CENTRE FOR CANADIAN AND ANGLO-AMERICAN CULTURES

CCAC

Klaus Martens / Paul Morris (eds.)

American and Canadian Literature and Culture: Across a Latitudinal Line

Papers from the Saarbrücken Mediation Project

AMARANT PRESSE

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The Centre for Canadian and Anglo-American Literature and Culture's sequence of small, intimate conferences dedicated to questions concerning the mediation of literature and culture was initiated in April 1998. The selected essays from this, as it turned out, groundbreaking Saarbrücken conference were published to considerable acclaim as *Pioneering North America* (2000). This initial volume explores transatlantic crosscurrents with a major emphasis placed on European influences on North American literature and culture. The second volume published in the mediation series is entitled *The Canadian Alternative* (2004). It contains papers from the eponymous 2002 Saarbrücken conference which concentrated on Canadian developments deserving of mediation in a European context.

The present, third volume contains selected papers given at three further conferences. The first was presented by members of the CCAC and hosted by the Canadian Comparative Literature Association at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg (1 June 2004). The following conference was hosted by the CCAC at the Universität des Saarlandes (28-30 October 2004). The CCAC then hosted a small international symposium devoted to "Emerging Modernisms in Canada and the United States 1914-1941: A Comparative Approach" at the Universität des Saarlandes, which concluded the series (23 February 2006).

The subject of the three mediation conferences included here was a cluster of themes related to the complex topic of modernism as a cultural period and a literary movement in Canada and the United States. Modernism in Canada and the United States was framed not only by different historical parameters but also assumed different cultural shapes in response to the separate social and literary forces at play in the two countries. The modernism of the United States, as exemplified by such epochal international events as the Armory Show of 1913, for example, signals a form of participation within an international movement which was slower to develop in Canada. The subsequent emergence in the United States of writers, critics and artists supportive of the broad cultural goals of modernism in poetry, fiction, drama and the visual arts attests to the success of the movement.

In Canada, although the innovations of the Group of Seven may be compared to the earlier modernizing thrust of the Armory Show in painting, the success of modernism in launching itself as a broader based cultural trend was slower and more restricted than in the United States. In Canada, the establishment of a literary institution, gaining strength in the 1920s by the efforts of such writers as Frederick Philip Grove, A.L. Phelps and Watson Kirkconnell, among others, was closely related to the development of a national identity. They had tackled a vast cultural project which seems to have taken priority over the more closely defined aesthetic goals of modernism as a literary movement. Regions, populations, religions, national historical events, economic products, and the means of production had not yet been wholly explored in their Canadian contexts and meanings. It is perhaps for this reason as well that in Canada the tradition of modernist writing extended longer than in the United States. In fact, it was continued well into the post-WWII period, a time when American critics, writers, and literary institutions were forging an aesthetic and period concept of postmodernism.

While papers from the two earlier conferences (2004) address particular authors and works, essays from the third (2006), also collected here, add the complex field of interlocking cultural and literary issues. The focus of the third conference was intended to foster an international exchange of research and critical opinion involving issues of literary history, gender studies, intermediality, transculturality, translation studies, poetry, and editing problems centred on, though not limited to, the crucial period between the wars. The papers collected treat issues related to the study of primary texts, but also to critical texts and related theoretical approaches dealing with the subject of modernism, as well as the interrelations between the social and artistic forces, including music and painting, which fostered or hindered the development of modernism.

As a notable research centre for early twentieth-century North American and European literary and cultural history, the Saarbrücken CCAC, we believe, is ideally situated to provide the appropriate forum for scholarly investigation of topics as those presented in the following pages. We are grateful to all contributors to the conferences and to this volume for their trust and their dedicated work. The editors also wish

to thank members of the CCAC team for their varying degrees of involvement in this project. Ramin Djahazi participated in the final corrections and Achim Loch formatted the manuscript.

The editors

Unsettling the Wilderness: The Interloping Pioneer in Atwood and Grove

David Lucking

In view of the prominence of the position occupied by Frederick Philip Grove in the landscape of Canadian literature, it is perhaps surprising that Margaret Atwood, in a book so centrally concerned with the topography of that landscape as her thematic study *Survival*, should devote as little space to his works as she does. In an essay written in 1973 in response to criticisms of her book she acknowledges that a number of authors of foreign provenance were wholly overlooked in her analysis, and also that she failed to "pay as much attention to Grove as some might like" (Atwood, *Survival* 142). She attributes this neglect not to any shortcomings on the part of the writers concerned but to her own misgivings as to whether it might not be "dangerous to talk about 'Canadian' patterns of sensibility in the work of people who entered and/or entered-and-left the country at a developmentally late stage of their lives" (142). Since it is only reasonable to assume that the perceptions of Grove and other foreign-born authors were shaped by experiences having nothing to do with life in Canada, Atwood is implying, it is to be questioned whether such writers can legitimately be invoked as instances of the kind of uniquely Canadian consciousness that it was her purpose to delineate.

Yet Grove's work is by no means entirely slighted in *Survival*. Not only do the short story "Snow" and the novel *Settlers of the Marsh* come in for some perceptive comment, but the latter furnishes one particularly vivid illustration in support of Atwood's thesis concerning the dominant features of the pioneer consciousness. This does not clash with what Atwood elsewhere has to say concerning the dubious representational status of Grove's writings, since it is a matter of historical record that the phenomenon she is discussing is one that involved significant numbers of individuals of European as well as of Canadian origin. Indeed, the existence of a generically "European" mind juxtaposed against a primeval Canadian reality to which it is irremediably alien is a presupposition of Atwood's analysis. One of the arguments developed in those pages of *Survival* dedicated to the figure of the settler, it will be recalled, is that there exists a radical disjunction between the stark linearity of what is referred to as "the order of

Western European Man," with its predilection for "squares, straight lines, oblongs and similar shapes," and the more convoluted but at the same time more vital order of the natural world upon which it seeks to impose itself (120). The pioneer contending with the Canadian wilderness, Atwood asserts, is "a square man in a round whole; he faces the problem of trying to fit a straight line into a curved space" (120). What is perhaps significant in this regard is that when Atwood seeks a literary character who in some way personifies the pioneer mentality she is describing the example she seizes on is not a Canadian-born settler, or even one invented by a Canadian-born writer, but the Swede Amundsen in Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh*:

> There's Ellen's father in *Settlers of the Marsh*, clearing the land and building his farm, praying fervently at night and proclaiming that God has been good to him while at the same time driving his wife into the ground by a combination of hard work, forced impregnation and equally forced miscarriages. The father is imposing his pattern of straight lines — barn, house, fence — on the curved land, and the wife and her fertility are a part of the "curved" Nature he is trying to control. But instead of controlling her he kills her, both spiritually […] and physically. (122-3)

Notwithstanding his foreign origins, or perhaps because of them, Amundsen exemplifies in almost paradigmatic form that "arrogant abstraction" which according to Northrop Frye — a major influence upon Atwood's thinking and one of those to whom *Survival* is dedicated — is crystallized in the physical configuration of Canadian farms and towns, that consisting in "the conquest of nature by an intelligence that does not love it" (Frye 224). But there are of course other personages in Grove's fiction who typify the mentality with which Atwood is concerned, and since a number of these are Canadian by birth and upbringing as well as by residence, it might be supposed that the books of which they are the protagonists are even more directly relevant to Atwood's exploration of the national sensibility than is *Settlers of the Marsh*. Rather curiously, however, given Atwood's interest in pioneer experience as a formative influence in Canadian cultural life, what is perhaps Grove's most deliberate and sustained rendering of that experience and the mentality it fostered, the novel *Fruits of the Earth* receives remarkably short shrift in *Survival*.

Although the work is mentioned, it is only on a single occasion, and even then only in conjunction with two other novels which are quite dissimilar in content. This is what Atwood has to say concerning the trio of novels she yokes together under a single thematic rubric:

> There are the Clarks in *The Master of the Mill*, in which the straight-line edifice is the mill and the curve upon which it's imposed is the rest of life. There's John Elliott in *Our Daily Bread* and Abe Spaulding [sic] in *The Fruits of the Earth* [sic]. In all these cases the settlers succeed in their plan, build their straight-line constructions but kill something vital in the process; it is often Nature in the form of a woman. (*Survival* 123)

The circumstance that the name of the protagonist of *Fruits of the Earth* is misspelled as *Spaulding*, and that the title of the novel is prefixed with an article it does not possess in the original, might suggest that Atwood did not subject the book to particularly intense scrutiny. There would be nothing particularly remarkable about such a fact in itself, especially in view of Atwood's reservations as to the propriety of attempting to identify peculiarly Canadian traits of sensibility in the work of writers already mature when they arrived in Canada. But what is perhaps of interest, considering the meagerness of the attention devoted to Grove's novel in her study, is that there is a pronounced affinity between the imagery deployed in *Fruits of the Earth* and that elaborated by Atwood herself in some of the poetry she produced during the period immediately prior to the publication of *Survival*. One poem in particular stands out as being so closely akin both in spirit and in metaphoric patterning to certain passages in *Fruits of the Earth*, indeed, that it is difficult not to suspect a relationship of direct influence between the two works. This is "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer," a poem which Atwood herself cites in *Survival* and which she evidently does consider to be an authentic expression of the distinctively "Canadian" mentality she is intent on exploring.

Before proceeding to a consideration of some of the continuities between the two works, it might be useful to quote those portions of Atwood's poem that most immediately pertain to the discussion in hand:

He stood, a point
on a sheet of green paper
proclaiming himself the centre,

with no walls, no borders
anywhere; the sky no height
above him, totally un-
enclosed
and shouted:

Let me out!
[…]
He dug the soil in rows,
imposed himself with shovels
He asserted
into the furrows, I
am not random.
[…]
The house pitched
the plot staked
in the middle of nowhere.
[…]
In the darkness the fields
defend themselves with fences
in vain:
    everything
    is getting in.
[…]
By daylight he resisted.
He said, disgusted
with the swamp's clamourings and the outbursts
of rocks,
    This is not order
    But the absence
    Of order.

He was wrong, the unanswering
forest implied:

    It was
    an ordered absence
[…]

If he had known unstructured
space is a deluge
and stocked his log house-
boat with all the animals

even the wolves,

he might have floated.
[…]
On his beaches, his clearings,
by the surf of under-
growth breaking
at his feet, he foresaw
disintegration
and in the end
through eyes
made ragged by his
effort, the tension
between subject and object,

the green
vision, the unnamed
whale invaded. (*Poems* 60-63)

The situation depicted in this poem is that of the archetypal settler who, finding himself adrift in a natural world he perceives as both unstructured and unbounded, feels impelled to establish his psychological coordinates, and at the same time to assert his own identity, by imposing himself physically upon the landscape. This rage for order assumes compulsive geometrical form, manifesting itself in the lattice of rows and furrows the pioneer etches into the soil, the plot he stakes out "in the middle of nowhere," the fences he erects to keep chaos at a safe remove. For the pioneer, pitting himself against a world that is as opaque to his comprehension as it is resistant to his exertions, what he sees around him is "not order / but the absence / of order." One of the points implicit in the poem, however, is that nature embodies an order of its own, even if this cannot be grasped by the human mind or subjugated to the rigid systems that civilization attempts to impose: "It was / an ordered absence." A recurrent image in the poem is that of water underlying and at the same time perpetually undermining the works of man, symbolic of a fluid reality

that cannot be contained within human structures and that threatens at any moment to sweep them away. The suggestion is that the pioneer might have survived had he been able to accommodate himself to this reality rather than expecting nature to conform to the dictates of his conceptual system, had he "stocked his log house- / boat with all the animals / even the wolves." The pioneer cannot do this, however, because his mode of thinking is based on a logic of differentiation and exclusion, according to which wolves and weeds are to be kept at bay, and the human subject strictly distinguished from the external world upon which it exercises its will by sheer force. It is therefore inevitable that the natural world he can perceive only as formless chaos will finally avenge itself upon his presumption by overwhelming everything he has laboriously constructed. This disintegration is clearly psychological as well as physical in character, something occurring in the pioneer's psyche as a direct consequence of his distorted conception of the relation between man and nature. As Atwood remarks in *Survival*, although her settler is clearly insane by the end of the poem "perhaps he was insane at its beginning: the attempts to impose this kind of order by a suppression of everything 'curved' may itself be a form of madness" (124).

The scenario described by Atwood in "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer" is essentially that underlying Grove's *Fruits of the Earth* as well. Abe Spalding too, like Atwood's pioneer, perceives the natural world that constitutes the "arena of his struggles" as something inchoate and devoid of intrinsic order, a "flat and unrelieved country which, to the very horizon, seemed to be a primitive wilderness" (Grove 18, 21). He too feels existentially challenged by the "immense and utter loneliness" of the landscape, and "aroused […] to protest and contradiction" by a vacancy that is almost metaphysical in quality is stirred to desperate feats of self-affirmation (23). His attitude is self-consciously that of the conqueror bent on stamping the forms of his own mind upon the primal matrix with which he is confronted, of refashioning the world in the image of his own mental schemata. "He would conquer this wilderness; he would change it: he would set his own seal upon it!" (22), the reader is told, and later: "the world was a thing to be conquered, waiting to take the impress of his mind and will" (36). As in the case of Atwood's pioneer, this "thirst for conquest" (38) assumes obsessive geometrical form, reminiscent of the

rage for order impelling Blake's Urizen as he carves up the universe according to the categories of Newtonian science. No sooner does Abe take possession of his claim than he "took a steel measuring-line from a pocket, and marked off a hundred and twenty yards to west and north" (24), an inaugural gesture of mensuration, aligned to the cardinal axes of the compass, that will be repeated on various occasions in the course of the novel. Immediately afterwards, in a scene of almost iconic intensity, Abe assembles his plough and embarks upon the task of breaking the land, an act that assumes distinct connotations of sexual violence as Abe positions himself behind his plough and "slanted the point into the virgin prairie" (24). What he is doing through this act of symbolic defloration is attempting to subdue the elemental reality of primeval earth to a conceptual order based on disembodied numbers and equally disembodied geometrical coordinates, inscribing the codes peculiar to his civilization upon a wilderness to which they are inevitably alien:

> He drew a furrow around the site of the yard; and, having finished it, he returned once more to the point whence he had started and began the task of breaking his first field ... As he stepped along, he did double work: he guided his plough and counted his steps; and when he had taken three hundred and eighty strides he turned, for […] he had figured out that the line squared would give him thirty acres. (25)

This is the "square man" described in *Survival* with a vengeance, a close cousin of Atwood's pioneer digging the soil in rows and imposing himself with shovels. It is as a pioneer that Abe defines himself, cloaking his self-aggrandizing impulses in the rhetoric of progress by asserting that he is converting the territory into "a country fit to live in. That is my task. The task of a pioneer" (48). As is clear from his initial encounter with his own tract of land, civilization as Abe conceives it can only take the form of a grid of rectilinear forms superimposed upon the wilderness, a manifestation once again of that "arrogant abstraction" referred to by Frye.[1] Abe "wanted land, not landscape" (23) — something reducible to units of measurement that can be divided up and multiplied, bought and sold, subjected to the processes of rational thought. This rage for quantification infects everything he does:

> During the previous fall Abe had built a huge barn and added a room to the shack, financing his operations by using his last capital and borrowing at the Somerville bank […] True enough, it was a short-term loan of only fifteen hundred dollars; but, after threshing, he had paid off only eight hundred, covering the balance by a renewal note. In the spring he had planted a four-rowed wind-break of black poplar, with spruces interspersed along the north and west lines of the yard. […] The whole of what was now Abe's half section was fenced; and the land was divided by a cross-fenced pasture of twenty acres, extending from the rear of his huge, red, curb-roofed barn for twenty rods west and for half a mile north. […] Hall, having received eight hundred dollars, had turned over to Abe his newly acquired title and left for parts unknown. Abe had a hundred acres of this new land under crop; and sixty acres were freshly broken […]. The total number of horses on the place was eleven now, not counting three colts born in the new barn. Ten cows were being milked; and there were steers and heifers besides, and pigs and fowl. (35-6)

All other imperatives are subordinated to the same logic of material expansion, and we are to understand that the "nature" that Abe is committed to suppressing exists within himself and those close to him as well as in the external world. Believing that "his life lay in the future" (60), he defers all hopes for personal fulfilment until such time as he has realized his material ambitions. If Abe is anxious to have neighbours, it is not with a view to social intercourse but "because I need roads; because I need crossditches and other improvements. And as the kids grow up, I'll need a school. That's why I need neighbours" (37). When one of his daughters announces her intention to marry, Abe insists that the wedding be delayed, his rationale being that "nature plays human beings a scurvy trick in allowing a blind instinct to mature before thought and insight are sufficiently developed to act as a check" and therefore that "it was he, the father, who must counterbalance it" (192). The contraposition between the spontaneous impulses of nature and the will to regimentation intrinsic to the patriarchal mentality — Abe is not named Abe for nothing — could not be more apparent.

It has been remarked that one of the images pervading "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer" is that of water, emblematic of an underlying and at the same time circumambient reality intractable to

human conceptions of order. Water is no less ubiquitous in *Fruits of the Earth*, although in this case it exists not merely as a symbol but as a very literal presence constituting on occasion a tangible threat. One of the persistent dangers confronting the settlers of the district is that of flooding caused by bouts of torrential rain and spring thaws, periodic inundations that hinder farming operations and disseminate destructive weeds at the same time as they provoke material damage. The only viable protection against this menace is the elaborate system of drainage ditches that the province has constructed, another Cartesian grid engraved upon the landscape. But even this prodigy of rectilinear thinking is not sufficient to keep the waters entirely under control, and this failure signals both the extraneousness of man to the territory and the ultimate futility of his efforts to dominate it. In the extended meditation on the characteristics of the prairie landscape and the minds of those inhabiting it that comprises much of Chapter Thirteen of *Fruits of the Earth*, both aspects of this situation are made explicit:

> Owing to the peculiar difficulties of drainage with which the farmer has to contend, man remains distinctly an interloper; the floods, though tamed, have not been done away with by the ditches; and in places these ditches have furnished the soil for willow-thickets which are choking them up. (137)

But although, as Atwood's pioneer might have put it, "everything / is getting in," Abe is doggedly persevering in his endeavour to bring the natural elements under the sway of human discipline, and what is perhaps surprising is that, however sorely he is afflicted by a sense of the vanity of what he is doing, there is an unmistakably heroic quality to this enterprise. The chapter of the novel entitled "The Great Flood" is largely dedicated to a description of the fortitude displayed by Abe and his neighbours in repairing the damage caused by one particularly devastating flood. While there is something reminiscent of Sisyphus in these ultimately doomed efforts to reverse the entropic tendency towards chaos, the epic quality with which they are also invested generates currents of implication tending in a quite different direction.

As is suggested by the covert allusion to the biblical Great Flood — a mythic precedent invoked in Atwood's "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer" as well — the incessantly encroaching waters partake of a reality which is entirely foreign to man and his works, and which can

annihilate both at any moment. Very occasionally Abe himself becomes distantly aware that beyond the physical and psychological fences he has erected to demarcate his territory there is an undiscovered country whose very existence constitutes a denial of everything he believes in and stands for. One such occasion occurs while Abe is conversing with his neighbour Nicoll about the mystery of death:

> Abe's eyes swept over the landscape beyond his fences. […] Rarely, during the first years of his life on the prairie, had he given the landscape any thought. […] But when Nicoll spoke as he had done, Abe felt something uncanny in that landscape. Nicoll's words impressed him as though they were the utterance of that very landscape itself; as though Nicoll were the true son of the prairie, and he, Abe, a mere interloper. (40)

The landscape speaks in a language of its own, incomprehensible to the ears of interlopers like Abe, just as does the "unanswering forest" that paradoxically replies to human presumption in "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer." Although Abe is sufficiently successful in his effort to impose his own idiom on his environment that his own name becomes that of the district in which he lives, the world he inhabits remains locked in a silence that "like the flat landscape itself, has something haunted about it, something almost furtive" (138). This implicit contraposition between the human urge to map out reality through the imposition of names and a primal silence that remains impervious to such efforts is very similar to that developed in Atwood's poem, in which the pioneer's activities are represented metaphorically as gestures of linguistic self-proclamation that are destined to falter before the stubborn reality of nameless weeds and unnamed whales. And indeed, in the following paragraphs describing another of the epiphanies by which Abe is occasionally visited, not only this sustained linguistic metaphor but a significant number of other images that will later appear in "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer" are anticipated:

> He had looked down at his feet; had seen nothing but the furrow; had considered the prairie only as a page to write the story of his life upon. His vision had been bounded by the lines of his farm; his farm had been floated on that prairie as the shipwright floats a vessel on the sea, looking not so much at the waves which are to

> batter it as at the fittings which secure the comfort of those within. But such a vessel may be engulfed by such a sea. (138)

Here we see prefigurations of the "sheet of green paper" upon which Atwood's pioneer strives to inscribe his own identity, the confines of a farm which are also those of the mind, the vessel launched upon a perilous sea which will sooner or later swallow up everything man has laboured to construct. And like Atwood's pioneer, Abe foresees disintegration, not only for the sanctuary of order he has constructed for himself but for all the works of man and, ultimately, the great globe itself:

> It was five years since the house had been built. […] Yet already little sand grains embedded in the mortar were crumbling away; already the edges of the bricks were being rounded by a process of weathering. […] The moment a work of man was finished, nature set to work to take it down again. […] And so with everything, with his machines, his field, his pool; they were all on the way of being levelled to the soil again. What would happen when the supply of iron ores was exhausted? For that supply had its limits. This great mechanical age was bound to come to an end; and the resources of the planet would be scattered all over its surface. […] Even the prairie was engaged in a process which would do away with it. Abe looked at the ditches running full of a muddy flood; and his mind lost itself in the mysteries of cosmic change. (134)

In the end, notwithstanding the almost titanic strivings of which man is capable, the waters of chaos will prevail. Although the inevitable process of physical disintegration is not directly represented in *Fruits of the Earth*, it is presaged clearly enough in the note prefaced to the novel in which Grove explains that one of the experiences inspiring it was a glimpse of a vast farm which, seemingly founded by "a race of giants," had become virtually derelict with the passing of the years (xiv).

There are numerous other points of convergence between *Fruits of the Earth* and "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer" that have not been touched on in this discussion, but perhaps enough has been said to indicate that Atwood's poem might be viewed as a kind of distillation of that view of pioneering experience rendered in more discursive form in the more spacious canvas of Grove's novel. This is not in the least to imply that Atwood's personal vision was directly

determined by Grove's stark and in some ways tragic conception of the pioneer pitted against an alien and ultimately intractable natural world, and there are of course other authors, antecedent to both Grove and Atwood, who might be invoked as precedents and even as possible influences. It seems reasonable to suggest, however, that the more specific similarities between the works I have been discussing are too close to be attributed either to a common legacy of influence or to coincidence, and that Atwood's treatment of what she conceives to be a typically "Canadian" archetype might at least in this respect be indebted to that of her foreign-born predecessor. And even if it is not agreed that this preoccupation with the contest between man and nature which is often regarded as being a hallmark of Canadian literature might owe something to European rather than to strictly indigenous perceptions, the question still remains of why Grove should be relegated to a comparatively marginal position in *Survival* when his work might so convincingly have been adduced in support of it.

One reason, perhaps, is that there is a considerable degree of ambivalence in the manner in which the character of Abe is portrayed in *Fruits of the Earth*, with the consequence that he does not readily lend himself to formulaic statements as to his thematic significance. On the one hand he is, as he himself intermittently recognizes, no more than an intruder seeking to enforce his own value system in an alien territory, and as such destined in the end to defeat. In this respect he is representative of the category of human beings to which he belongs, for this is a land in which "man remains distinctly an interloper" (137) and over which he can never gain complete ascendancy. On the other hand, as has already been suggested, there is an undeniably heroic dimension to Abe's determination not to be defeated by circumstances, and this is an aspect of the novel which might be foregrounded by a more affirmative reading. In the course of the extended description of Abe and his companions repairing the damage provoked by a flood it is mentioned that to those witnessing their struggles "the men were heroes and giants fighting the elements" (70). It is said that for some of these witnesses Abe was "a huge figure of somewhat uncertain outlines, resembling the hero of a saga," and subsequently that he was "a hero and a saga-figure, loved by few, hated by some, but willy-nilly admired by all" (85). There are moments, indeed, when his activities are described as having a

demiurgic aspect, and the hero of myth begins to resemble a god. While the construction of his house is underway, for instance, "when the foreman asked a question, on Abe's answer depended something akin to creation" (114), a suggestion that is reinforced by the *fiat lux* that occurs when the elaborate electrical system is activated and the yard flooded with light (117-18). Some time later, when Abe views his farm from a distance, "that was the proudest moment of his life; and he raised an arm as though reaching for the stars" (118-19). While this might be read in an ironic key, there would seem to be nothing ironic about the tone in which it is remarked immediately afterwards that the "lighting system had not formed part of the original plan; but dreams have a way of realizing their potential growth. The best thing a man can say of himself is that he has grown with the growth of his dreams" (119). This is presumably the voice of the author himself, and it hints at a pattern of implication in the novel that is offset but by no means cancelled out by what is sometimes referred to, perhaps a trifle too reductively, as the "tragedy" of Abe's life (Parks ix).

If from one point of view Abe resembles Atwood's pathetically self-deluded pioneer fated to witness the destruction of everything he has laboured to build, then, from another he is an individual of such extraordinary tenacity and resourcefulness as to qualify — to borrow John Moss's phrase — as "Grove's most Promethean hero" (Moss 152). As such he might be envisaged almost as a culture hero, one peculiarly relevant to his place and time, and one who would seem not only to exemplify but in some ways to vindicate the pioneer spirit as this is delineated in *Survival*. The story of Abe's unremitting struggle with the wilderness thus tends to cast doubt on Atwood's comments concerning the deficiencies of the kind of mentality she is describing, for although it is all very well to say that the Canadian pioneer "might have had a happier time if he'd tried to fit himself into Nature, not the other way round" (Atwood,*Survival* 120), the question inevitably arises of whether such a thing would ever have been possible under the circumstances. It is not without significance, perhaps, that endorsement of Abe and the values he represents comes in the end even from his wife Ruth, a woman who in many respects has been the principal victim of her husband's emotional remoteness and unrelenting work ethic. Notwithstanding her sense of personal disappointment, and a virtual estrangement between man and wife that

is never entirely overcome, the moment eventually arrives when "Abe, with all his faults, meant manhood to her, power, tenacity, perseverance in the face of adversity; yes, and forbearance," to which it is added that "the very things which she had resented in him she had come to admire" (240). This rueful and sometimes reluctant acknowledgment of the essential soundness of pioneer values even when those values are perceived to be inimical to a more spontaneous engagement with life is one that finds numerous echoes in the works of subsequent Canadian writers.[2] It is this admixture of respect and even of esteem with which the portrait of the pioneer is tinged, perhaps, and not only the fact that Grove's vision might have been forged in climes that were not Canadian, that Atwood — however much she might have concurred with Grove's analysis of the pioneer mentality — found impossible to accommodate within the thematic paradigms she was elaborating in *Survival*.

Endnotes

[1] This is evidenced in the map of Spalding District appended to *Fruits of the Earth*, in which squares and rectangles figure prominently. The physical features dividing up the landscape are all of human construction, consisting in railways, roads and ditches aligned in parallel or at right angles to one another. The distribution of property follows the same pattern.

[2] See, for example, Margaret Laurence's comment about the pioneers: "how difficult they were to live with, how authoritarian, how unbending, how afraid to show love, many of them, and how willing to show anger. And yet, they had inhabited a wilderness and made it fruitful. They were, in the end, great survivors, and for that I love and value them" ("A Place to Stand On" 17). This partial reconciliation with the pioneer ethic is dramatized in the final story of Laurence's *A Bird in the House*.

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Frederik Philip Grove and Knut Hamsun: Northern European Perceptions of the New World

Arlette Warken

In 1909, the German-born writer Felix Paul Greve published a short journalistic travel report entitled "Reise in Schweden" ("Journey in Sweden"). This early instance of Greve's interest in Scandinavia, however, hardly prepares for his, or rather, Frederick Philip Grove's, insistence on a Russian-Swedish ancestry as set forth in his autobiography *In Search of Myself*. The recurrent portrayal of characters of Scandinavian origin such as Phil Branden in *A Search for America* or Niels Lindstedt in *Settlers of the Marsh* is likewise striking; in both novels, the characters are "of Swedish extraction" (*A Search for America* 11). Different interpretations have frequently been offered: German ancestry and citizenship was, of course, problematic in the aftermath of World War I, and Grove seems to have preferred and partaken of the tradition of Scandinavian immigration stories made prevalent in the 1920s by such writers as Aksel Sandamose, Martha Ostenso, Laura G. Salverson, and Ole Edvart Rölvaag. More generally, Canada might have inspired him to focus on Northern imagery of European origin; critics such as Ted Blodgett or Kristjana Gunnars have detected a rootedness of some of his works in Norse myths and sagas: "Grove's protagonists move through climates that suggest the heroes of Norse sagas [...]" (Blodgett 23).

One element in his self-proclaimed Scandinavian oeuvre that still requires closer scrutiny is his critical evaluation of a Scandinavian author then highly acclaimed in Europe: the Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun (1859-1952). Hamsun provides an apt point of reference in terms of biography, oeuvre, and perception of the new world, while Grove's explicit references to the Norwegian author suggest that his interest in Hamsun is an aesthetic one, as much as an attempt to define and locate himself as an artist. This essay aims at exploring Grove's perception of his art and his role as artist in the New World in terms of his attempt both to relate himself to, and to distance himself from, Hamsun. In order to do so, it is necessary to elaborate on Hamsun's experience with and understanding of the New World, and how this influenced his writings.

Like Grove, Hamsun lived on both sides of the Atlantic.[1] After

the failure of his first attempts to establish himself as a writer, the hard life as a road construction worker inticed Hamsun to follow Björnsterne Björnson's footsteps and emigrate to America: Björnson, a well-known Norwegian writer of naturalism, had returned from a lecture tour and spoken positively of his experiences in America as land of opportunity. Hamsun attained a letter of recommendation by Björnson, and "the North German steamship line Lloyd gave him free passage to New York and extra money, provided that he write an account of his voyage" (Current 2). His first visit during the period 1882-84 took him to New York, Chicago, Madison and Elroy in Wisconsin, and Minneapolis. Beside his various jobs as a farmhand, delivery boy, and clerk, Hamsun early on wished to emulate Björnson's lecture tours, which he did, albeit with moderate success. He turned to Minneapolis and its significant Scandinavian community, where he published in Norwegian-language newspapers. After a diagnosis of tuberculosis, Hamsun decided to return to Norway. In hindsight, his life in America seemed idyllic to him, and he announced that "if he lived until spring it would be all right for him to 'travel back to America. And I think I will, if I live'" (Current 6). While the newspaper articles which he published at the time reflect his disillusionment with American democracy and life, he was not dissuaded from returning to America, hoping that this stay would foster his literary career. He returned to New York in 1886, travelled on to Chicago, Minneapolis, the Dakota Territory, and Moorhead, Minnesota. By 1888 Hamsun was once again disillusioned by the American way of life, in particular due to the Haymarket riot, and decided to give a "farewell address" in Minneapolis in order to finance his return to Norway. As an eye witness recounted, Hamsun's subject here "was not Norwegian literature but American culture, and his point was that there was none of it" (Current 9). Hamsun collected his numerous journalistic and short narrative texts for publication in *Fra det moderne Amerikas aandsliv* (*On the Cultural Life of Modern America*, 1889),[2] where he criticized not only the materialism of American society, but among others, the lack of literary or artistic originality, the exaggerated patriotism as well as America's narrow-minded and self-centered system of education. Many additional texts focussing on Hamsun's perception of America were collected and translated into English for the first time by Richard Nelson Current in

Knut Hamsun Remembers America: Essays and Stories 1885-1949 (2003). This collection is largely comprised of articles on a variety of American subjects which appeared in Norwegian and Danish newspapers soon after Hamsun's visits, and of narratives of life in America, most of which are presented as personal experiences but which actually fuse fact and fiction. In addition, some of his literary works, although none of them is set in North America, feature emigrants or emigrants returning to Norway, and often represent "the America that Hamsun disliked—the America preoccupied with newness, mechanization, material progress" (Current 13).

While a full analysis of Hamsun's perception of the new world is beyond the scope of this essay, the key issues of immigration and assimilation may provide a key to a comparative understanding of the two writers. In "The American Character," dated January 21, 1885, Hamsun stated that

> We then get a sense of the danger that arises from the mixing of different kinds of people in a free, uncontrolled, capricious environment. The danger is all the greater in America, where shiploads of immigrants—diseased and degenerate human raw material—stream in every day from all over the world. (Current 17-18)

He anticipated that "if the flood of mean and sickly European immigrants persists, the nation must go to wrack and ruin" (18), and advocated a solution which necessitated a "timely stop to immigration" (19). Hamsun's scepticism concerned the heterogeneity of American society, of its not comprising a "single people," and thus its inability to attain the social and moral superiority would-be immigrants hoped for (19). In his novel *Growth of the Soil*, this negative attitude towards uncontrolled immigration and assimilation is reflected in the character of Eleseus, the protagonist's son, who seems to be ill-equipped for the feat of immigration. He is portrayed as a self-important spendthrift, who decides to go to America after yet another failed job and just because he happens to see the chest of an American which is much more splendid than his own. Eleseus' character is tersely summarized as follows: "Something unfortunate, ill-fated about this young man, as if something were rotting him from within" (*Growth of*

the Soil 417). Eleseus thus seems representative of the stock of "mean and sickly European immigrants" that Hamsun spoke of in his early article.

Grove's attitude towards immigration is quite different. His perception of the phenomena was voiced most explicitly during a Canadian Club lecture tour in 1928, entitled "Assimilation," in which he analyzed the melting pot strategy of the United States, concluding that "[t]he theory of the Melting Pot is exploded today" ("Assimilation" 183) and that "[y]ou can destroy; you cannot assimilate" (185). Grove then opts for a different approach in Canada, allowing immigrants to keep their individual traits and thereby contributing to the multitude of Canadian society, creating "unity in diversity" (187). In *A Search for America*, Phil Branden hence states that "[w]hen I came from Europe, I came as an individual; when I settled down in America, at the end of my wanderings, I was a social man" (446). As part of this development into a "social man," he (like Grove, the author) eventually becomes a teacher in Winnipeg who helps recent immigrants fulfil their dream of the promised land:

> I wanted to go to foreign settlements and help recent immigrants to build their partial views of America into total views; I wanted to assist them in realizing their promised land. The upshot was that I applied for and obtained a position as teacher.
>
> I have been a teacher ever since; and not only a teacher, but the doctor, lawyer, and business-agent of all the immigrants in my various districts.
>
> And twenty-seven years after the end of my rambles I published the first of my few books. (*A Search for America* 458)

It becomes evident that these strikingly different approaches to the New World immigrant experience reflect how Grove and Hamsun viewed the literary potential of North America and their role as mediators of different cultures. For Grove, making a name for himself entailed the invention of a new name and a Scandinavian identity, of presenting himself as a learned European, and of weaving a net of fact and fiction, out of his European past and Canadian present. His redefinition and reinvention of self as mediator, "social man" and self-reliant immigrant represent core exercises in the new world and extend to his role as writer.

For Hamsun, whose lectures in the new world and in Scandinavia turn from mediating Norwegian literature in particular into diatribes against American literature and culture, the new world is not the land of opportunity and progress, but the epitome of the negative trends of modern civilization, and of a literary production focussing solely on the representation of society rather than on the aesthetic endeavour. In American literature, Hamsun could find little of aesthetic value; it was rather "that literature of yesterday" (Current 46), and America was a place where "[m]ost of the surplus energy goes into projects for political and social well-being; little is left for the merely aesthetic" (Current 45). And while "[n]ew words are needed to represent new inventions, new ideas, new ways of life" (56), Hamsun, in contrast to Grove, did not volunteer to contribute to the new world scene. Rather, he returned to Norway to become a social man there and to promote his vision of the promised land *in* and *of* Norway.

It seems quite logical, then, that his literary texts feature at best returning emigrants; and they are represented in a negative way. Most notable among these characters is August Edevart, the vagabond hero in the so-called August novels,[3] who "criticizes explicitly or implicitly the trend towards modernization and cosmopolitanism while glorifying localism and life on the farm" (Current 13). Hamsun's critical attitude towards America's materialism thus extends to a more fundamental criticism of industrialization, in particular of the urban settings in Norway, which he depicts, e.g., in his first novel *Hunger* (1890).

With so little in common with regard to the perception of the New World, one wonders how Grove, self-proclaimed mediator of European culture in Canada, viewed Hamsun in general. Grove's critical assessment of Hamsun's artistic oeuvre proves to be quite ambivalent. In a letter to Djuna Barnes (circa 1924), Baroness Elsa depicts her former husband Grove as someone who is unwilling to acknowledge greatness in other contemporary writers:

> And [...] F.P.G.'s secret subconscious envy of all truly creative artists—unless they were dead long since and he translating them. For—he wished to be and thought *himself* a "creator" and because he was mistaken—carried *that* envy in his system. Funny singular and sad that people who are excellent executors of all created values—must wish to be creators—and become warped that way. [...] —I still remember how he *disliked* my admiring Hamsun—he

> felt himself concerned in—and insulted by it—I know *now*—at the time—of course I knew not his underlying malice—but Balzac or Flaubert or anyone you please—who was dead and justly famous it was even my duty to admire as *he* did. (Hjartarson/Spettigue 216, emphasis in original)

The implied *anxiety of influence* is, in fact, quite reminiscent of Hamsun's own, highly ironic treatment of established contemporary writers. While he presented Björnson favourably in his lectures held in America in the early 1890s, he also ridiculed Björnson's as well as Ibsen's writings. In 1891, for instance, Hamsun called Ibsen in his presence a "man of a century that is reaching its end" ("Mann des zu Ende gehenden Jahrhunderts;" cf. Brandell 131). Grove's desire to establish himself as both writer and learned literary critic of World Literature and Canadian literature alike is likewise reminiscent of Hamsun's mediation of Scandinavian literature in America and of American literature in Scandinavia.

While Elsa's judgement corresponds with Grove's criticism of Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil* discussed later in more detail, there is also evidence that his perception of Hamsun was not entirely negative: Grove obviously came to appreciate the psychological depth of Hamsun's characters—albeit in comparison to another first-novel writer on the scene, Martha Ostenso. Grove found her novel *Wild Geese* "deplorably, even unusually immature" and complained that only "*[o]ne* character is *seen*, in glimpses; Caleb Gare. He is not understood; only a Hamsun could understand him" (Pacey 25, emphasis in original). Grove obviously cherished Hamsun's innovative, subjective representation of character in early novels such as *Hunger.*

The most striking discussion of Hamsun can be found in his references to *Growth of the Soil*, a less innovative novel which celebrates rural life in Norway. Thus, in a letter to Arthur L. Phelps, dated 10 May 1923, Grove explicitly mentions it in reference to the genesis of his own novel *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925):

> Further news is this: I am head over ears in the "Pioneers" [i.e. *Settlers of the Marsh*]. [...] I can't believe I did certain things in it. Surely I must have read something similar to it somewhere, sometime. (I have, too; in Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil*). But this thing was written 1919, largely. (Martens, *Canadian Trails* 177-78)

Grove here ascertains that the genesis of his novel was prior to the publication of the English translation of Hamsun's novel, which appeared in 1921. The rather dismissive tone in his reference to a Nobel-prize winning novel as "something similar, read somewhere, sometime" is, in *In Search of Myself*, changed into that of the more detached, rational voice of the literary critic:

> Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil* had recently appeared. Perhaps no other book has had a more decisive influence on the formulation of my theories. For the moment its effect on me was so great that I shelved my own book, *Pioneers*, unfinished. It seemed to me that Hamsun had done what I had attempted. It is characteristic of my whole attitude towards what I came to define to myself as art, that I considered it entirely unnecessary to finish a book the subject of which had been successfully dealt with by another. This attitude is not invalidated by the fact that I resumed the book at a later stage. I came to the conclusion that my aim had, after all, been fundamentally different from Hamsun's. In Hamsun's book I came to see a thing I abhorred, namely, romanticism; which means essentially a view of life in which circumstance is conquered by endeavour only if endeavour is aided by the *deus ex machina*. In other words, as I expressed it to myself, if man is justified by faith instead of by works; or if faith persists in the face of the strongest disproof and is ultimately upheld by an external intervention, natural or supernatural. This intervention is personified, in Hamsun's book, by the figure of Geissler. That has never been my view. (*In Search of Myself* 356-57)

While Grove focuses on the differences between Hamsun's novel and his own, he also acknowledges similarities, speaking in general terms of Hamsun's "decisive influence." These similarities might be found in the realist portrayal of rural settlement, and of their psychological impact on the characters, and of the gendered experience of settlement.

The difference that Grove mentions, a "romanticism" that is created by the *deus ex machina* in the character of Geissler, proves faulty under closer scrutiny, however. First of all, Grove's texts are not entirely written in the realist mode themselves. While Grove often reverts to a harsh portrayal of settlement and the Canadian landscape, for instance, he also dramatizes the Canadian landscape while at the same time pacifying the European one:

> Beyond, tall, ghostly, white stems of aspens loomed up, shutting out the world . . .
>
> Already, though he had thought he could never root in this country, the pretty junipers of Sweden had been replaced in his affections by the more virile growth of the Canadian north. The short, ardent summer and the long, violent winter had captivated him: there was something heady in the quick pulse of the seasons . . . (*Settlers of the Marsh* 58)

The Canadian landscape here is initially described in gothic terms with words such as "ghostly," "loomed;" and then sexualized by words such as "virile," "ardent," "violent," "heady," "quick pulse," which are counterpoised by "the pretty junipers of Sweden." How different is this short, pastoral depiction of the Swedish landscape from his early depiction of Swedish forests in "Reise in Schweden," where the Swedish forest becomes a threatening and mysterious place of gothic nightmare:

> "Dieser ganze nördliche Wald lehrt eine Poesie des Grauens [...]" ("This whole northern forest provides a lesson in the poetry of horror;" Greve 205)

Such reverberations from his European writings and their relocation to the Canadian context are manifold; and they create a fusion of the realistic and the romantic, of landscape as outside reality and as reflection of inner perception. Grove's strategy is not as different from Hamsun's as he proposes, even though Hamsun ends his novel on a utopian vision of rural life that clearly exceeds Grove's portrayal:

> Look at you folk at Sellanraa, now; looking up at blue peaks every day of your lives; no new-fangled inventions about that, but field and rocky peaks, rooted deep in the past—but you've them for companionship. There you are, living in touch with heaven and earth, one with them, one with all these wide, deep-rooted things. No need of a sword in your hands, you go through life bareheaded, barehanded, in the midst of a great kindliness. Look, Nature's there, for you and yours to have and enjoy. Man and Nature don't bombard each other, but agree; they don't compete, race one against the other, but go together. (*Growth of the Soil* 428)

With regard to Grove's analysis of the character of Geissler as *deus ex machina*, a short summary of *Growth of the Soil* helps to contextualize the character. *Growth of the Soil* tells the story of Isak, about whose earlier life history we learn nothing, and who settles in the remote, northern parts of Norway. Together with his wife Inger, he manages to settle and become prosperous. The depiction of the settlement and growth is combined with disturbing influences from civilization: Inger, who kills her third child because the girl has a harelip, is imprisoned in town. After she returns, she finds it hard to adjust to the conditions of rural life after her relatively comfortable time in town. The two sons, too, are drawn in opposite directions: the younger son stays on the farm whereas the older tries his luck in various occupations. Geissler, an outsider to the community who charters the land for the state and later turns into an ever nervous, urban businessman, appears now and then and protects Isak and his farm from all dangers great and small, thus helping to establish the utopian vision mentioned above.

The use of the *deus ex machina* device is less apparent than Grove seems to assume: Hamsun portrays Isak, the protagonist, as both hard-working and utterly naive, especially at the onset of the novel. And indeed, it is only because Geissler *chooses* to help rather than cheat on him that he can become prosperous. The reader is thus continuously made aware of possible alternative developments. Towards the end of the novel, for example, Hamsun introduces a second pair of characters, Axel Ström and Barbro, who initially have a relationship similar to Isak and Inger. Axel, a hard-working man, comes as a new settler, looks for a woman to help him on his farm, and begins a relationship with Barbro Brede. Barbro becomes pregnant and, like Inger before her, kills her new-born baby. Unlike Inger, however, she is cleared of all charges of murder and after a short interval away, she returns to Axel and they marry. Axel is unaware, however, that Barbro is already pregnant again by another man; and the novel suggests, albeit with an ironic tone, that the family might live happily ever after, with no notions of guilt, punishment, or repentance on Barbro's part, and no understanding on his part:

> […] Axel had seen from the first that taking Barbro would mean getting help for all the year. No swaying and swinging with Axel, no thinking with his head among the stars. Now he's a woman of his own to look after the place, he can keep on the telegraph business

> for a bit. 'Tis a deal of money in the year, and good to reckon with as long as he's barely enough for his needs from the land, and little to sell. All sound and working well; all good reality. And little to fear from Brede about the telegraph line, seeing he's son-in-law to Brede now.
>
> Aye, things are looking well, looking grand with Axel now. (*Growth of the Soil* 404)

Considering this lack of "virtue rewarded," and that it is again Geissler who plays an important role in helping naive Axel to secure his land, it becomes clear that Grove's interpretation of the conquest of "circumstance by endeavour" only by means of a *deus ex machina* does not address the ambivalent elements in Hamsun's novel.

One such ambivalent element can also be found in the character traits of Geissler who is presented as being very arrogant and self-possessed ("But far down in the course sat Geissler again, looking highly supercilious, as if bursting with his own superiority […]" 350), always on the move, sometimes disheartened, and secretive to the point of being obnoxious. It is only after Geissler discovers the copper mine on Isak's farm and brings business men and miners to the settlement that it becomes apparent that he is indeed well-meaning and benevolent, although occasionally given to bad judgement: he later acknowledges the grave mistake of having brought the dangers of business to this idyllic place.

One might wonder, however, whether this ambivalent side of the character really escaped Grove's notice. Referring to Geissler's peculiar change of fortune in being sometimes poor, and sometimes quite well-off, Grove says in *In Search of Myself:* "I was a born Geissler" (422). Bearing the just mentioned ambivalent nature of Geissler in mind, this statement has its ironic implications, and one wonders whether Grove is here not paying tribute to all the character traits of Geissler—and himself.

To conclude: In his long career, Hamsun, like Grove, questioned prevailing literary and cultural paradigms both of the new world and Europe. In *Growth of the Soil*, he continued to criticize the achievements of industrialization and modernization, turning to a relatively positive vision of the relationship between human beings and nature which brought him much critical acclaim at the time. It comes as no surprise that Grove, living through the various stages of his

anxiety of influence and having to negotiate both his European heritage and his immigrant experience, eventually acknowledged that Hamsun was one of the authors that belonged to "[T]he bread and meat of [his] mental fare" (*It Needs to be Said* 82). The delineation of the borders to another author in an attempt at artistic self-assertion is an essential part of Grove's oeuvre, and, as Geissler in Hamsun's novel makes clear, borders are negotiable. In that, Grove is indeed a true Geissler.

