p. 111. Macdonald's work is a thorough appreciation. He observes that "dialect, like stage-costume, removed an inhibition" from the poet (pp. 92-93) especially in regard to his own dead son and "The Last Portage" (pp. 106-07).

GERALD NOONAN

THE DILETTANTE IN EXILE: GROVE AT THE CENTENARY OF HIS BIRTH

IN A RECENT POEM BY Robert Kroetsch, entitled "F. P. Grove: the Finding," we find the following lines:

> Dreaming the well-born hobo of yourself
> against the bourgeois father dreaming
> Europe
> if only to find a place to be from
>
> the hobo tragedian pitching bundles
> riding a freight to the impossible city
> the fallen archangel of Brandon or
> Winnipeg
>
> in all your harvesting real
> or imagined did you really find
> four aged stallions neigh
>
> in your cold undertaking on those trails
> north
> in all the (dreamed) nights in stooks
> in haystacks dreaming the purified dreamer
> who lured you to a new man (back
> to the fatal earth) inventing (beyond
> America) a new world... [1]

In this poem Kroetsch conjures up the image of Grove as pioneer not in any conventional sense but as a discoverer of a new realm of the imagination where empirical reality becomes the material of fiction. "Inventing (beyond America) a new world" — this is a picture which is rather different from what literary historians usually give us. Grove inaugurates modern Canadian literature, we are told: his novel *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925) is the first example of realism in Canada abandoning the conventions of historical romance and regional idyll. In describing life in the prairies from a new view-point Grove links a new kind of social realism with psychological analysis. He is a quintessentially Canadian writer.

That realism won't take us very far, biographically, has become increasingly clear since D. O. Spettigue published his article "The Grove Enigma Solved" in 1972, and later his substantial biography *FPG: The European Years* (1973). It has since become common knowledge that in fact F. P. Grove is identical with the German author Felix Paul Greve, who faked a suicide in 1909. It is interesting, however, to consider the differences between the two lives which at first glance may not seem spectacular. Obviously Grove — in his two "autobiographies" *A Search for America* and *In Search of Myself* — does not invent an entirely new identity. Rather, his self-mystification is based on a subtle shift of nuances: the farming background of his parents makes way for the landed gentry; his restless travels through Europe are magnified into Grand Tours through several continents; his fleeting encounters with literary celebrities of his time become meaningful relationships; important formative years in Imperial Germany are relocated in North America so that Grove's early cosmopolitan years

in *fin de siècle* Europe are nicely balanced by twenty years of acquiring practical skills.

Grove's biography thus takes on a striking symbolic dimension. The European observer is strongly reminded of the figure of the bourgeois liberal who turns his back on reactionary Europe placing his revolutionary hopes on the new world. A famous nineteenth-century example of the type is Moorfeld, the protagonist of the popular novel *Der Amerika-Müde*, published in 1855 by Ferdinand Kürnberger. Moorfeld emigrates to the United States where his enthusiastic ideals are soon frustrated as he begins to realize that the country's seemingly unlimited possibilities are merely a romantic illusion. Moorfeld discovers capitalist greed and brutality behind a rigid puritan façade. Here the similarities between Moorfeld and Grove end: Kürnberger's hero tires of America (hence the title), of the inhuman societies in the cities as well as of the frightening and impassable forests of Ohio, and in the end returns to Europe as a broken man. Greve/Grove, who undergoes a similar process of disillusionment, leaves the United States in another direction: in the north he discovers a better America where the evils of a materialistic civilization may yet be averted.

It is not easy to understand nowadays why Grove's fictional version of his European years wasn't seriously questioned much earlier — despite its archetypal quality and the lack of documentary evidence. This may have something to do with the state of literary studies in the twenties and thirties. It may also be that Grove's autobiographical fiction (or fictional autobiography) provided exactly the kind of myth which appealed to the imagination of Canadians in those days. Even as late as the fifties, an example like Malcolm Ross's introduction to *Over Prairie Trails*, republished in 1957 as the first volume of the New Canadian Library, reflects the willingness to see Grove as the symbol of a specifically Canadian union of the cosmopolitan and the regional, of European culture and Canadian nature. Ross writes: ". . . he came to this country after tours (large if not grand) from the Sahara to Madagascar to the Antipodes to America. Frederick Philip Grove is yet the typical, perhaps even archtypical Canadian. . . . He was a *Canadian writer*, wholly absorbed by the Canadian scene and by the pioneer drama of a diverse yet single people."[2]