Endnotes

[1] The following biographical summary is based on Richard Current's introduction to *Knut Hamsun Remembers America,* pp. 1-13.

[2] Later, more well-meaning remarks by Hamsun suggest that he changed his perception of the United States later on (cf. Arlow W. Anderson's "Knut Hamsun's America," which provides a detailed account of the content of the book as well as of the reception of Hamsun's portrayal of America in Norway).

[3] Knut Hamsun's so-called August novels are *Vagabond Days* (1927), *August* (1930), *The Road Leads On* (1933).

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FPG and André Gide: Life, Art and *Rifacimento*

Rosmarin Heidenreich

The unusual nature of the relationship between André Gide and Felix Paul Greve alias Frederick Philip Grove can be documented in several sources: their correspondence, Gide's *Journal*, and, perhaps most significant of all, in a number of their published works. In examining this relationship between the two writers, three aspects of their lives and work emerge as determinant factors: their respective positions on life and art, their common desire for Protean self-transformation, and Greve's alias Grove's self-reinvention (or *rifacimento*) in America, as compared with Gide's vicarious adoption of multiple identities in his works.[1] The dialogue on these issues that began when the two writers first met in 1904 was pursued in their respective works long after there was no longer direct contact between them, and the intensity of their relationship was due to what seems to have been a reciprocal perception of the other as a kind of alter ego, in which each saw the other as a virtual version of himself.

The relationship between Gide and Greve, who was to become Gide's translator, began in June 1904 when Greve, having just been released from prison, visited Gide in Paris. Gide's description of his first impression of the young German reflects the intensity of his anticipation:

> Je m'avançais incertain dans le hall [de l'hôtel].—Je vis aussitôt cette figure glabre, comme passée au chlore, ce corps trop grand pour qui tous les sièges sont bas… Je souhaitai ardemment que ce fût lui. C'était lui. (Ernst and Martens 221)

At this first meeting, the conversation, precipitated by the mention of Oscar Wilde, revolved around a debate about life versus art, with Gide privileging art and Greve declaring that he preferred "life." In their conversation, the two notions are equated in terms of the opposition of "acting" (*agir*) versus "causing action" (*faire agir*):

> [L]'action, says Greve, […] c'est cela que je veux; oui, l'action la plus intense…intense…jusqu'au meurtre…
> Long silence. (224)

Gide replies:

> -Non, dis-je enfin, désireux de bien prendre position, l'action ne m'intéresse point tant par la sensation qu'elle donne que par ses suites, son retentissement. Voilà pourquoi, si elle m'intéresse passionnément, je crois qu'elle m'intéresse davantage encore commise par un autre. J'ai peur, comprenez-moi, de m'y compromettre. Je veux dire, de limiter par ce que fais, ce que je pourrais faire. De penser que parce que j'ai fait ceci, je ne pourrais plus faire cela, voilà qui devient intolérable. J'aime mieux faire agir que d'agir. (224f)

Underlying these two seemingly opposing positions is the Protean desire for self-transformation, to play all the parts, so to speak, rather than the one role in which one seems to have been cast by the circumstances of one's birth. For Gide, as we have seen in the above quotation, this desire manifests itself in the refusal to limit himself, through action, to one choice that precludes all others: he is, metaphorically, the puppeteer who pulls all the strings, the artist who "causes action" rather than act himself. For Gide, it is art rather than life that bestows the Protean gift of ultimate freedom from the constraints of personal identity. Greve, for his part, invokes the teachings of Ménalque in Gide's own *Nourritures terrestres* to justify his desire to live out the multiplicity of human experience.

As we now know, Felix Paul Greve acted on his Protean impulses, literally reinventing himself not only in the multiple roles he assumes in his "autobiographical" writings, but also in assuming the self-created identity he lived out as Frederick Philip Grove, a Canadian writer who had given himself the distinguished antecedents that he had tried, ultimately unsuccessfully, to claim in Europe. In this initial conversation between Gide and Greve, both articulated orientations that were to prove determinant in their subsequent works and lives, and both were to refer to it in various contexts years after it took place. In fact, Gide published his detailed account of their first meeting twenty years after it occurred in an essay titled "Conversation avec un Allemand quelques années avant la guerre," an essay which the Gide scholar Claude Martin later described as "strange and significant" (138).

Both writers lived lives consistent with the respective positions they had taken in this dialogue: in life, Gide remained solidly anchored

in the Parisian *haute bourgeoisie* to which he had been born, whereas Greve, five years after that first encounter with Gide, faked a suicide and subsequently emerged in North America, bearing a new identity. As of 1909, Greve presented himself under the name of Frederick Philip Grove, born in Russia of a Swedish father and an English mother, a child of wealthy and quasi aristocratic parents. He had "acted," literally reinventing himself as the figure he had impersonated in Europe.[2]

Rifacimento

There were, of course, compelling reasons for Greve to break with his European past, namely his insurmountable debt and the humiliation of having served a prison term for fraud, but his immigration to the New World was also the opportunity to assume a new identity under which, in his new surroundings, he could play a multiplicity of roles. At the beginning of the twentieth century, America offered unique possibilities of *rifacimento*,[3] the reinvention of the individual through the myths and paradigms that were specific to a society that was still trying to define itself. Although Greve would have been unaware of Archie Belaney's self-reincarnation as the Indian Grey Owl, or the mythologizing of the painter Tom Thomson as the lonely woodsman of the north, he would have been familiar with the popular ideas of the period with regard to the purity of nature and unspoiled wilderness as well as with the image of the pioneer settler or that of the immigrant who rises to fame and fortune after years of toil as a migrant worker or menial labourer. It can be argued that these archetypes of the New World played a significant role in Greve's self-reinvention, and that his account of his early years in North America was the product of many such narratives combined. But the multiple roles he assumed in his "new life" also permitted him to live out the "multiple possibilities" that Gide, in his *Nourritures terrestres*, had defined as the very essence of human freedom. It was the contradiction between Gide's exhortations in his *Nourritures* — which purported to favour life over art—and his contention, in the "Conversation," that, to him, art (*faire agir*) was preferable to life (*agir*) that was to remain the central focus of what can be seen as an ongoing dialogue between these two writers in their subsequent works.

Life and Art

The works of both writers continued to reflect the divergent views on life and art that they had exchanged at their first meeting in Paris. Among the texts published by Greve alias Grove, the most important work in this regard is no doubt the tome of almost five hundred pages that the author presents as his autobiography and that bears the ambiguous title *In Search of Myself*. In the present context, the most significant aspect of this work is the prologue with which Grove prefaces his "autobiography." His decision to write about his life was inspired, he says, by the biography of a brilliant young Frenchman who, in Europe, had been, as he puts it, one of his intimates. Indeed, it was precisely the allusion to this "young Frenchman" that put researchers on the trail that led to the discovery of Grove's true identity (Spettigue). It is the "young Frenchman's" phenomenal success that, according to the author, has motivated his desire to explain himself and to justify the failure of his own life.

We have good reason to believe that when he began to write his "autobiography," Greve alias Grove had access to Gide's works as well as to his biography.[4] And, in a volume published in 1924, titled *Incidences*, Gide had published the already mentioned "Conversation," which records almost word for word the conversation Gide had written down so carefully in his journal of 1904. One can imagine what an effect the publication of this intimate conversation would have had on Greve alias Grove as he read it in far-away Canada. The opposition between life and art established in *In Search of Myself*, in which the narrator represents one side and the "young Frenchman" the other, seems in fact to represent a response, a continuation of this conversation. In "Conversation avec un Allemand," it was Gide who had broached the subject by commenting on Greve's essay on Oscar Wilde.

> - C'est par là que m'a tant intéressé votre première plaquette (sur Oscar Wilde).
>
> Je crois très juste l'antagonisme où vous placiez la vie et l'art…
>
> Il m'interrompt.
>
> - Eh bien! moi je ne trouve cela juste du tout. Ou plutôt…si vous voulez…oui, il est dangereux pour l'artiste de chercher à vivre; mais c'est précisément parce que moi, je prétends vivre, que je dis que je ne suis pas un artiste. C'est le besoin d'argent qui maintenant

> me fait écrire. L'œuvre d'art n'est pour moi qu'un pis-aller. Je préfère la vie. (141)

While Gide maintains an absolute freedom in refusing to concretize his virtual identities, Greve, on the contrary, wants to live out the principles of the chameleon poet. If for Greve the Protean desire to "occupy all the places"[5] and to play all the parts was a tendency that began to manifest itself even in Europe, it was his immigrant status in America that allowed him to assume a multiplicity of paradigmatic roles. In America he becomes, in his "autobiographical" works, the North American picaresque hero par excellence. He is by turns a restaurant waiter, a travelling salesman, an itinerant labourer, and a hobo before settling as a school teacher in the Canadian west, where he produces his literary work. While Greve "acts," literally re-creating his identity in America, Gide, consistent with the position he had taken in the "conversation," continues to "cause action" (*faire agir*), pursuing his literary career in France.

That the intensity of the relationship between Gide and Greve was determined by personal, indeed emotional aspects as well as by their respective positions on life versus art is documented in their correspondence. Subsequent to a misunderstanding involving Gide's visit to Berlin, of which he had not informed Greve, who was living there at the time, Gide writes:

> Que penser de votre silence, à présent? Ne sentez-vous pas que j'ai besoin qu'un mot de vous m'apprenne que ma dernière lettre vous a guéri de la si mauvaise opinion que vous preniez de moi? Faut-il insister encore, vous certifier que non seulement je ne cherche pas à me détacher de vous, mais que, si vous vous écartiez à présent ou me forciez à prendre un ton peu amical avec vous, ce serait un des chagrins de ma vie? (Ernst and Martens 167)

And in another letter, dated May 28, 1907, he says:

> De toutes les figures que j'ai rencontrées, vous êtes une de celles qui m'a le plus intéressé—(J'ai transcrit, une fois rentré à la campagne, tout au long, la conversation que nous avons eu à Paris--)—mais quand je vous ai revu à Paris nous n'avons plus rien su nous dire. Vous m'intéressez autant que le premier jour et c'est là, si je puis ainsi dire, un intérêt du cœur autant que de la tête, mais, à moins

> que ce ne soit pour pénétrer un peu plus avant dans votre vie, je n'éprouve pas le besoin de vous revoir. (170)

Three elements—Greve's trip to Paris immediately after his release from prison, the sole purpose of which was to meet Gide, the emotionally charged tenor of much of the correspondence, and the passage cited earlier from Gide's journal—indicate the importance that each of the two men attached to their relationship. But it was in their respective literary works that the decisive role that each of them played in the works—and the life—of the other fully emerges.

If *In Search of Myself* was inspired by memories of Gide, the "young Frenchman," for Gide, too, the relationship with Greve was far from forgotten: twenty-eight years after their first encounter, Gide remained haunted by the respective roles assumed by the two writers in the "Conversation." In a journal entry written in 1932, Gide reflects on one of the phrases he himself had used at that first memorable meeting:

> 'J'aime mieux faire agir que d'agir'. Non, cette phrase ne m'a pas 'échappée.' […] L'étonnant, c'est que Grève, en me répondant, ne faisait que réciter l'enseignement de mes Nourritures. En s'emparant de mon rôle, il me précipitait à droite. Somme toute, je me défilais. (*Journal 1889-1939* 1104)

But the figure of Felix Paul Greve, who prefers "life" to "art," emerges not only in the journal and in the "conversation" that Gide had published in 1924. He must also have recognized himself in several other works, notably in the character of Lafcadio, in *Les Caves du Vatican*, and in certain passages in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*.

As Klaus Martens has pointed out in his book *F.P. Grove in Europe and Canada. Translated Lives,* the description of Lafcadio in *Les Caves du Vatican* coincides to an astonishing degree with certain features of the life and works of Greve:

> One is struck by resemblances to Grove's life and writings: his role as an English gentleman, his fictive parents (the mother Scots, the father Swedish), living at "Castle Thurow," Greve's proclivity for rowing, Else, homoerotically coloured friendships with Kilian and possibly Lomberg, the preference for "beaches…" (182)

However, Martens concludes: "There are many such echoes and textual cross-references. 'Proof,' unfortunately, there is not" (182).

One of these striking resemblances between Lafcadio and the young Greve lies in Lafcadio's will to act. Lafcadio commits the gratuitous act par excellence when he throws poor Amédée Fleurissoire—whom he doesn't even know—out of a moving train—a senseless crime. It is consistent with Greve's own statements to see this incident as an allusion to the famous "Conversation avec un Allemand," in which Greve expresses his intense desire to act, to the point of committing a murder.

But the resemblances Lafcadio bears to Greve to which Martens alludes manifest themselves in a variety of other, equally significant ways in Gide's novel: Lafcadio's obscure origins, his fastidious tastes, his physical appearance. In his meeting with Julius de Baraglioul, Lafcadio, like Greve in his first encounter with Gide, declares his father to be dead, and as is the case in Greve's account, the father's role is assumed by a series of "uncles," who strongly resemble those who appear in *In Search of Myself*. The relevant passage in *Les Caves du Vatican* reads as follows:

> Lafcadio, à qui sa mère avait donné cinq oncles, n'avait jamais connu son père; il acceptait de le tenir pour mort et s'était toujours abstenu de questionner à son sujet. Quant aux oncles (chacun de nationalité différente, et trois d'entre eux dans la diplomatie), il s'était assez vite avisé qu'ils n'avaient pas d'autre parenté que celle qu'il plaisait à la belle Wanda de leur prêter. Or Lafcadio venait de prendre dix-neuf ans. Il était né à Bucharest en 1874 […] (61)

The resemblance between elements in this passage to those occurring in *In Search of Myself*, in which the narrator presents several mentor figures, including "uncles," whose kinship ties are as nebulous as Lafcadio's, is striking. Two examples:

> It seemed that in her [his mother's] girlhood, there had been three men: an Austrian who held a high rank in the army; my father; and a third man whom, incredibly, I seemed to recognize as my 'Uncle Jacobsen'. (93)

> It must have been at this stage that I first met another relative of mine, a great-uncle by the name of Rutherford. […] he was engaged

> in negotiations with the Russian government at St. Petersburg […] (111)

What is more, the story of his life as Lafcadio tells it to the Count de Baraglioul (his biological father), is identical, even in its details, to Grove's account of his youth in *In Search of Myself*, although some of the personal and place names are different:

> À Bucharest, les salons de ma mère s'ouvraient à la société la plus brillante, et autant que j'en puis juger de souvenir, la plus mêlée; mais dans l'intimité fréquentaient surtout, alors, mon oncle le prince Wladimir Bielkowski et Ardengo Baldi que je ne sais pourquoi je n'appelais jamais mon oncle. Les intérêts de la Russie (j'allais dire de la Pologne) et de l'Italie les retinrent à Bucharest trois ou quatre ans. Chacun des deux m'apprit sa langue; c'est-à-dire l'italien et le polonais. (*Les Caves du Vatican* 82)

And here is the description of Greve alias Grove's mother's "salons" as he describes them in *In Search of Myself*:

> […] there was a very distinct and striking intellectual atmosphere in the circles which gathered about my mother; […] No matter where we were […] the people who called on my mother or on whom she called; who crowded her drawing-room or sat down at her table when she gave one of her rare dinner parties, were the men and women […] who were more or less internationally known as 'good Europeans' […] (82)

Lafcadio is conspicuously tall, a trait Gide stresses when he has Lafcadio himself draw attention to it in *Les Caves du Vatican:* "[…] ces passants vont s'apercevoir que je les dépasse énormément de la tête […]" (53). This allusion to Lafcadio's height evokes the impression Gide records of Greve in his *Journal*, which stresses his striking tallness: "[…] ce corps trop grand pour qui tous les sièges sont bas…"(Ernst and Martens 221).

Like Greve, Lafcadio is not only exceptionally tall, he is also handsome and blond. When Julius de Baraglioul pays a visit to Lafcadio in the latter's poor bohemian flat, he sees before him "un beau jeune homme blond qui l'observait en souriant" (*Les Caves du Vatican* 56).

The novelist Julius de Baraglioul calls on Lafcadio at the request

of his father, the Count Juste-Agénor de Baraglioul, whose illegitimate son Lafcadio is. While he waits for Lafcadio, Julius looks around him in the flat: he notices books in English and in Italian, and he is particularly interested in a photograph, which he finds disturbing:

> […]sur une plage de sable, une femme, non plus très jeune, mais étrangement belle, penchée au bras d'un homme type anglais très accusé, élégant et svelte, en costume de sport; à leurs pieds, assis sur une dérissoire renversée, un robuste enfant d'une quinzaine d'années, aux épais cheveux clairs en désordre, l'air effronté, rieur, et complètement nu. (*Les Caves du Vatican* 56)

As he continues his inspection of the room, Julius notes, in addition to food staples and the remains of a meal, various other objects, each one of which can be linked with elements Grove mentions in his "autobiography" or in other writings: the inscription on the photograph places its subjects at Duino, an archeological site, evoking Greve's two sojourns in Italy, the purpose of one of which was to pursue his studies in archeology. A "carnet relié en cuir de Russie," with a dedication to Lafcadio signed by "son vieux oncle," evokes the trip to Russia in the company of an "uncle" described by Grove in *In Search of Myself.* What is more, Julius observes that the content of this "carnet" consists of excerpts from a personal journal, but on further examination, it seems to be a sort of account book: "[l'on retombe] dans la comptabilité. […] Pourtant, c'était une comptabilité d'un autre ordre" (*Les Caves du Vatican* 55). This strange "accounting" evokes the itemizations and honorarium calculations for Greve's translations found in several of the letters he addresses to Gide (Ernst and Martens 73; 185-86).

It is true, as Klaus Martens observes, that these strange resemblances do not constitute *proof* that Greve was the main model for the character of Lafcadio. However, in addition to these resemblances there is another detail, associated with Julius's visit to Lafcadio, that supports this hypothesis. Carola, the woman who admits Julius to Lafcadio's room, introduces him to a woman whom Julius had noticed in a *fiacre* in front of Lafcadio's house. This woman is described as wearing "un trop grand chapeau," and in fact her entire appearance is somewhat vulgar *(*"à toilette un peu tapageuse"). Her name: Bertha Grand-Marnier.[6] "Bertha" was the name of Felix Paul

Greve's mother (Martens 2). Coincidence? Perhaps. But Gide's description of Bertha Grand-Marnier, which suggests that she has the appearance of a somewhat "loose woman," and her presence at what is essentially a rooming-house is consistent with two significant features in the profile of Greve's mother. Greve biographer D.O. Spettigue suggests that there was likely an intimate relationship between Bertha and a man called A.H. Jacobsen, to whom she was neither related nor married, making her, at least by lower middle-class standards of the period, a woman of dubious morals (46-47). And according to Klaus Martens, Greve's mother had operated a boarding-house in Hamburg (2).

In the light of all these "coincidences," one may conclude that Greve had told Gide a far more complete version of the story of his life than that presented in the "Conversation," which would explain the many similarities between Lafcadio and Greve, only a few of which have been summed up here.

These resemblances between the fictional Lafcadio and the biographical Greve also serve to dramatize manifestations of Gide's own (virtual) multiple identities. In *Les Caves du Vatican*, Lafcadio, who "acts" and commits the ultimate *acte gratuit*, is the illegitimate half-brother of the novelist Julius de Baraglioul, who "causes action." While Lafcadio, who is of obscure Eastern European origns, bears a number of features of Greve, as we have seen, it is easy, as Claude Martin has pointed out, to recognize in Julius de Baraglioul, a mask of his author. The fraternal bond between these two characters further suggests that both can be read as alter egos of Gide himself.

In this context it is therefore significant that Gide initially thought of making Lafcadio, the character resembling Greve, rather than Édouard (who, like Julius de Baraglioul of *Les Caves du Vatican*, is a novelist and a character generally resembling Gide) the narrator of his new novel. In the opening sentence of his *Journal des Faux-monnayeurs* we read: "J'hésite depuis deux jours si je ne ferai pas Lafcadio raconter mon roman" (11). In Gide's mind, the figures of Lafcadio and Édouard have merged, both characterized by their constant metamorphoses. As Claude Martin succinctly puts it, in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, Narcissus becomes Proteus (154).

But if Greve appears, in various disguises, in Gide's works, allusions to Gide, although far more oblique than those in *In Search of*

Myself, occur in a number of Grove's writings as well. The incident of the counterfeiters in *A Search for America* is one example.

Gide's *Faux-monnayeurs* was published in 1925. It was much commented upon by contemporary critics due to the complexity of its *mises en abyme*, the most significant of which is that Édouard, the main character, is a novelist who is writing a novel called *Les Faux-monnayeurs*. In it he reflects on the disguises and the falseness in the lives of people around him. Early on in Gide's novel, Édouard is confronted with a youthful band of actual counterfeiters, the children of the hypocritical *bourgeois* he is writing about— a "coincidence" he finds disconcerting. But Édouard is also constantly wrestling with his own demons, notably with the authenticity of his own identity. As Ernst Robert Curtius puts it in his lengthy review of Gide's novel, "Für Edouard hat das Wort 'Aufrichtigkeit' seinen Sinn verloren, weil sein Ich beständig variiert. Es kann ihm geschehen, dass er abends das Wesen nicht wiedererkennt, das er am Morgen war" (652). The irony of Édouard's quest for authenticity, to discover the truth that lies behind the multiple forms of human disguise, expressed from a perspective that can be so closely associated with Gide's own, would hardly have been lost on Grove, a writer living under an assumed identity, who had presumably already recognized himself not only in the "Conversation" but also in the Lafcadio of *Les Caves du Vatican*. That the counterfeit episode in *A Search for America* represents a response (perhaps an ironic rebuttal?) to Gide's novel is not unlikely.

Grove's *A Search for America* appeared in 1927, two years after Gide's *Counterfeiters (Les Faux-monnayeurs*). A chapter suggestively titled "The Issue Is Obscured" is devoted entirely to a description of the hero's encounter with a group of counterfeiters. It begins with Branden's attempt to orient himself in New York, and his references to the famous landmarks of Manhattan as he wanders about appear as parodic equivalents of the Paris landmarks that occur in the opening chapter of *Les Faux-monnayeurs*. The action describes Phil Branden's falling in with a group of hard-drinking gambling men, none of whom, as it turns out, is what he seems. Branden is drawn into a poker game and wins the pot, but the money is counterfeit, and when he tries to use it, he is arrested. The episode, and particularly the ensuing dialogue with the detective, can be read as a response to Gide's recently published novel.

In *A Search for America*, the detective cautions Branden: "[…] your story has got to be straight." "My story," replies Branden, "is straight enough. I want to make a confession. It's lucky that I was the victim and not the crook" (125). Grove's prefatory "Author's Note," in which he points out that "every event in the story was lived through; but only a very few events […] had taken place in the years with which the book deals," can be easily linked to Felix Paul Greve's European past, including the time he spent in prison: in the counterfeit chapter Branden describes his experiences with the justice system in some detail. Branden's remark that it was lucky that he was the victim and not the crook may be read as a vindication, a claim that Greve's imprisonment had been unjust. But in the light of Gide's *Faux-monnayeurs*, it may also contain an oblique allusion to Gide himself and to Greve alias Grove's recognition of himself in Gide's recently published novel. Grove's concluding remark in the preface is particularly suggestive in that regard: "[…] while a pseudonym ostensibly dissociates the author from his creation, it gives him at the same time an opportunity to be even more personal than, in the conditions of our present-day civilization, it would be either safe or comfortable to be were he speaking in the first person, unmasked." The key words in this quotation are "to be even more personal" and "unmasked." Grove must have found the impulse to respond to what he surely recognized as a representation of himself in *Les Faux-monnayeurs* (and in *Les Caves du Vatican*) to be irresistible, yet he could not reveal himself. His prefatory note to *A Search for America* can be read as a disguised response to Gide, written in the same vein and with the same intention as his preface to *In Search of Myself*.

Conclusion

If a number of characters in *Les Caves du Vatican* and *Les Faux-monnayeurs* are clearly modelled after the "jeune Allemand," and *A Search for America* and *In Search of Myself* contain elements that seem to constitute a direct response to the two French works, it is another of Gide's texts, published well before Gide and Greve met, that reveals another significant aspect of the bond between the two writers. In virtually all their works, both refused the idea of limiting themselves to only one choice among those open to them: "La nécessité de l'option me fut toujours intolérable; choisir m'apparaissait non tant élire, que

repousser ce que je n'élisais pas," says the narrator in *Les Nourritures terrestres* (111). Elsewhere, in what seems to be the author's voice, he seems resigned to the constraints created by the circumstances of one's past:

> Il y a d'étranges possibilités dans chaque homme. Le présent serait plein de tous les avenirs, si le passé n'y projetait déjà une histoire. Mais, hélas! Un unique passé propose un unique avenir—le projette devant nous, comme un pont infini sur l'espace. (77)

Felix Paul Greve alias Frederick Philip Grove, an obedient Nathanaël, in fact followed the precepts of the *narrator* in *Les Nourritures terrestres*, and not those of the author who had disavowed them: "Jette mon livre; dis-toi bien que ce n'est là *qu'une* des milles postures possibles en face de la vie. Cherche la tienne" (182). In assuming the multiple roles he claims in his Canadian works, Greve alias Grove in fact "acted," and "threw away the books," as exhorted by the narrator of *Les Nourritures terrestres*, refusing to acknowledge the constraints of birth and of one's personal past expressed so fatalistically in the voice of its author.

It is in another of his novels that what one can characterize as an ongoing dialogue on the subject of life and art seems to come full circle. Just as he had responded to Gide's texts in *A Search for America* and *In Search of Myself*, in writing a novel set in western Canada, peopled with characters pioneering the "new world" which he himself now inhabited, Grove recognized, in an oblique way, the author of *Les Nourritures terrestres* by giving his novel the title *Fruits of the Earth*. It is a translation of the title of the work from which he himself, as Felix Paul Greve, had translated an excerpt titled *Ménalque*. In terms of their actual content, the two works could not be more different. But it is precisely in the differences between these two works bearing the same title that one can recognize the refusal of both writers to "limit themselves to only one choice." It is a refusal that manifested itself in the life as well as in the work of Gide and Greve alias Grove, and which is eloquently summed up in the character of none other than Ménalque, of *Les Nourritures terrestres*. According to Claude Martin, Ménalque "incarne moins 'la ligne unique de sa vie *réelle*' que l'une des 'directions infinies de sa vie *possible*'" (48).

Greve saw this other "possible life" in Gide and Gide saw it in Greve, and it was the tantalizing possibility of choosing this other life that played such an important role in the works of both writers, from the time they first met. And it was also this other "possible life" that haunted both to the end of the "real life" each one had ended up choosing.

Endnotes

[1] The content of some sections of this article was first presented in French in a conference paper: Rosmarin Heidenreich, "André Gide et FPG: le soi dans l'autre," *Colloque international sur l'altérité dans les littératures francophones,* November 13, 14 and 15, 2003, University of Manitoba and Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface, subsequently published in Dominique Laporte, ed., *L'Autre en mémoire*, (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006) 27-43. For the relevant sources, see Jutta Ernst and Klaus Martens, eds., *"Je vous écris, en hâte et fiévreusement": Felix Paul Greve — André Gide. Korrespondenz und Dokumentation* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 1999) and André Gide, *Journal 1889-1939*, (Paris: NRF, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960).

[2] For biographical data on Greve/Grove, I have relied on Klaus Martens, *F.P. Grove in Europe and Canada. Translated Lives*, University of Alberta Press, 2001.

[3] I borrow this term from Andrew Hunter, who uses it to describe the Thomson myth in his splendid essay "Mapping Tom" in *Thomson* (the catalogue to the Tom Thomson exhibition), ed. Dennis Reid, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2002), 44.

[4] According to Klaus Martens, Grove had likely read the biography by Jean Hytier, published in 1938.

[5] I borrow this term from Régine Robin. See Régine Robin, *Le Golem de l'écriture. De l'autofiction au Cybersoi* (Montréal: XYZ Éd., 1997).

[6] Gide's choice of the Germanic form of the name ("Bertha") as opposed to its French form ("Berthe") also seems significant in this context.

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Japanese-Canadian Girl Meets Laura Ingalls: Re-Imagining the Canadian and American West(s) in Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child*

Karin Beeler

> "I'm always tossed into this tornado, this Wizard of Oz meets Godzilla at the Little House on the Prairie!" (*The Kappa Child* 244)

The American West can be defined in a number of ways: geographically (e.g. west of the Mississippi), historically (e.g. the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890), or mythically through powerful icons (such as John Wayne). Images of the American West are pervasive in American literature, film, and television and have captured the imagination of writers beyond the borders of the United States. The American prairie is of particular interest to the contemporary western Canadian writer Hiromi Goto, who uses intertextual references to the frontier experiences of Laura Ingalls, a character in the American novel *Little House on the Prairie* (1935) by Laura Ingalls Wilder. In her novel *The Kappa Child*, Hiromi Goto juxtaposes the world of Laura Ingalls' child character against images of the Canadian West which include the frontier experiences of a Japanese-Canadian family in rural Alberta.

Hiromi Goto engages in a postmodern interplay with Laura Ingalls Wilder's text, and in doing so creates her own unique novel of the Canadian West. *The Kappa Child* moves in and out of myth and "reality;" it is narrated by a young, Japanese-Canadian woman living in Calgary, Alberta reflecting back on her childhood in rural Alberta. Her childhood experiences, which include her devotion to the mythic status of *Little House on the Prairie*, alternate with her adult memories. As a young adult, the female protagonist's encounters with the mythic continue; she becomes convinced that she is pregnant from an encounter with a mysterious stranger, who may be a kappa or water sprite in disguise. This mythic experience reinforces Goto's extensive use of the kappa elsewhere in her narrative and highlights the author's inclusion of other mythic frames of reference such as the image of Laura Ingalls, her family, and prairie landscape in *Little House on the Prairie*. Goto offers intertextual or intermedial references to both Wilder's novel and the popular television show based on the novel. By interlacing images of the Canadian West with references to the

Midwestern American prairie, she demonstrates the concept of cultural mediation and offers a unique way of writing geographical and cultural landscapes, thereby creating new myths and fictions.

Before engaging in a more detailed examination of Goto's novel and her intertextual use of Wilder's novel, it is important to mention the content and impact of Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House books. American author Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote a series of eight novels outlining the experiences of a character based on herself.[1] The books incorporate her childhood experiences on the Midwestern frontier in the 1870s and 80s. The first book in the series, *Little House in the Big Woods* (1932), depicts the family's life in Pepin, Wisconsin. The second book, *Little House on the Prairie* (1935), takes the family on their trek southwards and westwards to Independence, Kansas; this latter text serves as the primary intertextual reference to Laura Ingalls in Hiromi Goto's book. Wilder's books, including *Little House on the Prairie*, have been very popular as literary texts and incredibly successful in the form of a television series by the same name starring Melissa Gilbert as Laura. The books and the television series have presented countless images of the American West (or more specifically, the American Midwest: Kansas, Wisconsin, Minnesota) and frontier life in the late 1800s to international audiences including Canadian readers and viewers. As a result, the character Laura, the actress Melissa Gilbert, and Laura Ingalls Wilder herself have become nothing short of icons. Today, there are historic sites in both Minnesota and Kansas which honour the author and the time her family spent in these regions,[2] and the television series continues to play around the world, thus ensuring that Melissa Gilbert (now in her 40s) first and foremost remains associated with the character of Laura.

The story of the Ingalls family was first adapted to television in the form of a pilot and then as a long running series called *Little House on the Prairie* (1974-84). Unlike the novel, which was set in Kansas, the series was set in Walnut Grove, Minnesota.[3] While Canadian readers/viewers might not necessarily associate Minnesota with the American West, the state is part of the American Midwest, and part of Minnesota actually falls within the geographical designation of the "West" as west of the Mississippi. In fact, one description of the Little House series labels the story as a narrative about the "American West" thus demonstrating the range of the term as applied to a fictional series. The

summary of the show on a web site concludes with the following description:

> The time was the late 1870s, and the locale was the American West, but Little House on the Prairie was not a western in the usual sense. There were no cowboys, Indians, or cow town saloons in this version of frontier life — it was more like *The Waltons*[4] in a different setting, the story of a loving family in trying times. ("Little House on the Prairie," http://www.timvp.com/lilhouse.htm)

The above description of *Little House on the Prairie* as a series with no "Indians" is not actually a fair assessment, since there were in fact several episodes that involved aboriginal characters.[5] Yet the series still differed considerably from Wilder's novel, because the latter is filled with references to "Indians" and the settler's alternating fear of, and fascination with, aboriginal people. The series, on the other hand, does not highlight native and non-native interaction.

This preliminary discussion of the Wilder novel and the popular television series *Little House on the Prairie* is intended to demonstrate just how powerful a "fictional" depiction of the West or prairie life can be. In her novel *The Kappa Child* (2001), Western Canadian author, Hiromi Goto[6] draws on the iconic status of the *Little House* phenomenon and engages in intertextual play with the character of Laura Ingalls and the images of frontier life presented in Wilder's novel. She juxtaposes these images of pioneer experience against a Japanese-Canadian family's encounter with the Canadian prairie. Not surprisingly, there are a number of key distinctions between the images of the West or frontier life depicted in *Little House on the Prairie* and the sense of alienation expressed by the characters in Goto's text. Yet, at the same time, Goto's novel seems to suggest how her own work, when combined with Wilder's text, can be used to generate new mythologies of the Canadian West.

In the Canadian context, there has been a tendency to view "regional" writing, which includes texts about the West, in negative terms because of the perception that it is somehow parochial or of limited interest to those who do not inhabit the region. Herb Wyile points out that the "dubious position of regionalism extends well beyond the arena of Canadian literature" (10) and cites Raymond

Williams who states that the term regional is often used within an "assumption of dominance and subordination" (Williams 265 cited in Wyile). Certainly, within an American cultural context, those who are perceived as living outside of a "centre" (whether this centre is Los Angeles or New York) are often marginalized. For example, the television series *The Beverly Hillbillies* and a film like *Deliverance* reinforced cultural stereotypes about Appalachia as "backward." In the case of Goto's regional Canadian novel, she subverts the traditional link between regionalism and inferiority or insularity through a number of different techniques, many of which relate to her intertextual use of *Little House on the Prairie*.[7] Thus, her treatment of Wilder's text and the portrayal of Laura Ingalls may be divided into various sections for the convenience of discussion:

1. prairie landscape
2. family and settler life
3. cultural aliens: Japanese-Canadian and Aboriginal Connections
4. other alien encounters
5. Laura Ingalls, Melissa Gilbert, and Goto's "I": Cultural Icons vs. a Nameless Narrator

1. Prairie Landscape

The prairie landscape plays an important role in Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child*; in Goto's case, it is the Canadian prairie that takes center stage; however, she draws on references to *Little House on the Prairie* and the character of Laura Ingalls in order to address "myths" of the West through similarities and differences based on place, time and the cultural identity of the prairie inhabitants. Laura Ingalls Wilder's novel *Little House on the Prairie* is set in Kansas near the town of Independence, an area of the American Midwest known for its rich agricultural country and as a major starting point for treks West.[8] Researchers have been able to locate the actual site of the Ingalls cabin based on an 1870 census of Montgomery County, Kansas. A recreation of the cabin built by Laura Ingalls Wilder's father was completed in 1977 "with special efforts to build the cabin according to descriptions in Laura's book." Apparently, "many of the landmarks Laura mentions in her book (such as Walnut Creek, and the bluffs to the north of the home site) can still be seen on and near the site" (http://

www.littlehouseonprairie.com/web/facts1.htm). However, it is not the direct relationship between fiction and reality that will be explored in this paper, or the perceived accuracy in the depiction of a historical reality. Rather, it is the way Goto uses the *Little House* text to construct a hegemonic image of "prairie" (read American prairie here) to support and counter images of the Canadian prairie. One of the first indicators of this simultaneous equation and juxtaposition can be found in the chapter title: "How We Came to the Great Prairies: A Family Drama." For Goto, the prairie in question is an area southeast of Lethbridge, Alberta. The land itself shares elements with the American Midwest such as the gophers that Goto's female protagonist discovers much like the preponderance of gophers described in Wilder's book: "And everywhere were little brown-striped gophers" (Wilder 43). Goto's narrator later thinks: "Thought about what Laura and Mary did to amuse themselves on their spread. Who'd be stupid enough to chase gophers in all this heat?" (162).

However, what is particularly interesting is the way Goto describes the geographical location of their journey in relation to the Ingalls family: "'The Ingalls family were from the east so they went west. We're from British Columbia, so we were in the west, but we moved east to get to the same place, funny, hugh?'" (42). The nameless protagonist initially makes a point of equating the prairie described in Wilder's book with the Canadian prairie, thus breaking down a distinction along national lines. However, this fusion does not last. In the chapter "The Prairie Didn't End," the narrator cannot believe they were going to live on the prairie: "We were going to live here? What was wrong with Laura Ingalls Wilder? Where was the adventure? The romance? No one even had horses!" (68). For Goto's character, the barren prairie landscape becomes a symptom of an empty family life, especially when she narrates her childhood experiences. This explains in part the character's fascination with the iconic status of Laura Ingalls, the child whose life is full of wonderment and joy — a fantasy that Goto's nameless narrator can never hope to imitate.

2. Family and Settler Life

Little House on the Prairie is essentially a family drama set in the West. In Wilder's book, the frontier family consists of "ma" and "pa" Ingalls, the three daughters, Laura, Mary, and Carrie and the family dog, Jack.

While the family faces the challenges of frontier life, the relations between family members are generally quite harmonious, at times unbelievably so. In Goto's novel on the other hand, the Japanese-Canadian family consists of a strict father, a mother (Emiko, who eventually leaves the father), and four sisters, Slither, Mouse, PG,[9] and the nameless narrator. Theirs is anything but an idyllic life on the prairie. This is made especially apparent when the novel's narrator compares the abilities of Pa Ingalls with those of her own father in the building of a well. Initially she is excited by her father's activity:

> "Your father is digging a well," Okasan (mother) said.
> Oh! I was excited again. Just like Pa Ingalls! I quickly leafed through my book to the well section. Yes! Poison gas in the bottom of the well! Maybe Dad didn't know the candle trick to check for dangerous vapors. (132)

The family soon discovers, however, from a neighbouring woman (who happens to be a second generation Japanese-Canadian or Nissei) that the soil is too tough to dig. "'Diggin a well?!' Janice laughed loudly, a hoarse croaking sound" (164). However, Janice does help the family by showing them a functional hand pump on their property. Interestingly enough, Goto also manages to turn this incident into a feminist moment. The father of the narrator assumes that only a man would have this kind of knowledge: "'Where's this water this neighbor man discovered, huh?'" (166). When he discovers that their neighbour Janice is a woman, he is surprised. In rewriting the "master-narrative" of the West, Goto replaces the active role of Pa Ingalls (the builder of a well) with that of a Japanese-Canadian mother figure, thus creating a new culturally mediated myth of the prairie experience with a special Canadian and feminist twist.

3. Cultural Aliens: Japanese-Canadian and Aboriginal Connections

Goto's injection of feminist humour and her use of cultural diversity in her construction of the Canadian prairie experience contrasts with what is a rather monolithic white settler landscape and perspective in Wilder's book. In the latter's text, there are copious references to native people; however, they are presented largely in the context of little Laura's fear of Indians. "Laura looked and looked at the Indian children, and they looked at her. She had a naughty wish to be a little

Indian girl. Of course she did not really mean it. She only wanted to be bare naked in the wind and the sunshine, and riding one of those gay little ponies" (Wilder 307). Thus Laura and her family perceive the "Indians" as cultural others or aliens instead of the settlers perceiving themselves as the alien presence on the prairie.

In Goto's novel, the concept of the cultural alien is applied to both aboriginal and Japanese-Canadian culture. The parallel to the Ingalls family who headed west to the Kansas prairie is the western Canadian prairie experience of Japanese-Canadian family members who are most definitely perceived by the mainstream as aliens in a new land; they still have to "prove" that they are Canadian and thus re-live the alienation Japanese-Canadians experienced throughout their historical internment during World War II:

> "I always thought it was terrible what was done to you people. . . ."
> "No offence intended," Motel Man stammered. "I figured you folks to be Japanese."
> "We are CANADIAN!" Dad roared. (70)

Goto is thus rewriting the prairie novel to demonstrate that not only white Americans like the Ingalls family populated the western frontier; the presence of the Japanese-Canadian family in *The Kappa Child* suggests a diversity of experience. For example, the narrator's father tries to grow "Japanese rice in Alberta" (114), which, as it emerges, is not a very practical endeavour but which reflects the desire to put a cross-cultural stamp on what has often been perceived as an essentially "white" prairie landscape. The reaction of "Motel Man" to this family's presence on the prairie also reminds many readers that some individuals may still relegate racial minorities to the outside by virtue of their ethnicity or appearance.

In *The Kappa Child*, Goto establishes links between Japanese-Canadians and First Nations cultures. For example, the protagonist says that her Japanese-Canadian father "could pass for an Indian" (44). This parallel between minority cultures is one that Joy Kogawa, a Japanese-Canadian writer of an earlier generation also makes in her widely read novel, *Obasan* (e.g. the narrator, Naomi, identifies with one of the aboriginal children in her classroom). However, unlike Laura Ingalls' alternating fear of aboriginal people and her desire to "abduct" Indian identity, in Goto's novel, the cross-cultural

identification is based on a shared marginalization. *The Kappa Child* juxtaposes Japanese-Canadian and First Nations cultures against the depiction of aboriginal people in *Little House on the Prairie*. In Wilder's text (as opposed to the television series where aboriginal people are rarely present), Laura, the protagonist is simultaneously intrigued and frightened by "Indians." She is obsessed with obtaining an Indian baby, but is frightened by the native men who come to their cabin to raid their food supply.[10]

The link between aboriginal and Japanese-Canadian cultures in *The Kappa Child* is further established through the narrator's encounters with her neighbour Gerald, (part Japanese-Canadian, part Blood Indian). Both have read a book by Laura Ingalls Wilder and are aware of the construction of myths about the "prairie." Gerald has read *Farmer Boy*, another Laura Ingalls Wilder book, and says "It's not the same as real life" (169). Goto's narrator discovers the discrepancy between fiction and her reality as well; for example, she cannot comprehend why Laura Ingalls "Wanted to See a Papoose Something Awful" and did not understand why she wanted to take an Indian baby: "[…] she looked deep down into the blackness of that little baby's eyes, and she wanted that one little baby" (Wilder 308). Goto's narrator says, "I could never figure out why Laura Ingalls wanted to see a papoose so bad. [. . .] I didn't not want to see a Laura Ingalls Indian, but then, I didn't want to see one either" (189). Symbolically, Laura's desire may represent an extension of a colonizer's desire to "manage" or assimilate native culture into white reality. In *The Kappa Child*, there is a different approach to First Nations' culture. The narrator's encounter with her neighbour's boy, Gerald, is an introduction to recognizing cultural hybridity on the prairie. Gerald Nakamura Coming Singer is part Japanese-Canadian and part Blood Indian; his very identity undercuts the myth of the Indian that Laura Ingalls, the character and the author, construct in *Little House on the Prairie*: "When I met Janice and Gerald, I had met someone I'd never imagined" (Goto 189). This is exactly the point; the presence of Janice, an independent single mother, and Gerald, her half-native son, counters a simplistic or stereotypical representation of either aboriginal culture or Japanese-Canadians.

While the above passage suggests that Goto may be discounting the "imagination" and advocating "reality" above all else, this is not at

all the case, since Gerald seems to encourage the narrator to form a different image of the prairie. Perhaps it is because of Gerald's combined Japanese-Canadian affiliation, as well as his First Nations identity, that Goto allows herself to see this western landscape in a different light. While much of the prairie in Goto's novel is described in bleak terms, particularly when it is contrasted with the colourful descriptions offered in *Little House on the Prairie*, the narrator does experience a different side of the landscape during a walk with Janice's son: "As we walked, I saw how the land was full of noise and presence. Not empty" (167). Gerald's very presence seems to allow the narrator to cast aside the negative image of prairie as "empty;" he thus acts as a kind of cultural mediator who changes her view of the "alien" landscape. Historically cultural mediators have been translators of foreign languages;[11] however, in Gerald's case, his presence results in the translation of the landscape for the narrator. Thus, Goto appears to be pointing out that myths of the prairie or the West are mediated by cultural forces, whether these consist of cross-cultural encounters between Canadians, or cross-cultural links between a Canadian girl and an icon of American popular culture such as Laura Ingalls.

4. Other Alien Encounters

The Kappa Child is filled with images of the alien, prairie landscape and includes portrayals of characters with a certain "alien" or unusual quality (e.g. the narrator, Gerald Nakamura and the kappa creature). The issue of an alien presence is developed even further in *The Kappa Child* through the fantastic and mythically significant notion of alien abduction. Gerald's mother Janice tells the narrator that her mother Emiko had apparently been abducted by aliens (206). After the abduction, Emiko leads an outreach program "to see how many other recent immigrants from non-European backgrounds have been abducted" (239) and acquires quite a following in the process. What should the reader make of this fantastic element in Goto's text? The author's essay on "Alien Texts, Alien Seductions: The Context of Colour Full Writing" may offer some clues:

> I have not been abducted by aliens but, in Canada, Aboriginal Peoples and People of Colour face ongoing cultural abduction.

> There have been largescale massacres, treaties of deceit, internment, and ongoing institutionalized racism from national to private arenas. (264)

Here Goto highlights alien abduction as a metaphor for certain injustices faced by visible minorities in Canada. The term "alien" functions in a dual capacity; for the cultural majority, "alien" would apply to the cultural minority (the abduction of "alien" groups); however, Goto is subverting the use of this term and ascribing it to the cultural majority (the "aliens" abducted people of colour, etc.). The alien abduction episode also functions as a way of re-reading Laura Ingalls' desire to take an Indian baby as expressed in *Little House on the Prairie*. Laura's interest in wanting to take an Indian baby may be re-read as well; instead of viewing Laura as the one who wants to abduct an "alien" or cultural other, she must be viewed as the "alien" presence wanting to abduct the Indian baby, thus rewriting Laura Ingalls Wilder's "myth" of alien abduction.