Three decades after Grove's death, his life and personal history have been thoroughly explored. The same cannot be said of his work and his literary background, although both have moved once more into the centre of critical interest. While never objecting to becoming part of Canadian mythology, Grove carefully concealed not only his personal but his literary ancestry. He wanted his work to be regarded as unique and original, even if it meant fiddling with the chronology.

However, it has never been a secret that Grove in his youth had been strongly influenced by the French naturalist writers, notably Zola, and by the great Russians. Moreover, he was familiar with contemporary European literature around the turn of the century. The wide range of his translations from English and French — Browning, Flaubert, Gide, Meredith, Pater, Symons, Wells, and Wilde, to name only a few — testifies to the heterogeneous influences which he absorbed: the realist tradition and contemporary symbolism. It is important to note — as Anthony W. Riley has pointed out — that young Greve disappeared from the European scene in 1909, i.e., the year before the Expressionist decade is said to begin, and Rainer Maria Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge* demonstrated new possibilities of psychological narrative. Instead, Grove surfacing in the United States switches to the great representatives of American realism

reading novels by Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, Sinclair Lewis, which leave their traces in his concept of realism.

Future interpretations of Grove's Canadian work must take a closer look at this mixed literary heritage. An interesting case in point is *Over Prairie Trails* (1922) which is still fairly close to the European experience but at the same time establishes the pattern of much of the later work. Of course, Grove's description of his seven trips across the prairie during the autumn and winter of 1917/18 can be called naturalistic: not only because the narrator provides a detailed account of the changing landscape and of the weather conditions, of his own physical hardships and his mental frustrations — but also because the dominant theme is man's struggle against nature, or more specifically the struggle between the planning intellect and the brutal force of the circumstances which determine man's fate.

But there is another aspect. In *Over Prairie Trails*, for the first time, Grove's archetypal hero emerges. He is an outsider who is pitting himself against nature and society alike, not really because he expects to win but because he sees the challenge as a supreme test of his own personality. This individualist challenge is usually taken up against all odds, and it ends in failure. It cannot be entirely explained in naturalist terms because it emerges as a kind of aesthetic experience: the arrogant denial of the human condition. It is the absurd insistence on the freedom of the artist who flatly refuses to surrender to the elements which may make us wonder about Grove's naturalism — even though Grove's main novels, overburdened with involved plots, contrived characters and didactic comment as they are, display a deterministic approach to reality.

In his heyday during the twenties, Grove indulged in a rather odd mixture of ill-concealed pride and self-irony. In a letter to his wife from one of his lecture tours across Canada, he wrote: "Well, my deah! Drat it all! I can't sleep when I have these ovations... 'The Greatest Canadian' I was called. Plup, plup! But they all know that the rest of Canadian writers are pygmies by my side; and they say so."[3] There is an aura of alienation surrounding Grove from the very beginning; it becomes more pronounced as the exuberant mood fades, and the economic and cultural crisis of the thirties crushes his optimistic expectations. I quote from another letter: "No, my works did not grow out of the milieu of what was being done by others in Canada, I neither knew of it nor cared for it. That a few of them, of late, have sought me out is no matter. I have helped many; nobody has ever helped me. People like Callaghan or de la Roche have gone out of their way *not* to meet me."[4]

Grove's contempt of his fellow writers — "nincompoops" he called them on another occasion — is, of course, based on a grossly distorted picture of reality. However, it reveals an important side of his enigmatic personality, as does his lack of a sense of humour and his almost dogmatic claim to be recognized as an absolute authority in matters of literary taste. Grove's pessimism, on the other hand, was at times just as radical as his intellectual arrogance: "I am just a dilettante," he writes, in 1927, to Watson Kirkconnell, one of his few close acquaintances.[5]

In the light of what we have said about Grove's hovering between realism and symbolism, the term "dilettante" has implications beyond being a simple admission of failure. Significantly, Grove uses it after discussing (in the same letter) the philosophies of Plato and Bergson. The aesthetic charm of a system of ideas, he argues, exists irrespective of its inherent truth — a thought common among the decadent movement. This movement —

to one of its important representatives, Paul Bourget, Grove refers in his letters — defines the dilettante as the man who continually masks himself, who experiments with different moral systems, who "tries on" various philosophies without subscribing to any. The dilettante sees his supreme achievement as an artist in this playful change of identities.

The strain of Grove's protean mind which emerges here is less obvious than his realistic side but may nevertheless provide a clue to his dual personality and his elusive work. Again, we have to look back to Greve's European years. Greve's penchant for Oscar Wilde — as person and artist — is well documented. In 1903, the young German writer published his translation of Wilde's *Intentions* (1891) under the title *Fingerzeige*. Wilde attacks realism and naturalism as perversions of the fundamental principle that Life follows Art. The reality of Art, he claims, is the only true reality — artificial, invented, ahistorical. Wilde says in his famous dialogue on "The decay of lying": "The only real people are the people who never existed; and if a novelist is base enough to go to life for his personage, he should at least pretend that they are creations, and not boast of them as copies."

It seems likely that Grove, one of the father figures of realism in Canada, never forgot the lesson of the master of decadence which young Greve had learnt. Oscar Wilde treated art as reality, but he also regarded life as an aesthetic experience and stuck to his persuasion — even though his trial and subsequent term in prison eventually broke him. Felix Paul Greve created "Frederick Philip Grove" to carry out an even more radical artistic experiment with reality. His struggle to create Canadian literature single-handedly has the makings of a decadent attempt to subordinate the real world to an artistic concept.

Seen from this point of view, there is no genuine contradiction between Grove's highly-developed self-esteem and his lifelong concern to camouflage his true origins. On the contrary, in inventing a new identity for himself, Grove turns life into art, casting off all restrictions which his own past, the historical situation, and current literary conventions would have placed on his existence.

Neither biographically nor artistically did this experiment turn out as successful as Grove might have anticipated. Reality proved stronger in the end. What had started as a fascinating adventure soon became a fierce battle for survival. Grove's resignation in later years reflects the growing disillusionment with his ability to come to terms with forces outside his control: "One day," he writes in 1936, "I wish to write the tragedy of a Canadian writer; the tragedy of the man who has something to say but cannot do so for sheer poverty. My personal tragedy has been that I have, throughout the forty-four years of my life in Canada, lived in exile from the realm of literature."[6]

The case of Frederick Philip Grove, seen against the background of Canadian literature in the twenties and thirties, has comic and tragic aspects. Comic — because Grove refused to abandon his *Lebenslüge* even when he had become a public figure in his own right and had to be constantly on his guard with inquisitive people; tragic — because, as man and writer, Grove paid dearly for his titanic ambitions. His work is strangely anachronistic in more than one sense. It comes too late in the sense that Canadian literature of the twenties was no longer a kind of *tabula rasa* ready for the first seminal ideas. The classic examples of realism in North America, as we have pointed out, had been published long before Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* appeared. Grove's work comes too early because the contemporary Canadian pub-

lic was not yet prepared to appreciate the extraordinary literary and intellectual challenge which Grove offered; it was unable to provide the strong response which Grove would have needed.

Frederick Philip Grove remains a controversial figure. It seems likely, however, that his future reputation will rest not so much on his realistic novels as on his stubborn refusal to accept the reality principle. We may even feel that young Greve's verdict on Oscar Wilde, written in 1903, is a fair judgment on Grove in 1981. Greve wrote: "Was Wilde schuf, ... war selten ersten Ranges. Nur wenige seiner Schöpfungen bestehen vor der Kritik als reine Künstwerke. Und doch ist Wildes Werk als Ganzes wertvoll. Es ist die Hieroglyphenschrift einer grossen Tragödie im Leben eines modernen Menschen, eines Menschen, der Künstler sein wollte und nicht sein konnte, der leben wollte und es nicht konnte, weil er das Leben mit dem Traum verwechselte."[7]

These prophetic sentences take us back to Kroetsch's phrase "Inventing (beyond America) a new world": Kroetsch the post-modern writer joining hands with the dilettante in exile — a hundred years after FPG's birth, the Grove enigma may not be completely solved after all.