5. Laura Ingalls, Melissa Gilbert, and Goto's "I": Cultural Icons vs. Nameless Narrator

For Hiromi Goto, the character, Laura Ingalls functions as an ongoing figure in the construction and the re-construction of prairie myth and the inter-relationship between fiction and reality. The narrator in *The Kappa Child* carries around a copy of *Little House on the Prairie* and tries to use this as a primer for her own introduction to prairie life in Western Canada (33). There are also moments when she is so involved in her experience of the little house world that she becomes one with Laura. For example, when she and her sisters are dozing on the prairie, she speaks in the voice of Laura:

> "Pa," I cried. "I'm on fire!"
> "Half-pint," he managed. "It's the malaria from the creek. Get your Ma some water . . ."
> I woke up. (34)

This union or fusion of Laura and the unnamed narrator does not last, however, since Goto soon makes it perfectly obvious how different the Japanese-Canadian family's life on the prairie will be from the more positive image of the Ingalls family:

> "Did Laura's pa hit the ma?" PG [the narrator's sister] muttered.
> "He never hit her! Ever! He played the violin!" I exclaimed. (43)

An interesting kind of transformation occurs, however, as the narrator reads her book again. It is almost as if her Western Canadian prairie "reality" has an impact on the way she reads this American work of fiction: "Though something gnawed inside. I hadn't noticed before, but now that I read it out loud, Ma seemed so much weaker than I'd imagined. '*Oh, Charles*,' she said. '*Whatever you think, Charles*'" (43). Goto thus emphasizes how myths and reality are involved in a process of exchange or cross-fertilization. Myths may be created through the perception or mediation of an individual. The narrator inserts the reality of her life (in this case, her weak mother) into a work of fiction, thereby transforming the character of Ma Ingalls and creating a new Caroline Ingalls. Alternatively, a fictional character may insinuate herself into one's reality. This mythic process continues even after the narrator is convinced that she had "killed Laura Ingalls" (222) by burning her copy of *Little House on the Prairie* (217). As a young adult working in Calgary, she discovers that her supervisor had hired a new girl by the name of Laura Ng (223). Here Goto may be suggesting that the narrator cannot completely abandon her past. Even though Laura Ng may be a far cry from the Laura Ingalls of Wilder's books, she still serves as a reminder of that "first" Laura from the American Midwest.[12]

In *The Kappa Child*, in typical postmodern fashion, there is no single truth; instead there are but multiple truths (Hutcheon). For example, the proliferation of Lauras indicates a seemingly endless process of mythmaking. Laura Ingalls is not just one individual but several individuals who all contribute to the iconic and mythic status of Laura Ingalls (including Laura Ng). First, there is Laura Ingalls Wilder, the author of the Laura books or the Little House books. Then there is the character, Laura Ingalls, a childhood persona of the author. Finally, there is the actress, Melissa Gilbert whose identity was perceived almost entirely in terms of the child character Laura that she played in *Little House on the Prairie*. A key episode in *The Kappa Child* revolves around the conflation of Laura the character with the actress Melissa Gilbert and with the narrator and implied reader in Goto's text: "on the television, Melissa Gilbert, playing Laura Ingalls, runs across a stretch of prairie, whooping, leaping, jubilant. The music is sunny and playful. 'Da da dada. Da da daaaaa. Da da dada! Daaa da da–'" (252). Shortly

thereafter, however, Melissa appears to become Laura Ingalls and addresses the narrator:

> "They changed the book, you know," she croaks. . .
> "And I can't do anything about it!" Laura is fierce, heat excudes from her skin and I pull back from the intensity.
> Laura stares at me and I'm afraid to blink.
> 'You can, though,' she nods [. . .].
> Healthy, full, she transforms back into Melissa Gilbert as music swells in the background. (252-253)

The scene offers a clear critique of another Western American phenomenon: Hollywood. Goto shows how a fictional or literary character is eradicated by the visual and cultural hegemony known as television. This scene also suggests the blending of fiction and reality, the overlaying of one myth onto another. A fictional character instructs the narrator (who is really just another fictional character herself) to rewrite the book of her own life (perhaps as a way of leaving behind some of the painful memories of childhood).

While Goto's character is profoundly influenced by the Western myth of Laura Ingalls and the *Little House* phenomenon, perhaps the most unconventional way that Goto rewrites the Western Canadian or prairie novel is by incorporating the kappa figure from Japanese mythology into her protagonist's life and by modifying the Japanese content with a feminist twist. For Goto, the mythic is an integral part of an individual's life. For example after her unusual encounter with a Stranger, who appears to be a lesbian kappa-like figure, the narrator says that she thought "some mythic process was initiated. But my life continues as always, uneventful in my daily ruminations" (250).

Near the end of the novel, her two major mythic influences, Laura Ingalls and the kappa, overlap. Following her encounter with the kappa, and her dream-like view of Laura Ingalls/Melissa Gilbert on television, the narrator has a dream about a child that resembles a kappa. This child asks for her protection and water. The child may represent a transformation of the American child icon, Laura Ingalls into another mythic entity: the kappa. Thus Goto demonstrates how mythic elements are culturally mediated and re-contextualized in the Canadian West. Myths replace earlier myths in a fluid process of re-invention.

In his book *The Arbutus / Madrone Files: Reading the Pacific Northwest* (2002), Laurence Ricou acknowledges the diversity that makes up the Pacific Northwest region. He writes that he has "learned to be at home — often uneasily — in a region that crosses the *pacific* with the *north* and again with the *west*" (148). Hiromi Goto's novel also offers its readers an opportunity to re-experience a diverse western Canadian space. Images of a new western frontier do not only emerge through combined references to the Alberta landscape and to *Little House on the Prairie*, but also through images of the East when the figure of the kappa is superimposed onto a western Canadian geography. The following statement made by the novel's narrator captures this "uneasy" cross-cultural blending of powerful myths and fantastic images: "I'm always tossed into this tornado, this Wizard of Oz meets Godzilla at the Little House on the Prairie!" (Goto 244). This passage combines three distinct images: 1) *The Wizard of Oz*, a children's story and subsequent film set in the American Midwest 2) Godzilla, a Japanese monster and 3) *Little House on the Prairie*, an American story about Midwestern frontier life. Together, these images create a tornado of mythic proportions. While all of the preceding references stem from non-Canadian contexts, Goto appears to be telling us that all of these images from popular culture help shape the personality of her rather unusual western Canadian narrator. Like Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*, she is a stranger in a strange land; like Laura in *Little House on the Prairie*, she has experienced life on a prairie setting, and like Godzilla, she also has an affiliation with Japanese culture. Thus, in true Canadian fashion, Goto's protagonist partially defines herself in relation to other cultural myths and identities; yet oddly enough, through the act of incorporating and simultaneously resisting these cultures, Hiromi Goto manages to construct a new western Canadian myth and a new western space in her fiction.

Endnotes

[1] The books in the series include *Little House in the Big Woods, Little House on the Prairie*, *Farmer Boy*, *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, *By the Shores of Silver Lake*, *The Long Winter*, *Little Town on the Prairie*, *These Happy Golden Years*.

[2] The official historic site of the Little House on the Prairie is located southwest of Independence, Kansas.

[3] This location was actually the destination that followed the literary Ingalls' sojourn in Kansas and is described in the book *On the Banks of Plum Creek*.

[4] *The Waltons* was an American television series which ran from 1972-1981. It was set in Appalacia or Virginia during the Depression era (1930s) and focussed on a large family. Like *Little House*, the storylines could often be a bit saccharine.

[5] These episodes include number 21, "Survival," number 60, "Injun Kid" and number 79, "Freedom Flight."

[6] Hiromi Goto lived in Calgary, Alberta for many years but now lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.

[7] The popular television series *Corner Gas*, which is based in the fictional town of Dog River, Saskatchewan depicts the people of a small, prairie town in a humorous manner. The popularity of the show seems to attest to the fact that "regionalism" in the sense of shows not about Canada's urban centers (e.g. Toronto) can appeal to audiences.

[8] According to the Independence Area Chamber of Commerce, "the first industry founded in Montgomery Country, was the water-powered flour mill in 1871, by Alexander Waldschmidt" ("Independence").

[9] Slither, Mouse, and PG are new names that the narrator has made up for her sisters.

[10] The actual Ingalls family had to leave their homestead in 1871 because their home was on the Osage Indian reservation ("Little House on the Prairie" http://www.littlehouseonprairie.com).

[11] See Klaus Martens' many studies on the phenomenon of cultural mediation including *Pioneering North America: Mediators of European Literature and Culture* (2000).

[12] Linda Hutcheon indicates that in postmodern literature, "Truth has been replaced by truths, uncapitalized and in the plural" (viii-ix).

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"You're Not the Indian I Had in Mind": Hollywood's Appropriation of the Native Other in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* and Guy Vanderhaeghe's *The Englishman's Boy*

Gordon Bölling

In November 2003, award-winning author, scholar, and photographer Thomas King became the first writer of Native descent to deliver the prestigious CBC Massey Lectures. King's well-informed and often humorous lectures were broadcast under the title *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* on CBC Radio. In the second of this series of five lectures, King analyzes the portrayal of the Native American in popular culture. King's lecture takes its title "You're Not the Indian I Had in Mind," from a brief encounter between himself as a young Native writer and a German cook in the early 1960s. At that time, King worked on board a German ship that was on its way from San Francisco to New Zealand:

> The ship was a German vessel out of Hamburg, the SS *Cap Colorado*. The captain was German. The crew was German. The cook was German. I wasn't German. As a matter of fact, none of the crew was sure what I was. When I told them I was Cherokee, or to keep matters simple, a North American Indian, they were intrigued.
>
> And suspicious.
>
> The cook, who could speak passable English, told me that he had read all of Karl May's novels and had a fair idea of what Indians were supposed to look like and that I wasn't what he had imagined.
>
> "You're not the Indian I had in mind," he told me. (47-48)

The German cook's concept of Native Americans is solely informed by his extensive readings of the works of Karl May and reflects a set of traditional stereotypes that have dominated popular culture to this day. However, the nineteenth-century German author is by no means the only one who has appropriated and misrepresented North America's indigenous cultures. In his lecture, Thomas King presents a seemingly endless list of artists, art works, events, and products that have decisively shaped our idea of Native North Americans:

> James Fenimore Cooper, George Catlin, Paul Kane, Charles Bird King, Karl May, the Atlanta Braves, the Washington Redskins, the Chicago Blackhawks, Pontiac (the car, not the Indian), Land O'Lakes butter, Calumet baking soda, Crazy Horse Malt Liquor, *A Man Called Horse*, Iron Eyes Cody, *Dances with Wolves*, *The Searchers*, the Indian Motorcycle Company, American Spirit tobacco, Native American Barbie, Chippewa Springs Golf Course, John Augustus Stone, the Cleveland Indians, Disney's Pocahontas, Geronimo shoes, the Calgary Stampede, Cherokee brand underwear [...], Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, the Boston Tea Party, Frank Hamilton Cushing, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the Bank of Montreal, Chief's Trucking, Grey Owl, *The Sioux Spaceman*, Red Man chewing tobacco, Grateful Dead concerts, Dreamcatcher perfume. (54)

The powerful influence of stereotypical ideas and imagery leads King to conclude that "there is no reason for the Indian to be real. The Indian simply has to exist in our imaginations" (54).

As King's impressive catalogue already suggests, contemporary culture's ongoing fascination with Native Americans has to be seen as part of a larger tradition of self-serving stereotypes invented by non-Natives. In his seminal study *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, Daniel Francis convincingly argues that the construction of a distorted and simplified image of Native Americans began as early as the late fifteenth century:

> From the first encounter, Europeans viewed aboriginal Americans through a screen of their own prejudices and preconceptions. Given the wide gulf separating the cultures, Europeans have tended to imagine the Indian rather than to know Native people, thereby to project onto Native people all the fears and hopes they have for the New World. (7-8)

The representation of Aboriginal peoples is one of the oldest thematic concerns of both American and Canadian literary cultures.[1] Important early examples include descriptive accounts like Thomas Harriot's *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588) as well as exploration narratives such as Samuel Hearne's *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795). Images of Native Americans are also to be found in works of a more

literary nature. Stereotypical perceptions of American Indians inform, for example, Mary Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty and Goodness of GOD, Together with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed; Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) and the popular genre of the captivity narrative. In the first half of the nineteenth century, James Fenimore Cooper's series of *Leatherstocking Tales* dramatized the fate of the allegedly vanishing Native American. In Canada, Frances Brooke adopted the Eurocentric concept of the noble savage for her epistolary novel *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), a novel that is now considered to be the first Canadian novel. In contrast, another classical text of early Canadian literature, John Richardson's historical novel *Wacousta; or, The Prophecy: A Tale of the Canadas* (1832), for the most part conceived of Aboriginal peoples as barbarous and bloodthirsty savages. Despite this long tradition of literary misrepresentations of Native Americans, the image of the American Indian has received its most popular though by no means its most comprehensive treatment in Hollywood's classical Western movies.

To this day, Hollywood's film industry has done next to nothing to challenge and thereby to subvert the deeply entrenched stereotypes of Native Americans. In the course of the twentieth century, the genre of the classical Hollywood Western has in fact popularized a very limited set of images and fantasies that cater to the expectations of its non-Native audience. In his survey article "The White Man's Indian: An Institutional Approach," film critic John E. O'Connor maintains that Hollywood's imaginative re-creations of the American past are not only characterized by their carelessness in their portrayal of historical events but also fail to represent the complexity of Native American cultures. O'Connor concludes that "Hollywood Indians are still far from real" (38) and points out that "[m]ovies and television, the popular art forms of today, continue to present images of Native Americans that speak more about the current interests of the dominant culture than they do about the Indians" (28). Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. similarly argues that the genre conventions of the traditional Western do not allow for a detailed analysis of Native American cultures. In fact, the genre's success with its non-Native audience relies on the marginalization of Aboriginal peoples:

> No matter how important the Indian might be to the Western plot and genre, he usually served in the end as the backdrop rather than the center of attention, for to do otherwise would have discarded simplicity for complexity and violated the premises of popular culture production. If the Indian was to be taken seriously, his motives and his culture would have to be presented as alternative values and lifestyles to White civilization, thereby introducing ambiguity into the genre. At the least, such introduction of Indian culture would imply the questioning of White values if not the criticism of White actions in history, and the popular artist would risk the possibility of alienating his audience. (98)

In her study *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*, Jane Tompkins also criticizes the blatant lack of accuracy that is a key characteristic of many Hollywood Westerns. Natives, she maintains, are very often not conceived of as fully-fleshed human characters but are degraded to the level of objects in their function as mere accessories to the plot:

> The ones [Native Americans] I saw functioned as props, bits of local color, textural effects. As people they had no existence. Quite often they filled the role of villains, predictably, driving the engine of the plot, threatening the wagon train, the stagecoach, the cavalry detachment — a particularly dangerous form of local wildlife. But there were no Indian characters, no individuals with a personal history and a point of view. (8)

The dehumanization of Native Americans is in fact a genre convention of a greater number of traditional Westerns. Movies such as John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) do not strive for a realistic representation of Aboriginal peoples and in their relentless repetition of stereotypical images have effectively silenced the voice of Native Americans: "Indians are repressed in Westerns — there but not there [...]" (Tompkins 9).

Recently the racial attitudes underlying the American genre of the Hollywood Western have come under intense critical scrutiny in the fiction of contemporary Canadian writers Thomas King and Guy Vanderhaeghe.[2] Although very different in form and content, King's *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993) and Vanderhaeghe's *The Englishman's Boy* (1996) are linked in their critique of the stereotypical

construct of the Indian as it is promoted by Hollywood's film industry. In their highly acclaimed works of fiction, King and Vanderhaeghe lay bare the power relations that inform the production of popular representations of Aboriginal cultures. Deconstructing and thereby renegotiating the stereotypical image of the Native American, the two novels explore mechanisms of storytelling in a very self-reflexive manner. Questions such as 'Whose story gets told?' and 'Who does the telling?' are at the center of both narratives. Both novels are to be read as examples of what Gabriele Helms has recently labeled "resistance literature" (8). In *Challenging Canada: Dialogism and Narrative Techniques in Canadian Novels*, Helms uses this term with reference to a growing number of contemporary Canadian novels that "call into question ideas of Canada as a benign and tolerant country, 'a peaceable kingdom,' a country without a history of oppression, violence, or discrimination" (3). Helms convincingly argues that these novels "give voice to those previously silenced and resituate those cast as outsiders, thereby exposing the myth of an innocent nation and challenging its hegemonic centre" (3). However, Thomas King and Guy Vanderhaeghe do not limit themselves to a rewriting of dominant representations of Canada. Instead, both Canadian novelists transcend national frameworks and privilege a larger transnational North American approach that permits them to engage directly with Hollywood's influential portrayal of Aboriginal peoples. King and Vanderhaeghe, in their own ways, argue for a more diversified perspective that allows us to see beyond the stereotypical imagery projected by White North America.

Despite these similarities, *Green Grass, Running Water* and *The Englishman's Boy* are very different novels and their respective authors deal with Hollywood's appropriation of the Native American in multiple and various ways. As a writer of Cherokee, Greek, and German descent, Thomas King presents a Native perspective on Hollywood's filmic image of indigenous cultures. In his multilayered narrative, he decenters the monologic genre conventions of the classical Western movie. His parodic rewriting of the Hollywood Western not only allows King to expose the racial stereotypes underlying this quintessential American genre but also permits him to reclaim the silenced voices of Natives. In contrast, Guy Vanderhaeghe belongs to a larger group of contemporary Canadian writers who in

recent decades have challenged accepted versions of Canadian history. In their ongoing renegotiation of constructions of Canada's past, these writers focus primarily on historical events that have so far been neglected by official history. As Margaret Atwood points out, the "lure of the Canadian past, for the writers of my generation, has been partly the lure of the unmentionable — the mysterious, the buried, the forgotten, the discarded, the taboo" (19). Similar to such historical novels as Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973) and *A Discovery of Strangers* (1994), *The Englishman's Boy* deals with the marginalized history of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. However, in his fictionalized retelling of the Cypress Hills Massacre of 1873, Vanderhaeghe rejects a straightforward account of historical events. Setting about half of his novel in and around Los Angeles in the early 1920s allows him to reflect extensively on the misrepresentation of Natives by America's burgeoning motion picture industry.

Thomas King's second novel, *Green Grass, Running Water*, is probably his most important work so far.[3] The novel brings together a number of stylistic devices as well as thematic concerns that have become key characteristics of King's writing. Relying on oral storytelling techniques, *Green Grass, Running Water* traces the life-stories of a number of Native Canadians heading for a traditional Sun Dance ceremony in Alberta. The novel combines King's abiding interest in oral patterns of narration with a challenge to the truth claims of such Western master narratives as the Bible.[4] However, the Old and the New Testament are not the only written narratives which are deprived of their traditional authority by a highly successful combination of humor and intertextual references.[5] In addition, King parodies a greater number of classical texts from the established canons of American, Canadian, and British literature. The many works alluded to include Herman Melville's novella *Benito Cereno* (1855), Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852), and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).[6] In *Green Grass, Running Water*, the values and interests that inform these and other canonical works are exposed and critically interrogated. Making use of mythic trickster figures, *Green Grass, Running Water* also rewrites conservative interpretations of historical events and developments.[7] The European conquest of the so-called New World and the westward expansion of White American civilization are no longer presented as teleological stories of progress

and enlightenment. Instead, King's novel provides an alternative reading of North American history from a Native point of view.[8] As Herb Wyile observes, the hybrid novel "constitutes one of the most sustained and hilarious assaults on the Eurocentrism of North American society in contemporary fiction" (113). However, *Green Grass, Running Water* does not merely substitute one version of historical events for another, equally limited interpretation. Insisting on the importance of storytelling, the polyphonic novel argues for a plurality of culturally specific readings of experience: "'There are no truths, Coyote,' I says. 'Only stories'" (432).

Mainstream images of Native American identity occupy a privileged position among the greater variety of non-Native narratives rejected in *Green Grass, Running Water*. Citing familiar misrepresentations in a novel that runs counter to the traditional expectations of a non-Native readership permits King to satirize popular conceptions of Native Americans. In an illuminating passage, Nasty Bumppo, a character whose name has to be read as an allusion to James Fenimore Cooper's frontier hero, tries to define the contrary character traits of Natives and non-Natives:

> Indians can run fast. Indians can endure pain. Indians have quick reflexes. Indians don't talk much. Indians have good eyesight. Indians have agile bodies. These are all Indian gifts, says Nasty Bumppo.
>
> Interesting, says Old Woman.
>
> Whites are patient. Whites are spiritual. Whites are cognitive. Whites are philosophical. Whites are sophisticated. Whites are sensitive. These are all white gifts, says Nasty Bumppo. (King 1994, 434)

Old Woman, a figure from North American Indian mythology, is quick to grasp the gist of the message Nasty Bumppo attempts to convey to her:

> So, says Old Woman. Whites are superior, and Indians are inferior.
> Exactly right, says Nasty Bumppo. Any questions? (435)

Ironically, the stereotypical image of Native Americans in popular culture proves to be so pervasive that it enables Natives to use these predominantly negative and exotic images to their advantage. Latisha,

one of the principal characters in *Green Grass, Running Water*, very successfully runs The Dead Dog Café. Catering to the popular belief that Indians eat dogs, this tourist trap is frequented by busloads of tourists, American and Canadian alike: "Latisha printed up menus that featured such things as Dog du Jour, Houndburgers, Puppy Potpourri, Hot Dogs, Saint Bernard Swiss Melts, with Doggie Doos and Deep-Fried Puppy Whatnots for appetizers" (117). Latisha even goes so far as to adopt typical White macho gestures to promote her fake Indian establishment:

> She got Will Horse Capture over in Medicine River to make up a bunch of photographs like those you see in the hunting and fishing magazines where a couple of white guys are standing over an elephant or holding up a lion's head or stretching out a long stringer of fish or hoisting a brace of ducks in each hand. Only in these photographs, it was Indians and dogs. Latisha's favorite was a photograph of four Indians on their buffalo runners chasing down a herd of Great Danes. (117)

However, it is only as long as they stay within the narrow boundaries of the popular image of the American Indian that Natives are able to retain their identity as an ethnic group. As soon as they step out of the confinements of the stereotypical image they are likely to lose their identity in the eyes of their White beholders. Eli Stands Alone is told by Clifford Sifton, a White civil engineer, that their enjoyment of some of the conveniences of modern life deprive Natives of their identity:

> "Besides, you guys aren't real Indians anyway. I mean, you drive cars, watch television, go to hockey games. Look at you. You're a university professor."
>
> "That's my profession. Being Indian isn't a profession."
>
> "And you speak as good English as me."
>
> "Better," said Eli. (155)

In *Green Grass, Running Water*, all of King's Native characters challenge racist conceptions of what it takes to be an Indian. Native identity is no longer perceived as a fixed entity. Rather, it is seen as a construction which is open to revision and which is reshaped continuously.[9]

As a former professor of literature at the University of Toronto,

Eli has a great interest in canonized literature. However, he is also an avid reader of Westerns, a popular genre he despises but that nevertheless holds great attraction for him: "It was junk and he knew it, but he liked Westerns. It was like . . . eating potato chips. They weren't good for you, but no one said they were" (181). The rapid consumption of potato chips is a very accurate image for Eli's reading of classical Westerns. His reading experience allows Eli to anticipate the stereotypical plot and to predict the outcome of the melodramatic storyline:

> Eli opened the book and closed his eyes. He didn't have to read the pages to know what was going to happen. Iron Eyes and Annabelle would fall madly in love. There would be a conflict of some sort between the whites and the Indians. And Iron Eyes would be forced to choose between Annabelle and his people. In the end, he would choose his people, because it was the noble thing to do and because Western writers seldom let Indians sleep with whites. Iron Eyes would send Annabelle back to the fort and then go to fight the soldiers. He'd be killed, of course, and the novel would conclude on a happy note of some sort. Perhaps Annabelle would find that her fiancé had not been killed after all or she would fall into the arms of a handsome army lieutenant.
>
> Chapter ten.
>
> Eli opened one of his eyes. Then again, this one might be different. (222-223)

The dime-novel Western Eli is reading features many of the genre conventions that can also be found in Western films. In Hollywood's version of the American past, a negative stereotype of indigenous cultures often prevails, and Natives are frequently presented as the traditional enemies of the westward advance of White American civilization. As John O'Connor outlines, certain plot formulas have persisted in Hollywood Westerns. Indian raids on the stagecoach, the wagon train, the fort, or the peaceful frontier homestead are a familar trademark (28). Many of these films culminate in a ferocious battle or a climactic gunfight. The genre conventions of the classical Hollywood Western do not allow for the development of the screen personalities of Natives. Therefore, they often appear as flat characters. They speak a fragmentary version of pidgin which is combined with a wide range of grunts. In many cases this loss of language is accompanied by a loss of

tribal identity. As Richard Maltby writes of film director John Ford, Hollywood "has obliterated the ethnic and cultural diversity between the many indigenous people of North America" (35). The Westerns that figure so prominently in *Green Grass, Running Water* bear many of the trademarks of the classical Hollywood Western. However, Thomas King employs a greater number of Native characters to comment upon the stereotypical image promoted in these films and thereby offers a Native perspective on a popular genre that conspicuously lacks this corrective.

Although set predominantly in Canada, Thomas King's novel, at least in part, is also set in Hollywood. It is there, at the very center of America's film industry, that Charlie's father, Portland Looking Bear, becomes a relatively well-known Indian actor. But even moderate success for a Native American comes at a price in Hollywood. In the long run, Portland Looking Bear is forced to change his name to Iron Eyes Screeching Eagle, a name that Portland and his wife think of as absurd, but that seems to cater to the popular concept of the American Indian. However, Portland's loss of identity is not restricted to his personal identity. Playing "a Sioux eighteen times, a Cheyenne ten times, a Kiowa six times, an Apache five times, and a Navaho once" (166), he also suffers from a loss of tribal identity. In addition, Hollywood's misrepresentation of Native Americans also includes their facial features. Apparently Portland's nose does not conform to the stereotypical image of what the noses of Indians should look like. Auditioning for an Indian lead in a Western that stars John Wayne, Portland is told "that he could have the part but that he would have to wear a rubber nose. Portland thought the man [the non-Native film director] was kidding and told him that the only professionals he knew who wore rubber noses were clowns" (168). Here again, Hollywood shows a lack of interest in the authentic representation of indigenous cultures. To meet the popular demands of a White audience and to entertain successfully, Natives, just like clowns, are required to dress up. As Thomas King skilfully suggests, the neccessity to cater to the expectations of a non-Native audience ultimately leads to the suffocation of Native American voices. The large rubber nose Portland Looking Bear only reluctantly agrees to wear not only prevents him from breathing easily but it also changes the tone of his voice. It thereby denies him the possibility to speak for/as himself: "Portland

couldn't breathe with the nose on, had to breathe through his mouth, which changed the sound of his voice. Instead of the rich, deep, breathy baritone, his voice sounded pinched and full of tin" (170). Any claims to authenticity that the genre of the Hollywood Western might hold are further undermined by the fact that the part of the Native American is very often played by Italians, Greeks, Mexicans, or white U.S. Americans. In *Green Grass, Running Water*, the lead role that Portland Looking Bear auditions for is finally given to a red-headed Italian actor.

Thomas King's preoccupation with the form of the classical Western reaches its climax in the deconstruction of the fictitious standard Western *The Mysterious Warrior*. Featuring Hollywood actors John Wayne, Richard Widmark, and Maureen O'Hara, this composite of classical Westerns is watched by all of the central characters in *Green Grass, Running Water*.[10] In his brief descriptions of a number of key scenes from the movie, King successfully exposes the shallowness of the Western genre. The following example recounts the traditional Indians' attack on a group of soldiers and the timely rescue of the latter by the cavalry:

> "Here they [the Indians] come, men," shouted John Wayne. "Make every shot count."
>
> And the soldiers began shooting for all they were worth. And John Wayne and Richard Widmark ran back and forth, encouraging the men, the bullets flying around them.
>
> "Take your time and aim," shouted Widmark.
>
> But the Indians kept coming, relentlessly, moving through the water. Then, in the background, along with the music, there was the sound of a bugle, faint at first and then louder, until it filled the speakers, and over the hill behind the Indians came a troop of cavalry charging down the hill into the river bottom.
>
> "Hooray," shouted John Wayne, and he took off his hat and waved it at the charging troops.
>
> "Hooray," shouted Richard Widmark, and he buttoned up his vest and ran a hand through his hair.
>
> "Hooray," shouted the soldiers, and they all leaped from their hiding places and watched the Indians, who were trapped in the middle of the river. (355-356)

The repetition of the same exclamation of joy as well as the similarities in sentence structure only reinforce the tediousness of this standardized scene. Its strict adherence to the conventions of the Western genre makes watching *The Mysterious Warrior* a very unrewarding experience for Thomas King's Native characters. Latisha's son Christian is able to predict the conventional outcome of the movie and quickly loses interest in Hollywood's treatment of Native Americans. In particular, the foreseeable defeat of the Indians is a big disappointment to Christian:

> "Mom, is this the one where the cavalry comes over the hill and kills the Indians?"
>
> "Probably."
>
> "How come the Indians always get killed?"
>
> "It's just a movie."
>
> "But what if they won?"
>
> "Well," Latisha said, watching her son rub his dirty socks up and down the wall, "if the Indians won, it probably wouldn't be a Western."
>
> [...]
>
> Christian took off one of his socks, smelled it, and threw it in the corner. "Not much point in watching it then." (216)

Relying on conceptions of White superiority, *The Mysterious Warrior* and the Western genre fail to do justice to North America's indigenous cultures. In its dependence on easily identifiable stock characters, the popular genre promotes a set of racist stereotypes: "Every one [Western movie] was the same as the others. Predictable. Cowboys looked like cowboys. Indians looked like Indians" (353). Given these conventions, it comes as no surprise that it is a White television retailer with the name of Buffallo Bill Bursum, who is the only character in *Green Grass, Running Water* that actually enjoys watching Westerns.[11] He even imitates the language and the gestures of Western stars such as John Wayne:

> Bursum took off his coat and put it on the back of the chair. On the screen, John Wayne pulled his pistol out of his holster and raised it over his head and was shouting, "Hooray! We got 'em now, boys," as the cavalry came galloping into the valley.
> [...]

> "Hooray," he [Bursum] shouted, waving the remote control over his head and turning the sound up. "Hooray!" (244)

However, Buffalo Bill Bursum as well as readers of *Green Grass, Running Water* are in for a surprise when Thomas King subverts the genre conventions. As part of their larger project "of fixing up this world" (455), the four old Indians make an appearance in *The Mysterious Warrior* and alter the traditional outcome of the Western. Due to the joint interference of Lone Ranger, Robinson Crusoe, Hawkeye, and Ishmael, it is the Indians who win the gunfight this time. The approaching cavalry suddenly disappears and John Wayne and his White comrades, to their great surprise, get shot:

> There at full charge, hundreds of soldiers in bright blue uniforms with gold buttons and sashes and stripes, blue-eyed and rosy-cheeked, came over the last rise.
>
> And disappeared.
>
> Just like that.
>
> "What the hell," said Bursum, and he stabbed at the remote.
>
> [...]
>
> And then Portland and the rest of the Indians began to shoot back, and soldiers began falling over. Sometimes two or three soldiers would drop at once, clutching their chests or their heads or their stomachs.
>
> John Wayne looked down and stared stupidly at the arrow in his thigh, shaking his head in amazement and disbelief as two bullets ripped through his chest and out the back of his jacket. (357-358)

In the revised version of *The Mysterious Warrior*, Hollywood's once heroic White Western stars are no longer defined by their courage: "Richard Widmark was pulling the trigger on empty chambers. The front of his fancy pants was dark and wet" (358). Although, for once, victory is awarded to the Indians, the altered version of King's fictitious movie does not draw a more complex picture of the American West.

The refusal to adapt the genre of the classical Hollywood Western to the revisionist aims of *Green Grass, Running Water* suggests that Thomas King completely rejects this popular genre. As a Native writer, he does not regard the Western as a means to authentically represent

the historical experience of North America's indigenous cultures. Playing with the expectations of his readership, King deconstructs the genre conventions and brilliantly succeeds in delineating the stereotypes and values that inform Hollywood's version of America's past. However, instead of scripting a Western, he chooses to foreground Native conceptions of storytelling. The cyclical structure of the novel, the insistence on the nature of storytelling as a joint venture, and the frequent reminders that "you have to get it [the story] right" (11) all characterize *Green Grass, Running Water* as a challenge and an alternative to non-Native narratives and genres such as the Bible and the classical Western.

Guy Vanderhaeghe's take on the traditional Western differs dramatically from Thomas King's approach. Whereas King dismisses the genre as a whole, Vanderhaeghe critically reimagines the possibilities of the Western. In *The Englishman's Boy*, he simultaneously employs and subverts the form of the classical Western. Foregrounding the ideological premises that inform the genre, he explores Hollywood's role in the shaping of popular versions of America's past.

In contrast to most Western films, *The Englishman's Boy* is a meticulously researched work of fiction. In his first historical novel, Vanderhaeghe skillfully intertwines very different narrative levels. One of the two major narrative strands chronicles the events that led up to the historical Cypress Hills Massacre in May 1873, in which a group of American and Canadian wolfers from Fort Benton brutally murdered a greater number of Assiniboines. As Vanderhaeghe's Canadian protagonist, Harry Vincent, learns, the Cypress Hills Massacre quickly passed into oblivion. In twentieth-century academic representations of Canadian history, the massacre is seldom mentioned. Those studies which do cover the events of 1873 treat the massacre as a tiny footnote in the much larger narrative of the successful exploration and settlement of the Canadian West:

> Shorty's story fared no better in the history books I consulted when I got back home to Canada. Searching them, I found a sentence here, a paragraph there. What I learned was little enough. For a brief time the Cypress Hills Massacre had its day in the sun; members of Parliament rose in the House, hotly denouncing the wolfers as American cutthroats, thieves and renegades. Nobody seemed to

> mention that among them were Canadian cutthroats too.
>
> Those few paragraphs always pointed to one result of the massacre. The Canadian government formed the North West Mounted Police, sent it on a long, red-jacketed march into a vast territory, establishing claim to it. A mythic act of possession. (Vanderhaeghe 1997: 326)

The Englishman's Boy, however, is not only concerned with the retelling of a crucial but neglected event in Canadian national history. In addition, Vanderhaeghe's historical novel examines the wilful distortion of the past by America's film industry. Chapters set on the Canadian and American prairies of the 1870s alternate with chapters set in the twentieth century. The latter comprise the autobiographical narrative of Harry Vincent, manager of a movie theater in Saskatoon. In the early 1950s, Vincent finally writes his memoirs, in which he records his traumatic experiences as a young script writer in Hollywood.

This confessional narrative chronicles Vincent's role in the making of *Besieged*, a classical Western envisioned and financed by the enigmatic movie mogul Damon Ira Chance. At the beginnings of his career in Los Angeles, Vincent is employed as a title writer in the script department of Best Chance Pictures. In 1923, he unexpectedly receives the commission to do research and to write the script for an epic Western that Chance wants to shoot. Flattered by a significant salary increase and impressed by the importance so suddenly bestowed upon him, Vincent, at least at first, goes along with Chance's elaborate plans for *Besieged*. Following Chance's orders, he eventually succeeds in tracking down Shorty McAdoo, an extra and bit player in Hollywood Westerns. Although the two men have never met, Chance regards McAdoo, the Englishman's boy of the novel's title, as a possible source of authentic stories about the historical American West. As a seventeen-year-old boy, McAdoo briefly worked for John Trevelyan Dawe, an eccentric Englishman, who in the early 1870s traveled the American West to trophy-hunt. Shortly after Dawe's death in a hotel in Fort Benton, McAdoo joined a band of wolfers in their pursuit of Indian horse thieves. Under the direction of the brutal Tom Hardwick, the group headed northward through the Montana Territory, crossed the international border, and finally reached the Cypress Hills on the south-western Canadian prairie. Here the party of hunters provoked a

violent clash with a band of Assiniboine, in which a greater number of Natives was murdered. In Vanderhaeghe's fictionalized version, the massacre culminates in the gang rape of a fifteen-year-old Native girl. On condition that his story will not be altered in any way, a deeply troubled Shorty McAdoo finally divulges his participation in the Cypress Hills Massacre to Harry Vincent. Although he gives his word, Vincent cannot prevent Damon Ira Chance from twisting McAdoo's narrative so as to meet his 'artistic' aims. In the course of his stay in Hollywood, Harry Vincent only slowly realizes that Chance's vision for *Besieged* entails a strong racist and even fascist bias. When he finally decides to opt out of the project, it is already too late. Chance soon after finishes his epic Western and a guilt-ridden Vincent decides to leave Hollywood and to return to his native Canada.

In *The Englishman's Boy*, the insertion of Harry Vincent's memoirs functions as the central strategy to critically examine Hollywood's depiction of North America's indigenous cultures. As Vincent's autobiographical narrative makes very clear, the filmic representation of Native Americans is informed by a highly questionable aesthetic. Damon Ira Chance's foremost aim does not lie in the faithful adaptation of Shorty McAdoo's original story about the Cypress Hills Massacre. Rather, the reclusive American film director feels free to rework McAdoo's oral narrative so that it suits not only his understanding of film art but also his right-wing political ideas. According to Harry Vincent, Chance conceives of film art as nothing less than a popular, democratic as well as modern means to capture the essence of America:

> [...] Chance happens to believe movies are the art form of the future. He thinks they can capture the American spirit the way Shakespeare captured the spirit of Elizabethan England. Speaking of ambition, it may sound megalomaniac and preposterous, but that's his aim. [...] Everybody else talks dollars. Not Chance. He talks art. [...]
> Chance wants to make films that are the artistic equal of Leaves of Grass. [...] Besides, how many people have read Leaves of Grass in Mencken's Sahara of the Bozarts? […] And what about the tenements and the ghettos? Immigrants can't read English. Whitman is for the elite. But everybody goes to the movies. It's the movies that have the chance of making everybody — the immigrant, the backwoods Kentuckian, the New York cab driver, maybe even

> the Ivy League professor — all feel the same thing, feel what it means to be American. (180-181)

In his preoccupation with the possibilities of an American form of film art, Vanderhaeghe's fictional Damon Ira Chance looks to the example of the historical film director D. W. Griffith: "'[...] I want to make pictures rooted in American history and American experience. Just as Mr. Griffith showed us how to. I'm tired of all these people making movies about Marie Antoinette. [...] Why not a film biography of George Washington instead of Henry III? Do you see what I mean?'" (16). In histories of film, D. W. Griffith is rightfully credited as an influential innovator of the relatively young art form (cf. Bordwell and Thompson 469-470). In particular, the rapid editing of key scenes as well as the extensive use of crosscutting techniques established him as one of the most important film directors of the early twentieth century. Griffith's masterpieces, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), are widely regarded as landmarks in the history of the cinema. Based on the novel *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (1905) by Rev. Thomas Dixon, Jr., *The Birth of a Nation*, however, is defined by its overt racism.[12] In addition, Griffith's Civil War epic is also characterized by its lack of historical accuracy. Fascinated by Griffith's skilful dramatization of America's past, Damon Ira Chance attempts to turn the historical Cypress Hills Massacre into a popular Western. In his ramblings, he envisions his treatment of Shorty McAdoo's narrative as a counterpart to *The Birth of a Nation*: "[...] Griffith made the American *Iliad*, I intend to make the American *Odyssey*. The story of a American Odysseus, a westerer, a sailor of the plains, a man who embodies the raw vitality of America, the raw vitality which is our only salvation in the days which lie ahead [...]" (109). Like D. W. Griffith before him, Chance is not interested in the historical truth. Calling his film "a movie of poetic fact" (20), he eschews objectivity and instead stresses the role of the imagination. In a heated discussion with his script writer, the American film director argues for a reworking of the facts as related by Shorty McAdoo: "'Yes, you [Harry Vincent] wrote it *exactly* as McAdoo described it. But where is the artistic intuition? You've assembled the facts like a stock boy stacking cans on a shelf. You must reach beyond that. The last scene, the most important scene in the picture, is all wrong.

Disastrously wrong,' he pronounces contemptuously" (250). Although McAdoo insists that "[n]obody's going to cut it [his story] up like an old coat, for patches" (205), Chance significantly alters the ending of Shorty McAdoo's version of the Cypress Hills Massacre. In *Besieged*, it is the raped Native girl and not the wolfers who finally sets fire to the post. His rewriting of the script's ending, helps Chance to convey his racist and anti-Semitic message. In his obscure reasoning, he establishes a connection between the historical fate of Native Americans and the seeming threat of a revolution in postwar America:

> The Americans who made this country were not sentimental. Far from it. Do you need proof? While I was researching our picture I made a point of reading the diaries and journals of early traders and settlers. One entry in particular made a great impression on me. It was simply two lines written on September 30, 1869. 'Dug potatoes this morning. Shot an Indian.' That was all. It was not accompanied by any tortured self-examination of conscience. Because the diarist knew his enemy would not have indulged in anything of the kind if he had killed him. The Indian, we might say, was a Bolshevik in a loincloth. Kill or be killed. They both understood compromise between them was impossible. (296)

Chance's interpretation of America's past is closely interrelated with his political outlook on America's present in the early 1920s. In a campaign reminiscent of the Red Scare that swept the United States in the years after World War One, he argues for "100 percent Americanism":

> The house must stand. Lincoln fought a war to keep it standing, pitted blood brother against blood brother. And then Mr. Griffith made a picture, made The Birth of a Nation, and reconciled the blood of North and South in the chalice of art. Now it is necessary to go one step further. If Griffith wrote history in lightning, the time has now come to rewrite history in lightning. Yes, rewrite the history of the foreigner, erase completely those sentimental flowers of memory and light their minds with the glory of American lightning. (297)

In the passage quoted here and in similar passages, Chance advocates a vision of the United States that denies the ethnic and cultural plurality of North America. Cast into the role of the enemy, Native Americans,

just like immigrants and Jews, are excluded from Chance's racist conception of a unified nation.

Like so many other classical Westerns, *Besieged* portrays Indians as savages. As Chance puts it in plain racist language: "The enemy is never human" (256). In his filmic retelling of North American history he tries to dehumanize Native Americans and thereby excludes their perspective. However, on a different level, Chance pays great attention to historical accuracy. He sends out buyers across the United States and Canada to purchase Indian artifacts, hires three artists to sketch Plains Indian costumes in the collection of the Smithsonian in Washington, and even buys his own herd of buffalo. Furthermore, the movie mogul insists vehemently that it is Natives who play the Indians in *Besieged*: "We need Indians [...]. Three hundred. Maybe four. Make it four. And *real* Indians. No Mexicans in wigs on this picture" (223). Despite this focus on historical detail, Chance's classical Western does not present a more comprehensive and diversified account of the history of the American and the Canadian West. In fact, the attention bestowed upon minute details serves as a strategy to divert the attention of film audiences from Hollywood's gross distortion of a larger national history. Moviegoers are to be lured into an acceptance of Hollywood's rewriting of North America's past. As Chance remarks after a screening of James Cruze's influential Western *The Covered Wagon* (1923), "[f]acts are of the utmost importance [...]. If I can convince the audience the details are impeccably correct, who will dispute the interpretation? The truth of small things leads to confidence in the truth of large things [...]" (230). Ultimately, in *Besieged*, historical accuracy only comes second to Chance's grand political design.

Guy Vanderhaeghe's fictional retelling of the massacre itself and the sequence of events that led up to the violent confrontation in the Cypress Hills lacks the self-reflexivity that informs Harry Vincent's memoirs. Whereas Vincent's autobiographical account critically questions Hollywood's misrepresentation of North American history, the narrative of the Cypress Hills Massacre is presented as an authentic account of historical events. Based on Shorty McAdoo's oral narrative and its transcription by Harry Vincent, the nineteenth-century sequences thereby serve as a counternarrative to Damon Ira Chance's classical Western *Besieged*. Told by a third-person narrator, the second

of the two major narrative strands in *The Englishman's Boy* sets in in April 1873 and ends with the shooting of the raped Native girl in the aftermath of the Cypress Hills Massacre. In contrast to Chance's reworking of McAdoo's story for *Besieged*, the third-person narration has Tom Hardwick and not the fifteen-year-old girl set fire to the post in the Cypress Hills. Thus, readers of *The Englishman's Boy* are confronted with conflicting interpretations of North American history. It is safe to say, however, that ultimately the novel privileges the third-person narrative. Because Harry Vincent never gets to see the final version of *Besieged*, Chance's racist reading of the Cypress Hills Massacre is relegated to the background in Vanderhaeghe's novel. In *The Englishman's Boy*, Hollywood's popular understanding of history and its racist attitude towards Native Americans is juxtaposed with a more objective revisionist version of North American history.[13]

Although Harry Vincent's autobiographical narrative puts forward a very critical reading of the form of the traditional Western, Vanderhaeghe adapts many of the genre conventions in his fictional reconstruction of the Cypress Hills Massacre. In contrast to Thomas King, he regards the Western genre, albeit in a modified from, as a viable means to represent North America's past. Similar to many classical Westerns, Vanderhaeghe sets the nineteenth-century sequences of his historical novel on the American frontier, an almost mythic place where civilized order and wilderness clash violently.[14] In *The Englishman's Boy*, the traditional landscape of the Hollywood Western serves as the background for a story that revolves around a group of hunters, Indians, horses, and other typical features of the highly conventionalized Western genre. The storyline includes such key scenes as the mindless slaughter of a herd of buffalo, the bar room brawl, the chase of Indian horse thieves, and the deadly fight between Natives and Whites.[15] However, Vanderhaeghe refrains from a slavish transcription of the conventions of the Western genre. His narrative, for example, lacks the solitary hero, which is at the center of so many Hollywood Westerns. Although the seventeen-year-old Englishman's boy is the protagonist of Vanderhaeghe's Western, he does not qualify for the role of the traditional hero. As an older Shorty McAdoo has long realized, his acceptance of Tom Hardwick's brutal leadership and his subsequent involvement in the Cypress Hills Massacre render him guilty: "I been thinking on this business for a long time. [...] My daddy

used to say you think a thing and think a thing, you can't shed it, that means you going to be called to answer on it [...]" (203-204). In his revisionist Western, Vanderhaeghe also challenges Hollywood's stereotypical representation of America's indigenous people. Retelling the historical Cypress Hills Massacre, he neither portrays Native Americans as bloodthirsty beasts nor does he depict them as noble savages. In contrast to classical Westerns, Vanderhaeghe does not obliterate the ethnic distinctions between Native Americans. Instead, he identifies the horse thieves as Assiniboine and thereby foregrounds their tribal identity. Although the focus in the nineteenth-century sequences of *The Englishman's Boy* is very much on the group of White horsemen, Vanderhaeghe succeeds in incorporating a Native perspective into his historical fiction. He frames the entire novel with two chapters, in which Native characters serve as focalizers. The novel's opening chapter recounts the theft of the wolfers' horses from the point of view of Fine Man and Broken Horn, two young Assiniboine. *The Englishman's Boy* concludes with the triumphant return of the young men and their new horses to the Assiniboine camp. In this frame narrative, Vanderhaeghe explores the historical experience of Native Americans and provides insights into their culture. Its plurality of perspectives and its thoughtful representation of Aboriginal people distinguishes *The Englishman's Boy* from Hollywood's appropriation of Native Americans. The rewriting of the conventions of the Western form allows Guy Vanderhaeghe to live out his apparent fascination with the genre and simultaneously to keep his distance from the racist assumptions underlying the classical American Western.

The controversies surrounding the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington in October 2004 reveal once more that questions about the ways in which to represent the history of North America's Aboriginal peoples within the larger framework of North American cultures are far from being answered conclusively (Häntzschel 15). It is very likely that literary representations of Native Americans for a very long time to come will have to compete with the popular construct of the Hollywood Indian. Despite this bleak outlook, Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* and Guy Vanderhaeghe's *The Englishman's Boy* foreground the need for greater representational accuracy. Both Canadian novels very

effectively challenge Hollywood's powerful version of the American Indian and thereby work to dismantle the image of the Indian we have so far had in mind. The attention bestowed upon both novels by academics as well as by a more general readership is indicative of the widespread dissatisfaction with Hollywood's stereotypical treatment of Natives and reveals the possibility of establishing revisionist narratives.

Endnotes

[1] For a very informative and diverse collection of essays on the construction of images of Natives in literary texts, see *The Native in Literature* (Montreal: ECW Press, 1987). Edited by Thomas King, Cheryl Calver, and King's wife, Helen Hoy, the book collects papers presented at a conference at the University of Lethbridge in March 1985. In their essays, the contributors not only explore the depiction of Natives in works by non-Native writers but also deal with literary representations of Native experience in Aboriginal writing.

[2] Despite the fact that Thomas King was born and raised in Roseville, CA, near Sacramento, he can be considered as a Canadian writer. In an interview with Jennifer Andrews, King explains why he thinks of *Green Grass, Running Water* as a Canadian novel: "Well, since I am a Canadian citizen and it was written in Canada, and it was written about places in Canada and characters who are, by and large, Native and Canadian — for all those reasons it's a Canadian novel" (161). However, King later adds that *Green Grass, Running Water* is informed by what he calls a Western sensibility: "It may be that what I'm dealing with is not so much a Canadian sensibility in the novel as a Western sensibility. I can defend that more easily because, in part, that's created by the landscape, and even more than by my being Canadian or American I'm a Westerner" (King 1999, 162). In his fiction, for example in his third novel *Truth and Bright Water* (1999), King easily transcends such artificial constructs as the national border between the U.S. and Canada.

[3] As Dieter Petzold points out, *Green Grass, Running Water*, "though published as recently as 1993, is on its way towards canonization, for it has quickly become the darling of the academy" (243). In addition, King's novel has found the acclaim of a more general readership.

[4] On King's parodic rewriting of the book of Genesis, the book of Exodus, the Gospel according to Luke, and other books of the Old and the New Testaments, see Donaldson (1995) as well as Wilke (1998).

[5] Robin Ridington points out that "King's story is so multivocal that no single reader can expect to know every reference [...]" (26). Jane Flick's "Reading Notes for Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*" is a very helpful guide to a novel which makes extensive references to historical events and figures as well as to literary works and their characters. On Thomas King's comic strategies and his use of humor, see, for example, the essay by Jennifer Andrews (2002). In her short piece "A Double-Bladed Knife: Subversive Laughter in Two Stories by Thomas King," Margaret Atwood does not deal with *Green Grass, Running Water*. However, many of her observations on the stories "Joe the Painter and the Deer Island Massacre" and "One Good Story, That One" also apply to King's second novel.

[6] For in-depth discussions of King's intertextual references to Melville's and Moodie's canonical works, see the respective articles by Fast (2001) and Stratton (1999).

[7] On the functions of tricksters in *Green Grass, Running Water*, see the articles by Linton (1999) as well as Matchie and Larson (1996).

[8] Priscilla Walton similarly argues that "King's disruptive text critiques the master-narratives of the West through counter-memory, and also engenders a space from which the dominated can challenge the normative constructions" (74).

[9] For King's understanding of questions of identity, see also his comments in an interview with Jeffrey Canton: "It's not a question that concerns me all that much personally, but it is an important question in my fiction. Because it's a question that other people always ask. Readers demand an answer to it, and it's part of that demand for authenticity within the world in which we live. It's the question that Native people have to put up with. And it's a whip that we get beaten with — 'Are you a good enough Indian to speak as an Indian?' For Native people, identity comes from community, and it varies from community to community. I wouldn't define myself as an Indian in the same way that someone living on a reserve would. That whole idea of 'Indian' becomes, in part, a construct. It's fluid. We make it up as we go along" (90-91).

[10] In her reading notes, Jane Flick points out that although Western stars Wayne, Widmark, and O'Hara appeared with each other, they never did appear all together. According to Flick, the title of King's fictitious film alludes to the television movie *The Mystic Warrior* (1984). Based on Ruth Beebe Hill's *Hanta Yo* (1979), this movie sparked a controversy because of its misrepresentation of the Lakota Sioux.

[11] Buffalo Bill Bursum's name is a composite of two names. In the infamous Bursum Bill of 1921, New Mexico Senator Holm O. Bursum (1867-1953) proposed taking land away from Indians. However, the bill was rejected by Congress. William F. (Buffalo Bill) Cody (1846-1917) was the founder of a touring Wild West Show. In these shows, Natives performed as riders and dancers and took part in large scale enactments of historical events such as the Battle of Little Big Horn. Sitting Bull, Black Elk as well as Gabriel Dumont, the leader of the small Métis military forces during the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

[12] *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* is the second part of Dixon's so-called Klan trilogy. The trilogy also comprises the novels *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden, 1865-1900* (1902) and *The Traitor* (1907). A popular success upon publication, *The Clansman* was soon adapted for the stage. In a 1906 run of the play in New York, D. W. Griffith played the lead role. In January 1915, Griffith's movie originally premiered with the title of Dixon's novel and was only shortly afterwards retitled *The Birth of a Nation*.

[13] In her article on Walter Benjamin's concept of the aura, Daniela Janes arrives at a similar conclusion when she writes that the "reader, like Harry, must believe in the authenticity of Shorty's narrative in order to recognize the outrage that Chance's revisioning of it represents. The presence of 'truth' in one section thus draws attention to its absence in the other" (90).

[14] On concepts of North American frontiers in *The Englishman's Boy*, see Kuester (2000).

[15] The Western genre holds such great attraction for Guy Vanderhaeghe that elements of the classical Western can also be found in those parts of *The Englishman's Boy* which are set in 1920s Hollywood. The killing of film director Damon Ira Chance and his sidekick Denis Fitzsimmons at the premiere of *Besieged* is modeled on the traditional shoot-out that forms the climax of many Western movies (319-323).

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Tossing the Tempest — American and Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Esther Fritsch

Shakespeare's work has achieved iconic status in Anglo-American culture and as such has played an important role in the culture of British colonies during and after the time of colonization. It has been seen as part of the civilizing mission of the colonizers or, conversely, as part of the mental colonization of subjected people, as a benchmark, demarcation or stepping stone for the (former) colonies' cultures. The United States and Canada, as two North American countries that emerged from the British settler colonies on the continent, provide excellent examples of different ways of dealing with this cultural heritage (or burden). So do Shakespearean appropriations in the Caribbean, which, however, are not going to be the focus of this study. The different histories of decolonization and attitudes forward the "mother country" are reflected in ways of engaging with this icon of English culture — William Shakespeare, and particularly with the play that most openly deals with issues (and discourses) of colonization — *The Tempest* (1611).

Shakespeare's presumably last play has served as a touchstone for creative writers from various national literatures and has provided one of the key paradigms for postcolonial theories. The play — written at a time of colonial expansion — has been read as an allegory of the relationship of nature and art, but also as a paradigmatic construction of the European encounter with a colonial racial other. Its characters have provided central metaphors for colonialism and for its critique, providing various theoretical and creative interpretations for the relationship between Prospero, Miranda, Caliban, and Ariel in readings, performances, and "re-writings" of this play. Both U.S. and Canadian writers have positioned themselves in relation to British literary traditions, but also in relation to each other. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* can be said to be one central site of this positioning. Intertextual relations to Shakespeare's plays can function as a tool in negotiating (post)-colonial national and cultural identities. By re-telling and re-working the plot and characters of *The Tempest*, through identifications with various characters, and by dramatizing various conflicts between them, literary (and non-literary) works bring up

issues of colonial filiation, dependence, racism, gender and generational relations.

The Tempest is set on an island (situated in the Mediterranean, but there are references to the New World) which is inhabited by Prospero, the exiled Duke of Milan, and his obedient daughter Miranda, the enslaved Caliban — the original inhabitant who claims the island as his inheritance — and the spirit Ariel, also enslaved by (or indentured to) Prospero. A storm conjured up by Prospero with the help of Ariel causes a shipwreck — which leaves the people responsible for Prospero's exile (his brother Antonio and his court) cast onto the island and subject to Prospero's magical manipulations. A love story between Miranda and the shipwrecked Ferdinand develops. In the end, Prospero and Miranda leave the island with the newcomers, the former having regained his duchy and the latter intending to marry. Caliban — the "misshapen knave" and "thing of darkness" — remains behind (as most readings of the play have it) and Ariel, in recognition of services rendered, is finally freed by Prospero, who, in the epilogue, renounces his magic, which, significantly, derives from his study of books.

Various narratives by writers such as Margaret Laurence, Robertson Davies, Margaret Atwood, Nancy Huston in Canada, and Louisa May Alcott, Herman Melville, Edgar Wideman, Gloria Naylor, and Toni Morrison in the U.S., among others, engage with *The Tempest* in various ways, as do non-fiction writings, e.g. about the relationship of French Canadians to Anglo-Canadians. This paper will attempt to explore various uses *The Tempest* is put to in works by several Canadian and American writers, focusing on how intertextual relations are established and how they are made to function. Shakespeare's play, I want to argue, serves as a cultural mediator through acts of appropriation. This entails making the intertext one's own, passing it through a series of changes, i.e. "tossing" *The Tempest* thereby rendering it amenable to various requirements and the accomplishment of cultural work.

Establishing a connection to and using or recycling another text is an act of appropriation that can be seen both as a tribute or a predatory act. Acts of appropriation have been analyzed in various ways in post-colonial theories. Particularly strategies of "re-writing" have been one major focus of post-colonial investigations, as the Australian critics Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths assert in their landmark introduction to

postcolonial theories, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989). Canonical texts such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (as well as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* or Brontë's *Jane Eyre)* have often been "recycled" by so-called post-colonial writers (and not only those). *The Tempest* has also been used more generally as a paradigm for colonial relations: "In the story of Prospero and Caliban, Shakespeare had dramatized the practice and psychology of colonization years before it became a global phenomenon" — says Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (quoted in Cartelli 106). The Cuban writer Roberto Fernandez Retamar (1973), for instance, delineates how Latin American writers and intellectuals have first often identified with Ariel as the intellectual Native. The air spirit associated with music is opposed to the more materialistic and earthy Caliban. Later (especially in the wake of political decolonization of the 1960s), these writers tended to see Ariel as a collaborator and identified with Caliban, who openly challenges Prospero's power. Prospero's dependence on the colonized (both economically and psychologically) is emphasized. In these early post-colonial studies (before the term became current), Caliban is not conceived of as Black, but as a representative of the "mestizos."[1]

This pattern of identification prevails in literary works from the Caribbean that take *The Tempest* as its intertext. The most famous case is the anti-colonial *Une Tempête* (1968) by Martiniquan writer and activist Aimé Césaire, in which a revolutionary Caliban talks back to a Prospero, who, in the end, remains on the island instead of leaving for his restored duchy in Old Europe. The ending leaves the adversaries in an uneasy coexistence and a continuing struggle for power with reversed roles in a master-slave relationship: "I won't answer to the name Caliban [...] Call me X. That would be best" (Césaire 15). The character formerly known as Caliban concludes his speech of rejection (of the colonizer's language, culture, and slave name) with the Swahili word "Uhuru" (meaning "independence"). The Barbadian writer George Lamming, in his essays in *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960) and his novel *Water With Berries* (1971) has also focused on the issue of Caliban's language. The issue of language is brought up in the play in the second scene of the first act and forms the basis for conceptions of Caliban — the speech includes his claim that "this island's mine, by Sycorax my mother" (T 1.2.334) and his curse: "you taught me language, and my profit on't/ Is, I know how to curse. The red plague

rid you/ For learning me your language!" (T 1.2.365-7). As postcolonial critic Ania Loomba has pointed out, "Caliban's curse became an evocative symbol of native articulation" albeit a derivative one in its necessary reliance on the colonizer's language (quoted in Brydon 199). This derivative self-articulation presents a dilemma because language is a carrier of values and self-images, and its use potentially furthers a double consciousness in the (post)-colonial subject.

One common way of establishing an intertextual relationship to the play is the inclusion of a staging in a novel. Both the Canadian writer Robertson Davies and the American novelist John Edgar Wideman make use of this intertextual strategy. In Davies's *Tempest Tost* (1952) the ambitious amateur theatre group in the fictional small town of Salterton is staging a production of Shakespeare's last play. In this social satire, the play is used to show the comic effects of discrepancies between appearance and reality, but it also satirically comments on Canadian provincialism, a Canadian reverence for English culture, and, partially, a dependence on American stagecraft (through the figure of the director trained in the U.S.). The character of Hector Mackilwraith, a stern math teacher who plays the counsellor Gonzalo and — in a mist of self-deception — completely identifies with that role, is a clumsy and socially inept Caliban figure who falls in love with one of the novel's Mirandas (19-year-old Griselda, who plays the role of Ariel). Despairing about his unrequited feelings, this Caliban tries to commit suicide on the opening night and — after his fruitless attempt to kill himself, decides to leave town (for a government job) — "being wise hereafter" (T 5.1.294).

Hector's character is aligned with Caliban through his inability to control his bodily urges (for food and for Griselda/Miranda), while his monstrosity lies in his psychological deformations, not bodily ones (Müller 44). The blame for this psychological monstrosity is put at the feet of Hector's domineering mother who — through overcautiousness and over-feeding has shaped her son's behavior patterns in terms of both body and mind. Another would-be Ferdinand — the director's assistant Solly Bridgetower, who has recently returned from his studies at Cambridge — also suffers from a domineering and controlling mother who insists on adhering to a strict meal plan "cours[ing] Solly through soup, an entrée, a sweet and a savoury every night" (Davies

41) and who is hysterically afraid of the "Yellow Peril." *Tempest Tost* follows Shakespeare's play in that Griselda's mother is dead just like Miranda's, but Davies's novel features several other mother figures — as opposed to *The Tempest*, where the absence of mothers is notable. In Shakespeare's play the fate of Miranda's mother is never explained after her being referred to as a "piece of virtue" (T 1.2.56) by Prospero once. Caliban's mother Sycorax — described as a deformed witch ("this blue-eyed hag" T 1.2.266) and Prospero's Other as a rival in the exercise of magic (T 5.1.269-71) — is also already dead at the time the events of the play take place. In his re-writing of the play, Davies fills this empty maternal space with the witch-like domineering mother figures who deform their sons to various degrees. Especially Solly's mother is ridiculed in her reverence of (outdated) British culture and manners.

The play thus provides an ironic foil for provincial pretensions of grandeur, and it is an expression of a reverence for all things English. Since other Little Theatre companies from the area "have never attempted Shakespeare [t]hey'll be on the lookout for every little flaw," one of its organizers — the overbearing Mrs. Forrester — frets (Davies 29). But Shakespeare it has to be, since he is considered "worth while" (50). The group wants to make an attempt at "pioneering the pastoral in this part of the world" (54). Salterton's architecture and the interior design of its houses is a testimony to the colonial effort to transplant "what had been done in England […] repeated clumsily and a quarter of a century later, in Canada," notably by "one of those Englishmen who sought to build a bigger and better England in the colonies" (11). The self-delusions of the characters — particularly Hector Mackilwraith — and the pretensions of the small town's elite are presented by an all-knowing narrative instance who looks upon the antics of the provincial Canadians from the amused distance of a puppet master. In this, the brunt of the irony is carried by the various mother figures — Hector's and Solly's mothers as well as Mrs. Forrester who "mothers" the Little Theatre group. The narrator thus follows Prospero's misogynist representation of women.[2] The issue of race is not addressed in Davies's adaptation of the play.

Another novel that takes *The Tempest* as its intertext, *Philadelphia Fire* (1990) by African-American author John Edgar Wideman, similarly uses a staging of the play to comment on social relations. The novel also focuses on the character of Caliban, but its emphasis is on

race relations. The staging of *The Tempest* in a park in West Philadelphia is aborted due to bad weather (an actual tempest) and a resulting lack of audience turnout. Subsequent memories of these events and varying identifications with several of the play's characters serve to explore issues of racial tension and social privilege. The novel is written in a postmodern narrative style not just in its use of overt intertextual references, but also in its complex narrative perspective and blurring of distinctive categories such as fact and fiction, dream and reality, sense impressions and hallucination — which also can be seen as an appropriation of central elements in *The Tempest*.

Philadelphia Fire includes shifting narrative perspectives and multiple narrators, metanarrative elements ("Cudjoe is getting confused, his stories mixed" or "Why this Cudjoe?" 65, 122) and an author figure called Wideman in the second part of the novel, who identifies Cudjoe as his alter ego. The distinction between fact and fiction is blurred by the integration of historical events and figures of the 1985 bombing by a Rastafarian-like cult as well as by the multiple mirroring of writer figures and autobiographical elements, and by the inclusion of letters from "Wideman" to his incarcerated son and those from a member of the MOVE cult to the author. In *Philadelphia Fire*, there are often several versions of a character, e.g. the leader of the MOVE cult called King and the homeless person J.B. in the third part of the book, or the figure of the boy Simba, who supposedly escaped the fire and who might be identical with the leader of a murderous street gang. J.B. is set on fire by such a street gang and barely survives:

> He's seen it all before, or read about it or dreamed it or maybe he saw the movie in one of the all-nighters on Market, maybe it was somebody else's dream in a book, maybe a book he, J.B., was writing. All were possibilities, possible worlds he was sure he was remembering. (188)

Here, as in other passages of the novel, the distinction between what is a dream or hallucination and what is reality based on sense impressions remains unclear — which is a topic central to Shakespeare's play, where Prospero's magic relies on the manipulation of illusions and the mastery of art over nature.

The most obvious connection to *The Tempest* — apart from the verbatim quotations from the play — is the Caliban figure who

becomes a point of reference for several characters. The militant youth gangs who terrorize neighborhoods in their crusade for "Money Power Things" (88) are called the "Kaliban Kiddie Korps" in graffiti all over town. King, the leader of the primitivist MOVE cult, who deliberately cultivates his body odor and exerts sexual power over the female cult members, is a Caliban figure who rejects Western civilization, as is his alter ego, the homeless veteran J.B. In addition, King's aborted attempt at establishing an egalitarian alternative society in a West Philadelphia row house is reminiscent of Gonzalo's vision of an ideal edenic society. Cudjoe, whose consciousness dominates the first and last part of the novel, is a writer and the former teacher responsible for the staging. He openly identifies with Caliban and takes Shakespeare's play to be representative of the oppression of minorities in general:

> Today's lesson is this immortal play about colonialism, imperialism, recidivism, the royal fucking over of weak by strong, colored by white, many by few, or, if you will, the birth of the nation's blues seen through the fish-eye lens of a fee fi foe englishmon. A mister Conrad. Earl the Pearl Shakespeare, you see. The play's all bout Eve and Adam and this paradizzical Gillespie Calypso Island where the fruit grows next to the trees but you're not supposed to touch, see. (127)

Cudjoe, then, uses *The Tempest* in an effort to raise racial consciousness among his pupils in the 1960s as a kind of "guerilla theater," as he calls it (143). This is reminiscent of Aimé Césaire's re-imagining of the play in *Une Tempête* with its revolutionary Caliban figure. Later doubts about the possibility of re-writing the play are expressed, however:

> You can't rewrite *The Tempest* any damn way you please. [...] How's Caliban supposed to sass Miss Ann Miranda without him get his woolly behind stung good and proper by that evil little CIA covert operations motherfucker, Ariel? Round the clock-surveillance, man. Prospero got that island sewed up tight as a turkey's butt on Thanksgiving. Play got to end the way it always does. Prospero still the boss. (144)

Cudjoe also temporarily identifies with Prospero envisioned as a "kind of hippie saint" (145), while his extended 10-year exile on a Greek

island and his neglect of everyday business (i.e. his family) in order to serve his literary ambitions parallels Prospero's neglect of his ducal responsibilities and his preference for "secret studies."

Particularly in this part of the novel, Cudjoe "riffs" on the play — translating it into the vernacular, improvising on some of its elements — a process which gives these passages a poetic quality. This "riffing" constitutes the use of the colonizer's language albeit with a difference. Based on traditions of Black oral culture such as rap and playing the dozens, Cudjoe presents a creative vernacular appropriation of a master text of the Western tradition by its master playwright whom he describes as follows:

> the master blaster bad swan from Avon, number-one voice and people's choice, scratcher and mixer and sweet jam fixer, ripsnorter and exhorter, cool as a refrigerator prestidigitator, have no fear, Mr. Auctioneer is here super pitchman mean as a bitch man, pull my goat and milk my goat ding-dong pussy-in-the-well wheeler-dealer and faith healer, record changer, dog-in-a manger platter-pushing poppa of the rewrite […] (129)

The questioning of the legitimacy of such a rewriting strategy in expressing Cudjoe's doubts about his enterprise (144) while simultaneously performing a revisionist re-imagining of the play constitutes one of the postmodern qualities of this novel.

Both Davies and Wideman thus use stagings of the play, reflections about the production and various identifications with Shakespearean characters in order to comment on social relations. While Davies maintains the play's status as a cultural icon in his satire of provincial Canadian life, Wideman signifies on the play by having Cudjoe translate it into a hybrid "speech queerly accented traces of the Bronx, Merry Ole England, rural Georgia, Jamaican calypso, West Coast krio, etc." (120). This appropriation constitutes both a tribute to, and a familiarization and carnivalization of, the master text. In many other narratives, the intertextual relationship is not established through an actual staging of the play, but through naming or, more covertly, through character constellation, as the following examples will show.

Other writers and critics have focused on the gender dynamics in the interaction between Prospero, Ferdinand, Caliban, and Miranda.

Thus Prospero's implicit comparison of Ferdinand and Caliban (as suitors of his daughter and as his prisoners that have to work for him) has been scrutinized as well as the interplay of racial and sexual control. This is especially apparent in Miranda's role as object of desire and of male exchange (as a token of competition or kinship). The character of Miranda has also served as a focus for re-castings of the play, both in a post-colonial context and outside of it. Feminist and postcolonial critics and writers have taken issue with the minor role she plays, her obedience to her father and her complicity in his colonial enterprise.[3] Some writers conflate Miranda with other characters (such as Ariel or Caliban) to strengthen the "pale" original. This kind of re-vision can be seen as part of a larger woman-centered strategy of recuperation. As Adrienne Rich has put it:

> Re-vision — the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction — is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. (35)

Exploring the power relations that Miranda is part of can be seen as part of a critical or creative attempt at attaining self-knowledge.

As opposed to Caliban, who can "seize his voice," Miranda is implicated in Prospero's domination of the island and hence in an ambivalent position. Diana Brydon claims that identifications with Miranda have been "appropriate for exploring the ambivalences of a settler-colony culture" such as the Canadian one (166).[4] According to Brydon, her position between old and new world, her role as the dutiful daughter of Empire who is part colonizer herself and an obedient, cooperative disciple can be opposed to the revolutionary Caliban, who has served as a model for many U.S. writers. In several Canadian re-writings of the play, Caliban has been displaced, an absence which can be interpreted as an expression of white settler's guilt about the colonization and displacement of the Native population (Brydon 1993: 202). Narratives by Charles Roberts, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, and Nancy Huston provide examples for these revisions of the Miranda character and the figure of Caliban.

One example for the dynamic of guilt and displacement can be found in Charles Roberts's fable *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* (1900),

in which Miranda meets and interacts with a Calibanic (female) bear called Kroof, playing out a dichotomy between nature and civilization. The Miranda figure in Roberts's tale is a pioneer woman in tune with her natural environment — being able to communicate with the wild animals. Apart from the references to *The Tempest*, there are echoes of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* as well as of the genre of Indian captivity narratives. In those narratives, a white person (often a woman) is captured by hostile Native Americans and either killed, freed or adopted into the tribe. Miranda resembles one of those adopted captives who acculturate to their new environment. She is adopted by Kroof who protects her on numerous occasions. Kroof is a representative of "the furtive folk" — the original inhabitants of the forest. Their descriptions echo the stereotype of Native slyness and their noiseless ways of moving in the forest. Travelers in the forest feel continuously watched and threatened. Miranda, however, feels at home in the forest and in deference to her abhorrence of killing, the "furtive folk" only kill when she is absent.

The young woman's re-entry into "civilization" is effected through a young hunter whom she grows to love. Finally, she has to decide between her two lives, between "civilization" and "nature," represented respectively by the hunter and her bearish stepmother Kroof. After the hunter inadvertently kills Kroof's cub, the bear is about to kill the young man and Miranda shoots her to save her future spouse. This final rejection of the Calibanic wildness is foreshadowed by her gradual loss of self-assurance and independence before this climactic event — when she has to be taught and rescued by the Ferdinand figure, while before she was the teacher and rescuer. Thus, she becomes a properly submissive wife-to-be in the sentimental fashion of the time, who also will civilize the wild urges of her male companion by inducing him to give up hunting and take up farming instead. Robert's fable does not contain a Prospero figure, since Miranda's father is absent. He is a poet, who leaves his family to its own devices, exposing the Miranda-figure's mother to the vicious village gossip that drives her into the forest — a strong echo of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. The echoes and re-writings of various canonical texts in Robert's tale serve to establish a Canadian identity between "civilization" and "nature." In this, wild "nature" — represented by the forest and its native inhabitants — ultimately has to

give way to "civilization" after serving to educate the protagonists. The fact that the canonical texts are British and American and that they are combined with the homegrown genre of the captivity narrative also positions Canadian literature as a development from these traditions.

Positioning Canadian literature and national identity in relation to Britain and the USA is one of the recurring topics in the work of Margaret Atwood. In Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972) the protagonist and narrator is also a Miranda figure who is torn between nature and civilization. She imagines her father — who went missing during a stay in the wilderness — as having metamorphised into a Caliban-like creature (*Surfacing* 95). At the same time, moreover, she is studying her father's mysterious notebooks which align him with Prospero. These lead her to sacred Native sites and ultimately to his body. She goes through a phase where she retreats into the wilderness and into an animal-like natural state herself where she rejects language and civilization and seeks mystical union with nature before emerging with renewed strength. She ultimately decides to leave the woods to be with her lover Joe — who is less a Ferdinand figure than another Calibanic character — who is compared to buffalo and called "half-formed" (186). While civilization and its decadence is aligned with "Americanness" for the narrator, she finally comes to a reconciliation with it. Here the Miranda figure shares some elements of Caliban, or rather, goes through a phase where she gets in touch with the Calibanic parts of her personality. The relatively subtle reference to *The Tempest* in this novel is a claim on and an appropriation of an English canonical text for a Canadian literary tradition. This marks a stance that Atwood has also advocated in her study *Survival* (1972), which deals with issues of Canadian literature and cultural identity.

Nancy Huston's 1993 novel *Plainsong* is a further variation and continuation of the tradition of Canadian identifications with Miranda in that it creates a Native Miranda who is part Sarcee and Blackfoot and part white, thus conflating Miranda and Caliban in a more explicit way than Atwood does in *Surfacing*. In *Plainsong*, the Miranda figure is barely literate, not highly educated like the Shakespearean character, having rejected white schooling after painful childhood experiences at a boarding school where she was also renamed because the nuns could not pronounce her Native name. This aligns her with Caliban, as does the fact that she is an artist who is attuned to nature and tells stories

about it, similar to the Shakespearean native inhabitant of the island who enjoys the sounds, smells and visions of his environment (T 3.2.130-8). Miranda becomes the lover of a somewhat disempowered Propero figure called Paddon Sterling — whose name implies the worth, purity and economic power of the British colonizers. She dies from a degenerative disease — her destiny thus invoking the stereotypical doomed native. The Prospero figure Paddon is a would-be philosopher who would like to dedicate his life to his studies like Prospero but whose energy is depleted by everyday life and the need to provide for his family as a history teacher at a local school. His has retreated into an internal exile and his frustration and dissatisfaction about this plain existence is expressed in violent rages that abate somewhat after he meets Miranda. He concludes wearily: "This is the crowning irony: my children destroyed my book and my book destroyed my children" (Huston 194), and charges his granddaughter Paula with completing his task.

The story is set in Montreal and Alberta and told by this granddaughter, who is trying to record the family history and by extension national and local Albertan history. Prospero's books are again the source of power — in this case, the power of recording history — which is ultimately achieved by Paula, who uses her grandfather's aborted dissertation on the history of time called "P's book" as well as Miranda's stories for her account. By turning Paddon's book into Paula's book and drawing on Miranda's tales, the narrator restages the past and reconstructs both her grandfather and Miranda as characters, which makes her the inheritor and appropriator of both. The guilt and violence implied in this appropriation of the Native story revisits Paula in a dream about destroying Miranda's body by looking at it:

> Now my gaze began to search her body for wounds and everywhere it fell a wound appeared because it had fallen there. It fell on her eyes, they were gouged out. It fell on her chest, a deep hole was carved into the flesh above one breast. Aghast, I turned away before my gaze could attack and destroy the rest of her. The dream appalled me because it suggested that what I'm doing here is just the opposite of what I had hoped to do — not stitching a shroud but defiling cadavers. (214)

Paula's raising of the dead in her narrative combines the magic powers of Prospero and Sycorax (Brydon 1993: 211). Sycorax's magic is also echoed in the invocation of Haitian voodoo when Paula's half-Haitian cousins that possess magic *marasa* powers prevent the discovery of the extra-marital relationship of Paddon and Miranda (Huston 208).

Paula has the other characters dance to her tune by integrating them into her story. This resonates with the title of the novel, which refers to the European tradition of religious plain song that can be seen to supplant and drown out the Native song. In this reading, Miranda is the stereotypical "woman, native, other" (Brydon 1993: 209) who is surveyed by the cartographer and surveyor Paddon who "would help her draw the map of her body" (53). At the same time, Paula is aware of the problematic of appropriating Miranda's story, as the reaction to her dream shows. As Diana Brydon puts it, in *Plainsong*, Caliban's "curse is retuned into plain song" (1993: 206), invoking issues of appropriation and legitimacy, as well as of art as transcending magic. This rewriting, Brydon states, "complicates any attempt to read the novel as postcolonial allegory" (1993: 204). Huston's novel does not mark its intertextuality as overtly as Davies's and Wideman's texts do, but inscribes Shakespeare's play into its characters and narrative strategy in a complex way.

Margaret Laurence's novel *The Diviners* (1974) is another "self-begetting" novel (i.e. a novel that is about its own creation by a character) in which both characters and plot development are based on *The Tempest*, although it is only explicitly referred to in a discussion of the protagonist's novel, which is called "Prospero's Child" (Laurence 329). *The Diviners* includes the Calibanic figure of Jules Tonnere, a Métis and songwriter, whom the Miranda figure, the protagonist Morag Gunn, has a child with. Morag first marries and later rejects her Prospero, the English professor Brooke Skelton, who treats her like a child. Prospero's books — English letters — have to be rejected (in the character of Skelton) and used at the same time (as a re-vision of Shakespeare's play). This rejection constitutes a step towards maturity, independence, and becoming an artist.[5]

In Laurence's novel, political dominance and dependence are scripted as sexual power relations. Thus Morag's development exemplifies the Canadian situation as a former British colony, which is both dependent upon, and independent from, the colonial metropole

and its culture.[6] Like Davies in the 1950s, Laurence points out the dependency of Canadian culture, but unlike him, she does not stop at showing the Canadian artist still "in the cradle" as it were. Rather, in her 1974 novel, the play undergoes a successful act of revision — creating Prospero's progeny's book. *The Diviners* thus resembles Nancy Huston's *Plainsong*, whose rewriting is even more an act of appropriation and a re-writing of history (i.e. the discourse of power). In both novels, a Métis character is associated with Caliban and serves as a counter-force to the representatives of British metropolitan culture, providing the protagonist with alternative traditions in forging a national narration that is more than just derivative. Moreover, in Huston's novel the issue of re-writing the native Caliban's story is problematized by marking Paula's seizure of "P's books" as a Frankensteinian experiment haunted by ghosts.

While Miranda looms large in Canadian adaptations of Shakespeare's play, American rewritings more often concentrate on the character of Caliban and sometimes Ariel, the native inhabitants of the island. In U.S. contexts, an identification with the Natives — what has been called "playing Indian" — can be seen as a national characteristic that has had far-reaching implications for U.S. national identity. Mythical events and elements in the national imagination such as the masquerade of the Boston Tea Party, the influential Tammany Society or the common phenomenon of the Cherokee princess claimed as an ancestor play an important role.[7] American rewritings of *The Tempest* can be seen in this context of identification with the Native, in particular when some of the play's characters are conflated. Two nineteenth century stories by Herman Melville and Louisa May Alcott respectively, a novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, and several novels by twentieth-century African American writers will be used to illustrate and test this assumption about the pre-eminence of the Prospero-Caliban relationship in American "tossings" of *The Tempest*.

In Herman Melville's story "Hood's Isle and the Hermit Oberlus" (1852), for example, the characters of Caliban and Prospero are conflated in the title character Oberlus. Oberlus, who lives on a deserted island in the South Pacific occasionally visited by whaling ships, is white and of European origin, quite an "accomplished writer, and no mere boor" (Melville 110); indeed, he is someone with "qualities more diabolical than are to be found among any of the

surrounding cannibals" (102). His appearance after years on a deserted island is as wild and unkempt as Caliban's, however. He is described as "beast-like" with "befreckled skin," a flat nose, and "countenance contorted, heavy, earthy; hair and beard unshorn," as well as possessing a "warped and crooked" nature (103). He is repeatedly described as animal-like and compared to a bear or a snake; having kept the company of tortoises, he has "degraded to their level" (104). He claims to have inherited the island from his mother Sycorax (105) and deems himself superior to his visitors. Thus the echoes of the Shakespearean characters are strong. The island is not the only thing bequeathed by Sycorax, but also Oberlus' natural cruelty is attributed to her. With the help of alcohol, Oberlus enslaves visitors on the island and treats them cruelly, "out of mere delight in tyranny and cruelty, by virtue of a quality in him inherited from Sycorax his mother" (105). This misanthropic Calibanic Prospero ends up in a South American jail after stealing a boat and pursuing a mate to more populous regions in order to people his island. Caliban is thus shown to be a facet of Prospero that attains dominance due to the external circumstances of solitude and non-human company and the genetic inheritance of his mother. His rebellion is directed against humanity, not a particular authority figure or social structure.

The other enslaved figure under the dominion of Prospero, the air spirit Ariel, has also been re-imagined as a part of another character. Several American women writers have merged this character with Miranda, e.g. Louisa May Alcott in "Ariel or the Legend of the Lighthouse" (1865) or Harriet Beecher Stowe in *The Pearl of Orr's Island* (1862). In Alcott's story, the seventeen-year-old protagonist Ariel March lives with her reclusive and embittered father in a lighthouse on a little island that is otherwise only inhabited by the hump-backed lighthouse keeper called Stern, described as "shaggy-haired, tawny-bearded and bronzed by wind and weather" (Alcott 162). This character, who appears as a mixture of Caliban and Heathcliff, is in love with the young girl, but a union is out of the question due to class and age differences. A young poet vacationing nearby also falls in love with the girl and becomes her Ferdinand.

The young man first thinks of the girl as a mermaid, a "watery sprite" that vanishes "with a sound of musical laughter" (154) and who has been taught to swim and dive by birds and possesses an "elfish

intelligence" and the manners of a gentlewoman (158, 167). He gives her a new copy of her favorite book — Shakespeare's works — and openly compares her to Miranda, while she refers to him as Ferdinand (158, 166). The girl returns his affection, and at first her father is pleased about the development (172), but when he finds out that her suitor is the son of an old enemy, he opposes the match. In proper sentimental fashion, this Miranda-Ariel remains obedient to her stern and dictatorial father, rather than follow her heart and her suitor. Only when her father relents and shows forgiveness, like the original Prospero, is she free to marry her Ferdinand and live happily ever after. In Alcott's story, the reference to the Shakespearean original is signaled openly, and the story is refashioned by the inclusion of such sentimental motifs as a lost locket containing locks of hair, letters withheld from their addressees, family secrets and mistaken identities, rivalry and jealousy, a murderous plot and a fortuitous rescue as well as the suicide of the hapless Stern.

Similarly, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Pearl of Orr's Island* follows the literary style of its time and the ideals of sentimental womanhood. The author sets the story on an island off the coast of Maine, where the gentle and pious female protagonist Mara grows up with a dark-haired, wild-natured orphaned boy as her companion, he, like Caliban, has no interest in books or education. Like Ariel March from Alcott's story, Mara combines features of Miranda and Ariel: she is "one of those aerial mixtures of cloud and fire, whose radiance seems scarcely earthly" who is "all nerve and brain" and "like a little elf" (Beecher Stowe 35). She also identifies with the figure of Miranda in a copy of *The Tempest* that becomes her favorite reading (132), while Moses — the orphan that later comes to claim his heritage — is her Ferdinand. But unlike Alcott's protagonist, Mara dies before her marriage, which solves her dilemma of religious incompatibility with the atheist Moses. Here, the Miranda character turns out to be rather an Ariel, while the Caliban character is actually a Ferdinand. In a manner similar to Alcott's tale, the novel follows the conventions of sentimental fiction in its plot and character development, and it uses the Shakespearean pre-text to address questions of religion rather than questioning parental authority.

While Brydon claims that in the Canadian context, rewriting *The Tempest* has been "predominantly a white Anglophone exercise" (1993:

200), this is not true for the American context.[8] Many African American writers have also used the allegorical power (and the cultural capital) of *The Tempest* in their re-writings, focusing on issues both of race and of gender in their works. Caliban is the most obvious character to be given prime place in those re-visions, but the figure of the racial other is often merged with Miranda as well in varieties of family "romances." Edgar Wideman's *Philadelphia Fire* — which was discussed above — pits an African American Caliban against white society — without effecting a reversal in the power structure. Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* (1981) is set on a Caribbean island dominated by retiree Valerian Street — the heir to an American sugar dynasty who has profited from the exploitation of Caribbean natural and human resources all his life and thus is a representative for colonizing powers. He sponsors the European education of Jadine, his Black servants' niece and the Black Miranda figure of the novel. They all encounter the fugitive Black-skinned Son, whom Jadine is attracted to and repulsed by at the same time. For her, he embodies her African heritage that she has taken pains to distance herself from. Son first appears as a wild man who gradually becomes more civilized, but it is not him who threatens the lives of other characters, as it turns out. Rather than this Caliban's potential crimes, it is Valerian's wife's past abuse of their son that puts into question received ideas about civilization and order.

Such a reversal of characters and values is also a feature in Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1988). Naylor's novel uses the setting and characters of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* while radically reversing some of its relationships. The title character Mama Day is christened Miranda. She is Prospero's daughter — in a manner of speaking — who has inherited the island. Thus the childless matriarch is in Prospero's position of power, speaking for the island population — "Mama Day say no, everybody say no" (Naylor 6) and advising young people in matters of love. She does not, however, quarrel with her sister Abigail (unlike Prospero and Antonio), suggesting, as James Andreas points out, a more peaceful sisterly rule rather than the fratricidal struggles common in Shakespeare's works (113-4). As a descendant of the slave and "conjure woman" Sapphira Wade[9] and versed in magic herself, she is also in the position of Sycorax and in the role of Caliban. Sapphira herself is a Sycorax figure who made her owner and lover Bascombe Wade bequeath the island to his slaves, hence laying the foundation for

their ownership of it. As an original inhabitant of the island (originally from Africa, but brought to the island as a kind of exile herself), she cooperates with natural forces rather than dominating them. The setting of the uncharted island of Willow Springs complements metropolitan New York City, the home of George. He is a Ferdinand figure and at the same time a revised version of Caliban: a dispossessed orphan who gets drunk on the island, who "gives allegiance to false leaders" and who does not resist reason (like Caliban) but resists emotion and Miranda's worldview (Storhoff 170-1). This resistance ultimately leads to his death. Miranda/Mama Day finally identifies with her father (by recognizing her hands' similarity to his). Unlike Prospero, she does not give up her power in the end, remaining the island's matriarch. In an "imaginative interrogation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*" (167) that focuses on racial and gender revisions, Naylor raises issues of appropriation as both tribute and critique.

The statement that in Canadian literature and culture, Miranda is the primary identification figure while the rebellious Caliban serves as a model for American contexts can still be upheld, as the examples show, but needs to be amended. Many Canadian texts privilege the Miranda-Prospero constellation in their rewritings, casting Canadian female protagonists as a Miranda who negotiates an identity between "wilderness" and "civilization" (as in Roberts's and Atwood's narratives) or fights to assert herself against patriarchal power (in the examples by Atwood, Laurence, and, to a lesser extent, Huston). Often, characters are merged in the various re-writings: the merging of Miranda and Caliban, which takes place to some degree in Atwood's *Surfacing*, but more openly in Nancy Huston's novel, breaks down this convenient dichotomy between American and Canadian traditions.

A dominant identification with the native Caliban, but also a strong tendency towards merging the characters can be found in the examples from U.S. literary tradition. A conflation of characters is effected in Melville's Oberlus, the Calibanic Prospero, who is a character study for an exploration into the heart of darkness. Alcott's and Beecher Stowe's pious Ariel-Mirandas and the latter's Caliban turned Ferdinand refashion *The Tempest* in line with the authors' concerns with romance and religion. These texts do not focus on Caliban as a revolutionary, but as a representative of "untutored" nature. Naylor's novel is set on an island peopled with Sycorax's

descendants and asserts the legitimacy and power of a Sycorax figure who also identifies with Prospero. The other Miranda figure, Cocoa, who is similar to Jadine in Morrison's *Tar Baby,* struggles to accept the Calibanic heritage, i.e. her "Africanness" in or outside herself. Wideman's *Philadelphia Fire* most notably supports an American identification with Caliban and his revolutionary impulse, but the novel also questions simple dichotomies by showing Cudjoe's disillusionment with his erstwhile revolutionary fervor.

In both American and Canadian literary traditions, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has been a crucial touchstone. Tossing, re-viewing, or re-visioning Shakespeare's play has enabled many writers to envision and mediate identities, and particularly to re-configure gender and racial attributes. In both national literary traditions, the play thus functions as a "contact zone" — a concept introduced by Mary Louise Pratt in her investigation of colonial relations. It provides a space of dialogue, trade, and negotiation of identities, where it can be appropriated and "signified" on. At the same time, however, this appropriation signifies a tribute and mark of respect. Adrienne Rich's call for the necessity of "revision" as "seeing with fresh eyes" (35) turns out to be true not just for women's writing. As the many examples discussed in the context of *The Tempest* show — it is a statement valid especially for contesting assumptions of the cultural inferiority of subjected peoples and even more broadly, for situating all varieties of postcolonial subject positions.

Endnotes

[1] For an overview of interpretations of Caliban see also Alden T. and Virginia Mason Vaughan's study *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History* (1991).

[2] See Loomba (151) on the discourse of misogyny and racism in the description of Sycorax.

[3] See Showalter's *Sister's Choice* (1991), Donaldson's "The Miranda Complex" (1988), and Loomba's *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (1989, particularly chapter 6) as examples of feminist and postcolonial readings of the play.

[4] See also Zabus (42) on this issue.

[5] In the case of *The Diviners*, several other characters help the protagonist in this development: Morag's stepfather Christie — a storyteller who is proud of his Scottish ancestors and scornful of small town manners — and her imaginary helper Catherine Parr Trail, a pioneer woman and writer, whom Morag sees as a literary forerunner, but also as an awe-inspiring ideal she will constantly fall short of.

[6] Another version of Miranda appears in Canadian writer Sarah Murphy's novel *The Measure of Miranda* (1987), where the white liberal guilt of Prospero's daughter is explored. For an analysis of this novel see Brydon (1993).

[7] For a detailed analysis of this cultural construction and appropriation of 'Indians' in American culture see Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian* (1999).

[8] Note that for francophone Canadian traditions, an identification with Caliban has been more common, as Chantal Zabus points out in her comparison of Canadian and Caribbean adaptations of the play (1985). But then Francophone Quebeckers have also often identified with African Americans in the U.S., as "Nègres blancs de l'Amérique," e.g. in Max Dorsinville's *Caliban Without Prospero: Essay in Québec and Black Literature* (1974).

[9] The characters of Sapphira and Miranda can also be seen as an allusion to Charles Chesnutt's collection of short stories *The Conjure Woman* (1899) — an important text in the African-American literary tradition.

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"Canada mania" — The Fascination for Canada and Anti-Americanism in Nineteenth-Century British Literature

Norbert Lennartz

I.

The lament for the loss of the pastoral life has been a topos prevalent in literature in English at least since Romantic times. Industrialization, poverty, the transformation of time-honoured cities into jungles of crime and prostitution — features which Wordsworth persistently ignores in his poems on London — have inaugurated a kind of literary realism *avant la lettre*, utterly at odds with former ideas of Albion as the epitome of the Golden Age.

The rapid and threatening decline of the English countryside, the deterioration of manners attendant upon the apparent destruction of civilization are explicitly shown in Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" as early as in 1770;[1] by the end of the eighteenth century, the myth of England as Arcady revisited is completely destroyed when authors like George Crabbe describe the way a whole generation of young and ablebodied people is driven to emigration. Even Scotland, immortalised in Robert Burns's poetry and thus seen as the model of idyllic rural life, participates in a westward movement which in the end drains the country of its young and prospective generations and makes them eager to establish a "nova Scotia" elsewhere. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, when the Shelleys, Lord Byron, and other Romantic rebels flaunted their existence as outcasts and moral exiles in southern European countries, massive streams of emigrants likewise turned their backs on Britain with the hope of finding prosperity in the growing towns and settlements overseas. As Susanna Moodie says in the introduction to the third edition of her autobiographical work *Roughing It in the Bush* (1854), "[f]rom the year 1826 to 1829, Australia and the Swan River were all the rage. [...] These were the *El Dorados* and lands of Goshen to which all respectable emigrants eagerly flocked" (4). The other destinations — on whose changing representation this essay will concentrate — were the United States of America and British North America, eventually to become the dominion of Canada in 1867.