NOTES

1 "F. P. Grove: the Finding," *Horizon. Writings of the Canadian Prairie*, ed. Ken Mitchell (Toronto: Oxford, 1977), pp. 131-32.

2 P. v.

3 *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove*, ed. Desmond Pacey (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), pp. 125 ff.

4 *Letters*, p. 383 (1/4/1940).

5 *Letters*, p. 58 (7/3/1927).

6 *Letters*, p. 317 (15/6/1936).

7 Felix Paul Greve, *Oscar Wilde* (Berlin: Gose & Tetzlaff, 1903), p. 43.

WALTER PACHE

REFERENCES

New reference books of several kinds bear upon Canadian writing; these are biographical, critical, and bibliographical, and like all useful reference books serve as guidebooks, sources to dip into rather than to read through. The inveterate Gale publishers offer several new volumes in various series. In *Contemporary Authors* there appear portraits of a range of Canadian writers — Ray Smith, George Whalley, Rachel Wyatt, Janis Rapoport, and David Williams in vol. 97-100; and Seymour Mayne, Stan Persky, Walter Baker, and Markoosie Patsauq in vol. 101 ($62.00 each). These volumes also offer some longer pieces: interesting biographical interviews with Pat Lane and F. R. Scott in the first, and with Barry Callaghan in the second; In *CA* 3 (new revision series) there also appears a sketch of Margaret Atwood by David Guy. Gale's *Jewish Writers of North America*, ed. Ira Nadel ($34.00) offers another kind of research guide: a selective primary listing of Jewish-American and Jewish-Canadian writers' works, with notes of some secondary materials. And also from Gale comes *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, a serial anthology of snippets from criticism; *CLC* 18 includes excerpted material on a swath of writers: Bissett, Finch, Gallant, Gotlieb, Nichol, Page, Richler, and Webb — material that provides more of a glimpse than a guide to the writers, but can be helpful to those seeking to follow the reception writers have been given. Gale's *Book Review Index* is enumerative only in providing a similar service; *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*, vol. 4, with a long section of material on Grove, parallels more closely the *CLC*. Of less help is Gale's *Childhood in Poetry*, 3rd. supp. ($75.00): a list of poems that relate to childhood, including references to Lee and Carman. It seems legitimate as far as one can tell — and will be of some use to the school librarian and the harried primary teacher.

Paul W. Bennett's *Rediscovering Canadian History: A Teacher's Guide for the 80's* (OISE, $10.50) is something of a model of its kind: a valuable book for teachers of history and for literary people who want to know how things have been changing in historical studies and where to look to find out more about them. It also includes suggested unit organizations: key questions to ask, pedagogical assistance if such is required. But though it acknowledges regional splits in Canada, it seems curiously unaware of how they

affect its own structure: Toronto newspapers and P. Whalley are his only source of contemporary illustration; his suggested list of 24 visiting speakers includes only 3 west of Waterloo and none east of Montreal; and his map puts Vancouver somewhere near Ocean Falls. Despite which, the concept is a good one, and the book better than anything comparable which has to do with Canadian literature.

In more familiar reference format is Donald M. Tupling's *Canada: A Dissertation Bibliography* (Univ. Microfilms International), a business catalogue of what's available from Accounting to Zoology, with Cinema, Folklore, History, Literature, and "Theater" in between; one valuable feature: the inclusion of material relating to Canada as well as produced in Canada. The new edition of the *Concise Oxford English-French, French-English Dictionary* ($19.95) omits the illustrations and the archaisms of the earlier edition, giving itself room for more contemporary idioms and illustrations, but it still, as it says, prefers the well-tried, and it does not include all the variations one requires, reading the French of North America. The *Britannica Book of English Usage* (Doubleday, $22.50) is a combination of an updated Fowler and a guide to after-dinner speaking, with conservative advice on how to use commas and when to tell funny stories. And finally, in Justin Wintle's fascinating *Makers of Modern Culture* (Oxford, $35.00), we find a series of biographical accounts of political, literary, philosophical, and economic specialists who have shaped modern times. Everyone is there from Lenin and Timothy Leary to Mansfield and Mao to Tagore and Dylan Thomas. But among Canadians? Only McLuhan.