Long before the United States became idealized as the prospective setting of Romantic primitivism,[2] there was a tradition of seeing America as the harbinger of "another golden age" (George Berkeley, "Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America," rpt. in Crossley-Holland 365f) which promised the emergence of learning and nobility in stark contrast to the corroding effects of the decadence which Europe, a decrepit *alma mater*, brings forth: "Not such as Europe breeds in her decay." The westward movement, which is at the root of Berkeley's imaginary empire, is also pivotal in political utopias such as Coleridge and Southey's 1794 idea of pantisocracy — an egalitarian community which was to be founded on the banks of the Susquehanna River. And yet, it cannot be ignored that there is a tendency, at least in British literature, which compares America unfavourably to Canada. While in the minds of the nineteenth-century writers, Canada tends to be visualized using mystical language — which in the end even takes on a hagiographical note in Rudyard Kipling's poetry — the United States are more often than not described in terms which border on satire or dystopia. It can be argued that, to a certain extent, this is due to Edgar Allan Poe, who, transmitted to Europe via Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé, shaped the Europeans' minds about America and gave the conception of the American Dream an untimely nightmarish tinge. *The Masque of the Red Death* (1841), *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), and "The Raven" (1845) with the reiteration of the bleak "Nevermore" did not take long to become precursors of European decadence and to show their readers that death, morbidity, and madness were ineradicable flaws even in the new world.

Long before Poe became established in the literary circles of the late Victorian period, British readers of Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) had conceived a biased notion of America as a country of felons and amoral creatures of all kinds. It can only be considered a form of blatant irony that a place with the telling name Virginia[3] is the state in which Moll, the whore, the bigamist, the incestuous wife, and radical opponent of virginity can thrive contrary to all notions of poetic justice. Instead of being taken to task for the crimes she has perpetrated while — as she maintains — being "in the clutches of the devil" (Defoe 268), she even seems to be rewarded for her misdemeanour. As a rich owner of a plantation she is thus not only a bitter mockery of the Protestant idea that wealth is the outward sign of

spiritual election; she is also instrumental in spreading the cliché that the new world overseas is fundamentally based on lawlessness, the arbitrary rotations of the wheel of Fortune according to which the wicked are inevitably elevated and the law-abiding punished — a notion which even reverberates in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) when he has the intruder Sergeant Troy temporarily go to the United States to make "a precarious living in various towns as Professor of Gymnastics, Sword Exercise, Fencing and Pugilism" (Hardy 297).

II.

Defoe could not help relying on the image of America as it was spread in spiritual autobiographies by transported felons or in popular travelogues in the vein of Dampier and Rogers. In 1842, more than a hundred years after the publication of *Moll Flanders*, Charles Dickens was able to draw his material from a four-month journey both to America and Canada. The impressions he gained are essentially recorded in two books: in a non-fictional account, which is unpretentiously titled *American Notes* and which is based on his letters to John Forster, the editor of *The Examiner*, and in the America chapters in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844). The *American Notes*, which provide the real background to the later Swiftian satire in the novel, are partially modelled on the earlier *Sketches by Boz* and partially on the various travelogues written by hypercritical and patriotically prejudiced travellers such as Tobias Smollett. Like Smollett, who in his *Travels through Italy and France* (1768) is perpetually confronted with corruption, dirt, ill manners, and a stereotypical form of southern treachery, Dickens is likewise unsentimental[4] and even less empathetic when he — as a representative of the 'old Europe' — encounters what was ubiquitously seen as a highly precarious and dubious experiment of democracy and gross egalitarianism. Since, after the calamities of the French Revolution, democracy had pejorative connotations of egalitarianism in nineteenth-century England and was generally seen as the harbinger of cultural decline, Dickens, despite his leanings to republicanism and his strong attachment to the idea of social Christianity, could not help being appalled at the idea of being ruled by an uncouth people whom he considered an obnoxious group of subspecies of the (English) *genus humanum*.[5]

In the wake of Frances Trollope, a copy of whose caustic account of travel *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) was in his possession,[6] Dickens adopts the persona of Boz to describe a severe clash of cultures. Arriving in Boston, whose refinement and elegance are attributed to the influence of the University of Cambridge, Dickens, alias Boz, cannot help mentioning the "hideous blot and foul disgrace — Slavery" (34) — a leitmotif which ubiquitously overshadows America's achievements and betrays the duplicity of a country apparently based on freedom and equality.

Another source of British scepticism is not only the unsubstantiality of the cities, the primness and brightness of the varnished chapels and churches, which remind the speaker — as it does the narrator in *Pictures of Italy* — of a backdrop in a pantomime; more than that, it is the fact that the whole nation consists of merchants and that the "almighty dollar" (36), "this sordid object," as Trollope says (301), has become the Americans' golden calf, which elicits Dickens's strong disapproval. Twenty-five years prior to Marx and Engels's publication of *The Capital* (1867), Dickens sees in America the epitome of capitalism, "the vast counting-house" (36), in which everything can be bought for money and in which advertisements and visual incentives take on dimensions verging on the grotesque. While Marx finds the remedy for this state of affairs in the total abolition of private property and in an extreme form of levelling all class distinctions, Dickens seems to be convinced that it is just the egalitarian and democratic tendencies which bring about the degeneration of human beings.

The first indications of such an egalitarian community can be witnessed in the American railroad. The speaker appears to be dismayed to find that there are "no first and second class carriages as with us" (72). The only vestige of distinction which does exist is gender-related, and that means that in the gentlemen's carriage everybody smokes while in the ladies' car nobody does. Since black people as a neutral and monstrous gender are generally not permitted access to either carriage, they are transported in what is described as "a great blundering clumsy chest, such as Gulliver put to sea in, from the kingdom of Brobdingnag" (72). The intertextual references to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), which are scattered throughout the travel narrative, reveal Dickens's high esteem for the

Irish satirist and his disgust for a nation which has arrogantly broken free from hierarchies and traditional values. Swift's misanthropy and his strong loathing of the Whigs' Icarian pretensions is recaptured by Dickens when he — implicitly or explicitly — deals with the rebestialization of the Americans. The post-Romantic reinvention of the ignoble savage[7] is ushered into the text when the inveterate American habit of spitting is commented on with repugnance. While Frances Trollope seems to be dumbfounded when she enters a theatre where "spitting was incessant, and the mixed smell of onions and whiskey" was revolting (133), Dickens is more graphic and takes literary advantage of the description of this repulsive and anti-human behaviour. Washington, otherwise a sleepy and nondescript city of magnificent but ludicrous aspirations, is "the headquarters of tobacco-tinctured saliva" (125). Not only spittoons, but also revolting traces of these "copious shower[s] of yellow rain" (126) are evidence of a largescale decline of civilization. Both in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, the carpets are in poor condition because the honourable members of both houses are accustomed to missing the spittoon "at five paces" (136).

Horrified at such instances of "the brutalizing and blotting out of all the fairer characters traced by Nature's hand" (154), Dickens eagerly deconstructs the emergent myth of the American Adam when he observes forms of deterioration everywhere: in the faces of the slaves, in the politicians with their "swelled faces" (135), and predominantly in the Americans' off-putting eating habits. Reminded of Gulliver's return from the country of the Houy-hnhnms and his subsequent disgust at the filthiness and brutality of his fellow-Yahoos, the speaker is compelled to watch the passengers on the steamboat on the Ohio river eat: it is neither the fact that huge quantities of incongruous food are consumed (Trollope 297), nor is it the atmosphere of darkness and listlessness in which everybody broods over their meal, which is felt as oppressive by Dickens's persona; it is above all the way his "fellow-animals" invariably choose "to ward off thirst and hunger as a business; to empty ... the Yahoo's trough as quickly as [they] can, and then slink sullenly away" (189), which upsets him and makes him assume such a patronizing attitude. The loss of "the social sacraments" in favour of "the mere greedy satisfaction of the natural cravings" (189), the transformation of the time-honoured

banquet culture into "these funeral feasts" (189) is undoubtedly a feature of modern times, recognizable in a wide range of nineteenth-century British writers from Byron to Gissing and H.G. Wells, but for Dickens it is a distinctive mark of the Americans rapidly relapsing into the chaos of atavism.

Even more than the allegorical interpolation of the "republican pig" in New York (97ff.), the passage on the Mississippi takes on the character of a descent into the rotten and bestial core of America, into the heart of darkness, which predates Joseph Conrad by more than sixty-five and Huck Finn's journey on the raft by fifty years. On the morning of the third day — alluding to the symbolic relevance of the number three — the speaker is faced with Cairo City, a village with a high-flown name, which in England was vaunted as a paradise for speculation and financial prosperity. The contrast between the ideal place the British had in mind and the stark reality could hardly have been greater, because what Dickens — in contrast to Huck and Jim[8] — actually sees as the purported land of Amalthea's horn of plenty is a "dismal swamp," covered with "rank unwholesome vegetation" (190), and a cynical anticipation of the swamp of Eden in *Martin Chuzzlewit*.[9] Contrary to all favourable representations, the infernal character of the place is so striking that the persona underlines his disillusionment with the rhetorical device of a tripartite gradation: Cairo City, as a *pars pro toto* for the continent as a whole, is a "hotbed of disease, an ugly sepulchre, a grave uncheered by any gleam of promise" (190).

The inversion of eschatological thought which characterizes the place is also applied to the river. In contrast to the Victorian images of the river as the stream of life and of water as the element of conversion and regeneration,[10] the Mississippi is circumscribed as "[a]n enormous ditch," full of "liquid mud" in which floating logs and trees are metamorphosed into "monstrous bodies" with their "tangled roots showing like matted hair" (191). The muddy water ostensibly teeming with corpses, giant leeches, and wounded snakes, the foulness of the stream, the mosquitoes pestering the passengers, and the fact that the water they are compelled to drink is "more opaque than gruel" (191) — the mere listing of all these aspects not only testifies to the Mississippi being "a slimy monster" (191), which elicits from the speaker a Kurtzian cry of nauseated horror; the representation of the Mississippi as an infernal and death-inflicting river has an additional function since,

at this point of the story, it serves as a foil to the sublimity and purity of the Niagara Falls.

Stunned by the awe-inspiring vastness of the scene, the persona — in the throes of nausea before — is now inspired by a kind of Wordsworthian feeling of beatitude:

> then, when I felt how near to my Creator I was standing, the first effect, and the enduring one — instant and lasting — of the tremendous spectacle, was Peace. Peace of Mind: Tranquillity: Calm recollection of the Dead […] (220)

In accordance with the Romantics, and in particular with Wordsworth's description of Mount Snowdon as an epiphany in *The Prelude*, Dickens's persona tries to recapture the ecstatic vision of a mystic 'spot of time' which, on the one hand, is contrasted with the experience of horror and irredeemable death on the Mississippi and which, on the other, serves as a cathartic device at the beginning of the Canada chapter. After treading the "Enchanted Ground" (220) where water is transformed into "angels' tears" (221), the speaker is prepared to encounter the Canadian cities with conspicuous enthusiasm: thus he praises Toronto's beauty, is taken with Montreal being "pleasantly situated on the margin of the St. Lawrence" (229), and in Quebec, he is struck by the picturesqueness of the city but also by the reminiscences about James Wolfe and his heroic but lethal fight against the French in 1759 — a memorable event which later, in 1847, is even commemorated in the claustrophobic world of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.[11]

Thus, when the speaker leaves Canada, with James Thomson's "Rule Britannia" "sounding in [his] ears" (232), he is not reluctant to state that "Canada has held, and will always retain, a foremost place in my remembrance" (233). Referring to "the health and vigour throbbing in its steady pulse" (233), Dickens substantially contributes to the nineteenth-century black-and-white portrayal of America and Canada with the latter invariably being of "surpassing beauty" (230) and the former sinking into the mire of corruption, slavery, and degradation.

III.

The Edenic image of Canada as a clean, budding, and even virginal country is a kind of myth which is created in nineteenth-century British anti-American writings and which is pitted against the Canadian

identity which gradually emerges from Canadian writers. The early Canadian text "The Rising Village" (1825) by Oliver Goldsmith, junior, is an interesting case in point, since it seems to correct future British distortions. As a nephew of the Irishman and author of "The Deserted Village," Goldsmith intends his long poem to be a counter-text to his uncle's poem of disillusion and decline. But reading the text carefully and taking heed of the submerged strata of meaning, we find our expectations that we will become acquainted with a new primitive culture and a new race of noble savages sorely disappointed. Canada as the Breughelian land of Cockaigne revisited, in which — as Susanna Moodie says later with an ironic twist "the sheep and oxen ran about the streets, ready roasted, and with knives and forks upon their backs," (5) — was an idea as fallacious as the scholarly assertion that elks could only be found in Canada.[12]

The specious phonetic affinity between Acadia, the former French Atlantic colonies, and A*r*cadia, the idealized place of Greek bucolic literature, is immediately forgotten when we see in Goldsmith's poem that the positive and Romantic aspects of Acadian life are juxtaposed with an imagery casting doubt on the idea of progress and future happiness. Although the times when the first achievements of civilization were threatened by "wandering savages, and beasts of prey" (Bentley 45) belong to the past, the recurrent references to "winter's dreary terrors" (153) — cold, snow, storms, ice — indicate that life in Canada means permanent exposure to the inclemencies of nature. Unlike Ann Radcliffe, who defined "terror" as a soul-expanding experience of nature's sublimity (*New Monthly Magazine* [1826]), the settlers suffer from the aggravating consequences of the climatic terrors.

Beyond that, the reader is astonished to find that dilettantism, corruption, and even vice are not absent from the young and rising community. With the village church enveloped in an ominous "holy gloom" (166), the precarious and self-contradictory state of life is highlighted by the fact that a wandering pedlar here "a merchant's higher title gains" (206), that a "half-bred Doctor" wavers between chance and doubtful skill, and that the post of the teacher is held by a poor wanderer of the human race, "[u]nequal to the task ... / Whose greatest source of knowledge or of skill / Consists in reading, and in writing ill" (236ff).

The patriotic apostrophe to Britain, with which the poem concludes, can hardly gloss over the fact that the title of the poem and its programmatic idea of rising is constantly undermined by a predominant semantics of circularity. Besides the "circle of Britannia's sky" (28) with which he pays loyal homage to Britain at the beginning of the poem, the reader is faced with a plethora of circles and rings derived from different ancient languages: spheres (250; Greek ring); "charms" (267/299) in the old sense of a magic circle, periods (500; from the Greek *periodos*).

When, in the last lines, he wishes that bliss and peace may "encircle" Canada's shore "[t]ill empires rise and fall, on earth, no more" (559f), the reader, pondering over the adynaton, cannot help having qualms about its intrinsic meaning. As empires have risen and sunk since time immemorial, the implication is that Canada's circle of bliss and peace cannot in the end evade the threat of deterioration and decay. Corresponding to the contrastive structure of the whole poem, the idea of the rising village is inevitably linked with the image of the deserted and fallen village — a disturbing undercurrent of meaning, which all those self-assured propagators of novelty, emigration and colonial heroism like Thomas Carlyle's Professor Teufelsdrökh ignored, who, in 1836, in the novel *Sartor Resartus*, calls for new heroes to arise and lead the "superfluous masses" (Carlyle 175) abroad, to conquer and cultivate the untilled portions of the globe, among them "the Pampas and Savannas of America" (175).

The serious misgivings which crop up in Oliver Goldsmith's poem and which culminate in Susanna Moodie's apocalyptic description of Quebec and Montreal as areas depopulated and devastated by the "choleraplague" (30) are completely blotted out in British literary texts following in the wake of Dickens. The "almost ceaseless tolling of bells," the "mournful tale of woe and death" (30) which alternate in Moodie's account with Romantic evocations of a paradise regained ("a second Eden" [27]) have come to be replaced with images of hagiographic praise in Rudyard Kipling's poems at the turn of the century.

Kipling's poems must be interpreted both in the wider context of cultural reactions to the European *fin-de-siècle* movement and in contrast to Samuel Butler's sceptical voice in the poem "A Psalm of Montreal" (1878). Whereas the latter tries to draw the reader's

attention to the humdrum reality of Canadian commercial life painfully clashing with the beauty of ancient Europe materialized in several statues of Discoboli or Quoit-throwers (Crossley-Holland 371f), Kipling was convinced that Canada was both an apt counterfoil to the "ache of modernism"[13] and to the contagious atmosphere of decadence, amoralism, and uninhibited pleasure as it was displayed in the works of the late Victorians. All these phenomena were not only considered incompatible with the colonial 'burden' the white man had been called to shoulder; they were also regarded as conducive to the menacing tendency of 'letting-go' which Joseph Conrad warned of in his novels.

Both Conrad and Kipling were preoccupied with the idea of the jungle and chaos obliterating the accomplishments of civilization (Lessenich 199). But while Conrad's jungle inevitably proves to be victorious, Kipling is convinced that in the long run a system of allencompassing laws — symbolized by the chain imagery in *Kim* ("chainman" 118) — will prevail and destroy the twofold threat of decadence: the decadence of uncivilized people, "[h]alf devil and half child" (Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" 8) and the decadence of dandyish over-refinement in Europe.

While India with its vast dimensions, its sweltering heat, its plagues, and its cultural heterogeneity was Kipling's epitome of chaos and disintegration, for some time he focused his attention on Canada and contributed to the myth of the country's anti-decadent purity and germ-free cleanness. His admiration for the Canadian prairie is clothed in a language which, on the one hand, is a counterpoise to the decadent preference for semantic lavishness and which, on the other, is clearly erotic. The "treeless land" ("The Prairie [Canada]" 2) stretching for leagues everywhere, unimpeded by traces of old civilizations is characterised by an "empty plain," "a steely pond," and a "distance diamond-clear" (3). In this asyndetic enumeration we find epitomized the distorted view of Canada as a vast and empty country, but it also anticipates the longing of the Georgians for toughness, clarity, and *tabula rasa*. This can be witnessed in the poetry of Rupert Brooke, who in 1912 visited Canada only to be agitated at its unseizable virginity, and in 1914, one year prior to his untimely death, saw his war generation as "swimmers into cleanness leaping" ("1914 I. 'Peace"' 4).

The subsequent lines make it abundantly clear that this virginal country has undeniable erotic attractions for the speaker. While the

reference to the "low blue naked hills" (4) could be dismissed as a conventional metaphor for Canada's emptiness, the description of the riverside that not only entices the traveller to stay but even ties and knots every winding round his heart underscores the fact that the Canadian prairie can be imagined as a seductive and naked woman who voluptuously takes advantage of the beauty of her body. The inescapable and magical nature of her eroticism is then emphasized by words like "spell" and "charm," which are used in lines which assume the character of an admonition: "Take heed what spell the lightning weaves — what charm the echoes shape — / Or, bound among a million sheaves, your soul shall not escape" (13-14).

Although virginal in its emptiness and marked by a natural nudity, the Canadian landscape is successively anthropomorphized into a *femme fatale*, who, in contrast to the vast numbers of Salomes in *fin-de-siècle* culture, is less intent on working on the speaker's destruction than on offering him sexual gratification:

> Now I possess and am possessed of the land where I would be
> And the curve of half Earth's generous breast shall soothe
> and ravish me! (19-20)

The reader inevitably feels reminded of John Donne's "Holy Sonnet XIV," where the speaker begs to be ravished/raped by God. Without Donne's startling homoerotic overtones, Kipling's persona sees himself likewise in an ambivalent situation: like an infant he hopes to be soothed by the generous breast of Canada's maternity, and unlike a lover in patriarchal Victorian society, he is not reluctant to act both parts: the part of male possessor and the part of female possessed.

While England is seen as a mature matron who has borne many sons but, as she protests, whose "dugs are not dry," ("England's Answer" 7) Canada takes on the alluring shape of a curvaceous and desirous woman. Even in the poem "Our Lady of the Snows" (1897), Canada has not discarded all her erotic corporeality. The recurrent line "Said our Lady of the Snows" at the end of each stanza is highly reminscent of Swinburne's highly blasphemous poem "Dolores (Notre Dame des sept douleurs)" and the latter's provocative imitation of a prayer. The overall religious quality of the poem is, moreover, emphasized by lines which seem to refer to the *Song of Solomon* and visualize Canada as a *hortus conclusus* permitting or refusing access at

her will:

> ["] The gates are mine to open
> As the gates are mine to close
> And I set my house in order"
> Said Our Lady of the Snows. (5-8)

As the gates and doors of the gardens have always been charged with overt vaginal symbolism, at least since the *Roman de la rose*, the reader should not be amazed to find an erotic undercurrent in this poem with its otherwise strongly hagiographic or prayer-like character. But whereas the poem on the Canadian prairie shows the sexual union between the country and the speaker in a vein of euphoria, the Lady of the Snows stresses the aspect of soberness and reason in her solemn soliloquies:

> ["] Soberly under the White Man's law
> My white men go their ways.
> Not for the Gentiles' clamour —
> Insult or threat of blows —
> Bow we the knee to Baal." (11-15)

Both Moodie and Conrad prove to be alert to the alluring contagion of "going native;" the former talks of "honest Scotch labourers and mechanics from the vicinity of Edinburgh" who no sooner arrived in Canada than "they became infected by the [...] spirit of insubordination and misrule" (Moodie 21), and the latter gives us a warning in the shape of Kurtz who is drawn into the maelstrom of barbarity and eventually turns into a cannibal. In stark contrast to these threats of darkness, Kipling shows us a Canada willingly submitting to the "White Man's law" (11) and successfully staving off any temptation to worship idols and false deities. What is striking in this context is that Kipling refers to the opponents of the White Man's law as gentiles.[14] Derived from the Hebrew word "goim" and denoting someone not Jewish, the word in Kipling's poem is a clear indication that he saw Canada via Britain as Israel's legitimate inheritor and its people as God's Own Chosen People singled out by prosperity and success. At the core of this line is the Anglo-Israeli parallel, based on the ludicruous etymology of British as Hebrew "ish-Brit" (= man of the

covenant) which can be traced back to the sixteenth-century theory of the British as the ethnic descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel (Lessenich 202). This tenuous theory confirmed Kipling in his belief that the immaculate territory of Canada had to be protected from illegal colonizers and desecrators — foremost from the Germans, from the Huns –, who strove to destabilize the British Empire.

Thus, at the end of the poem, Canada, the westernmost madonna of the Empire, even proves to be militant in her loyalty to the heritage of the mother country:

> ["]They that are wise may follow
> Ere the world's war-trumpet blows,
> But I — I am first in the battle"
> Said our Lady of the Snows. (37-40)

With the image of Canada as a religious fighter against the lawless breeds of heathens, nineteenth-century "Canada mania" reached its apex. While the Canadian writers Oliver Goldsmith junior and Susanna Moodie, were hesitant in their praise of the country's identity, the British authors from Dickens or Marryat (*Settlers in Canada*. *Written for Young People* [1844]) to Kipling tended to be overenthusiastic and thus contributed to a warped image of Canada, which derives its preternatural splendour from the Victorians' disappointment and disgust at the Americans' apostasy from the British Empire. Convinced of the fact that — as Oscar Wilde mockingly put it — "the youth of America is their oldest tradition" (Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*, I 239), the British were all too ready to project their dreams of youth, cleanness, virginity, and virtue onto Canada and thereby sought to give Canada an identity which until today writers and artists have been trying to rectify and to give a genuine shape of their own.

Endnotes

[1] In *The Citizen of the World*, Goldsmith warns his contemporaries of seeing the emigrants as refuse: "This refuse is composed of the laborious and enterprising […] the sinews of the people." *Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1966), II, 75.

[2] In what way America was the country on which the Romantics focused their hopes can be seen not only in Chateaubriand's *Atala*, but also in Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (IV, 861-63), where the narrator eulogizes the spirit of Freedom in America: "Deep in the unpruned forest, 'midst the roar / Of cataracts,

where nursing Nature smiled / On infant Washington" *The Complete Poetical Works* II, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1980), 156.

[3] Virginia derives its name from Queen Elizabeth I who is often represented as Diana Cynthia, the virgin queen.

[4] Smollett's and Dickens's travelogues (and this is also true of Dickens's 1844 *Pictures from Italy*) follow a tradition which is at variance with Laurence Sterne's sentimental journeys. The figure of Smelfungus whom Sterne models on Smollett takes every opportunity to castigate the foreign country's mores and pits them against his patriotically warped notion of Britain. The sentimental traveller, by contrast, is more interested in details which trigger off chains of associations and sentiments. See also Norbert Lennartz, "Charles Dickens Abroad: the Victorian Smelfungus and the Genre of the Un-Sentimental Journey" *Dickens Quarterly* (forthcoming).

[5] For the wider and diversified context and the emergent concept of Englishness in the 19th century, see Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified, Manners and Character 1650-1850* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

[6] Frances Trollope's description of the American way of life — especially the Americans' eating habits, their large evening parties, in which people eat "inconceivable quantities of cake, ice and pickled oysters and […] shew half their revenue in silks and satins" (299) and the country's mercantilism, "this universal pursuit of money" (301) — is recaptured and elaborated upon by Dickens. While Trollope tries to be suggestive when she comments on the discrepancy between the Americans' "general stiffness of manner" (136) and their grossness, Dickens is not reluctant to pinpoint their conspicuous lack of civilization.

[7] Shakespearean dramas teem with ignoble savages — Moors, Egyptians, Caliban-like monsters — who were generally seen as descendants of the devil. After a spell of sentimental tolerance in Romanticism, the ignoble savage reappears in Victorian and twentieth-century literature.

[8] The "dozen houses" that purportedly seem to make up Cairo stand in marked contrast to the Edenic hopes that both Jim, the slave longing for freedom, and the British invested the place with. See Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, ed. Peter Coveney (London: Penguin, 2003), 144.

[9] For America as a vast *locus terribilis*, see the subsequent passage in *Martin Chuzzlewit*: "A flat morass, bestrewn with fallen timber; a marsh which the good growth of the earth seemed to have been wrecked and cast away, that from its decomposing ashes vile and ugly things might rise; where the very trees took the aspect of huge weeds, begotten of the slime from which they sprung, by the hot sun that burnt them up; where fatal maladies, seeking whom they might infect, came forth, at night, in misty shapes, and creeping out upon the water, hunted them like spectres until day; where even the blessed sun, shining down on festering elements of corruption and disease, became a horror" (375).

[10] See Jerome H. Buckley who refers in his book *The Victorian Temper* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge UP, 1951) to Charles Kingsley, George Meredith, and others to exemplify the Victorian idea of conversion.

[11] In the George Inn at Millcote, there is, next to a print of George III, "a representation of the death of Wolfe," *Jane Eyre*, 108.

[12] Oliver Goldsmith, "Of Quadrupedes in General and their Way of Living." *Collected Works* V, 238.

[13] The term is taken from Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 124.

[14] See Also Kipling's famous "Recessional" (1897), where he speaks of "boastings [such] as the Gentiles use" (21). *Definitive Edition*, 328f.

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Oslo by Bertrand Gervais: *L'américanité* as Repatriation

Svante Lindberg

In this paper, I will examine the geographic movements of the main character and first person narrator, Mitchell Awry, Bertrand Gervais's *Oslo* (1999), from his native Denver to the francophone metropolis of Montréal, Canada. My prime concern will be to focus on the transcultural space negotiated by the protagonist and on the text's *américanité*, a phenomenon in the Québec novel of which this text is an interesting example. I will follow the suggestion of Pierre Nepveu (1989) and use the word *transculture* as a way of examining the problematic relationship to "Here." The term *américanité* has been used in several ways,[1] and I will mainly concentrate on the American aspects of Québec culture itself and on the link between Québec literature and other literatures of the American continent, a question which has been examined by Nepveu (1998 26-28) and Morency (1994). The issues of fatherhood, the past, the Others and on territory as an image reflecting personal development will be seen as intertwined with a certain change of focus as far as the notion of Here is concerned in recent Québec novels.

The protagonist was born in Denver, Colorado where he has been brought up by his grandmother, after having been abandoned at birth by his mother, a woman who herself was abandoned by the protagonist's father, an ex-Québecois who leads a half-criminal life as a vagabond. After a childhood characterized by this absence and by the muteness of his grandmother regarding the past, Mitchell decides to flee his home at the age of eighteen. This departure seems closely connected to his will to write and is a search for himself and his own contours. He chooses Montréal as his destination after having glanced at a map of North America and a long coach trip takes its beginning. Upon putting his feet on the ground of the Québec metropolis, he experiences novelty and familiarity at the same time. The city immediately appears to him as Home: "[…] en écoutant mes premiers mots de français, mes premières phrases étrangères, une musique que je ne connaissais pas, je me suis senti purifié. Je serais ici chez moi" (Gervais 14). Knowing Mitchell's background, one can look upon this Home[2] as associated with repressed fatherhood, a link that is confirmed by the fact that the protagonist says to himself that once in

Montreal, he will recuperate a lost "paternal language" (14).

In Montréal, Mitchell settles in an apartment which is the former home of a family of dwarves[3] who earned their living by opening their home, called *The Palace of Dwarfs*, to tourists. However, times having changed, nobody is interested in visiting a home of dwarves any longer and the owners have decided to sublet the apartment. Adjacent to the museum-apartment, there is also a "dolls' hospital" where broken dolls are repaired. In the apartment, everything has minuscule dimensions, except Jeannes's room, the daughter and only family member who is not a dwarf. When Mitchell settles in the apartment, he insists that everything keep its normal proportions, a condition which he judges essential to his writing project in Montreal. This means that Mitchell's self-conception will be determined by his relative size; he is a giant in this miniature environment. This idea of relative "difference" will also apply to other traits of his character; his immigrant condition and his illness (his kidney problems oblige him to visit the hospital several times a week).

In the adjacent Parc La Fontaine, he makes friends with a group of stray persons. There's William, an old man who has problems with his legs, which will have to be amputated towards the end of the story, and Marianne, who is a shop assistant in a department store in the summer but who is paid to measure the amount of snow that falls from the sky during winter. The theme of the father presents itself again in the character of William whose son happens to live in the building behind that of Mitchell. He wants very much to get to know his neighbour in order to repair their broken relationship, perhaps in order to provide himself with a semblance of missing emotional structure. He also believes this act will facilitate his own writing. But, in spite of the fact that he does succeed in getting into contact with his neighbour, the pages of his copy book remain clean and white. His friendship with Simon evolves into real passion and becomes almost an obsession when he discovers the small opening of a covered window at the back of his wardrobe. From here he is able to see through the window of his neighbour's house and is thus afforded secret access to the privacy of his new friend. From his hidden position in the wardrobe, he will from now on be involved in a secret act of voyeurism, the intensity of which becomes even stronger on those nights when Simon is visited by his girl-friend, France. Simon also becomes the image of a man who has

managed to liberate himself from the grip of his father, an achievement that Mitchell himself seems to have gone to Montreal to come to terms with. His opinion of his neighbour as a role model is thus emphasized:

> Il n'a fait aucun geste déplacé, ses bras sont restés croisés sur son torse, mais ses jambs étaient droites et écartées, ses pieds à plat sur le tapis, son menton relevé. Il ne craignait pas son propre regard. Voilà, me suis-je dit, dans la pénombre de ma garde-robe, c'est ainsi que se comporte un homme, un fils libéré de l'emprise de son père. (55)

The idea of an absent and yet influential fatherhood is also to be found in the life of Marianne, a woman whose dead father has paid a company to send her a greeting card, reminding her that they will soon be together again, together with a cheque on all the feast days of the year.

The paternity theme also works on a socio-cultural level. It is evoked, for example, by the presence of the Québec motto and devis of the Parti Québécois "Je me souviens." This idea of a Québec "nation"[4] is in itself a sort of fatherhood and is thematized in some parts of the novel. First there is the ironic evocation of the French fatherhood by the presence of the sculpture dedicated to Charles de Gaulle near the Notre-Dame Hospital (Gervais 85). Then there is the presence of another father figure in the statue in the urban *montréalais* landscape, that of Félix Leclerc:[5]

> Nous nous sommes approchés de la statue de Félix Leclerc, indifférents à la fraîcheur de la nuit quand tout se condense en fines gouttelettes, les désirs, les souvenirs, les manques, qui se déposent sur le sol sans rien ébruiter. Sur son piédestal, Félix mesurait près de dix pieds. On aurait dit un être vivant, avec son manteau sur l'épaule, sa main sur une hanche, sa tête baissée et ses cheveux défaits. Il ne manquait qu'un peu de mouvement. (127)

In my reading, de Gaulle and Leclerc are to be seen as pedagogic symbols of the nation in the sense described by Homi Bhabha,[6] a status that is subject to irony or degraded and which is shown, for example, by the fact that the statue of Leclerc has been vandalized:

> De nombreux graffitis avaient été griffonnés sur le béton. Des noms de jeunes, des signes de paix, d'obscurs hiéroglyphes. Il s'est rendu

> ensuite au présentoir, où il a lu en riant l'inscription. "Félix, notre Moïse québécois, a été coulé en bronze, a-t-il déclaré. Notre père putatif est creux! Il n'y a que du vide dedans. Du vide… Du bronze et de l'air." (127)

The idea of paternity is also applicable on yet another socio-cultural level, namely that of the role of francophone culture in North America. This question is illustrated by the character of Mitchell himself as a man who is the fruit of an illegitimate Anglo-Franco union in the past and an orphan in the present. The return of Mitchell to the land of his forefathers is a sort of repatriation, which suggests the need to further scrutinize the concept and perhaps forward a redefinition of the concept of border in the American space.

The geographical distance between "American" space and "Québecois" space is closely connected to the evolution of the main character of the novel. The time spent in Denver becomes the image of a fixed story, whereas the time in Montréal will appear as conducive to new writing and to a transformation. The novel exposes a close connection between the time spent in Montréal and the activity of writing on the one hand, and the questions of fatherhood and belonging on the other. This connection is suggested for example by the themes of blood (Mitchell suffers from a serious kidney problem) and of ink (Mitchell's strongest wish is to write his own story in Montréal), a substance that evokes the question of language and subsequently that of national belonging. The novel, then, tells the story of how the sick blood is metamorphosed and not only cured but changed into the ink of the story which can formulate the protagonist's past. The paternity theme can thus be said to operate on a personal thematic level and on a socio-cultural and historical one, which re-enforces the interdependence between territory and subjectivity.

Formulating the fixed and mute past

Since muteness had characterized Mitchell's life in Denver, he had formulated a whole mythology around his origins, according to which his father was a pilot who had died in combat while his mother had died upon childbirth. In Denver, he had also built his friendship with the boy Oslo on the basis of this myth of origin. However, one day Oslo stopped believing his story, an event which caused an angry conversation, a fight, and eventually the death of Oslo. This was the

reason behind Mitchell's American traumatism, and not before his friendship with Simon will he be able to formulate this experience. Having tried to avoid Simon's questions and having persisted in telling his untrue myth once again, he finally begins to express himself, provoked by the awareness that Simon seems to see through him: "Simon ne m'a pas cru. Quelque chose dans mon ton avait sonné faux. Mes reins avaient dû parler malgré moi et laisser transparaître un soupçon de vérité" (Gervais 133). His decision to speak the truth coincides with the fact that the artist Simon has recently drawn the picture of his new friend, an act that has captured and created Michell's true face:

> Avec ses croquis, Simon s'est approprié plus que mes traits, il a mis la main sur mon âme, son principe, ce deuil qui me consume. Et les mots sont finalement sortis de ma bouche. J'ai révélé ce secret qui avait empoisonné mon enfance et qui avait atteint jusqu'à mes reins. (134)

This creation of his true lines, allows Mitchell to address the trauma from the past in words in all its terror:

> Sur les rails, comme d'habitude, j'avais voulu inventer une nouvelle histoire sur mon père, dont les faits d'armes imaginaires avaient meublé nos escapades aux limites de la ville. Mais cette fois-là, Oslo ne m'avait pas écouté. Il m'avait toisé et traité de menteur. Son père lui avait raconté la vérité. Il avait rétabli les faits. […] Je n'étais pas le fils d'un aviateur mort au combat, mais l'enfant illégitime d'un malfaiteur. Cela changeait tout. (135-136)

This personal trauma is reflected by the traumatic cruelty of nature, symbolized by the presence of a wolf waiting to devour Oslo's body:

> Le front appuyé sur l'écorce, j'avais aperçu un loup. Les yeux jaunes et perçants d'un loup qui me dévisageait. Il était là, tapi dans l'ombre du sous-bois, la tête penchée, le regard précis. Il attendait. Nous avions dû le déranger dans son repas. Il s'était retiré quand nous nous étions approchés du corps d'Oslo. Il n'était pas parti. […] Ce loup avait commence à se gaver d'Oslo. Il avait déjà mangé de sa chair, de ses entrailles. J'aurais voulu mourir. À tout le moins crier, pour avertir le policier, mais j'étais devenu muet. (134)

Simon has thus broken the traumatizing concordance[7] of the story of Mitchell's past. But the character of Simon is also to be seen in terms of a parallel relationship with Oslo, the friend from the past. These two friends of Mitchell's have a relationship to Mitchell's personal truth which is significant. Oslo is the one who delivered the truth to Mitchell in the past, thus causing confusion and an act of violence. If the truth delivered by Oslo in the past was an insult causing an act of repression, Simon is the one who makes Mitchell speak the real truth through an act of empathy. Or, described in terms of territory: Oslo is part of the American traumatism of the protagonist, whereas Simon is part of his beneficial meeting with the *montréalais* territory in an unstable present. It is in this encounter that Mitchell's personal truth of American territory can be told, namely a story of the orphan, of muteness, repression, myth and of the elaboration of an untrue story. Since this personal truth is conveyed in terms of landscape and geography, which gives it an allegorical dimension, it also points towards a more general truth.

Perspective play and gestual otherness

Changing perspectives, fluidity, and an importance attached to gestures are three characteristics of the main characters in *Oslo.* The play of perspective can be perceived in the recurrent manipulation of distance and proximity in the text, discernable for example in the act of voyeurism performed by Mitchell. From his position at the window, he will be close to and distant from his friend at the same time: "L'appartement de Simon ne lui était, par contre, d'aucune utilité. Il ne le protégeait pas mais, par l'entremise de mon oeil-de-boeuf, me le donnait à voir dans sa plus grande intimité, celle qu'il ne partageait même pas avec France, son amie" (68). And in the relationship between Mitchell and Marianne, the idea of a tension between distance and proximity returnes in the tattoos on the body of Marianne. Mitchell started to take an interest in them from a distance and was then repelled by them before coming to an understanding of them as beautiful:

> À partir de cette nuit-là, le corps de Marianne s'est mis à hanter mes rêves avec insistance. Quand elle avait montré à William ses tatous, j'avais ressenti un léger malaise. La peau, de proche, est faite de sillons, de pores, d'une multitude d'accidents, de poils qui poussent

> dans tous les sens et qui se croisent et se plient, de veines qui transparaissent, et les tatous de Marianne, même s'ils prenaient la forme d'un papillon ou d'une rose, étaient composés de lignes plus ou moins bien tracées. Le bleu ne ressemblait pas vraiment à du bleu et le rouge n'était pas plus franc, des ersatz de couleurs, gravés dans la peau à coup d'aiguilles sales, porteuses de virus et de maladies. Mais, vu de loin et par la suite en rêve, ses tatous se sont transformés en signes d'une grande pureté. Débarrassés de toute cette peau, portés par un être immatériel, puisque fait de mes fantasmes, ils sont devenus des talismans sans prix. Et le désir qu'ils avaient généré chez Simon a déclenché cette modification, il a décollé les tatous de leur support, pour les graver en lettres écarlates dans mon imaginaire. (90)

The description of Marianne's skin resembles that of a landscape that only acquires its real significance for Mitchell from a distance, together with the knowledge that this skin had previously aroused the interest of Simon, Mitchell's model of a man. It is only then that its *scarlet letters*[8] can communicate their real meaning to him.

According to my reading of the novel, the issue of Otherness is most prominently expressed in terms of gestuality. It is by the signifying and temporary gesture that the significant Others, who only temporarily occupy a place in Mitchell's life, are able to play their roles. This is apparent, for example, in the love scene in the Parc La Fontaine, which is Mitchell's introduction to sensual pleasure (something that he can only realise after having observed the love scene between Simon and France through his hidden window). After his encounter with Marianne in the park he states the following:

> Marianne, comme je l'espérais, venait de changer le cours de ma vie. Je n'avais pas eu droit à une étreinte complète, à cette passion qui déplace les montagnes, mais le peu qu'elle m'avait donné à l'instant suffisait à rétablir le cours des choses, à me remettre sur les rails. J'avais enfin droit à une réponse. J'étais un homme. (144)

William and Simon are the providers of other significant gestures, namely those of the father and the son. Towards the end of the novel, when the sick William visits Mitchell's house, we find ourselves before this scene:

> Je me suis approché de sa tête, je l'ai soulevée avec mes mains, pour déplacer les oreillers, et d'un geste précis j'ai essuyé son front. J'ai agi sans aucune hésitation, comme si j'avais toujours su comment faire. D'une façon naturelle, sans aucune arrière-pensée. Ça devait faire partie de ces choses qui existent entre un fils et son père. Cette spontanéité m'a dépassé. Elle déjouait, en fait, toutes mes attentes. Je me suis endormi à côté de lui, pelotonné dans un coin du lit. (171-172)

But the gestures are characterized by their fugacity and the harmonious picture of Mitchell and William as father and son is quickly disturbed by the evocation of William as an old man under the threat of death. However, the limited durability of human relationships is of secondary importance. The main emphasis is on the role of the imagination of the person experiencing the gesture (Mitchell in this case), and the novel displays a number of gestures awaiting their interpretation in a sort of internal hermeneutics typical of Mitchell's stay in Montréal. An example is the voyeurism: Mitchell does not have a full view of the bedroom of his neighbour, and is compelled to complete the blanks in the love scene between Simon and France that he partly witnesses. And as far as William is concerned, we learn that his amputated legs will be replaced by imaginary ones ("des membres fantômes") in his mind (32).

The emotional integration of the gestures performed by Simon, William, and Marianne have a curing and reconstituting effect which I believe can be explained by the fact that Mitchell has confidence in these gestures. Once integrated, the gesture in question seems to stimulate reproduction in a creative act which is less imitation than new subjective creation. This attitude towards the gesture is something that Mitchell has learnt from Simon in his artistic work as a painter:

> Moi qui m'invente des rituels infinis, des séances de méditation et des exercices de réchauffement, un recueillement inspiré des arts martiaux, je ne parviens jamais à faire le vide et á me mettre à écrire. Les distractions l'emportent sur l'application et mes pages restent blanches et insignifiantes. En coupant court aux préparatifs et en passant à l'acte sans détour, Simon m'a enseigné dès ce premier soir que je devais me débarrasser de ces préambules stériles. Une véritable leçon des choses. (54)

As I have stated, the subjective interpretation of the gestures is partly independent of their context giving them an aspect of discontinuity. What matters are their expression and their energy which will enable the protagonist to incorporate their semiotic value. It is this symbolic value that will provide the symbolic structure necessary for the rectification of the protagonist's story, a story which will take place in Montréal and which will involve re-interiorising the experience structures[9] of, precisely, a father, a son, and a female lover. Or, as Mitchell concludes himself, upon peeping at the love scene between France and Simon:

> […] l'irruption de Simon dans ma vie avait tout chambardé. L'oeil-de-boeuf m'avait révélé un univers de désir et de corps, de rituels et de passions. Et toutes ces questions qui étaient trop longtemps restées irrésoulues avaient commencé à trouver des réponses. (140)

And when Simon wants to paint the portrait of his friend, this is a gesture of authentic vision which also strengthens Simon's identity: "Pour la première fois de ma vie, un regard créateur se portrait sur moi" (109). The act of painting is a gesture of truth not a creation of illusions, it is something that unites illusion and reality and that captures Mitchell's true lines:

> [Simon] isolait un objet, en faisait une ébauche et passait au suivant. Il ne se donnait pas le temps de réfléchir ou de mesurer. Il ne recherchait pas d'angle particulier. Il captait l'essentiel en quelques coups de crayon, sans jamais effacer. Il avait un sens inné des proportions et traçait d'une main assurée les lignes de force des choses. Il restait debout, sa tablette rigide à la main, et parlait peu. (110)

It is in his role as a model for a painting that Mitchell takes his first step towards a reconstruction of his identity. He had already tried to achieve this by trying to forget (he used to spend time in the "fauteuil à l'oubli" in his house), but this only resulted in a confused state of *rêverie*. The real way of dissolving the trauma of childhood lies, on the contrary, in the assured gesture of his new friend, which provides the means for Mitchell to insert himself in a line of sameness[10] (*mêmeté*) where he finds his true face, and also to start living out his selfness

(*ipséité*) and talk about the reality of his past in the United States. *Oslo* is a *Bildungsroman* in the sense that it illustrates how its protagonist learns how to integrate the creative gestures of others.

The gradual dissolution of the memory of the trauma of the United States is illustrated by the theme of the wolf. A wolf had been present after the death of Oslo on the rails in Colorado, which has lead to Mitchell often imagining himself as such an animal: "Je m'imagine un être hybride, mi-animal, un loup sûrement, au pelage mange par les poux, rachitique" (69). And in the Parc La Fontaine, there are wolves in a cage: "[…] un mâle et trois femelles qui me donnaient la chair de poule. Ils vivaient dans une cage trop étroite qui les forçait à tourner en rond et à se replier dans une niche au grillage rouillé" (25). However, the importance of the wolves will diminish as the story is told, and Mitchell approaches the truth of himself. Eventually, we will learn that the animals in the park are gone: "[…] même les loups ne rôdaient plus dans leur cage. J'ai été étonné. Où étaient-ils parties? Du sang avait coulé, ils auraient dû être à l'affût" (148).

Towards a re-reading of human relationships

Just as there had been a fight between Oslo and Mitchell in the past in the United States, there is a fight between Simon and Mitchell in Montréal. The latter one is caused when discovering the reflection of Mitchell's face on the wall opposite his house one night, Simon finally discovers that he has been watched: "Ton visage venait de m'apparaître, à travers la fenêtre, sur le mur de l'autre côté de la ruelle. Il ne s'agissait pas d'une apparition floue; au contraire, ta face était nettement dessinée" (159). The realisation of this intrusion makes Simon furious and he beats his neighbour unconscious and then flees his own apartment. Much later when Mitchell wakes up, he finds himself in the wardrobe, the door of which has been blocked with furniture. This period of unconsciousness becomes a sort of turning point which only strengthens Mitchell in his determination to unite the father with his son, i.e. Simon and William.

Two weeks later, Simon actually succeeds in bringing William to his apartment, only to be faced with the fact that Simon is no longer present. Simon is not the only one who disappears from the provisional life that Mitchell has created in Montréal: William will go into hospital for his operation and Marianne will go on a trip around the world with

her new friend Xa. Thus, human relationships are evoked as being discontinuous, but this also goes for the spatial framework of the protagonist, i.e., the *Palace of Dwarves*. On its walls, there are no longer any portraits of dwarves, since Simon had torn them all down before leaving. Having been a magic place where Mitchell had taken his refuge, it is now revealed in its triviality, especially under the effect of William's gaze:

> La magie du Palais s'était évanouie au fur et à mesure que William l'avait visité. Avait-il pose ses yeux sur une antiquité, conservée jalousement par les propriétaires des lieux, elle était redevenue la vieille chose sans valeur qu'elle n'avait jamais cessé d'être. Il ne disait rien, mais son jugement était sévère. Et rien n'y résistait. Mon Palais était un musée défraîchi et sans vie. (170)

The only thing of beauty left is the portrait of Mitchell painted by Simon. In spite of the fact that the glass is broken, it is proof of sincerity and of gestural force: "Malgré l'état du cadre et les déchirures, on pouvait sentir la force du geste, l'assurance du regard. Le reste, mieux valait l'oublier" (170). Mitchell finally realises that he has not been able to re-unite father and son. However, he experiences some satisfaction by realising that William seems to have understood that this had been his sincere intention. He also gives William the portrait of himself and the novel ends on a positive note when Mitchell learns from the nurses at the hospital that his illness is not as serious as he thought and that he may be cured: "Malgré mes écarts de conduite et les reproches du corps médical, j'étais toujours en vie et sur la liste pour une greffe. J'aurais droit à un nouveau rein. Ce n'était qu'une question de temps" (173). It is here that the connection between blood, ink, and writing acquires its full significance. The protagonist learns that his blood is not "really dirty but tâché," (173-174). It was as if ink had been poured into it. And it is Mitchell's determination to put some order in the scribble that had been his life (174). In my reading, there is a coincidence of the needs of the kidneys, or the blood, and that of the voice. These two factors having been separated up till then, the novel now promises their fusion. This fusion is symbolized by the act of writing, a synthesis which integrates gesture and intention. It is from this new condition that a re-interpretation of space and human relationships can begin.

Spatial metaphors and personal development

The rectification of Mitchell's personal story in Montréal functions with the help of various spatial images some of which will be briefly examined here. According to Bertrand Gervais[11] himself, there is one fundamental spatial metaphor in the novel, namely the labyrinth of Minotaur. This is a symbol that would, for example, make the telephone cable used to communicate with Jeanne in the novel into the thread of Ariadne in the Greek myth. Learning how to master the territory of the labyrinth would also mean, again according to the author, learning how to master space.

As far as other spatial metaphors are concerned, I have already treated the question of a geographical space. The United States represents a fixed myth based on repression, whereas Montréal equals a dynamic space that invites reinterpretation. Mitchell's new domicile in Montréal is also important.[12] In the beginning, this place expresses the disequilibrium of the protagonist: the settling of a man of "normal size" in this Lilliputian palace becomes in itself an image of the disproportioned interior of the main character. A hint of the curing role of this palace is, however, given by the presence of the dolls' hospital adjacent to it. And the building has yet another characteristic, which is shown by the existence of one room which is different from the others, i.e. Jeanne's room, where everything is of normal size, since she is the only member of the family that used to live there who was not a dwarf. This room seems to stand for what the novel calls "normalcy" and the access to it and its former dweller is something that happens gradually, just like the disappearance of the wolves is a gradual development and will only come about when the protagonist has succeeded in expressing the trauma of his past. The encounter with Jeanne will also point towards Mitchell's own virtual normality, which is shown for example in the passage below:

> Et elle [Jeanne] découvrait un être presque normal, sans verrues ni difformités, portant des vêtements de tous les jours, elle qui avait refusé de s'habiller pour l'occasion et qui portrait un jean délavé et une chemise indienne aux manches bouffantes. (124)

This normalcy is however only suggested, although its virtuality can be perceived when Mitchell picks up the phone to speak to Jeanne at the end of the story.

The next spatial metaphor of essential importance is the Parc La Fontaine, which is first a kind of alternative territory where prostitutes meet, but also where the disparate existences that are to become Mitchell's new *montréalais* friends gather. Already the first time, Mitchell senses great affinity with the place: "La première fois que j'avais traversé le parc, j'ai su que je ne m'en éloignerais pas tant que je vivrais à Montréal" (25). But the park is also an area where people practise skating, a sport that Marianne has been engaged in. Her story of her experience while practising this sport sheds light on a particular conception of space that, according to my reading, is the crucial one in the novel:

> J'ai fait du patin avec eux, au début de l'été. La nuit, quand les sentiers se vident, il est possible de filer sans être dérangés jusqu'à ce que l'aube se lève. Après quelques heures de mouvement, un étrange phénomène se produit. Une forme d'hypnose. Une bulle se crée autour de nous. On perd la notion du temps, du lieu. Le parc devient une mer sans contour qu'on parcourt de long en large. Et quand le coeur atteint un certain rythme, on oublie le choc des patins contre le sol, pour ne plus penser qu'aux gestes mêmes de la course, les pieds qui se posent à intervalles réguliers, les bras qui suivent la cadence, le torse qui se projette vers l'avant, tout le corps qui s'anime; et on se métamorphose. On descend d'un cran, plus proche de nos instincts, de ce qui est animal en nous. Des prédateurs. Le plus étonnant, c'est que l'environnement lui-même se transforme. Comme si, en sillonnant le parc, on captait ce qui se cache sous sa surface. On voit réapparaître des arbres depuis longtemps coupés, des allées enfouies sous la pelouse. Le parc devient épais de toute son histoire, de tous ces êtres qui l'ont habité et le hantent encore. (128)

Under the influence of the energy liberated in the skaters' bodies, the park presents itself as a territory where past and present are juxtaposed and brought together in a sort of fluid union. It is also a territory characterized by its potential for metamorphosis[13] and transgression and for revealing unknown layers of consciousness. Furthermore, it is the place where the collective (the skaters) and the individual (the heartbeats of each skater) fuse and where it is possible for several temporal layers to coexist. In the plot of the novel, this new kind of territory represented by Montreal in contrast with the false personal

story that Mitchell used to tell of himself in the United States. But it also comes out in stark contrast to the hidden life of a deformed voyeur that Mitchell used to lead in his *Palace of the Dwarves*. And, of course, this new territory echoes the fugacity of the signifying gestures of the people who cross Mitchell's way in Montréal. And this instability will also become a characteristic of Mitchell himself. As we remember, his portrait was the only one left after the fight with Simon. However, the drawing will also prove to be subject to change in spite of its being an image of the real proportions of Mitchell's identity. Nothing is stable,[14] and Mitchell states:

> J'ai regardé le dessin et j'ai cru remarquer que ma figure commençait déjà à s'estomper, comme le Jardin des merveilles l'avait fait au Parc La Fontaine. Déjà, l'imprimé de la chemise s'était attenué et les traits de mon visage se dissipaient. Le passé ne reste pas stable. Sous la pression des événements, il s'étire pour adopter de nouvelles formes. Sous le regard de William, les contours du mien commençait déjà à se désagréger. (169)

Story, American territory and transcultural negotiation

Talking about the plot in *Oslo* as an example of *l'américanité* would mean telling the story of a transgression of a territorial frontier where the formulation of one's true life story, the inscription into a story about paternity, and the exploration of the filial condition are closely intertwined with the evocation of anglophone and francophone territory. The transgression between the two will appear as a narrative movement between one space characterized by silence and a fixed story of the past and a moving, dynamic present. Ricoeur's concepts of concordance and discordance can shed more light on this difference. Such a reading would evoke a story of the son of an exiled Francophone and the concordance is to be found in the muteness and trauma of the past in the United States, whereas the discordance is to be found in the meeting with the openness of the Montréal territory, its purifying language, its significant human relationships, and in the real formulation of the past that takes place there. It is in this meeting that one could talk about a transcultural negotiation of space. An important tension in this meeting is that between intention and intervention shown by the fact that while Mitchell really wants to forget his past, the real solution lies in the intervention in his life of the

other characters, particularly Simon's painting of Michell's portrait. In this sense, *Oslo* is the story of a synthesis and a reformulation and, on a socio-cultural level, of repatriation or return to the palimpsest of a previous ethnic condition evoked as a promise more than as a fact in the novel.

One can also translate the novel into a story of the play of forces. Another dynamics in the novel can be formulated by using Bhabha's idea of the production of power, reference, application, and capacity in order to seize the relationship between main character and the Other. In such a reading, the gestures are expressions of force because they have an impact on the protagonist's future life, whereas the Others are references, since they are models for the same future life. The education that Mitchell undergoes in Montréal can be seen as a kind of application, the main example being the love scene between Mitchell and Marianne in the park. The virtual possibility of a normal life towards the end would then be an example of capacity.

For the originally francophone Mitchell,[15] Québec appears not only as home but also as a territory out of tune with itself, examples of which are the vandalised monuments of Québec nationalism. But it is also territory open to semiotic redistribution and which is stuffed with meaning allowing the protagonist a re-reading and a re-formulation of his own position. The novel, having repatriated the truth of the past to Québec and both substituted American territory for Québec territory as well as juxtaposed the two, also raises questions about the legitimacy of borders, language, and identity not only in Québec but on the whole of the North American continent.

Endnotes

[1] See for example Gasquy-Resch (1994) and Chassay (1995).

[2] In her dissertation, Claudia Egerer (1997) has examined the conception of Home and Exile in theoretical and literary discourse (Homi Bhabha, Jacques Derrida, Edward Saïd, Louise Erdrich, J.M. Coetzee, and David Malouf).

[3] The dwarf and the child are recurrent metaphors of the Québec subject in many novels.

[4] Benedict Anderson describes the nation as "an imagined political community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (13).

[5] Félix Leclerc (1914-1988) was an influential Québecois folk singer, author, poet, and playwright.

[6] I have in mind the distinction between the *pedagogic*, or official, and *performative*, or individual and irregular, expressions of the nation as described by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994).

[7] In Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity, *concordance* means the unbroken chronological story of a subject whereas *discordance* is used to talk about what breaks this unbroken line, i.e. accidents, encounters with the Other, etc. (1990)

[8] Bertrand Gervais said in an interview on January 2, 2004, that Hawthorne is in fact a source of influence.

[9] Ricoeur (1990) talks about the past as conceived by the subject as an experiential structure or "structure de l'expérience."

[10] In Ricoeur, *mêmeté* expresses the stable aspects of identity, whereas *ipséité* is the changing subjective expression in a person or subject.

[11] Interview with the author.

[12] Inspired by Michel de Certeau, Józef Kwaterko (2001) makes the difference between *carte* and *parcours* when talking about the conception of space in contemporary urban Québécois novels.

[13] Sylvia Söderlind (1994) claims metamorphosis as a recurrent theme in contemporary Anglo-Canadian fiction.

[14] As Ashcroft et al. point out, *instability* and *hybridity* are two inevitable key issues in postcolonial literature (205).

[15] Having recently participated in the *American Council for Québec Studies*' conference in Québec City in November 2004, I was able to see the renewed interest in the situation of the so-called Franco-Americans in the United States.

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Leacock, Davies, and Their American Publishers

Carl Spadoni

In his ground-breaking study, *Authors and Audiences: Popular Fiction in the Early Twentieth Century*, the historian Clarence Karr charts the careers on the international stage of five popular authors of Canadian fiction — Ralph Connor, Robert Stead, Nellie McClung, L.M. Montgomery, and Arthur Stringer. The period of Karr's study is the 1890s through to the 1920s, what he refers to as the "golden age" of writing, when hard-cover fiction flourished in the English-speaking world. Karr's approach is from the perspective of the history of the book, an emerging and exciting discipline that focuses on the cultural impact of print on society in areas such as the book trade, publishing, authorship, and reading. For each author, he analyses the publishing record of books published in terms of the relationships forged with literary agents and publishers in Toronto, New York, and London. Quite remarkably, a small publisher such as the Westminster Company in Toronto, for example, managed to market Connor's books with American publishers, and then, after the First World War, McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, (later McClelland and Stewart) assumed this role. After protracted legal wrangling with her American publisher L.C. Page of Boston, Montgomery also found a happy home with McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, who thereafter became her Canadian publisher and acted as her agent in establishing contacts with the American publisher Frederick A. Stokes Company. A general theme of Karr's work is that each of these five authors struggled with Canadian identity, but ultimately, each author recognized that international success — the status of becoming a best-selling author — inevitably depends on strong links with foreign publishers.

In this paper, which explores and contrasts the careers of Stephen Leacock (1869-1944) and Robertson Davies (1913-1995) and their American literary connection, Karr's approach of the history of the book is the underlying methodology of analysis. Regardless of the post-modernist rebellion against the hegemony of authorship, for the historian, an author must be understood in the context of his time. Leacock and Davies are from different generations. Both achieved international fame. Leacock is from the same period as the authors studied by Karr, although Karr lumps Leacock with lesser well-known

Canadian authors, such as Basil King and Frank Packard, and adds mistakenly: "[…] their relevance as representatives of this Canadian cultural phenomenon is more limited."[1] At the outset, however, it should be asked to what extent Leacock and Davies fit into Karr's model of authors reaching out to foreign publishers in order to obtain international success. Davies belongs to that dynamic generation of Canadian writers when Canadian literature came of age during the centennial celebration of Canadian confederation, witnessing the emergence of an astonishing number of successful writers, such as Mordecai Richler, Margaret Atwood, and Margaret Laurence.

Despite the fact that Leacock and Davies belong to different generations of Canadian writers, there is a fraternal bond between them, so to speak. Their literary careers briefly overlap. Still prolific in spite of the infirmities of old age, Leacock was at the end of his career when Davies first made his mark with the publication of *Shakespeare's Boy Actors* (1939) and *Shakespeare for Young Players: A Junior Course* (1942). A decade later in the 1950s when Davies had great comic success with the diaries of Samuel Marchbanks and the frothy fiction of the Salterton trilogy, he was regarded by some critics as Leacock's worthy successor as a Canadian humorist. It was a label that Davies rejected as simplistic and one-dimensional. Davies's second novel, *Leaven of Malice* (1954), won the Leacock Medal of Humour, an honour that he initially treasured and then disdained as a designation bestowed by a lightweight bunch of literary amateurs. "The notion of an annual Leacock celebration," he told Claude Bissell, President of the University of Toronto, on 11 November 1969, referring to the Leacock annual dinner in Leacock's home town, Orillia, Ontario, "which would occupy the same place in the affections of Canadians as Burns Night does among the Scotch seems to me to be too absurd for discussion." Davies was in fact asked several times to write a biography of Leacock. "I have the greatest admiration for Leacock," he told R.W.W. Robertson, Clarke Irwin's literary editor, "but I never met him and never met anyone who knew him intimately; I have some ideas of my own about his work but they would not be suitable for expression in the kind of book which you describe."[2] In the end, Davies wrote several appreciations of Leacock's literary ability, the most prominent being his little book, *Stephen Leacock* (1970) in the New Canadian Library Canadian Writers series, and he gathered together two

anthologies of Leacock's humorous essays, *Feast of Stephen* (1970) and *The Penguin Stephen Leacock* (1981). The 1990 reprint of *Feast of Stephen* features a caricature on the front cover by Graham Pilsworth of Davies and Leacock shaking hands.

Stephen Leacock — humorist, professor, social critic, historian, biographer, and platform entertainer — had a long and fruitful association with the United States. Between 1899 and 1903 he completed his doctorate in political economy and political science at the University of Chicago. During the heyday of his career on the lecture circuit in the 1920s, he routinely visited American cities, such as Philadelphia, New York, or Boston, taking the train from Montreal in mid-week and returning there on the next Monday for his classes at McGill University. In spite of his deep-seated belief in Canada's imperial ties to the British Empire, he was very fond of Americans and American culture. If Americans were not part of the immediate Canadian family, they were cousins of a sort, he thought. Talk of Canadian annexation to the United States or the Americanization of Canada was simply fear-mongering, he claimed. The fact that the border between the two countries was undefended — at least during Leacock's day — was an obvious sign of mutual national respect and harmony. In *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912), Leacock's enduring, idyllic portrait of life in Canadian small towns, a major theme is the election in Missinaba County fought on the issue of free trade with the United States. Yet on America's national holiday, Leacock tells us, American flags jubilantly fly over half of the stores in the town: "Oh, it's the most American town imaginable is Mariposa — on the fourth of July."[3]

Leacock's first book, *Elements of Political Science* (1906), was a textbook published by the American publisher Houghton, Mifflin. Widely used at many universities, it went through three editions, and is sometimes considered to be his greatest commercial success. A few months after the textbook's publication, Leacock was bold enough to ask Houghton, Mifflin if the publisher would take on a book of his literary sketches. But Houghton, Mifflin declined publication, much to their regret once Leacock achieved international fame as a humorist less than a decade later. In 1910, Leacock arranged for the vanity publication of *Literary Lapses* in an edition of 3,000 copies. "It sold like hot pop corn," he later remarked.[4] The English publisher John Lane

The Bodley Head quickly recognized Leacock's potential and offered him a royalty of 15% on all copies sold of an expanded English edition. Lane raised the royalty to 20% a few years later. Other publishers, including Harper & Brothers, tried in vain to get the American rights to Leacock's books, but it was too late. Leacock saw a good thing with John Lane, and Lane celebrated Leacock's comic genius, promoting him as the Canadian Mark Twain. With extraordinary versatility, combining sparkling wit and incisive social commentary, Leacock produced his best work in the next several years: *Nonsense Novels* (1911), *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912), and *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914). Thereafter, he gathered together his comic sketches, sold to popular magazines on both sides of the Atlantic, for an annual anthology. In the United States, his stories appeared in *Vanity Fair*, *American Magazine*, *Hearst's Magazine*, *Harper's Magazine*, and many others. It was a lucrative way of writing, first getting paid for serial publication in North America and England, and then having a book of the same stories packaged before the reading public. Although he sometimes sent his gathered sketches to the John Lane Company in New York, John Lane in London was the mastermind behind Leacock's success, culminating in Leacock's exhilarating and exhausting lecture tour of Great Britain from October to December 1921 organized by Christy & Moore Agents Limited.

But the English domination and shaping of Leacock's literary stature and recognition would change in that year and in the succeeding year with a definite shift to America. It came about in two fundamental ways. In 1921 the Metropolitan Newspaper Service of New York began the syndication of Leacock's comic stories on a weekly basis. For more than a decade, he wrote a column of humour or revised previously published pieces for syndication. These appeared each Saturday in newspapers throughout North America and Great Britain and as far away as India and China. As a result, Leacock became a household name in the United States. Then, at the beginning of 1922, John Lane sold the American branch of his company to Dodd, Mead and Company. Under the terms of this purchase, Dodd, Mead took control of the American contracts of the John Lane Company. In February 1922, Frank Dodd visited Leacock in Montreal. Impressed by Dodd's enthusiasm and by the republication of his earlier books under the Dodd, Mead imprint, Leacock may have been wary at first to a

contractual commitment for future books, but he was soon convinced that his long-term interests were best served with a devoted American publisher and an equally enthusiastic American public. His reliance on the American literary agent Paul R. Reynolds, used primarily for serial publication, reinforced Leacock's turn toward the American market. In the second decade of the century, prior to the First World War, when Leacock demonstrated his prodigious literary talent, he travelled to England annually and was feted by Lane. His travels to England ceased in the mid-1920s. The Bodley Head continued to play a leading role in publishing Leacock's books in Great Britain even after John Lane's death in 1925. However, in the late 1920s with the onset of the Depression, Dodd, Mead asserted itself as Leacock's chief publisher. The two publishing companies often coordinated their plans together so that competing editions would appear in their respective countries within a few months of Leacock's submission of a manuscript, and occasionally, one publisher, particularly Dodd, Mead, would publish one of Leacock's books — *Laugh with Leacock* (1930), *Wet Wit & Dry Humour* (1931), *Hellements of Hickonomics* (1936), and *Laugh Parade* (1940), for example — and there would be no corresponding edition in the other country at all.

What about the Canadian dimension of Leacock's publishing career, one may ask? He proudly contributed to Canadian magazines and newspapers throughout his life. In the early part of his career, Canadian publishers such as Morang and Glasgow, Brook and Co. approached Leacock to write works of Canadian history. These works sold well in the Canadian market. But Leacock always treated Canadian publishers as subsidiary to his principal publishers in New York and London. The only separate Canadian edition of one of Leacock's books of humour prior to 1930 is *College Days*, published by S.B. Gundy in 1923.[5] Bibliographically speaking, all other Canadian publications of Leacock's books of humour are issues — that is to say, in terms of printing and production, they derive from American or English editions.

In 1925, Leacock forged a relationship with the Macmillan Company of Canada to publish theses of his graduate students in political economy. Financially, this publishing scheme was a losing proposition for both Leacock and Macmillan. Hugh Eayrs, the President of the Canadian branch of the Macmillans, hoped that such a

move would endear him to Leacock personally so that the Macmillan Company of Canada would become the Canadian publisher of Leacock's books of humour. He developed a close relationship with Leacock. Unfortunately, for Eayrs, McClelland and Stewart was the Canadian agent of Dodd, Mead. The Macmillans in Canada published several of Leacock's economic works, and found American and English publishers for them as well. In 1931, however, Leacock gave the Canadian rights to his previously published books to McClelland and Stewart. This was a bitter blow to Eayrs and ultimately spelled doom to his company's chances of representing Leacock in Canada. It also meant that foreign publishers, namely Dodd, Mead, would remain as the primary publisher of Leacock's major works.

Although Leacock employed Dodd, Mead as the American publisher of his annual anthologies of humour, in the 1930s he also wrote a series of biographies, economic works, and social commentary which were published by a variety of other American companies. Doubleday, Doran, for example, published *Charles Dickens* (1934), *The Greatest Pages of Charles Dickens* (1934), *The Greatest Pages of American Humor* (1936), and *Montreal: Seaport and City* (1942). Leacock was a prolific author, capable of working on many projects simultaneously in different genres. He wrote quickly and easily, often for money and sometimes simply because a magazine editor begged him and paid homage to him as the *great* Stephen Leacock. Newspapers and publishers besieged him for his opinion on practically every subject imaginable. On at least one occasion when a reporter went to his hotel room, he scribbled the entire interview, and handed it to the astonished reporter. He gladly donned the jester's mask of the literary humorist *par excellence*, but he also wanted recognition as a man of learning and letters — hence his forays into biography, history, social reform, and philosophical speculations about the nature of humour and creative writing.

In essence, Leacock conforms very much to Karr's model of the Canadian author who reaches out to foreign publishers in order to achieve international success. A founding member of the Canadian Authors Association, Leacock was adamant nonetheless that there was no such thing as a distinct Canadian literature. At the end of his active teaching career at McGill University, he was asked by a London newspaper if he would return home to mother England to live out his

remaining years. He chose proudly to stay in Canada. He referred to the Canadian language, manners, and education, the country's vast distances, its isolation, and climate. Oddly enough, one of his reasons for not returning to England was Canada's proximity to America: "I'd hate to be so far away from the United States," Leacock stated. "You see, with us it's second nature, part of our lives, to be near them. Every Sunday morning we read the New York funny papers, and all week we read about politics in Alabama and Louisiana […]."[6] For Leacock there was no conflict in being Canadian, wanting Canada to participate as an equal partner within the framework of the British Empire, but having Americans as best friends. According to James Steele, Leacock had a multi-national, cosmopolitan literary persona founded in Anglo-American imperialism.[7] Beverly Rasporich agrees with Steele's assessment, but places Leacock squarely within the venerable tradition of American humorists, such as Artemus Ward, Josh Billings, Bill Nye, and Mark Twain — a humorist acutely aware of the multiplicity of verbal tricks and the forms of literary burlesque, "British by heredity... American by association" but "Canadian by experience."[8]

Robertson Davies shares Leacock's British ancestry and outlook, although his sympathies are admittedly tinged with a love of Welsh folklore and culture. Unlike Leacock, however, at least in the first half of his career, Davies's primary publishers were Canadian. Even when he achieved international success as a novelist renowned for fantastic story telling and intellectual pyrotechnics, he coordinated the editing of his novels through a Canadian publisher. Until 1958 when Macmillan of Canada published *A Mixture of Frailties*, the last volume of the Salterton trilogy, Clarke Irwin was Davies's publisher. In one sense, Clarke Irwin was an odd choice for Davies since the publisher's area of expertise was the educational market rather than trade publishing and the literary scene. But Davies second book, *Shakespeare for Young Players: A Junior Course*, commissioned by Clarke Irwin in 1941, was aimed at high school students, and at the time W.H. Clarke, also president of Oxford University Press in Canada, was greatly respected among his peers. Although *Shakespeare for Young Players* was not published outside of Canada, it sold more than 93,000 copies, earned approximately $850 annually in royalties, and was reprinted nineteen times up to 1973.

Davies carried on a love-hate relationship with Clarke Irwin for

several decades. Clarke Irwin soon realized that Davies was not only ambitious and prolific, he was stubbornly convinced of his superior writing skills in many genres. An author firmly rooted in Canadian traditions, Davies wanted to be not just a great Canadian writer but a great writer. He regarded Clarke Irwin as staid, moralistic, unimaginative, and controlling. For their part, Clarke Irwin sometimes felt that Davies was simply too big for his own britches. In spite of the fact that Davies had worked for many years as the literary editor of *Saturday Night* and the editor of *Peterborough Examiner*, his experiences with Canadian magazines had not been positive. When R.W.W. Robertson, Clarke Irwin's editor, attempted to rekindle his contacts with Canadian magazines, Davies told him: "[…] I am proud enough to think that my writing, after it has been sifted through the intelligence of a Canadian magazine editor, is like coffee which has been strained through a dirty sock."[9]

Prior to the 1950s, Robertson Davies's burning ambition was to be a playwright and critic. "The theatre is my prime interest in life, and my eventual aim and hope is to be a playwright," he told W.H. Clarke on 17 September 1944.[10] His plays were very well received in Canada, and he used agents in Great Britain to market them but without success. None of the plays was published outside of Canada, however. His struggles to establish himself as a playwright are evident in at least five attempts to dramatize *Leaven of Malice*, the most disastrous being in 1960 on Broadway in the production of the Theatre Guild under the direction of Sir Tyrone Guthrie. His frustrations as a playwright are reflected in *Fortune, My Foe* (1949), a play about the role of the arts in Canada, the indifference of the public to the plight of artists, and the unfortunate loss of talented young Canadians to the United States. One of the leading characters in the play, Idris Rowlands, an English professor, states melodramatically: "God, how I have tried to love this country![…] I have given all I have to Canada — my love, then my hate, and now my bitter indifference. But this raw, frost-bitten country has worn me out, and its raw, frost-bitten people have numbed my heart."[11]

Davies's first major publication in the United States was *Tempest-Tost*, the first novel of the Salterton trilogy, published in 1952 by Rinehart. But Rinehart, Harcourt Brace, and the Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc. all declined publication of *Leaven of Malice*, the second volume of

the trilogy. It was at this point in July 1954 that Davies took matters in his own hand and employed Willis Kingsley Wing to act as his American agent. Clarke Irwin reluctantly agreed to allow Wing to find an American publisher of *Leaven of Malice*, and Wing did so immediately with Charles Scribner's Sons. Davies tried to reassure Clarke Irwin that Wing posed no threat to Clarke Irwin's role as his publisher. In fact, Wing's contacts and his understanding of American publishing caused a major rift with Clarke Irwin. Davies's loyalty to Clarke Irwin was tested severely during this period. W.H. Clarke died of a coronary thrombosis on 31 July 1955. Neither Irene Clarke nor Garrick I. Clarke had W.H. Clarke's acumen and experience as a publisher. They refused to allow Wing to act as Davies's agent in securing publication outside of Canada for *A Mixture of Frailties*, the third volume of the trilogy. In the final analysis, much to Davies's relief, Clarke Irwin decided not to publish *A Mixture of Frailties*. This was a turning-point in their relationship, releasing Davies to pursue publication of his books elsewhere. *Leaven of Malice* and *A Mixture of Frailties* sold reasonably well in the United States in editions of approximately 7,500 copies. Davies was quite troubled by the books on the best seller list in America. At the top of the list was Robert Ruark's *Something of Value* (1955), which Davies regarded as a very bad book, "undoubtedly extremely sensational" with "a great many scenes of horror." Davies suggested to G.I. Clarke on 21 July 1955 that if he was going to succeed in America, his next novel should be entitled *The Rape in the Slaughter House*.[12] In the 1950s he was very pessimistic about his chances of popular appeal with the American public.

Davies enjoyed a modest success in America when Alfred A. Knopf proposed to publish an anthology of his journalism and reviews from *Saturday Night*. Flattered by the overture and Knopf's recognition of his critical writing, Davies was not persuaded to rehash his columns from *Saturday Night*. The book, *A Voice from the Attic* (1960), was fresh and invigorating in its presentation, a new book entirely about critical appreciation in reading and writing. The title, taken from a quotation by the Canadian poet Patrick Anderson, refers to Canada as America's attic. Davies stated that his emphasis at times was Canadian in point of view. In fact, *A Voice from the Attic* is pure Davies — his love of finely crafted prose, books as physical objects, and good old-fashioned story telling.

Davies's breakthrough with the American public occurred in 1970 with the publication of *Fifth Business*, the first book of the Deptford trilogy. In comparison to his previous fiction, this novel constituted a major departure in narrative technique and conceptual approach. The book's opening scene recalls an incident that occurred on 27 December 1908 in which Mrs. Dempster is struck on the back of the head by an errant snowball thrown by Percy Boyd Staunton. Burroughs Mitchell of Charles Scribner's Sons declined publication on the grounds that the book would not sell a sufficient number of copies. Fortunately, the reaction of Corlies M. Smith of the Viking Press was quite different, thus beginning a long and satisfying association between Viking Press and Davies and his estate, made even more fruitful by gifted editors such as Elisabeth Sifton and by Viking's alignment in the 1980s with the Penguin Group. While the reviews in Canadian newspapers and journals of *Fifth Business* were mixed, the reception in America was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. On the day of publication, the review in the *New York Times* compared Davies's writing to that of Thomas Mann, one of Davies's heroes. By the end of the year, a month after publication, almost 8,000 copies had sold. In *The Manticore*, the second volume of the Deptford trilogy, the question of Percy Boyd Staunton's death haunts his son David who undergoes a course of Jungian therapy in Switzerland. *The Manticore* won the Governor General award for fiction, a sign of Davies's literary recognition in Canada. It sold more than a million copies in paperback in the United States — and resulted in large advances in royalties for Davies's future books. *Murther & Walking Spirits*, published by Viking in 1991, for example, received an advance royalty of $250,000 for the American edition.

In the last two decades of his life, Davies became a literary celebrity in America. He was awarded honorary degrees at the University of Rochester and the University of Santa Clara in 1983 and 1985 respectively, for example. The National Arts Club in New York City awarded him the Gold Medal of Honor for Literature on 24 February 1987. He gave many talks and went on promotional tours at major American cities.[13] It was not uncommon for a lecture hall to be filled with 1,000 people when he gave a reading or speech in the United States. In the last year of his life, on 12-18 January 1995, Davies went on a promotion book tour of *The Cunning Man.* He gave readings in New York, Boston, and Washington. He returned to Washington on

16-23 February 1995, went to the west coast of the United States, and then gave a final reading on 5-7 March 1995 at Pittsburgh. The American edition was published on 1 February 1995. Tired but rejuvenated by the public and critical reception, Davies reported to Douglas M. Gibson, his editor at McClelland and Stewart, on 28 February 1995: "As you may have seen, the book appears to be doing well in the States and has been very generously reviewed. I have been talking there to large audiences — 2,800 in Portland, Oregon — and enthusiasm that they express is strong."[14] By the end of the year, at the time of Davies's death, 81,569 copies in hardcover had sold in the United States.

The American public was mesmerized by Robertson Davies. They not only loved his writing, they were fascinated by his magnetic appearance and personality. Here was an author who wrote about human emotions, the mysteries of the mind, and elements of magic, but he also looked the part — an imposing figure of learning and wit with flowing hair, beard, and a mellifluous voice. In Canada, he also became a best-selling author and the grand old man of Canadian literature, but he was regarded with a measure of caution by Canadian critics. Was it the fact that his books were not sufficiently Canadian in outlook? "A lot of people complain that my novels aren't about Canada," Davies told the journalist Peter C. Newman. "I think they are, because I see Canada as a country torn between a very northern, rather extraordinary, mystical spirit which it fears and its desire to present itself as a Scotch banker. This makes for tension, and tension is the very stuff of art, plays, novels, the whole lot."[15] Unlike Leacock, Davies never gained a firm foothold in Great Britain, despite the fact that Anthony Burgess touted him as a worthy candidate for the Nobel Prize for literature[16] and *What's Bred in the Bone* and *The Cunning Man* were both nominated for the Booker Prize. Certainly he was greatly respected by British readers. Towards the end of his life, Davies embarked on book tours in Great Britain, but his books there had modest sales only. Indeed he probably had a greater following in Scandinavia and Germany than in Great Britain.

In the case of Davies, Clarence Karr's model of Canadian authorship — where a Canadian author is forced to reach out to foreign publishers in order to obtain international recognition — has partial explanatory value only. While it is true that Davies would never

have become a popular author internationally without American literary agents, huge sales in the United States and the enthusiastic reviews from American critics, his principal publishers remained chiefly in Toronto. Clarke Irwin controlled the world rights to Davies's early books. After he left the strictures of Clarke Irwin, Davies was published by Macmillan of Canada. Contracts were often negotiated separately with publishers in the United States and Great Britain. Although Macmillan of Canada did not recognize that *Fifth Business* would become a best seller, Macmillan's publisher John Gray saw great potential in Davies's literary abilities.[17] At Macmillan of Canada Davies enjoyed the confidence and sensitivity of two gifted editors, Ramsay Derry and Douglas M. Gibson. In the 1980s, Macmillan of Canada endured a number of takeovers, changed the direction of its publishing program from trade publishing to works in finance and business, and let Gibson leave the firm for its chief competitor McClelland and Stewart in 1982. Davies had no qualms about cutting his ties with Macmillan of Canada for McClelland and Stewart in the belief that an author's relationship with an editor was central and primal and more important than the public's perception of the credibility of a publisher's imprint.

Davies's most trusted editor was Gibson, whose first editorial assignment with Davies was in 1975 with *World of Wonders*, the third volume of the Deptford trilogy. With the exception of *The Lyre of Orpheus*, they worked together for twenty years as author and editor and publisher. Davies liked Gibson both personally and professionally — his Scottish background and urbane demeanour, his politeness and enthusiasm, his humaneness and generosity. In his reminiscences of Davies, Gibson states that it was many years into their relationship before he felt comfortable in addressing Davies as "Rob": "This was a man who had been publishing books literally before I was born and somehow, despite his endless courtesy and kindliness, it seemed presumptuous."[18] Davies was eager to have Gibson's positive reassurance and overall impressions of his work, but he was not always receptive to Gibson's specific criticisms. Gibson often coordinated the editorial work in Great Britain and the United States so that Davies received one set of sustained criticisms from his publishers. The list of criticisms would ordinarily run to a half a dozen pages single-spaced, questioning word usage, expressions, and grammar and pointing out

inconsistencies and lapses in the story-telling. Davies would spend a week or so mulling over these criticisms. It was not an exercise that he enjoyed, but he gave as good as he got; in other words he responded with a similar number of pages to his editors in remarks laced with a measure of caustic wit. His replies to criticisms are a mixture of concessions and rebuttals, rewriting and fine tuning, insertions of new material, and sometimes adamant refusals to make the requested changes.

"I am a Canadian author writing about Canada," Davies told Harold Raymond of Chatto and Windus on 28 July 1956 in response to the English publisher's criticisms of *Tempest-Tost*.[19] As a young man he was sometimes disillusioned by the lack of culture in his country, government indifference, tendencies towards literary parochialism, and indiscriminate taste among the reading public. In his career, he had reflected on the place of the arts in Canada over a period of fifty years. After Canada's Centennial, he was gratified to learn that there was a growing spirit of confidence and maturity among Canadian writers, that there were institutions that celebrated the arts in Canada, that there were courses taught in Canadian literature, and that Canadian writers were beginning to make their mark in a larger world. Feted by the American public, he was wary of American dominance of Canadian culture and vociferously opposed a free trade agreement with the Americans. But he was also suspicious of Canadian nationalism for its own sake, arguing that Canadian literature can only define itself with an internationalist context. "We are who we are," Davies stated in tautological fashion by way of answering the fundamental question of Canadian literary identity: "we are the civilized people of the northernmost portion of North America. And what we have to say is what mankind has always had to say in its literature. The themes are Love, War, and Death; our task is to write of those things in our own way, without fretting about originality or novelty, which are both delusions." For Davies, the originality of an author's canon is to be found in the author himself, not "in the mode of life and the racial makeup of the people he writes about […]."[20]

Karr's model of Canadian authorship was meant for the "golden age" of hard-cover fiction in the English-speaking world from the 1890s to the 1920s. Leacock conforms to Karr's model, whereas the case of Davies is more complex. Much had changed in publishing by

the time of Canada's Centennial in 1967. Canadian publishing had ceased to be a matter of agency-publishing. Indigenous Canadian publishers aspired to independence and sought contracts for their books internationally. Moreover, Canadian authors saw no conflict in being published in Canada and having a wider audience and being marketed abroad. It also became acceptable, and downright sexy, to have Canadian characters and settings in books without a changed literary venue to suit American or English readers. Lest this scenario appear overly optimistic, it should be remembered that in Canadian publishing, matters are never constant. In the last forty years of publishing in Canada, there has been little stability in the industry. The doomsday critics point to the dramatic effects of global publishing and takeovers of mainstream trade publishers — in the last several years, for example, the bankruptcy of Stoddart Publishing and General Distribution Services, the sale of CDG Books by John Wiley and Sons Canada, the virtual disappearance of Macmillan Canada after a century of publishing, and even the apparent Americanization of McClelland and Stewart by Random House Canada.[21] Despite the international success of authors such as Michael Ondaatje, Margaret Atwood, and Yann Martel, winners of the Mann Booker Prize in 1992, 2000, and 2002 respectively, the literary successors to Stephen Leacock and Robertson Davies will have to cope with this continually disturbing trend of crises in Canadian publishing. Meanwhile the United States of America — Canada's giant, extroverted neighbour to the south — relentlessly expands its empire and sphere of cultural influence, discarding the pieces of broken dreams from Canadian publishing houses.

Endnotes

[1] Clarence Karr, *Authors and Audiences: Popular Fiction in the Early Twentieth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2000) xi.

[2] file 30, vol. 43, file 13, vol. 44, and file 3, vol. 50, Davies fonds, Library and Archives Canada; file 4, box 104, Clarke Irwin fonds, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University Library. Quotations from unpublished writings of Robertson Davies are made with the permission of Pendragon Ink.

[3] Stephen Leacock, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, ed. Carl Spadoni (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Literary Text, 2002) 45.

[4] Written by Leacock in the inscribed copy of *Literary Lapses*, Friedman collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University Library.

[5] On 17 December 1923, B.W. Willett of The Bodley Head complained to Leacock that Gundy had not responded to The Bodley Head's offer to supply the dust jacket of the

Canadian publication of *College Days*. Willett alleged that Gundy held a grudge against The Bodley Head. See A40c of Carl Spadoni, *A Bibliography of Stephen Leacock* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1998).

[6] Stephen Leacock, "I'll Stay in Canada," *Funny Pieces: A Book of Random Sketches* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1936) 288.

[7] James Steele, "Imperial Cosmopolitanism, or the Partly Solved Riddle of Leacock's Multi-National Persona," David Staines, *Stephen Leacock: A Reappraisal* (Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1986) 59-68.

[8] Beverly Rasporich, "Stephen Leacock, Humorist: American by Association" in David Staines, *Stephen Leacock: A Reappraisal* 82.

[9] Davies to Robertson, 21 May 1949. File 21, box 103, Clarke Irwin fonds.

[10] File 5, box 103, Clarke Irwin fonds.

[11] Robertson Davies, *Fortune, My Foe* (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1949) 48.

[12] File 5, box 103, Clarke Irwin fonds.

[13] Here are some examples of speeches that Davies gave in the last decade of his life: "Problems of National Identity," PEN Conference, New York City, 15 January 1986.; "The Peeled Eye," Cosmos Club, Washington, D.C., 12 November 1993.; "Creativity in Old Age," Symposium, A View in Winter: The Art of Growing Old, Turner Auditorium, The Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, Baltimore, Maryland, 14 November 1993.; "An Unlikely Masterpiece" on Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City, 22 November 1993.; "How to Be a Collector without Having the Wealth of a J.P. Morgan," Pierpont Morgan Library, New York City, 9 May 1995.

[14] The letter to Gibson is located at the premises of McClelland and Stewart in Toronto.

[15] Peter C. Newman, "A Fond Farewell to 'Rob' Davies," *Macleans*, 18 December 1995, 40.

[16] Burgess, "Maple-Leaf Rabelais" (a review of *Rebel Angels*), *London Observer,* 4 April 1982, 33.

[17] The Macmillan Company of Canada engaged three readers. An anonymous reviewer (KAM) reported on 18 December 1969 that the book was "beautifully constructed […]. About two thirds of the way through it seemed to me to drag a little." The editor Ramsay Derry, however, praised the book for its "splendid flowing narrative" (19 December 1969). Gray found it "lacking in warmth and immediacy," but he concluded on 30 December 1969: "Given the standing of the author and the general quality of the book, there is no question of not publishing — we must sound enthusiastic." Gray sent Davies a congratulatory telegram on the same day: "BOOK MUCH ENJOYED MAILING SCRIPT LONDON AFTER HOLIDAY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU AND BRENDA." See file 9, box 247, file 5, box 305, and file 7, box 419, Macmillan Canada fonds, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University Library.

[18] Douglas Gibson, "Davies' Gift Enriched Us All," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 4 December 1995, C1.

[19] Robertson Davies, *Discoveries: Early Letters 1938-1975*, Judith Skeleton Grant, ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2002) 77.

[20] Robertson Davies, "Canadian Nationalism in Arts and Science: 1975" in *The Well-Tempered Critic: One Man's View of Theatre and Letters in Canada,* ed. Judith Skeleton Grant (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981) 266-7.

[21] See the last chapter of Roy MacSkimming, *The Perilous Trade: Publishing Canada's Writers* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2003).

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Reading a Bioregion on Zero Avenue

Laurence Ricou

> Zero worms its way
> between one and one
> and changes everything.
> Lorna Crozier, "Poem about Nothing"

Zero Avenue runs east and west in Surrey, British Columbia. The section I know best runs between border-crossings: the Pacific Truck Crossing at Blaine, Washington, and the Huntington Crossing thirty kilometres east. I usually drive it to avoid ninety-minute lineups, or the frenzied bumper-to-bumper race to the border on Interstate 5.

Zero Avenue is a narrow paved road with a fifty or sixty kilometres per hour speed limit. Most of the traffic, other than the occasional tractor pulling a manure spreader, travels eighty to ninety. On the north side, hobby farms with white rail fences: llamas lope; handmade signs announce goats for sale; a score of compact equestrian courses speak of class and connection. Just off the edge of the pavement, maybe two or three metres away, is the Canada-U.S. boundary. On the U.S. side, homes are relatively rare: abandoned outbuildings slump back into the earth; poplar and blackberry scrub edges the occasional swamp. On this nothing street, at least at eighty kilometres per hour, I detect little evidence that I am up against a major international boundary. Rarely, at the bottom of the ditch — a grey boundary marker. They seem to be placed randomly: two within five hundred metres of one another, then none visible for five kilometres. Mediating across this zero-invisible line should be easy: few impediments are evident. From this vantage point, if the U.S. were a landscape, it would be northern Manitoba wilderness; if Canada were a landscape, it would be rolling rural Vermont. Things are not as expected.

Crossing the line

From Thomas Haliburton to Jacques Poulin's *Volkswagen Blues*, it's easy to compile examples of Canadian and Québecois writers using U.S.-American models. Rudy Wiebe and Guy Vanderhaege story the big West where the buffalo roam. Tom King listens to both Oldman

and Tonto. Charles Olson and Robert Duncan teach a generation of poets, especially in Vancouver, to hear their own breathing and to honour the local.

What of the other way around? The examples are far less numerous. But what do they tell us — about culture and teaching and borders, and ecological necessities? Zero is the number "we didn't understand/at school" (Crozier 15). It seems to ask: how can an avenue be numberless? How can a street have no name? And such questions bring me to a crucial border-crossing poem:

> When the anthropologist asked the Kwakiutl
> for a map of their coast, they told him
> stories: Here? *Salmon gather*. Here?
> *Sea otter camps*. Here s*eal sleep*.
> Here we say *body covered with mouths*.
>
> How can a place have a name? A man,
> a woman may have a name, but they die.
> We are a story until we die.
> Then our names are dangerous.
> A place is a story happening many times. (*Places* 11)

Like Canadians, Kim Stafford, essayist, teacher, poet from Portland, Oregon, wonders a lot about place. He wants a map of the coast. A map that sings. The predecessors he listens to in "There are No Names but Stories" direct him to place not only or primarily as something on a map or postcard, or even as patches of topographical description, but as *story*.

I have read reasonably widely in the imaginative writing of what Michael Pyle, celebrating *winter*green, calls the "Maritime Northwest." I find many shared narratives — salmon, gold, and extraction of almost everything else — and common icons. So Ivan Doig (Idaho/ Washington) in a fine journal, *Winter Brothers,* that reinscribes James Swan's notebooks, imagines a culture of continental "edge-walkers," "border crossing" to a "coastal time of beginnings" (11). Swan has that "rare knack," he writes, "of looking at the coastal Indians as flesh and blood rather than the frontier's tribal rubble" (21). But oddly, it's very unusual — at least in my reading, and whatever the magnetism of the myth of California's California — to find writers on either side writing

back in this region. Few writers rewrite an antecedent text from the other side of the border.

So, Seattle poet Richard Hugo is surprising when he writes in the half-Canadian, half-U.S. archipelago between the mainland and Vancouver Island:

> . . . Between the San Juans
> blackfish roll their fins through tourist eyes.
> North and south the islands flare with names.
> Shafts of mainland try to break for Asia
> and in the Strait of Georgia, Birney trailed a seal. ("Orcas in the Eyes" 49)

Hugo here alludes to Earle Birney's poem "Gulf of Georgia" where the poet invites or challenges the reader to

> Come where the seal in a silver sway
> like the wind through grass
> goes blowing balloons behind him. (Birney 36)

At first Hugo's syntax makes Birney an afterthought, an add-on. But no, Hugo's "Orcas in the Eyes" is, read side by side with Birney, an homage, something of a "letter to Birney from the San Juans," a form Hugo often adopted. His flare of names echoes the "garrulous arabic" Birney finds written on the sand. Birney's "fluted lands" want to "break for Asia" in Hugo. And Hugo surely trails Birney's aphoristic ending:

> Trail the laggard fins of your flesh
> in the world's lost home
> and wash your mind of its landness. (Birney 36)

Kim Stafford's poem happens on the beyond-landness notion that place is a story. He asks us to think about places as *told*. A single sentence from Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy* sums up the challenge: "Try to imagine a culture where no one has ever 'looked up' anything" (31). If the map has no material existence, when you look up a place, zero is what you see. The place keeps moving. Many places may hold the same story simultaneously.