W.N.

NOW IN PAPER

Recent reprints from Fides include Pamphile Lemay's *Contes vraies*, Yves Thériault's *Ashini*, Lionel Groulx's *L'Appel de la race*, Germaine Guevremont's *Marie-Didace*, and Félix Leclerc's *Le Fou de l'île* — a range of styles and topics from the whole history of Quebec writing. From Oberon come two volumes of Raymond Souster's eloquent *Collected Poems*, a testament to voice and to the constant watchfulness of a poetic mind, a poet's eye. Macmillan has released Mavis Gallant's *From the Fifteenth District*, a superb collection, as Laurentian Library No. 67; Boréal Express has brought out for the first time a full version of *Maria Chapdelaine*, edited from the author's manuscripts; *Field Notes*, subtitled 1-8 of a continuing poem, of "The Collected Poetry of Robert Kroetsch" has appeared from General Publishing at $9.95, making available a substantial body of work, an integral part of Kroetsch's questing canon. Lerici of Rome has published a collection of Irving Layton's poems in an Italian translation by Alfredo Rizzardi: *In un'eta di ghiaccio* (15,000 lira). Les Editions des plaines has released a photographic reproduction of an interesting 1890 travel book, Georges Dugas's *Un Voyageur des pays d'En-Haut. Room of One's Own* (vol. 6, nos. 1-2) published the late Susan Wood's collection of women's science fiction, a collection which illustrates the sublimated rage against current pressures, and the dreams of an egalitarian future, that women lately have rendered through fantasy.

W.N.

ON THE VERGE

*** ANDREW BIRRELL, *Benjamin Baltzly*. Coach House, $24.50. Baltzly's photographs follow in an established tradition. Baltzly, one of Notman's photographers, accompanied a CPR survey party that embarked into rugged territory when B.C. joined Confederation. And he struggled to capture the width of alpine panoramas, the depth of river chasms, the sparseness of the arid country, and the speed of the rapids, and waterfalls, all with limited success. But it is less the contrast with the present than the particular views which should strike Baltzly as interesting which ought to concern us. All travellers know that most strange sights can rapidly seem familiar. These photographs, and the 1872 journal reprinted here along with them, offer a tantalizing glimpse of the way in which the camera developed just in time to catch these first new views in black-and-white and half-tone.

W.N.

*** *Livres et auteurs québécois 1979*. An important annual guidebook to the year's work in Quebec studies, this work includes reviews of fiction, poetry, drama, and criticism, and includes indexes to related articles and re-

views in other journals. Highly useful, too, are the lists of relevant addresses.

W.N.

** GORDON GIBSON with CAROL RENISON, *Bull of the Woods: The Gordon Gibson Story.* Douglas & McIntyre, $16.95. "The people of the west coast of Vancouver Island, both native and white, were a special breed," says Gordon Gibson, and his book, which is really an oral narrative taken down and edited by ghost-writer Carol Renison, is there to prove it. It is a well-flowing, lively story of the life of a man who was logger, ship's captain, construction boss, pioneer hotel-keeper on Maui, and populist politician before he decided that his career was worth recording for its own sake and as a descriptive account of the largely vanished way of life on British Columbia's inlets and in the first three-quarters of the present century, when individualism and a natural anarchy flourished there. Entertaining biography and good folk history, vigorously told.

G.W.

** PAULA GUSTAFSON, *Salish Weaving.* Douglas & McIntyre, $24.95. Though coupled with photos of and comments on traditional weaving techniques, this is not an anthropological text but more of an objective enthusiast's account of the revival of weaving techniques and practice in the Fraser Valley. With accompanying information on dyes, methods, and designs, it is practical as well as beautiful. Reading G. W. Reed's edition of George Angas's *Early Paintings of the Maori* (Reed, n.p.) at the same time, I was struck by the recurrence — but the difference in handling — of geometrical pattern. Angas's comments, from the 1840's, complete with handsome paintings, include, incidentally, the expressed belief that the Maoris came from Mexico; it is a theory long since eroded, but Angas's illustrations of flax weaving and fingerweaving (i.e., without loom) — and his comments on the symbolic significance of geometrical patterns — still have relevance.