This sense of the fluidity and mobility of place insists itself when I contemplate U.S. writers and Canadian places. In the sweep of his

Whitmanesque "North American Sequence," in which the poet moves from dark lament to the exhilarating song of bobolink, bluebird, and sandblaster (204), Theodore Roethke pauses at Oyster River. The Canadian section of the poem (as it were) is the *meditation*. Watching the "ripple" and the "small stones," at Oyster River, some 20 kilometres north of Courtenay on Vancouver Island, the poet-observer makes his most precise inventory of bird-life and tidescape. In the stretched and whirring lines of his meditation comes a sense of fusion. He yearns — but, no, his desire knows more conviction: "I *would be* . . . with water," with the "waves, altered by sand-bars, beds of kelp, miscellaneous driftwood/Topped by cross-winds, tugged at by sinuous undercurrents" (190-91, my emphasis). When he finds himself, or remembers an experience of place, north of the border — only the title tells us the place name — he senses zero: "No sound . . . No violence./ Even the gulls quiet on the far rocks,/Silent" (190). The tongues are of water.

Are there other cultural mediators? Not hockey. Certainly not curling. Some — especially George Bowering — would argue for a border-crossing culture of baseball. Certainly, we can see border-crossing in popular culture: think of Shania Twain. Where Céline Dion meets Tammy Wynette the most pervasive and intimate — and nationally unaware — border-crossing occurs. Canada-U.S. border-crossing also occurs in sound and concrete poetry, and in work poetry, in Tom Wayman's corresponding with Bob Carson to define realistic poetry, and in transporting the idea of a poetry group made up of longshoreman to Vancouver.

Maybe the American writer chooses the Canadian outside deliberately to avoid the inside. A Canadian cultural reference, if not a specific text, allows the vantage of a (faintly familiar) periphery:

> Canada conducts an asymmetrical relationship with the United States, the American artist Allan Sekula has remarked, in which "Canada is typically neither here nor there" for Americans, and "the United States is both here and there" for Canadians. For many Americans, Canada is the *almost* familiar. (O'Brian 95)

I can't think of a William Stafford poem that uses Canadian writing as intertext. In all those poems, I assume I may have missed it. But Stafford did write a poem tersely relevant to mediating border. It's

titled "At the Un-National Monument along the Canadian Border." It's just 10 unevenly rhyming lines — something of an un-sonnet, without resolving couplets. A series of negatives and un-words, one per line. It sings, in this privative, uncelebrating way, a history and a site of no killing. From Roethke through D. J. Duncan to Zero Avenue — if this poem is set at the White Rock-Blaine Peace Arch, the Avenue is right there — recognize the echo, "unknown," "tame," "neglect" and "birds fly here without any sound" (Stafford 17).

What connects is what we used to call *natural*: "grass joined hands" and "wings across the open":

> . . . on this ground
> hallowed by neglect and an air so tame
> that people celebrate it by forgetting its name. (Stafford 17)

I think here of a nice zero-aware summary of the cross-border consciousness, although I recognize Stafford is urging a site where symmetry might not even be a consideration, since there is no *two*.

On Zero Avenue, I have said, the boundary seems like nothing. A border apparently without barriers has great appeal for smugglers. Along Zero Avenue is a hot zone for transporting marijuana and stronger drugs, for moving people, guns and money outside the law. In response, the U.S. has constructed an elaborate unseen, unfelt barrier — a system of heat, motion, and metal detectors and powerful cameras networked into a computerized observation post. Even better, Canadian and American enforcement agencies have joined in a patrol operation code-named *Eh Quo Vadis*: "Where you goin', eh?"

On Zero Avenue, you're likely to feel as if you're going nowhere — but if it's also a site of intense watchfulness and reckless smuggling, then I am the more attracted to it. I want to scrutinize all those clandestine attempts to slip a Canadian character into a U.S. book, to tell a U.S. story with a Canuck spin. I want to smuggle Kim Stafford into a Canadian lit. anthology and to secret Jack Hodgins into a Corvallis classroom.

Flora and fauna don't recognize state boundaries. You might say that the bobolink and the blackfish look for avenues, but for them national borders are zero.

Bioregion is most often defined by watershed — a river, its sources and tributaries, for example. (Hence, our limited examples here

flowing to washing and dissolving landness may gurgle in harmony.) Where does that origin and life-giving essence arise, and in what direction does it flow? That's the border-question for bioregion. Bioregion will also refer to a cluster of vegetal forms and climate: we might speak of the cedar-hemlock maritime bioregion. Soil, subsurface, and human use shape overlapping bioregions. You might say that bioregion is a story happening many times.

Bioregion will insist, for the human animal, that for us to flourish and grow we need to pay closer attention to *where* we are, to the subsurface and soil and flora and fauna within which we are enmeshed. And for the humanities teacher, we will say that language and story are the skeleton and support of that intricate interconnection. And it won't stop at the border.

Place might be an event, and hence, in the words of Gloria Cranmer Webster and Jay Powell in "Geography, Ethnobotany, and the Perspective of the Kwakwaka'wakw," an "occasion . . . not controlled by people, . . . having its own existence" (5). In Kim Stafford's poem, "they" becomes "we," and the events teach: a listener attending to this poem might wish, if asked to speak *to* or *at* a discussion circle, to listen to the story of a we.

When the acrobatic David James Duncan rewrites Dostoyevsky into the Pacific Northwest borderlands, the Karamazovs themselves turn out to be Kwakiutl. It's an anti-cold-war novel. "Why are we supposed to hate Russia?" it keeps asking (8). And when the war turns hot, brother Everett seeks quiet and no violence in Kwakiutl territory ... just fifty miles west of Victoria (in post-contact mapping). At first he is baffled and depressed by the desolation of logging and over-fishing. But soon he recognizes that town is a tribe, "'a bona fide bunch of modern-day hunter-gatherers ... muddling their way from post-industrial ruin back toward a more Kwakiutl way of life'" (398).

Everett has found himself, we might say, following Roethke, in a place of meditation, a distance that allows a quite altered sense of the North American sequence:

> letter from Everett/Shyashyakook/January/1971
>
> Dear Kade,
> I dreamed last night that I was watching TV — a hockey game, boring and violent as hell, bodies all over the ice, no subtlety,

> where's some baseball I'm thinking — when the broadcast was interrupted and a newscaster came on to say that an entire continent had been discovered.
> […]
> What sounds even stranger (though it seemed "normal" in the dream) was that the new continent was located inside North America — right between the United States and Canada. It had been there all along apparently, though no one had ever seen it, and somehow it had finally just appeared, had become accessible to us, right there where it had always been. . . . The eighth continent was almost a parallel North America, really. Yet familiarity bred no contempt: the places, names of places, cities and small towns, mountain ranges and natural wonders, regional quirks and dialects and on and on were utterly fresh and new.
> […]
> But now listen, Kade, because here's the great part: no sooner did I think this than I did wake up. And as I opened my eyes and found Natasha lying up against me and a new day dawning gray and wet and glorious outside, it dawned on me that my dream was no dream at all. It was perfectly real. That continent was this continent. I was, I am suddenly living in that gigantic, glorious, wounded place. (409-410)

David James Duncan's Everett, by going to Shyashyakook, finds an eighth continent. He follows the trail set out by Kim Stafford in "There are No Names but Stories." As Stafford explains in a prose version of the poem:

> The Kwakiutl people of the northwest coast had a habit in their naming. For them, a name was a story. We say "Vancouver," naming an island for a captain; we say "Victoria," naming a village for a queen. For them, a place-name would not be something that is, but something that happens. […] I want to fight my way back in time, where the new names have not yet pruned away stories with a chainsaw. I want to find new stories, and graft them living to the earth I love. ("Naming the Northwest" 3)

"There are No Names but Stories" serves as some kind of paradigm for us: it begins as a poem in one English (and one sense of what poetry is) and slides into/opts for a different kind of English. It tells us a story of bewilderment, of disbelief. It tries to translate, even though it doesn't

know the originating language. If place is a story, then place is a narrative of people doing things, and connecting to and disconnecting from other people, and animals and birds. It would be a story of feeding one's community, and about the community named ecosystem.

Two Languages

In *The Arbutus/Madrone Files*, I argued for border-crossing — and for bioregional vision. Here I want to extend this approach a little by asking how you *poem* the plants, by asking how the language-using animal gets outside of language. Or, how anthropod avoids anthropocentricism. The simple answer is that you *cannot*. The more complicated answer seeks to understand what you can do within that "cannot."

Emily Carr is a verby, energetically terse poet. But she doesn't *write* much about plants. Her most celebrated and memorable paintings are almost always about plants. True, it's seldom possible to pick out an identifiable species (arbutus being a significant exception), but corkscrewing trees, torquing underbrush and twisting ground litter (and cycling clouds and light) spiral her signature. And poets ever since (mostly women poets)have been trying to write what Carr saw, what Carr painted.

Georgia O'Keeffe, as imagined by Kate Braid, was terrified going into Emily's rainforest: "these woods creep, full of shape/and movement that captures me/alive in a too-female place" (Braid 70). In the "green conundrum" (97), few particular plants are identifiable. Florence McNeil's wan autobiography does find Emily conspiring with "Red Cedar":

> You and I whispering on
> canvas
> say CEDAR
>
> and it is made. (McNeil 57)

In his attentive and probing reflection on matters apparently quite remote from my question (how do you poem a plant?), Robert Bringhurst interrupts himself, seemingly, to wonder, "Are there other ways to think besides in language?" He rephrases the question in an assertion: "there are other languages to think in." And then, the line so

crucial I used it as the epigraph and touchstone of two courses I taught during 2004: "*Language is what something becomes when you think in it*" (163, my emphasis).

I'm bamboozled by this line. Because I don't know what to make of it, it keeps haunting me. If you think *in* a plant, let's say *in* the shrub *Gaultheria shallon*, then it "becomes" language. Bringhurst's proposition is fastidious here in using the most capacious and imprecise terms: "what," "something," "it," the amorphous second-person "you," and even the blankly copula forms "is" and "becomes." What could be lazy and hurried in most writers is meticulously calculated in Bringhurst. He obliges the reader, requires her, to fill in the blanks.

We might consider, in response, three poems that try plant-thinking. Mavis Jones' "Shallal" is language-centred botanics — that is it takes the *name*, and learns the plant through repeating its name. Jones's title announces this interest. In emphasizing the Salish (and typically U.S.) pronunciation with an uncommon spelling, she invites us to understand the salal shrub's native status. In writing in the twelfth-century, and intricately playful, form of the sestina, she links to a troubadorian commonness. Salal is an eco-network of sixes: seashells-cedar-berries-breath-night-shallal. The poem is a narrative of memory, anchored in a mother's storytelling, backed up to a mother's personal story (in stanzas three and four), then expressed directly (stanza five) and then allowed to breathe. The poem, that is, works through transpiration to a sacred apostrophe to salal's own inherent salal-ness.

The second example is cross-cultural. The remarkable young poet Danielle Lagah parodies Atwood, partly, in a regional alternative titled "The Trees in that Country." For Atwood in "The Animals in that Country," a characteristically placeless poem, "that country" is occupied by anthropomorphic cats and foxes and bulls and wolves. But in "this country," the animals resist any humanizing: they die, inelegantly, without identity (Atwood 2-3). Answering, Lagah sees flora, no fauna. And against Atwood's cerebral cool thinking, she hears an intimate, teasing, awkward conversation with her father: "Show me a tree, dad," she pleads (53). She has quite specific trees in mind: "Okanagan apple orchards," "West Coast Spruce and Oak." And she parses the tree into its parts ("tuber, trunk, rind, stump/leaf, flower/fruit." She even renames a tree to connect it to a specific

site)"Nanoose Arbutus." And *that* country here has a very specific, if doubled location on a map. It is, at once, Nanoose and Jalandhar. And Shakespeare's "tongues in trees" invert to a listening, for "words for trees in this tongue." To satisfy her dream of learning the names of trees in the Punjab, and learning Punjabi, she dreams a "Douglas Fir" and "grows [it] in the center of a Jalandhar field." Trees grow within two languages and must be always already translated from Punjabi to English.

This tongue reminds that poetry is a profound *listening*. One language tactic, as Brian Bartlett signals in introducing *Thinking and Singing*, is to use language to signal a pre-linguistic state, where human intelligence and its manifestation in a human language system is not paramount and supreme (9). Hence, in Jones's "Shallal" the soundscape is foregrounded as the rustle of *ssss* and *eehh* and *ththth* and *shsh*. The poem is a riff on the *child's* tongue-twister: "Sally sells seashells by the seashore." In lamenting that her father only taught her numbers, Lagah is calling attention to the innumerable, to the "mouth shifting to that/ other language" (Lagah 53). Bartlett notes that listening is a process of attending to *other*, to "those soft *j*'s and hard *ee*'s/*n*'s […] this tongue […] I can never understand" (Lagah 53).

Where Lagah yearns for a name, Stephanie Bolster might question the *labelling* that denies the observer (reader/interpreter) any place in the classification/description of species. Bolster's intricate poem-ing of the blackberry now disconcerts. Where is the running "rampant"? Where is the massive destruction of native species? Where is the "monster," a term popular with gardening websites as they advise how to battle this invader? Framed as intimate advice, Bolster develops an erotics of blackberrying. The generalized second-person, who enters the poem precisely at the mid-point, becomes the confidante, the secret conspirator, the sensory, sensual magician.

"Often forming dense, impenetrable thickets" (Pojar and MacKinnon 78): the ecological intertext here is another poem. As my colleague Michael Healey enthused, individual blackberry vines are quite weak and cannot grow very high before they begin to bend over. As they grow longer they continue to bend until the tip touches the ground where it immediately sends out roots, fastening the tip to the ground. The weakest vine is at that moment transformed into an arch, one of the strongest of structures. New vines, Mike continued, form

other arches that criss-cross to form quite a rigid architecture. Thus, the very weakness of the plant becomes its source of strength and new vines climb on the old arches, reaching higher and higher. The thicket conceals various half-understood threats. The thicket conceals "other" (8). Bolster, isolating this term, may have in mind the "Himalayan" dimension of the Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus discolor*). Whether this "exotic and highly aggressive" variety has any roots in the Himalaya seems to be unknown. "But it definitely came to North America from *England*, where it was bred and developed by Luther Burbank in the late 19th century" (Daniel 45). Finding that Himalaya is probably illusory is like waking up to discover "the language you used to speak [about blackberry]/ is gibberish" (Bolster 9). That the highly aggressive destroyer of the native is not Himalayan but Burbankian.

Bolster's poem is packed with juicy language. It flourishes in that complex ecotone where the lay observer-*cum*-aspiring ecologist encounters the limits of guidebook language. Where she registers, as Don McKay puts it, "the incommensurability of the plant's infinitude of parts, processes, and ecological relations with the tag [Himalayan blackberry] that attaches it to language and makes it accessible to human intelligence" (63-64). At that point, where language is so inadequate, read Bolster.

"Many have written poems about blackberries," Bolster begins. The *many*, the poets (more broadly the language users) spread with the explosive tenacity of the blackberry. As Charles Elton writes, in *The Ecology of Invasions by Animals and Plants*, "we have been introducing too many of ourselves into the wrong places" (144). And so, surely, as we listen to this *lyric*, the "dark notes" we hear ("bruise," "organ," "bleed," "thorns," "pierce," "swollen") dislocate, direct our attention to the "other" invader (those of the ominous unnamed creature with the "larger hands on the same search"). To "get at" the blackberry by recognizing that it "is the colour of a painful/bruise" the analogy directs you *not* first to verbal representation, but to an "unnamed" bruiser. And the marriage, distressingly, might unite you and you "brutal" (Bolster 8-9).

In a stunning passage in his essay "Remembering Apparatus," Don McKay contemplates this dilemma of the ecocentric: how to "escape reason" (we're inevitably caught in our language) and still

"carry conviction":

> metaphor's first act is to un-name its subject, reopening the question of reference. It's as though we were able to refer beyond reference, to use sameness against itself to bring the other, and a sense of the other . . . into the totality. Thanks to metaphor, we know more; but we also know that *we don't own what we know*. (69, McKay's emphasis)

Notes

I'd like to thank all of you for giving me this opportunity to walk the banks of your river (yesterday), and stroll through your sun-bright woods (Wednesday). Thank you to the Centre for Canadian and Anglo-American cultures, to the Universität des Saarlandes, and especially to Klaus Martens, whose patient and painstaking scholarly work has done so much to refine and extend our sense of why and how Frederick Philip Grove matters. He is an emblem for all that Germany-based study has contributed to Canada — and for which I can presume to say from Canada we are very, very grateful.

The volume edited by William G. Robbins, *The Great Northwest: The Search for Regional Identity*, and Robbins' own essay in this volume are frequently relevant to the cross-border mediating addressed at this conference. Robbins, quoting Robin Fisher's view of the border as an "insurmountable barrier" to regional definition, highlights Fisher's insistence that BC historians have had almost no interest in ideas, while U.S. historians have obsessed on ideas, especially the Turnerian hypothesis (160). But Robbins goes on to highlight the many shared stories of periphery and extraction, including natural abundance and lack of regional autonomy (162). However, when he lists the best regional writers, he lists *only* U.S. names (162-63).

Numerous border issues are raised in recent articles in *The American Review of Canadian Studies*. In 24.1 (Spring 2004): Stephen T. Moore "Defining the 'Undefended': Canadians, Americans, and the Multiple Meanings of Border during Prohibition" (3-32), and Andrew C. Holman "Playing in the Neutral Zone: Meanings and Uses of Ice Hockey in the Canada-U.S. Borderlands, 1895-1915" (33-58); and in 33.1 (Spring 2003): Debora L. VanNijnatten "Analyzing the Canada-U.S. Environmental Relation-ship: a Multifaceted Approach" (93-120), and Christopher Maule "Stage of the Canada-U.S. Relationship:

Culture" (121-143).

When Kim Stafford tries to define the urge to write, the "surrender to the process of making," he bridges Richard Hugo and Joy Hargo with Emily Carr: "It seems to me that a large part of painting is longing […] an effort to be on hand when the barriers [have] left." (*An Intricacy of Simple Means* 2-3).

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The Autochthonous, the Primitive, and the Group of Seven

Ramin Djahazi

This paper scrutinizes the love-affair of the Group of Seven with Canadian nature and traces of a First Nations presence within it, asking why the former so persistently shadows the latter, especially at a period when their fellow artists south of the forty-ninth parallel were beginning to revalue the Native Americans as the autochthonous spirit of their national soil.

"Everywhere we turn in Canadian literature and painting, we are haunted by the natural world. Even the most sophisticated Canadian artist can hardly keep something very primitive and archaic out of our imagination" (Northrop Frye qtd. in Osborne 162). The significance of nature for Canadian national culture voiced here by Frye also resonates in what many Canadian art historians consider today the cradle of a truly Canadian art: the modernist movement of the Group of Seven. Different, yet similar on a strategic level to Thomas Cole almost a century earlier, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, Lawren Harris, Fred Varley, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Carmichael and Frank Johnston discovered their Canada's unique national character in its immense store of non-developed landscape.

A landscape is "a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings" (Cosgrove and Daniels 1). Nature on a canvas is "mediated land, land that has been aesthetically processed" (Andrews 7). Following Frye's proposition, the representation of nature in Canadian landscape art is especially mediated through an aesthetic of the "primitive" and "archaic." But the landscape art of the Group of Seven is far from being primitive compared with tendencies in then contemporary European and American art. With the exception of Emily Carr, and unlike many American modernists, the Group of Seven did not engage in native art. What Frye refers to here seems to be a distinctly Canadian variation of primitivism, one that this paper is going to explore.

National Modernism

Had contemporary European modernists of the twenties paid any attention to the art of the Group of Seven, they certainly would not

have discerned a transatlantic avant-garde. The Canadians at the time were lagging behind, largely due to their country's culturally conservative climate which was dominated by a taste for the established and conventional art of the old world. Fresh impulses in Canadian art, as they emerged in the art of the Group of Seven had virtually no market. For J.E.H. MacDonald, the art market was in the hands of "solid people, well entrenched, financiers, newspaper critics, the conservative, the sentimental, the ignorant — elements of society who always want to do the proper thing" (qtd. in Hill, *Group of Seven* 77). This Canadian bourgeoisie decorated the walls of their respectable mansions with European art, mostly Hague school paintings and pastoral landscapes of the English motherland. Even the supporters of the careful avant-garde art of the Group of Seven within the cultural establishment were "often more conservative than the artists" according to Charles Hill (28). In the remarks of Augustus Bridle, Harold Mortimer-Lamb, or Eric Brown, or in the pages of the *Rebel* and the *Canadian Forum,* Hill discerns a will to separate a "clean, national modernism" (29) from a decadent and immoral European one. Painters like John Lyman, recently returned from Paris and inspired by the latest modernist ideas, could not take root in a country where anything avant-garde was denounced as "travesties, abortions, sensual and hideous malformations" (Morgan-Powell n.pag.). But unlike in Europe, where modernism's break with traditional academic values brought about a "bifurcation of artistic practice in two virtually irreconcilable camps" (Gombrich 207), the Canadian cultural scene still shared a common ground: cultural nationalism. Canadian modernism sprouted at a time when "cries for a distinctly Canadian art were coming from all directions" (Hill, *Group of Seven* 58). Although the stylistic experiments of the Group of Seven were rejected by conservative artists and critics such as Wyly Grier, Carl Ahrens, Henry Franklin Gadsby or Peter Donovan, the Canadian cultural scene was in perfect agreement with the Group's nationalist agenda. The quest for a genuinely *Canadian* art certainly created a common ground for progressive and conservative artists and critics and the general strife for a national art independent from Europe embedded the emerging modernism into an emerging nationalism; this may be a reason for its lack of serious provocation, since their addressee was ultimately mainstream Canada and its people, as their adherence to William

Morris' democratic arts and craft ideas shows. The landscape art of the group must be seen in connection to its claim of contributing to a national iconography, as the first of their "Algomaxims" of 1919 underlines: "The great purpose of landscape art is to make us at home in our own country" (qtd. in Hill, *Group of Seven* 83). The critics liked these modernists who strove to capture "the spirit of young Canada" (83), as the *Mail and Empire* wrote in a review of the 1919 exhibition of Algoma Sketches and Pictures at the Art Museum of Toronto. This art "neither gross nor vulgar" (83), did not sell — not even a single painting — but was still consecrated by its national theme.

With the Canadian-ness of Canadian landscape being sought in the natural world, the painters tried to get as close to the latter as possible. On a black and white photograph of a sketching trip into northern Ontario in 1914 (52), one sees faces that can easily be taken for those of hunters, lumberjacks or pioneers, faces of what represents "the Canadian type." Statements of members of the Group show that they consciously played with this woodman image, appropriating an undaunted pioneer spirit. Take this excerpt from a letter by A Y. Jackson: "[…] the obedient in art are always the forgotten […]. The country is glorious but its beauties are unknown, and but waiting for a real live artist to splash them onto canvas […] Chop your own path. Get off the car track" (qtd. in Hill, *A. Y. Jackson* 3-4). Jackson translates the figurative thrust of a group that considers itself avant-garde into a literal plunge into the bush. The image of such a trapper-modernist drew public ridicule and caricature, e.g. in Peter Donovan's "Arting among the Artists," published 1916:

> When your up-to-the-moment artist decides to wreak his soul on the canvas, he puts on a pair of boots, rolls up his blanket and beans enough for three months, takes a rifle and a paddle, and hikes for the northern woods. […] He can't work unless he has a bear trying to steal his bacon or a moose breathing heavily down his neck. (5)

Still, the tone of the criticism is rather benevolent and not without sympathy. Donovan, although he dislikes modernist techniques, cannot debunk the Canadian man of nature. The leitmotif of Canadian modernism in art is the move of the urban artists into the wilderness. In Jackson's letter, as in the aesthetics of the Group of Seven in

general, the nation is discovered "out there" in the natural world. In the words of a supporter of the Group of Seven: "The spirit of Canada is not to be found in the settled portions of the country, in the vicinity of the cities. There it has been tamed, or re-clothed with the commonplace garb of civilization, so that its individuality is destroyed" (Mortimer-Lamb 22). Using the metaphor of clothing as identity, Mortimer-Lamb sees Canada as clad in "commonplace" European dress, and betrays a sense of the unnaturalness involved in this familiar yet foreign influence. The task of the Canadian artist is therefore the representation of the truly Canadian Canada, a mission that paradoxically leads away from the Canada that its inhabitants have built.

As the Group of Seven's landscapes of the undeveloped areas of Canada celebrate the calm and untouched wilderness, they expressed not only this nationalist agenda but also the core myth of any settler colony: the *terra nullius* topos of the colony as pristine nature, untainted by any presence of culture. This national archetype disavows the fact that the undeveloped territory was still well within the realm of the aboriginal people living there. But with very few notable exceptions, the bright oil colors of the Group of Seven landscapes do never mime anything but the objects of the natural world. This non-treatment of native culture is remarkable, since it takes place at a time when modernism in Europe and America was immersed in the aesthetic discovery of what was then considered primitive cultures. This particularity of Canadian modernism can be connected to the national aesthetic which the Group of Seven helped to formulate. As their attitude towards Emily Carr suggests, they attempted to keep this nascent aesthetic free of any primitivist elements. A comparative look at the contemporary discourse on primitivism in the United States can provide a good vantage point from which to put Canadian modernism's treatment of non-Anglo-Saxon national cultures into perspective.

American Cultural Primitivism

In his history of cultural primitivism in the United States, W. Jackson Rushing makes a convincing case that American modernism was crucially inspired by the so-called primitive art of the Native Americans:

> The recognition of Indian art as such was coincident with the emergence of modernism in America. In fact […] the modernism of New York's avant-garde, 1910-1950, was dependent on Native American art and culture to a degree previously unrecognized in the art-historical literature. (xi)

Understanding of modernism's reception of native culture in the United States is predicated on consideration of the enormous presence of the tenets of evolutionary racism and cultural primitivism which were disseminated via anthropological institutions (see: Aldona, Rohner, Rushing) and thus common currency in the early twentieth century. In agreement with leading scientists like Herbert Spencer and E.B. Taylor, W J McGee from the Bureau of American Ethnology and first president of American Anthropological Association could hold that the "savage stands strikingly close to sub-human species in every aspect of mental as well as bodily habits and bodily structure" (McGee 13). This crude racial-cultural primitivism was perpetuated and reaffirmed in the way cultures were represented in museums, on world fairs, in literature, newspapers and science. This discourse was prevalent in art history as well; nineteenth century aesthetics was governed by a broad consensus that mimetic art was the most sophisticated art form on what one might call the "Great Chain of Painting." Abstract art was considered either degenerated, for example by Frederic Ward Putnam or Alfred Haddon, or a primitive proto-art, by William H. Holmes. One has to understand the pervasiveness of this discourse that so closely tied civilisation with realist art to fathom the shock potential of a new art that debunked the civilised aesthetics of perfect mimesis. A critic in the *Nation* was certainly serious when he compared the modern art of the Armory Show to "works of glacial or Paleozoic children" ("Post-Impressionism Again" n.p.). But the pervasiveness of the discourse of primitivism is certainly best illustrated by the close relationship of the modernists themselves with the cultures of the people that Natalie Curtis, ethnologist and wife of modernist Paul Burlin called "the child races" (qtd. in Rushing 50). According to Jackson Rushing, considerable parts of the modernist avant-garde at the beginning of the twentieth century betrayed a "romantic infatuation" with Indian culture: "As Native Americans were systematically annihilated through American governmental policies,

nostalgia for Native Americans and especially for Native American culture grew" (13). What really grew here within modernism was — similar to Canada — a fascination with modernity's profound Other. Figures of the New York avant-garde, such as Mabel Dodge Luhan, Edgar L Hewett, Robert Henri, Holger Cahill or John Sloan regarded the Native American as a primitivist version of the noble savage, celebrated for his radical difference from modern Anglo-Saxon man. For Mabel Dodge Luhan for example, they were "pure being at the heart of the sun, neither feeling nor thinking, only worshipping and receiving" ("From the Source" n.p.). In keeping with reference to contemporary evolutionist theories of the time, she explained Indian art with a specific mental structure of primitive man: "The Indian has the gift of seeing organized form so clearly because he has cultivated the senses instead of the faculty of analysis […] he sees instead of thinking about what he sees" ("Awa Tsireh" 298). The Native Americans purportedly had their own racial aesthetics. Accordingly, Natalie Curtis, considered the art of these children of nature "charged with emotional reality" ("A New Art in the West." xiv-xv). Similarly, Marsden Hartley believed that the art of primitive people he saw at the Trocadero was "created out of spiritual necessity" (qtd. in Rushing 55); the Indian motives of his America Series (1914) were painted in Berlin, inspired by the American collections of the Museum für Völkerkunde. Native American Indian art, for example the abstract pattern of Navajo rugs or the bright paintings of the Pueblo artists offered American modernists an ideal source of inspiration. Here they found a distinctly national primitive art as raw material for avant-garde experiments. While Picasso used African masks in his primitivist landmark work *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, American artists could make use of the primitive art of "the first *Americans* and possibly the oldest race on earth" (Curtis, *The Indians' Book* xxxv). It was this emphasis of the autochthonous character of American Indian art that helped American modernists to set their aesthetic program apart from the one of European modernism. Holger Cahill celebrated Native American culture in the 1933 exhibition with the programmatic title "American Sources of Modern Art" in this vein:

> The marvel [...] is the spectacle of a people skilled in architecture, sculpture and drawing [...] not derived from the Old World, but

> originating and growing up here, without models or masters, having a distinct, separate, independent existence; like the plants and fruits of the soil, indigenous. (17)

Canadian Natural Primitivism

Since cultural nationalism was a major concern of the Canadian painters after the Great War, the question arises why Canada did not celebrate Indian *culture* along similar lines. Part of the reason seems to be that the Canadian conceptualization of indigenous cultures was characterised by the relative weakness of the dogma of evolutionary primitivism which dominated the American concept of "the" Native American. Whereas this is a sign of a relatively enlightened stance towards indigenous culture, the absence of cultural primitivism might also be related to the conservative cultural climate of Canada mentioned above. The rejection of a supposedly degenerated European modernism may be based on the latter's very use of the primitive, and its experimentation with abstract forms, something that was not accepted in Canada until the late thirties. Another explanation can be found in the Anglocentrism of Canadian culture and its perception of indigenous cultures –both First Nations and Quebecois - as representatives of folk cultures. The main anchor point for Canadians was not Charles Darwin but William Morris. The British educated Canadians followed critics in British art history that reassessed the difference between Renaissance aesthetics and medieval folk culture, for example the works of John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle and William Morris.

In the Canada of the twenties, there was a widespread interest in what was considered the cultural heritage of the nation. Examples of this burgeoning interest may be discerned in the success of Pauline Johnson-Tekahionwake's *The Legends of Vancouver* (its 1912 edition illustrated by J.E.H. MacDonald), the debate about the preservation of Totem poles (Cole 270), and the increasing marketing of the national folk heritage by the Canadian tourism industry. The public was interested in the indigenous craftsmanship of aboriginal people such as Northwest Coast totem poles, masks and basketry, but also in French Canadian art, as the carved statues of Louis Jobin or the traditional weavers of the Ile d'Orleans and the Ile aux Coudres. Perhaps the most enthusiastic proponent of such craftsmanship was Marius Barbeau, a

Quebecois ethnologist working for Edward Sapier in Ontario. Like Eric Brown of the National Gallery, Barbeau believed that the cultural heritage of the nation could provide inspiration for contemporary national culture. Because he was convinced that the juxtaposition of traditional art and modern art was "vital and inspiring" (qtd. in Hill, *Group of Seven* 183) for contemporary Canadian artists, he organized joint exhibitions: in 1926 the *Art in French Canada* exhibition, and in 1927 *Canadian West Coast Art Native and Modern*, the latter of which was to be the first special exhibition in America to present native American artefacts as art (Cole 285). In order to facilitate direct contact between the Toronto-based artists and the cultural heritage of the country's periphery, the Western and the Eastern seaboard, Barbeau obtained free railway passes for the Group of Seven artists Lismer and Jackson. He introduced them to such nineteenth century Quebecois craftsmen as the woodsculptor Jobin, the traditional Quebecois weavers and to the world of Northwest Coast Indian cultures, which he described in the catalogue to the 1927 exhibition as "one of the most 'valuable of Canada's artistic productions […] an invaluable mine of decorative design […] being entirely national in its origin and character'" (qtd. in Hill, *Group of Seven* 191). Barbeau's two guests seemed to share his enthusiasm for what they considered autochthonous Canadian cultures. A.Y. Jackson, for instance, praised Jobin's "rude vigour that is in harmony with the early architecture. They both grow out of the soil. We do not feel this with the early painting. The painters studied in Europe and kept on doing as they were taught with no interest in their environment" (Jackson 186). Lismer was especially fascinated with the work of the weavers which he considered as an art motivated by an original spirit of human creativity, "a living, vital, expression, an absolute necessity" (qtd. in Hill, *Group of Seven* 179). Their enthusiasm illustrates how cultural nationalism, the conservationist concerns of ethnology and the arts and craft reverence for an organic national art worked hand in glove. Barbeau himself is a case in point. He voiced established arts and craft positions when he declared that in the older communities (both Quebecois and First Nation) "art was no idle pursuit for them or their tribesmen but fulfilled an all-essential function in their everyday life" (192).

The question arises, however, whether Jackson and Lismer shared Barbeau's semi-nativist vision that such folk art could serve as an

inspiration in the creation of a modern national art. Certainly, Jackson's praise for the autochthonous character of Jobin's art quoted above shows such traditional art was merited with a supposed independence from European models. But unlike the American cultural primitivists, the Group of Seven did not legitimate their art through association with aboriginal and other non-British-colonial cultures. Canadian artists were certainly not going native; they remained uncommitted, yet sympathetic observers of Canada's cultural margins. The catalogue of the 1927 exhibition *Canadian West Coast Art Native and Modern* does not evoke a close connection between native and modern Canadian art but rather an intellectually appealing juxtaposition: the "modern interpretation" of Northwest Coast scenery is seen as providing an "interesting background" to the Indian art on display (191). This again affirms that the modernists' Canadian aesthetic was firmly in the grip of landscape. A case in point is Lismer's belief in the "need to develop national standards of design to utilize our wealth of *natural* form and weave it into the artistic expression of our people" (179, emphasis added). In developing a popular national art, the *cultural* forms available through Native and Québecois art remain of peripheral interest for the Group of Seven's vision of a national art.

A.Y. Jackson 's *Indian Home* (1927) is a good example of how a Group of Seven artist embedded the contemporary concern with the country's cultural heritage within the Group's aesthetic. The painting depicts three dark-skinned people standing in front of an archaic log hut embedded in natural scenery. There are totem poles and the roofs of old, probably traditional longhouses in the middle distance. This might be a documentary picture, but although it looks like a natural scene, it is a carefully orchestrated landscape. This becomes evident when one looks at the preparatory sketches to *Indian Home* which the National Gallery purchased from Jackson in 1973. The sketch onto which Jackson wrote "First Sketch for Indian Home" shows a house in a village. This house is connected to civilization, and as there are no totem poles or other signs of Indian society and culture. The whole scene looks rather like a view of a pioneer village. But as the native population of this town, Port Essington, was very early assimilated to Western culture (see e.g. Jacobsen 13), the scene is at bottom an authentic and faithful representation of Northwest Coast Indian life,

and documents the process of cultural assimilation. The follow-up sketches reveal that Jackson increasingly severed the connection of the house to civilization. The sketch titled *Indian Home, Port Essington* shows what Jackson is aiming at: the house now stands in nature, isolated from other houses. Dense undergrowth crowds the foreground, formerly occupied by the street. There are still no totem poles; instead, the right side is dominated by two tall trees. Behind them, one discovers a possible contour of a church spire or some other form of architecture. Compared with the first sketch, the village setting is pushed into the background, the foreground taken over by raw nature. Despite minor changes, the *Composition Sketch for Indian Home* shows the actual composition of the painting. All traces of settler culture removed, the house is now completely integrated into the wilderness. The village shapes and the trees in the middle distance have been replaced by totem poles and the roofs of traditional Indian long houses. The overall effect is an archaic frontier scene of a near-unity between nature and culture. The rough, wooden texture of the house likens it to the trees and bushes that frame it. Due to their slope and trunk-like shape, the totem poles imitate trees. Autochthonous culture literally grows out of the woods. Three towering mountains in the background repeat the compositional arrangement of the house and its two sheds. This all underlines how much the human sphere is integrated into the powerful natural world at the frontier. Jackson underlines the supremacy of the latter by putting its growth into the centre. The house is surrounded by plants to such a degree that one cannot avoid the impression that nature will soon reclaim the land. Because the trees in the foreground are young and small, a sense of future growth captures the observer. All this is contrasted with the passivity of the house and its inhabitants, who stand motionless amidst this growth, and the decay of the totem poles, that look like dead trees, wood without a future. With all signs of First Nation civilization associated with decay and decline, the painting expresses little hope for the lasting survival of this cultural presence. But Jackson's perspective is not that of an anthropologist recording the remaining traces for posterity. The theme of *Indian Home* being the procreative power of nature, the artistic eye of Canadian modernism is riveted on the richness of natural forms. The autochthonous natural world supersedes the autochthonous cultures.

Canadian Primitivism: Emily Carr

Unlike the urban modernists, Northwest coast resident Carr took a deep interest in the local First Nations *culture*. In her diary, she summed up the difference between her representations of Indian life and those of A.Y. Jackson like the above discussed *Indian Home*: "His Indian pictures have something mine lack — rhythm, poetry. Mine are downright. But perhaps his haven't quite the love in them of the people and the country that mine have. How could they?" (*Hundreds and Thousands* 5). While Jackson is fascinated with the energetic play of natural forms, Carr portrays the First Nations' world. Before she met artists of the Group of Seven in November 1927, she approached indigenous culture with a documentary agenda, motivated by heart-felt enthusiasm for what she saw: "The Indian people and their art touched me deeply […] I was going to picture totem poles in their own village settings, as complete a collection of them as I could" (*Growing Pains* 211). Paintings such as *Gitwangak* (1912), *Alert Bay* (1912), *Memalilaqua, Knight Inlet* (1912) or *Heina,* (1928) a view of a deserted Haida village that Carr painted from a photograph of the 1880s, follow exactly this documentary agenda. Carr's felt necessity to document the poles in their native context reflects contemporary concerns about the evident disappearance of the traditional indigenous way of life in a modernizing Canada. In the public eye, the fate of the totem pole illustrated the falling apart of the Indian world in general: "By the 1920s, as result of private and museum acquisition, natural decay, and occasional wanton destruction, the British Columbian totem pole had become an endangered specimen" (Cole 270). During the twenties, several public bodies were concerned with the preservation of the last remains of Indian culture with the totem pole becoming the symbol of the efforts. One buzz-word of the time was on-site preservation; the idea was to conserve the last traces of autochthonous Canadian culture within their original setting. This acknowledgment of an intrinsic connection between Indian culture and the territory it grew in also informs Carr's early paintings of these villages. But her paintings echo the commercial aspects of this national project as well. On-site preservation created travel destinations for the budding Canadian tourism industry. Carr's portraits of the old villages of the coastal tribes often have a postcard-like perspective.

Perhaps because her approach to Northwest coast culture

corresponded with the concerns of anthropologist Marius Barbeau, the latter introduced her to the Canadian avant-garde artists of the Group of Seven. But although her work was much admired at the joint exhibition *West Coast Indian Art, Native and Modern*, its documentary approach to the Northwest was certainly considered old-fashioned by the modernists. Lawren Harris' "The Paintings and Drawings of Emily Carr" suggests such a stance, when he states that "her early paintings are somewhat informative. They tell us about Indian villages, houses and totems, whereas her later paintings do not inform us, do not tell us about trees, villages and totems but are equivalents on canvas of their life, and as a consequence, we are inwardly moved by a vital experience" (xxiii-xxiv). This introductory essay to Carr's journal shows that Harris considered the Carr of 1927 in need of improvement, by adopting the Group's aesthetics. Her diary affirms that after her first personal contact with the impressive artists of the Group of Seven in 1927, she decided to adapt her perception to the modernist eye for the "underlying spirit, […] the mood, the vastness, the wildness […]" of the painted object (5). Three years later, she publicly spoke as a modernist painter: "The Old Masters did the very things that the serious moderns of today are struggling for, namely, trying to grasp the spirit of the thing itself rather than its surface appearance" (*Address* 4). A comparison of *Gitwangak* (1912) and *Grizzly Bear Totem, Angidah, Nass* (1930) illustrates the modernist turn in Carr's approach to her subject. Whereas *Gitwangak,* portrays a traditional First Nation village, *Grizzly Bear Totem* illustrates her determination to move from documentation of the sight to "the bigger actuality of the thing" (*Address* 4). The wide angle perspective so suitable for documentation is replaced by a close focus on the object. *Gitwangak* puts the observer at a vantage point outside the observed scene, and thus grants him the position of a non-involved observer. On the other hand, *Grizzly Bear Totem* does not grant such a security; the observer is almost too close to the face of the totem animal to be aware of it being part of a pole. It is as if a mythical being sat portrait. The rough-shaped background of the stature appears almost as much a carving as the statue itself. The security of a sobering realist background to a grotesque idol is declined; nature and mythical being are part of the same world, the latter being a captivating expression of the former, a symbolic representation of nature's spirit.

Paintings from the middle period of her oeuvre, like *Grizzly Bear Totem*, *Blunden Harbour* (1930), *Totems* (1930) or *Indian Hut, Queen Charlotte Islands* (1930) suggest that Carr applied the aesthetics of the Group of Seven to indigenous Northwest Coast culture. Her primitivist modernism was certainly more akin to American and European modernism than to the clean national modernism of the Group of Seven. Lawren Harris, who, certainly not without condescension, assumed the role of a modernist tutor to a fellow artist fourteen years his senior, told her to keep things in their proper place: "[T]he totem pole is a work of art in its own right and it is very difficult to use it in another form of art." He advised her to seek "an equivalent for it in the exotic landscape of the island and coast, making your own form and forms with the greater form" (qtd. in Shadboldt 135). His advice must have made some impact, considering Carr's boreal re-orientation in the 'thirties. Harris' determination to keep national Canadian art unblemished by primitivism underlines Canadian modernism's failure to integrate indigenous culture into their national canvas.

Conclusion

The central interest of the Canadian modernists of the Group of Seven was the creation of an art that is first and foremost purely Canadian. The result was an art that centred on the autochthonous Canadian landscape and which did not invest indigenous cultures with either metaphysical or modern national significance. Focussing on nature, they subdued autochthonous native culture as much as possible under the pure landscape. However, alternative visions did exists, as the art of Emily Carr and the mediating activity of Marius Barbeau shows. But despite exposure, the focus of the Toronto based group remained on nature and its potential for a modernist national aesthetics. Lawren Harris' notion of the "cleansing rhythms" of the north is a case in point: "The top of the continent is a source of spiritual flow that will ever shed clarity into the growing race of America" ("Revelation of Art in Canada" 85-86). Comparing America and Canada, one can therefore discern two primitivisms: American modernists primitivised Native Americans and their culture whereas Canadian modernists primitivised nature itself. But both primitivisms follow the same aim, an aim characteristic of the national identity of a former settler colony. They

tried to detach themselves from the European tradition by attachment to a non-European, non-modern Other that functions as essence of a pure national art. Frye's haunting natural world mentioned at the outset of this paper might thus be interpreted as the residue of modern Canada's struggle to become autochthonous in an appropriated land, always haunted by its European m(other).

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True Colors: A Comparison of America's *The Eight* and Canada's *Group of Seven*

Colette Weihrauch

Canadian and American art of the modernist period is commonly treated as comprising two separate traditions. Even perfunctory assessment of the art worlds of Canada and the United States suggests that the differences between the two far exceed the similarities. The impression is strengthened by the relative paucity of comparative research linking the two. One of the primary differences referred to in critical discussions is the greater modernity of American art in comparison with its conservative Canadian counterpart. Contemporary studies of modern Canadian art continue to discuss the "inevitable time lag with which the importation of European movements to Canada continued" (Mellen 1). This observation is not surprising given the differing contexts of cultural development of both nations. Nonetheless, out of these disparate national contexts, two renowned modernist groups of artists emerged which share numerous traits: The Eight in America and the Group of Seven in Canada. With the exception of one exhibition at the Heckscher Museum in Huntington, New York, in 1982, there has been little comparative study of the overlapping qualities of these two groups and their artwork. By uncovering and examining the numerous similarities, ranging from their styles and subject matter, through their influences and their roles in art history, to organizational details of the groups themselves, a better understanding of the further development of art in both countries, as well as the aspect of nationalism in the arts may be reached. Additionally, the wealth of similarities helps refute the still current practice of describing Canadian art of the first quarter of the twentieth century as archaic. In contrast to existing conjecture and as the example of The Eight and the Group of Seven indicates, I propose that the paths of Canadian and American modernist art converged in several respects.

The Modernist Art Scenes in Canada and America

Canadian modernism is frequently restricted to the Group of Seven; among the more recognized exceptions are Bertram Brooker, Emily Carr, David Milne, who belonged to the Ottawa Group, and the

members of the Beaver Hall Group, a circle of Montreal painters to which also women belonged. Of these, a limited number created abstract art or looked to American or European contemporary artists for inspiration. Emily Carr, who worked in western Canada after studying art in the United States, England, and France, belongs to a small minority of artists who ventured into the unknown territory of abstract art in Canada. Her unique style of painting includes a combination of cubist, futurist, and post-impressionist techniques and a reduction of details, resulting in paintings which often have striking similarities to those created by the Group of Seven member Lawren S. Harris. However, most other artists refrained from experimentation in other genres, such as sculpture or photography. They sketched and painted, but largely avoided collages or a mixture of different materials. The Canadian art world was rather restrictive for artists at the time; paintings by indigenous artists were only admired and purchased if they resembled what was considered popular in England at the time (Hill 35-36).

In comparison to Canada, the American art scene was extremely multi-faceted and open to variety. First, American and expatriate European artists experimented with various styles of painting including cubism, expressionism, and futurism; wholly non-figurative pieces were being produced as well. These works were influenced by the art of, for instance, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Paul Cézanne, and represented highly differing directions in the art world. Second, photography, collage, and sculpture were areas into which artists readily ventured; experimentation with new or unusual materials such as metal and natural fibers was also prevalent. Third, American artists sought expansion of their subject matter with, for instance, depictions of dust, magnifications of various objects, and non-figurative forms.[1] In this manner, modernist artists in the United States were continuing the tradition begun by the artists of realism in the nineteenth century to portray what had been previously deemed unworthy of representation. These aspects led to a greatly diversified American art scene, predominant in the East, in which most artists experimented to discover a technique, style, or subject matter which suited them personally. Artists such as Charles Demuth, John Covert, William Glackens, and Edward Hopper are all modernist, although it is difficult to identify overlapping traits when analyzing their art, with the

exception of the time frame in which each worked. Even in this context, however, traditional art and teaching methods remained popular.