W.N.

** *Madame Benoit Cooks at Home.* Paperjacks, $3.95. Some years ago, asked to list the 10 best Canadian books, I put *The Encyclopedia of Canadian Cooking* on, motivated at least a little by Hugh MacLennan's essay that avers "ye shall know a people by its food." My gesture was regarded as flippant, but that's by the way. This new book is a delightful declaration of *something* Canadian, with recipes for Tourtière and maple mousse, as you might expect, and other delights called CP Stuffed Pears, Lister Sinclair Chicken Special, Mother's Way with Duck à l'orange, Manitoba Special, Haytime Freshener, Moniques April Fool Applesauce, Curried Eggs à la Poonah, and Easy Chop Suey. Recommended for sampling.

W.N.

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** PAULA GUSTAFSON, *Salish Weaving.* Douglas & McIntyre, $24.95. Though coupled with photos of and comments on traditional weaving techniques, this is not an anthropological text but more of an objective enthusiast's account of the revival of weaving techniques and practice in the Fraser Valley. With accompanying information on dyes, methods, and designs, it is practical as well as beautiful. Reading G. W. Reed's edition of George Angas's *Early Paintings of the Maori* (Reed, n.p.) at the same time, I was struck by the recurrence — but the difference in handling — of geometrical pattern. Angas's comments, from the 1840's, complete with handsome paintings, include, incidentally, the expressed belief that the Maoris came from Mexico; it is a theory long since eroded, but Angas's illustrations of flax weaving and fingerweaving (i.e., without loom) — and his comments on the symbolic significance of geometrical patterns — still have relevance.

W.N.

** *Madame Benoit Cooks at Home.* Paperjacks, $3.95. Some years ago, asked to list the 10 best Canadian books, I put *The Encyclopedia of Canadian Cooking* on, motivated at least a little by Hugh MacLennan's essay that avers "ye shall know a people by its food." My gesture was regarded as flippant, but that's by the way. This new book is a delightful declaration of *something* Canadian, with recipes for Tourtière and maple mousse, as you might expect, and other delights called CP Stuffed Pears, Lister Sinclair Chicken Special, Mother's Way with Duck à l'orange, Manitoba Special, Haytime Freshener, Moniques April Fool Applesauce, Curried Eggs à la Poonah, and Easy Chop Suey. Recommended for sampling.

W.N.

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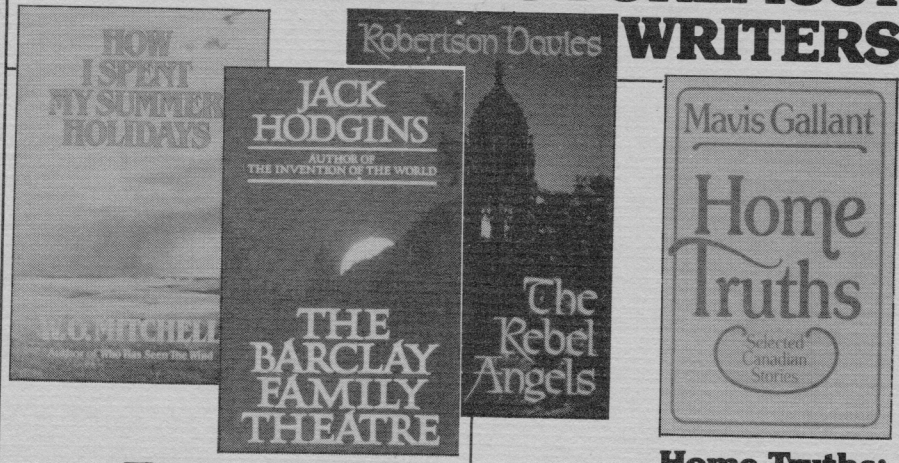

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