In these two widely differing art scenes, two groups emerged with very similar traits: The Eight and the Group of Seven. The Eight originally consisted of eight members (Arthur Davies, William Glackens, Robert Henri, Ernest Lawson, George Luks, Maurice Prendergast, John Sloan, and Everett Shinn)[2] when their first and only collective exhibition opened to the public in 1908 at the Macbeth Gallery[3] in New York City. Robert Henri was the unofficial leader of this heterogeneous group, loosely held together by the members' opposition against academic arts and their collective desire for artistic independence (Richardson 362). They expressed this opposition by painting the blunt reality of everyday life in New York City. The subjects of their paintings were rendered in a realistic manner; thus, their content, not necessarily their technique, was innovative. Several members of the group played further important roles for the American art scene by assisting in the organization of the renowned Armory Show in 1913, and contributing to the formation of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917, two important steps towards the shaping of an independent American art culture (Richardson 369, 373).

The Group of Seven[4] officially formed in Toronto in 1920, although several members had already been collaborating for nearly ten years. The seven members of the official group were Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and F.H. Varley. A.J. Casson, L.L. Fitzgerald, and Edwin Holgate eventually joined as well. Tom Thomson, who drowned while on a canoe trip in 1917 and was therefore not part of the official group, was among the first to paint what would become characteristic Group of Seven material: the wild, rugged wilderness of northern Ontario. The Group existed for somewhat over a decade before its name was changed to the Canadian Group of Painters. It expanded to include nearly thirty members and continued to promote a consciously Canadian approach to the arts until disbandment (Hill 281).

A Canadian and American Art

The contexts out of which the Group of Seven and The Eight arose have little in common, making the many similarities between both groups all the more remarkable. One of the most prominent of these similarities is their shared desire to create art which would respectively be recognized as characteristically American or Canadian. George Luks, a member of the American group, is quoted in the *New York Daily Tribune* as proclaiming, "We want a true American art, and not bad copies of foreign artists" (Milroy 27). This paralleled the Group of Seven's endeavor to create a uniquely Canadian art, which is today acknowledged as highly nationalistic. A.J. Casson calls this "a critical turning point in Canadian art" since "for the first time, Canadians dared to […] paint as Canadians" (9). The Group refused to support the wide-spread conservative viewpoint towards art in Canada, which praised and admired traditional European and especially British work, while for the most part ignoring or ridiculing different approaches by indigenous Canadian artists. In a radio broadcast in 1954, Lawren Harris reflected upon this time: "The idea was generally held that anything which we ourselves created in the arts was not worth serious consideration" (Harris). Although Canadian artists enjoyed little general support, an interest could be detected in the form of art clubs that were established (Hill 40-41). These clubs, such as the Toronto Art Students' League, the Mahlstick Club, and the Canadian Art Club, were interested in promoting and supporting Canadian artists (Hill 43-46). Their life-span was relatively short but their influence considerable. Most members of the Group met through their affiliation to another of these clubs, the Arts and Letters Club which formed in 1908 (Hill 46). For several members of The Eight in New York City, the case was similar. There, Robert Henri taught night classes, dubbed the "Charcoal Club," which also brought artists with corresponding artistic aspirations together (Rose 12).

The Landscape as an Expression of National Identity

The desire to create works of art which would be recognized as separate from European influences led artists to search for a distinguishing method or subject matter. The landscape was therefore adopted by The Eight and the Group of Seven as suitable subject, portrayed by the artists as realistically rough and coarse. They

refrained, for the most part, from idealistic depictions.[5] Robert Henri proclaimed that artists should paint from life (Lochridge 4); the members of the group therefore turned to the urban landscape and its inhabitants for their inspiration. Cities, slums, grimy streets, as well as scenes from the daily lives of Americans became their subjects. Paintings were titled "Sixth Avenue and Thirteenth Street" (John Sloan, 1907) and "Old Beggar Woman" (George Luks, 1907). The Eight's works were subsequently described as depressing and shabby, and its members were criticized for depicting what was considered the solely negative and commonplace aspects of American life (Rose 21). This contrasted the traditional concept that not all aspects of life were worthy of being rendered artistically. Beyond the preferred subject matter, another reason for this unfavorable criticism was perhaps the rather gloomy color palette adopted by The Eight: deep black, earthy browns, and dirty creams are the predominant colors of many paintings, while bright reds, blues, and greens, though frequently employed, served as contrasts and highlighted particular elements in the piece.

Canadian artists did not turn to cityscapes but took the Ontario wilderness for their subject. Lismer recalled how "accepted and valued art was all imported and none notable," and how "these ways [of thinking] were totally inappropriate to the expression of the power, clarity, remoteness, character, and rugged elemental beauty of [Canada]" (Lismer). Elsewhere he suggests that the aim of the Group was to "make a Canadian statement in art in Canadian terms" (quoted in Hunkin 38). In order to do so, the members turned to the natural beauty of northern Canada. Paintings with titles such as "Frozen Lake, Early Spring, Algonquin Park" (A.Y. Jackson, 1917) and "Autumn in Algoma" (J.E.H. MacDonald, 1921) became the norm. As with The Eight, the stark contrast of these new pieces to the traditional, accepted artwork provoked negative criticism; it was even suggested that these paintings could discourage possible immigrants from coming to Canada (Casson 9).

Although the types of landscape depicted by the two groups differ, their manner of portrayal overlaps. This becomes particularly evident when considering art historians' descriptions of the work of each group. For instance, in John Walker's portrayal of paintings by The Eight in *Paintings from America*, certain words could very well be

substituted, such as "America" with "Canada," "metropolitan" with "natural," and "slums" with "wilderness": "Having discovered metropolitan life in America to be a teeming jungle, savage, vital and cruel, these painters of the American scene […] plunged into its crowded activity, slashing away with their brushes the sentimental and picturesque, to show both the brutality and the beauty of the American slums" (36). The many overlapping aims and similar approaches are striking in spite of The Eight's concentration on an urban American setting and the Group of Seven's homage to the Canadian wilderness.

Miscellaneous Subject Matter

The artists of both groups are known primarily for their landscape paintings, however, they explored other subject matter as well. World War I had a significant impact on the citizens and artists of the United States and Canada. George Bellows of The Eight produced a series of fourteen lithographs in 1918 entitled "War (The Tragedies of War in Belgium)." He also created several drawings and etchings as well as the occasional painting, for example, "The Germans Arrive," also in 1918. A.Y. Jackson and F.H. Varley were also actively involved and they subsequently depicted scenes from the war such as "For What?" (Varens, 1918) and Jackson's 1918 painting "A Copse, Evening." The members of The Eight and the Group of Seven explored a greater range of subject matter than is often presumed, due in part to commissions. Henri, from The Eight, painted a great number of portraits, for instance, while most of the Canadian artists broadened their subject matter to include villages and towns, as well as portraits.

Influences on the Groups

The influences on the Group and The Eight are various, due particularly to the greatly differing contexts from which both groups arose. It has been suggested that the members of the Group of Seven were affected by Scandinavian art, articles from traditional art magazines such as *The Studio*, contemporary adventure novels, as well as industrialization and the resulting development of towns and cities.[6] Acquaintances such as J.W. Beatty and Tom McLean from the Arts and Letters Club were also relevant, since they were among the first to travel to the northern wilderness and induce the aspiring artists to venture into this territory (Hill 51).

The artists of the American circle were influenced by the growing cities as well as by the spirit of revolt which had already arisen prior to the new century (Rose 10). The development of realism in literature also contributed to the circumstances forming the artists' view of the world (10). Most directly, however, the members of The Eight were influenced by their unofficial leader, Robert Henri. He had studied in Paris and admired the dark palettes of such seventeenth century Spanish painters as Francesco Goya, Frans Hals, and Diego Velazquez. He introduced these artists' works to his students when he returned to America in 1891 (15) and many students subsequently applied the coloration to their own pieces.

Although the contexts and therefore the influences vary greatly, both the Group of Seven and The Eight found inspiration in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and especially Walt Whitman.[7] The painters found particular appeal in the transcendentalist ideas expounded by these writers. The importance of nature and man's relationship with it, as well as ideas concerning the foundation of a national culture, mirrored both artistic groups' basic beliefs. Harris and Lismer from the Group of Seven were even associated with the modern theosophist movement, whose members believed the North was the location of the "new renaissance" (Ried 167). Similarly, Whitman's early articulation of an American national culture[8] was hailed not only by the Group, naturally for their own purposes, but also by The Eight, who also propagated a national art (Rose 23). When Henri proclaimed "art for life's sake," in allusion to "l'art pour l'art," he addressed the importance of seeking inspiration in the immediate American surroundings, scrutinizing these, and then presenting the findings artistically, as an expression of love of all life.

Individual Styles

The various individual styles of the artists in each group provide a further example of the similarities between The Eight and the Group of Seven. In some paintings by William Glackens, for example, the artist used light, pastel-like colors, reminiscent of Renoir and Monet. John Sloan refrained from this coloration and painted in primarily dark, somber tones. In contrast, the colors used by the Group of Seven are predominantly shades of blue, green, and brown. The tones themselves are often subdued and red and orange are employed as highlighters if

they do not constitute the central colors of the artwork. This, however, also varies according to the subject matter and artist. Lawren Harris, for instance, is the only member of the Group whose art can be described as abstract; in numerous pieces, the details are starkly reduced and the elements of the landscape are treated as geometrical forms. Whereas some artists resorted to broad bands of homogenous color in their work, others employed dots or streaks of paint to recreate their view of the North. The differing styles of the artists of both groups poses a problem of structure for many art historians in discussion of either; unsurprisingly, a commonly sought solution in book publications is to devote one chapter to each artist.

Both groups are also unified in that their styles are today regarded as conventional, although the works themselves were considered modern at the time of completion. Content and style are two equal factors when categorizing art. Yet, when it comes to modernism, it is especially the aspect of style and the experimentation thereof that receives particular attention today, in part perhaps because its novelty is more immediately discernable. The majority of The Eight's works utilize impressionistic and post-impressionistic brushstrokes; small flecks of color converge on the canvas, blurring the outlines of objects in the paintings and giving many works an airy, fuzzy look. Some critics even consider paintings by The Eight a form of Post-Impressionism, such as the curators of the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia, who held an exhibition in 1986 called "The Advent of Modernism: Post-Impressionism and North American Art," in which paintings from the members of The Eight were displayed. Despite the partial legitimacy of this classification, the program of The Eight does not coincide with the aims of the Impressionists or Post-Impressionists who paid particular attention to color and light, in contrast to subject matter. Furthermore, artists such as Arthur Dove, Man Ray, and Charles Sheeler, renowned today for their highly innovative artwork, employed these methods as well. In contrast to the members of The Eight, however, most other modernist artists had stopped using this technique by the 1920s and had moved on to abstract or precisionist methods.

Although the painters of the Group of Seven had very individual styles of painting, critics have often compared their works to those belonging to Scandinavian Symbolism, Art Nouveau, and Fauvism, or

have described the Group's general style as an amalgamation of these.[9] At an exhibition in Wembley, England in 1924, the influence of Japanese art on Lismer was suggested as well (Murray 19). Even Post-Impressionism as a category was not omitted; several pieces by A.Y. Jackson were displayed during a well-received post-impressionist exhibition in 1913 (Hill 55). As to the Group's modernist tendencies, Charles Hill writes, "[It] was conservative compared to much that was being done in Europe, and the Toronto artists repeatedly reminded their critics of that fact. Yet their art was perceived by most Canadians in relation to the work of other Canadians, and in this context their paintings were advanced" (25). Today the perception is different. Nonetheless, and with the advantage of historical perspective, it is important to emphasize that the modernist and innovative aspect of The Eight's and the Group of Seven's artwork resided not in their style but rather in their choice of subject matter.[10]

Renegades and Rebels

Another common misconception about The Eight and the Group of Seven is their perceived status as renegades and rebels ("Stories"). Both groups supported this notion and their active defiance of the traditional, conventional art world of their time warrants such categorization to varying degrees. From the outset, critics rightfully regarded them as a strong oppositional force to the existing art establishments. Nevertheless, it is certainly justifiable to calibrate more precisely the exact extent of rebellion which the artists then, and art historians even today, frequently highlight. Of The Eight, Craven mentions their "angry defiance" (424) and how the artists had to "face the outrage and denunciations encountered by any rebel who threatens the establishment" (427). Helen Farr Sloan, wife of The Eight member John Sloan, speaks of The Eight as "pioneers" and "revolutionaries" and comments on their "remarkable rebellion for independence" (12) in a foreword to Purlman's study of the group, *The Immortal Eight*, in which the author echoes these tones, speaking of The Eight's "crusade" (16). As for the Group of Seven, the members claimed to "have as little desire to be revolutionary as to be old-fashioned" (Boulet 28) in the forward to their 1921 group exhibition catalog. F.B. Housser, however, titles one of his chapters "Signs of Revolt" in *A Canadian Art Movement*, a contemporary portrait of the Group

published in 1926. In the foreword to their first group exhibition catalog in 1920, the author, Lawren Harris, devotes a significant portion to the expected reactions to the Group's exhibited artwork, among which he included "ridicule, abuse or indifference," and a "refus [al] to recognize" (Hunkin 86).

As rebellious as these accounts allow both groups to appear, consideration of certain particulars puts the artists in a tamer light. In America, members of The Eight formed their group in order to secede from the National Academy of Design in New York, which did not support the artists' styles and subjects. Elizabeth Milroy, however, describes how certain members were still in contact with the Academy; Arthur Davies exhibited paintings while William Glackens served as a member of a jury at one point (17). Furthermore, the only collective exhibition by the artists, which took place in 1908, was a great success and led not only to several sales but also to a tour through eight other American cities, suggesting keen public interest. This does not coincide with the idea of a rebellious group which received little public support and was on oppositional terms with traditional forces in society. Milroy suggests that the press played a large role in exaggerating the concept of rebellion (17). The artists displayed their works in independent art exhibitions which ignored and undermined the established institutions. To attract attention to these exhibitions and convince the public to see their work, The Eight made use of publicity campaigns. Although the criticism towards The Eight is well known and evidenced in such nicknames as "the apostles of ugliness" and "the Revolutionary Black Gang," Lochridge, for example, suggests that more critics praised their work than condemned it (8). Nonetheless, any reports would have also been advertising and strong criticism may have tempted curious New York citizens into seeing the exhibitions themselves.

Although the Group of Seven's reputation as rebels has been questioned in the past, the members continue to be considered as such. This is due, in part at least, to their own promotion of this status in many respects ("Stories"). Yet, the Canadian artists were also involved with the institutions they had wanted to disconnect themselves from and specifically referred to themselves as a *group* instead of a *society* or *organization* for the purpose of avoiding conflict with established societies (Hill 88). Many Group artists continued to exhibit with the R.C.A. (Royal Canadian Academy of Arts), of which A.Y. Jackson was

even a full member, and the O.S.A. (Ontario Society of Artists). In fact, of the Group, Harris remained the only member never to accept nomination ("About," "History"). As with The Eight, the Group of Seven received much negative criticism, as Lawren Harris described in a 1954 radio broadcast:

> That a real art movement inspired by the country itself should be taking place in Canada was more than the critics and the public could credit. Both we ourselves and our paintings were attacked from all sides and this continued throughout the years of the Group's existence […] Such broad sides of anger, outrage, and cheap wit had never occurred in Canada before and in few other countries. We were called the "Hot Mush School," artistic perverts; our paintings were compared to a Hungarian goulash, a drunkard's stomach, a head cheese and so on. One of the leading conservative critics gave lectures in the Ontario cities and towns and used these occasions to warn the public about the ugly and insidious paintings of the Group.[11]

Although these words are harsh and could have potentially discouraged the artists, the Group used criticism such as this to their benefit as well. Harris continues by adding that some of the negative comments were included in the forward to an exhibition catalog. This is certainly reminiscent of The Eight's practice of intriguing and provoking the public with similar negative publicity. Positive reviews, especially from foreign critics, were naturally also a great help for the Group, which was still attempting to gain popularity and support within their own country. Two American tours, one in 1920-21, the other in 1923-24, gave the American public the opportunity to see uniquely Canadian art in cities such as Boston, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Milwaukee (Hill 116-120, 141-142). Unfortunately, the exhibitions were less than enthusiastically received and only one sale resulted from the tours. It was a different matter altogether when the Group sent their work to Wembley, England in 1924 and 1925 for the annual British Empire Exhibition. Their work was met with strong approval and brought the artists well-deserved international recognition (142). Certainly, to some extent, the members of both groups rebelled against the traditional art world in which they were immersed. Nonetheless, they remained institutionally connected to the art world of their time

and this fact, as well as the support they received, should have been sufficient to nullify their renegade status. The members of both groups seem to have realized the positive aspects of having this oppositional status and actively attempted to sustain it themselves.

Affecting the Next Generation of Artists

The influence of both The Eight and the Group of Seven on younger generations of artists is not to be underestimated. The Eight, with their urban realism, prompted the development of American Scene painting in the 1920s (Delahunt). This usually figurative direction of art in America is often considered a reaction to European modernism with its extreme abstraction (Rose 122). It corresponds to the ideology of The Eight in that it was a further attempt to create a truly American art by portraying scenes of daily life (122-123). The members of the Group of Seven were very supportive of younger artists and strove to include them in their shows. Charles Hill claims that "with a few exceptions, every important modern painter working in Canada in the late twenties was encouraged by the Group of Seven and included in their exhibitions" (237), a statement supported as well by Casson who writes, "The Group constantly encouraged Canadian artists to look at landscape through their own eyes and interpret it in their own way" (9). Although this was a great improvement to the seclusion of the Canadian art world previous to the Group's formation, the text in the catalog to their 1930 exhibit slightly contradicts these statements and is more precise about the kinds of young artists being mentored: "there are a number of invited contributions by younger artists whose work is in harmony with that of the members of the Group of Seven" (Hunkin 147). The Group's influence on Canadian painters was so extreme that the new generation of artists had difficulty being recognized. The dominance of the Group's work and importance also kept younger artists from looking to other countries and artists for inspiration until well into the 1940s.[12] Younger artists may have been actively encouraged to find their individual voices yet the actual practice proved to be more difficult to sustain. Nevertheless, both groups were vital for the development of a sense of national awareness in Canada and America. The pride the artists felt for their respective countries has continued into the present day.

Conclusion

In his chapter on The Eight, Wayne Craven has proposed that the formation of the group in the given context was almost inevitable (422). The great number of similarities between the Eight and the Group of Seven suggest that this is very likely the case. Both groups arose out of very different contexts, hardly overlapped temporally, were subject to various distinct influences, and had goals and aspirations particular to their native country. In light of this, the number of corresponding factors and elements of both is remarkable. Their most distinct, shared characteristic is the basic national pride which permeates their work and associates it immediately with Canada or the United States. This sets them apart from other modernist artists whose works in a non-traditional style may present the viewer with scenes, objects, or characters from daily American or Canadian life, but largely fail to capture the spirit felt and included by the members of The Eight and the Group of Seven. By utilizing the landscape, both groups found a suitable subject matter with which to express this spirit. The manner in which they coped with negative criticism, their status as rebels, the role of Whitman's writings and philosophy, their influence on younger generations of artists, as well as their highly individual styles are among the characteristics shared by both The Eight and the Group of Seven. Although the groups arose out of different national contexts, their similarities are striking and suggest a certain inevitability of formation. Perhaps the time had come for a nationalistic, realistic strain in the emergent modernist art worlds of both Canada and America.

Endnotes

[1] See, for example, works by Man Ray and Georgia O'Keeffe.

[2] George Bellows and others joined the group some years later.

[3] Founded in 1892, the Macbeth Gallery was the first gallery in New York City committed to the presentation of contemporary American art.

[4] Joan Murray argues that Arthur Lismer invented the Group's name based on his knowledge of The Eight in America. Some time prior to the official formation of the Group, Lismer had worked in Halifax, New York, home of Ernest Lawson, a member of The Eight (Murray 12).

[5] William Glackens from The Eight is an exception; his paintings of idyllic scenery were painted with an impressionistic palette, two characteristics unusual for the artists' group.

[6] For a more detailed account, please refer to Gutsche 490, Murray 15-19, Nasgaard 161, Boulet 13-18.

[7] See for instance Lochridge 8, and Nasgaard 166 on this issue.

[8] As Roger Asselineau remarks in *The Evolution of Walt Whitman*, "Whitman gradually rose from a rather narrow Americanism to a very broad internationalism which sang the universal brotherhood of men rather than the particular merits of the American nation [as he had initially done]" (132).

[9] See, for instance, Hill 47-48 or Naasgaard 161.

[10] It is just as important to note, however, that the styles, conservative by European standards of the time, were new and modern when placed in a North American context. This became especially evident for the artwork of The Eight during the Armory Show exhibition of 1913 which presented the public with American and European modern art. William Glackens of The Eight acknowledged the difference with his comment, "I am afraid that the American section of this exhibition will seem very tame beside the foreign section" (Perlman 210).

[11] In a five-paragraph forward, Casson devotes one full paragraph to the negative criticism received, writing, "In the early days, and with rare exception, the critics were uniformly unreceptive and unsympathetic to the work of the Group. Many insisted that the members of the Group had invented those northern landscapes […]" (9). The members seem inclined to refer to negative criticism despite their renown, and in doing so support a public view of them as victims of a conservative society.

[12] See Nasgaard 167, and Ried 156 on this issue.

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Modernist Music in the United States and Canada: Ornstein and Weinzweig

Achim Loch

In the aftermath of World War I there were several rival movements in composition in North America. Decades before, American students had flocked to Germany to acquire and enjoy a fundamental education in music; German late-Romanticism was omnipresent. In France, Romanticism in the form of Impressionism had evolved, and such figures as Debussy and Ravel around the *fin de siècle*, and the Second Viennese School set out to invent new forms of composition after the first decade of the new century. Gradually, with the rise of the record industry, Ragtime, Blues, and, of course, Jazz settled as predominant styles of popular music. This music would influence composers such as George Gershwin and Aaron Copland.

While these types of music would be revolutionary in their influence on mainstream music, there remains to be analyzed another school of music which would prove to be just as important in reshaping and challenging the music age of its time, the Ultramodernists. It is this group of individuals and their radical notions of composition, form, and musicality that would ultimately further the development of Modernist music in America and Canada. While the effects of this movement may not have been readily seen or accessed by the public at the time of their creation and implementation, their effect, though short-lived, has been long lasting and continues to resonate in the compositions of later generations of musicians and composers. Here, I am going to discuss the development of Modernist composers in both America and Canada and their impact on the shaping of a specific identity in music and culture. The main focus is on two composers, firstly on Leo Ornstein and two of his piano works, which he wrote between 1913 and 1919, and secondly on John Weinzweig who, in spite of his different approaches, represents a Canadian counterpart.

In the United States, Ornstein triumphed as a piano prodigy and a biography was published by Frederick Martens when he was a mere twenty-six years old ("Leo Ornstein"). Leo Ornstein was born in Russia in 1894 or 1895, where he enjoyed an excellent education and even worked together with Glazunov. The family fled to the United

States in 1907, consequent to revolution and pogroms (Howard 458), and settled in Philadelphia.

> [A]bout the time of World War I, a young Philadelphian of Russian birth named Leo Ornstein drew snorts of indignation from conservative music lovers with his "revolutionary" piano pieces, assailing their ears with alarming discords and publicly proclaiming his renunciation of "form." (Chase 571)

A concert-goer of the 1920s had been well aware of Ornstein's shocking success and his performances when furiously playing *Wild Men's Dance* and *Suicide in an Airplane*.

> It is a good many years since *Leo Ornstein* [*ital.* in the original] (Russia, 1895 [sic!]) ceased to shock concert-goes as the impish youngster who dealt in note-clusters. Today Ornstein has achieved a highly respected niche as a piano teacher in Philadelphia, and he seems content to leave experiments to others. *The Wild Men's Dance* and *À la Chinoise* were the piano pieces which attracted the most attention on his recital programs, but he also has a lengthy list of orchestral works […] (Howard 204)

The Economist recalls, in Leo Ornstein's obituary of 2002 that his "furious music was compared to Futurism, the name given to the painting and writing of an Italian group that aimed to glorify the machine." In fact, in 1913 Luigi Russolo demanded in *The Futurist Manifesto* that "[w]e must break out of this narrow circle of pure musical sounds, and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds" (Sherry 573). The year 1913, it seems, could be called the *annus mirabilis* of Modernist musical thought.

Danse Sauvage, the *Wild Men's Dance*, published in 1915 for piano solo appears to be a rather violent and penetrating piece of music. Time changes are numerous and manifold. A four-eight time signature is followed by a three-sixteen time; amidst a row of measures in eight-eight time, Ornstein changes to a seven-eight time for just one measure, then returns to the quasi-regular three-eight time scheme. Earlier, he uses a single one-eight time measure. The sudden changes indicate changes in time signature, however, not in meter (see Fig. 4).

The overall mood is aggressive; barbaric, yet settled; chaotic, yet ordered; improvised, yet composed. Tight clusters in low, as well as in

the higher ranges, seem to be random. It is important to realize that the music is neither random nor improvised. It ought to be played exactly the way it is written and it is easily understandable that "within a year or two [Ornstein's] piano was suffering grievous bodily harm from such numbers" (*The Economist*). The dynamic and temporal value of each note and of each rest is indicated precisely as, for instance, in the late Romantic tradition. The rhythm is tantalizing, as motifs of eights and thirty-seconds change quickly. In the middle of apparent chaos, Ornstein echoes a waltz. The form is reminiscent of the past, even the introductory preparation is given in the beginning. Before the waltz finally takes off, different time signatures run parallel in three-eights and four-eights (see Fig. 1). The immediate waltz is then stripped from its former Austrian, light-hearted function to amuse (see Fig. 2) and moves into a tribal rhythm. The somehow expected alternating bass cannot be ignored. However, it is the overwhelmingly pure violence and aggressiveness which contribute to the programmatic aspect of this piano music. In the final measures, clusters of eleven notes need to be played fiercely, as the player is instructed to play *forte fortissimo* and at last *fortissimo possibile* (see Fig. 5).

Unlike *Danse Sauvage*, Leo Ornstein's *Suicide in an Airplane* (1919) hardly makes use of dense tone clusters and surprising changes of rhythm. There are multiple, yet to the audience unnoticeable, time signatures. The starting of the propeller, and the sound of the engine, is echoed in an *ostinato* motif of sextuplets in the lower range. Sudden effects of triads in augmented fourth intervals take the listener by surprise and underline the drama of a flight by means of triplets, chromatic runs, and the ubiquitous presence of the initial propeller motif.

On first hearing Leo Ornstein's *Suicide in an Airplane*, the listener might describe his or her experience as aggressive, violent, or even chaotic. In fact, Ornstein's *Suicide* does not merely offer a wide range in sound and volume but also in the usage of intervals and clusters, respectively. Dynamics play a crucial role, since not only careful *pianissimo*, but also fierce *fortissimo possible,* in *Wild Men's Dance,* is expected from the performer. When taking a closer look, *Suicide in an Airplane* unfolds to an outlined thorough composition, thus, the term chaos does not seem appropriate anymore to describe the work. At this point, I am going to take a closer look and examine Ornstein's work

for piano in a bit more detail. Following musicological convention, I will use capital letters to indicate the section, and lower case to indicate a musical phrase (here also referred to as a group). Apostrophes behind such letters indicate a variation of the original, thus *A'* is a varied form of *A*.

In the first section, which I will here assign the letter *A*, Ornstein introduces an *ostinato* motif. It is a sextuple consisting of "c" and "a" small cluster of "C" and "C Sharp" (see Fig. 6). In order to make this idea more tangible, I will call the single sextuplet *ostA* (*ostinato* motif A), since there are more to come. Unnoticeable to the untrained ear, Ornstein puts this *ostA* in a group of nine sextuplets, whereas the first four appear in two-four time, the next three in three-four time, and the final two pairs appear in two-four time again. Eventually, this results in a construction, which looks as follows: *4 (in 2/4) — 3 (in 3/4) plus 2 (in 2/4)*. It is more convenient and logical for the work as a whole to see the latter group of two as a transitional measure, instead of counting them to the group, thus I get seven sextuplets of motif *ostA* in the beginning, which I will refer to as group *a*. While the *ostinato* motif *ostA* continues to move on in the base, the phrase for the right hand changes and varies and the scheme unfolds a rondo: *a-b-a-b-a*; the number of sextuplets can then be grouped like this: *a(7+2)-b(6)-a(7)-b(6)-a(7)*.

The second half of section A is slightly different from the rondo scheme of the first part. Part two starts with a new group *c*, while the motif *ostA* still remains omnipresent. The intervals in group *c* now clearly suggest a downward movement from "B flat" down to "G." The adjoining group can also be regarded as another variation of *a*. As a result, section A allows a structure which is indeed reminiscent of a classical rondo: *a-b-a-b-a-c-a-c-a'-a(abridged)-c-a'-a'-a'(abridged)-a."*

Now having been introduced to the motif *ostA*, sudden effects of triads in augmented fourth take the listener by surprise and underline the drama of a flight with means of triplets, chromatic runs, and the ubiquitous presence of the initial *ostinato* motif *ostA*, which now clearly portrays the propeller of an airplane. Ornstein here presents the tritone chord theme three times, once in the original, the second time as a repetition, and a third time as a variation (see Fig. 7).

The *ostA* prevails throughout the next four-four time passage. As it is fairly short, the passage of section *C* serves perfectly as a

transitional interlude in an extended bar-form, i.e. instead of *a-a-b*, the form could more likely be described as *a-a-a'-a'-b*. Though written in a four-four time signature, the interlude is echoed in section *E* again, this time without the so far omnipresent *ostA*. The signature changes in section E to six-four time and the *ostA* is being replaced by a harsh octaved E flat in the base. Rigid syncopated clusters underline the intensity. Between these sections *C* and *E* lies the not yet discussed section *D*. The *ostA* is now replaced with a different type of an *ostinato* motif, here referred to as *ostB*. The form is a sextuplet similar to *ostA*. The pitch value is, however, simply f natural (see Fig. 8). The upper part in this section is characterized by another downward movement. Again, the quasi melody moves from b to b flat to a and a flat. As a consequence, the variation of section *C*, previously referred to as section *E*, should actually be assigned the letter *C'*.

At this point, the most dramatic and well-ordered structure is about to unfold. The next four sections are intertwined, whereas the actual section *E* (the previous one is now *C'*) echoes as a variation in section *E'*. I shall pause here and provide a little scheme to clarify the situation of the composition. At first sight, the analysis might allow the following division: *A B C D E F G H I A'*. Yet, when taking a closer look at the work, it reveals a composition scheme which more closely resembles this: *A B C D C' E F F' E' A'*.

Section E confronts both performer and listener with another descending motif. Here the movement moves from "a" to "f sharp" and thus forms a sequence to section *D*, where the descending move stopped at "a flat." In section *E'* the descent continues from section *E*, where the movement starts from f sharp and gradually moves down to "C sharp." The direction of a programmatic propeller machine is evident.

Sections *E* and *E'* frame the enclosed sections *F* and *F'*. The thematic composition of those sections is based on a pure bar-form (*aab*) and twelve measures in three-four time each. The frame and the enclosed sections (i.e. *E F F' E'*) are always accompanied by another *ostinato* motif in the bass (i.e. *ostC*, see Fig. 9). Once more the direction is a descending line. The introduction based on *ostA* is resumed and varied in a way that the rhythm slowly changes into a decelerating speed. The piece ends the way it started. Slowly, the sextuplets turn into triplets, eventually they merge into a small cluster

of "C" and "C sharp" and the *morendo* suitably evokes the title of the piece.

Leo Ornstein's career as a radical in modern music was rather short and he soon turned to more conservative music. This is analogous to George Antheil, another composer who passed from the sensational and novel to the comparatively conventional (Sherry 572). Above all, the period of Experimentalism and Radicalism which arose in the wake of World War I, culminated in the 1920s and seemed to have come to an end in the events following Black Friday in 1929. The 1930s were going conservative. The taste of the audience once more shifted to a more traditional and entertaining mode and the high art of radical and experimental music rested for a while. Political events in Europe led many artists and composers to flee to America. It was not until that decade that the Second Viennese School, personified by such composers as Alban Berg and Arnold Schoenberg, came to be known in the United States as well. As pointed out in the first part of this paper, the art of using Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique is mentioned in Cowell's book *New Musical Resources* (1919), yet Cowell himself failed to comprehend how Schoenberg used the technique (Carter 278).

In Canada, Modernist music and its development and understanding were in many ways different. The major founder of the *Canadian League of Composers*, John Weinzweig, was born in Toronto in the same year the *Armory Show* opened in New York City. Weinzweig was still a child when Leo Ornstein shocked the audience with his violent *Wild Men's Dance* and similar performances. One of Weinzweig's later teachers at the University of Toronto was the Englishman Healey Willan who came to Canada in 1913. He became one of Canada's most prominent figures as a composer and organist. His style is rather traditional and conservative. Such a ripe form of romanticism remained his hallmark throughout his life as a teacher and composer. Not astoundingly, contemporaneous developments on the continent at that point did not affect Britain and most of her dependencies as much as they affected the United States. British composer Benjamin Britten, who was of Weinzweig's age, for instance,

> […] could hardly expect to be welcomed by the traditionalist English music establishment. […] When, in 1930, he won a scholarship from the Royal College of Music to travel abroad, his

> idea of using the money to study composition with Alban Berg in Vienna met with total incomprehension and his application was turned down out of hand. (Kluge 9)

John Weinzweig, then, could thus be looking forward to spending some time in the States. Having studied in Toronto, Weinzweig moved on to the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where he had been introduced to Schoenberg's idea of dodecaphony. He is regarded as the first Canadian composer who used that technique in an original work in Canada's history of music (Henninger 230). John Weinzweig received his B.A. in 1937. By then he had already been recognized as a talent. In his freshman year he founded the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Howard Hanson, then director of the well-known Eastman School of Music at Rochester, encouraged Weinzweig to enroll in graduate studies. Weinzweig had most likely shown him his compositions previously. The school was more progressive than the University of Toronto in those days. Modern and contemporary music was not offered as a course, but the Eastman School offered twentieth-century music (van Eyk; Keillor). The music, John Weinzeig was about to learn, was not yet accepted in Toronto. Had he not been able to attend such a school, Weinzweig's career might have been similar to that of Benjamin Britten.

After completing his studies, Weinzweig returned to Toronto where he introduced his newly acquired techniques in his classes. Motivic usage and rhythmic force and diversity caught his attention in the works of Alban Berg and Igor Stravinsky. Rhythm and motif were about to become key elements of his compositions (van Eyk; Keillor).

> Throughout most of his music, Weinzweig's style is characterized by clear, often thin, textures and lucid form with strong motivic organization, usually serially derived. His music exhibits unrelenting rhythmic drive, frequent sharp dissonance, and a peripheral reliance on tonality. His melodies can be either angular or lyric. The general effect of his music can be either light and witty or warm and moving.
>
> Weinzweig's music is almost entirely instrumental. The bulk of it is for orchestral and chamber ensembles. The size of his orchestra rarely exceeds that of Mozart. (Henninger 231)

Mozart's scores do not demand orchestras as large in size as, e.g. orchestras of the late Romantic age. According to Elaine Keillor, "One of the reasons why Weinzweig decided to use chamber ensembles rather than full orchestra for most of his post-1950 compositions was because of the difficulty of getting performances in Canada, although works by Weinzweig had received some performances in New York, Prague and England."

Furthermore, Keillor continuesWeinzweig's twelve-note technique, like Riegger's, is not constructed in the manner of Schoenberg's Second Viennese School. Weinzweig uses his rows for melodic invention, "which is applied in such a way that it more resembles the baroque technique of 'Fortspinnung'" (Henninger 232). In his flute divertimento (*Divertimento No. 1*, 1946), which won the highest medal awarded at the 1948 Olympics for Chamber Music category, the composer chooses a different row for each movement and the overall effect of his rhythm is one of energy and vitality (Henninger 232; Keillor; van Eyk). The music is incredibly lyrical, witty, and lighthearted.

> In all his works, qualities that have characterized Weinzweig's music since 1939 are evident: clarity of texture; economy of material; rhythmic energy; tight motivic organization, usually but not slavishly controlled through serialist techniques; short melodic outbursts contrasted with long flowing lines; and harmonies which, though often severe, never fully lose their tonal orientation. (van Eyk)

Weinzweig's preoccupation with Canada's landscapes led to a fruitful musical expression. He was able to combine relevant folk tunes with specific characters and their historical situation, all influenced by a twelve-tone technique, motivic composition and rhythmic devices which he encountered and learned while at Eastman (Keillor).

John Weinzweig's *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1941) had been written in the romantic tradition of salon music. The structure reflects Weinzweig's studies of the Second Viennese School and is far more atonal than his later work *Divertimento No. 1* for flute and strings. However, due to the motival structure and the usage of spinning a theme along a given context, the music could have been written a hundred years earlier. It is Weinzweig's very conscious usage of an

enhanced tonality that grants the piece a contemporary character. In his oeuvre, form habitually remains what it had been a century ago, while the audible fiber simultaneously conveys his preoccupation with European, yet not necessarily American, role-models. Larry Weinstein created a documentary film on the composer that premiered in 1989. He adopted the phrase "Radical Romantic" for his title — a nickname for Weinzweig (van Eyk; Keillor). While Weinzweig is a clear radical, he keeps on being a faithful romantic composer at the same time.

> [The term] 'Radical Romantic' emphasizes key aspects of what defined Weinzweig's aesthetic: a championing of advanced, new, and often unpopular styles and methods in his compositions […]. (van Eyk)

A teacher for music at the University of Toronto, Weinzweig was able to introduce contemporary techniques, like those of Alban Berg, Arnold Schoenberg, and Béla Bartók, to "a few sympathetic colleagues and students," thus generating a "group of like-minded composers" he encouraged. A composer of many awards and an influential Canadian teacher, John Weinzeig died only a few months after his ninety-third birthday.

> The University of Toronto Faculty of Music regretfully announces the death of Professor Emeritus John Weinzweig, who passed away peacefully on the evening of Thursday, August 24, 2006. ("The Faculty of Music")

Elliott Carter once critically observed that the obvious end of the Modernist movement in the United States had been caused by a merger of the *League of Composers* and the *ISCM* (276). Nonetheless, for almost any American and Canadian composer of the *entre-deux-guerres* period "[…] 'tonality' and 'atonality' were not purely central theoretical and stylistic issues, as they were for many European composers at the time. Americans [along with Canadians], of course, had no long-standing native tradition of tonal art music to react toward or against" (Nicholls 472), thus Modernism only appeared to have ended abruptly. In fact, its continuance in mainstream classical music would result in a revival, in a re-noticing, of Modernist music in post-war America.

With the ending of World War II, Europe again became accessible for eager American and Canadian composers alike. European composers, such as Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Bartók, now themselves expatriates, moved and settled in America. However, many young and talented Americans were seeking further contacts in Europe and quickly pursued their own paths. Studying with one of the European expatriates in the States remained merely an episode. New musical worlds were about to be discovered (Briner 91).

> Schoenberg showed music's materials to be products of particular practices by particular people und particular circumstances: they are socially and historically relative, not immutable or absolute. Music's supposedly natural foundations, then, are not natural after all, only conventional. […] Music is not a natural whole, but a collection of human practices without any essential core. (Bowman 330)

The Ultramodernist school of American music was more active at an earlier stage of Modernism, when avant-garde art was more progressive and accepted and often performed within one year of a work's completion. In the 1930s the Boston composers started dominating the musical stage with more traditional styles of music, though influences of Jazz and Blues were remarkable. The development of modernist music stopped suddenly. Had the country not been struck with the consequences of Black Friday, and had the success of the Boston Concert series not prevailed, the development of the Ultramodernist school would certainly have been different. Record sales also indicate a high interest in modern music at that point in time, thus the widely expressed idea of a refusal to accept Schoenberg's twelve tone technique in the United States and Canada is merely hypothetical (Carter 277 *passim*). After Ornstein's withdrawal from public life, musical Modernism reinvented itself in given traditional forms. While the Ultramodernist school of music holds a small chapter in the annals of the history of music, its place, nonetheless, is still to be highly regarded.

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Thematic Index to Leo Ornstein's *Wild Men's Dance* and *Suicide in an Airplane*

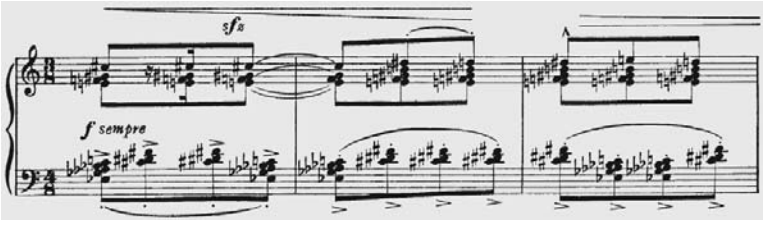

Fig. 1 Leo Ornstein, *Danse Sauvage* [*Wild Men's Dance*], different time signatures (3/8 and 4/8) running parallel

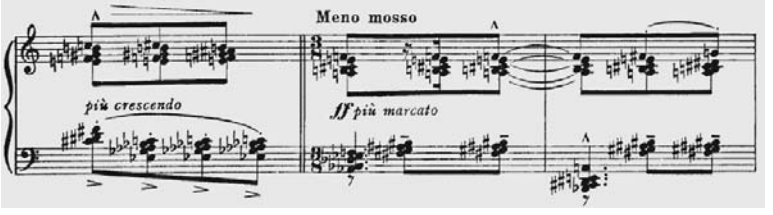

Fig. 2 Leo Ornstein, *Danse Sauvage* [*Wild Men's Dance*], beginning of the "waltz" with alternating bass and clustered melodious structure

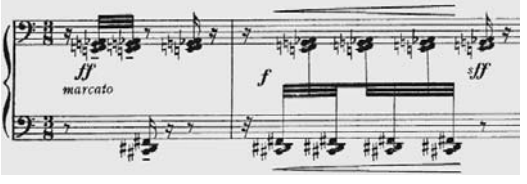

Fig. 3 Leo Ornstein, *Danse Sauvage* [*Wild Men's Dance*], motif occuring in *Danse Sauvage*, simliar to the *ostA*-motif in *Suicide* (see **Fig. 6**)

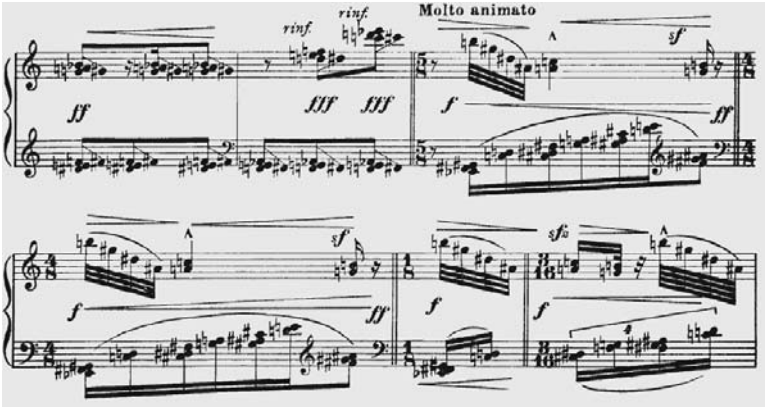

Fig. 4 Leo Ornstein, *Danse Sauvage* [*Wild Men's Dance*], excerpt showing the change of time signature and several descending arpeggio motifs

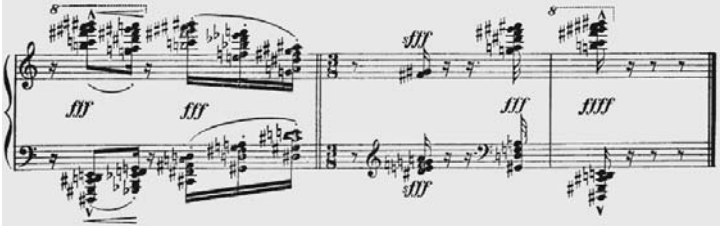

Fig. 5 Leo Ornstein, *Danse Sauvage* [*Wild Men's Dance*],
final measures instructing the player to play *forte fortissimo* to *fortissimo possibile*

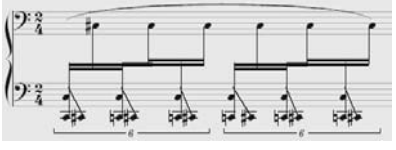

Fig. 6 Leo Ornstein, *Suicide in an Airplane*, ostinato motif *A* (*ostA*)

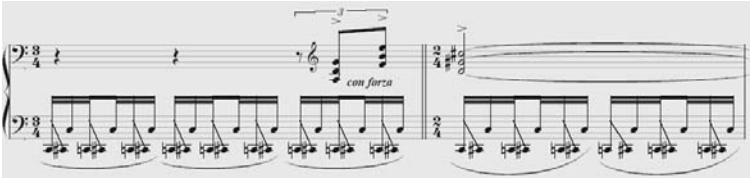

Fig. 7 Leo Ornstein, *Suicide in an Airplane*, tritone theme at the beginning of section *B*

Fig. 8 Leo Ornstein, *Suicide in an Airplane*, ostinato motif *B* (*ostB*)

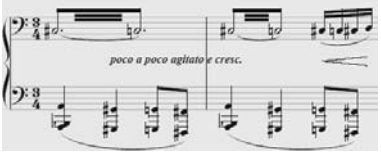

Fig. 9 Leo Ornstein, *Suicide in an Airplane*, ostinato motif in base (*ostC*)

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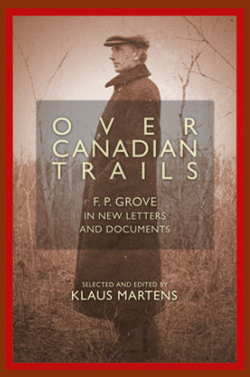

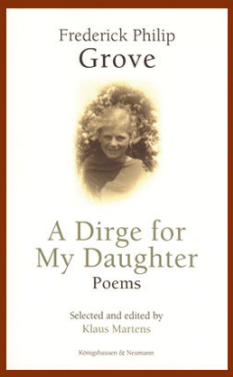

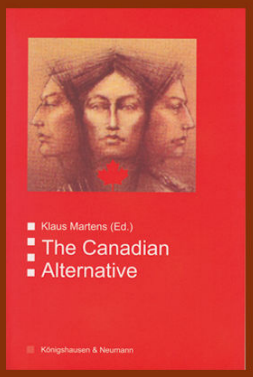

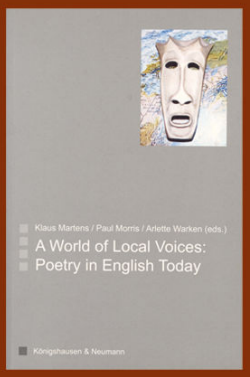

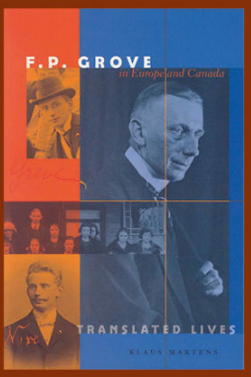

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