

LANDSCAPE IMAGES IN
SELECTED CANADIAN PROSE

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations refer to the editions of the texts listed in the Bibliography:

<u>Ag</u>	<u>Agaguk</u>
<u>AMMH</u>	<u>As For Me and My House</u>
<u>B of Can</u>	<u>The Backwoods of Canada</u>
<u>Bl. R</u>	<u>Black Rock</u>
<u>DH</u>	<u>The Double Hook</u>
<u>FF</u>	<u>The Forge in the Forest</u>
<u>HAW</u>	<u>The Heart of the Ancient Wood</u>
<u>Imp.</u>	<u>The Imperialist</u>
<u>M and V</u>	<u>The Mountain and the Valley</u>
<u>OPT</u>	<u>Over Prairie Trails</u>
<u>RITB</u>	<u>Roughing It in the Bush</u>
<u>SA</u>	<u>The Stone Angel</u>
<u>SuS:</u>	<u>Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town</u>
<u>SS</u>	<u>The Swallower Swallowed</u>
<u>SwA</u>	<u>Swamp Angel</u>
<u>Wac</u>	<u>Wacousta</u>
<u>WNWH</u>	<u>Where Nests the Water Hen</u>
<u>WHSW</u>	<u>Who Has Seen the Wind</u>
<u>WG</u>	<u>Wild Geese</u>
<u>Y of L</u>	<u>The Yoke of Life</u>

Part I:

DICHOTOMY TO DIALECTIC

INTRODUCTION

In his "Conclusion" to Literary History of Canada,¹ Northrop Frye pioneered a thesis about the antagonism between culture and nature, and about the complex tensions which arise from the impact of the sophisticated and the primitive on each other, as these occur as consistent themes in a good deal of our literature. While this essay gave new direction and vigour to critical writing on Canadian works generally, Frye himself has not, to date, published any extended discussion of his own thesis. What one awaits is a book or series of articles which, employing an inductive critical method, would examine a range of specific texts, prose, fiction and poetry, in illustration and support of Frye's original impressions--much as Douglas Jones has done in his provocative Butterfly on Rock.² As it stands, the thirty page "Conclusion" is a bush garden of insights and suggestions, seemingly deserted by the gardener and left for others to prune and cultivate at will.

¹Carl F. Klinck, gen. ed., Literary History of Canada, revised edition; University of Toronto Press, 1970.

²Douglas Jones, Butterfly on Rock; University of Toronto Press, 1970.

Frye chose as the nodal concept of his thesis a particular literary preoccupation which had been noted by many critics and commentators before him--the dichotomous Canadian landscape, a vast geographical entity within which centres of culture and civilization on the one hand, and 'nature' and surrounding tracts of 'wilderness' on the other are psychologically ranged against each other. He argued that the complex of tensions between culture and nature manifest in much Canadian writing is the dramatisation of a garrison culture and garrison mentality confronting a hostile wilderness.

Small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological "frontier", separated from one another and from their American and British cultural sources; communities that provide all that their members have in the way of distinctly human values, and that are compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that holds them together, yet confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting--such communities are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality . . . A garrison is a closely knit and beleaguered society, and its moral and social values are unquestionable. In a perilous enterprise one does not discuss causes or motives: one is either a fighter or a deserter.³

This 'garrison mentality' attempts to keep the surrounding wilderness at bay while holding it in fear.

I have long been impressed in Canadian poetry by a tone of deep terror in regard to nature, a theme

³Northrop Frye, "Conclusion", Literary History of Canada, gen. ed. Carl F. Klinck (revised edition; University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 830.

to which we shall return. It is not a terror of the dangers of discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest. The human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is to preserve its integrity or even its sanity, yet the vast unconsciousness of nature in front of it seems an unanswerable denial of those values.⁴

The members of the garrison society unite in their attempt to conquer, or at least shut out, nature's lawless threat to man's design for living, the design of social structures, laws, taboos and organizations, by which society operates. So, the garrison culture mobilizes its aptitude for erecting (one is tempted to say 'imposing' in this context) restrictive structures, prohibitions and defences, and puts into effect a 'fencing-out' strategy against nature by, in Frye's words, "conquering the landscape and imposing an alien and abstract pattern on it."⁵ It is this patterned landscape that I will examine in Part I--the geographic landscape, centres of civilisation and communication routes as well as prairies, forests, rivers, transfigured into a literary and metaphoric landscape, and the psychological-symbolic dichotomy embodied in an archetypal landscape which is both the impetus to and the end product of this process of transfiguration. Finally, I will evolve a detailed interpretation of John Richardson's *Wacousta* as a specific symbolic use of the archetypal landscape.

⁴Ibid.

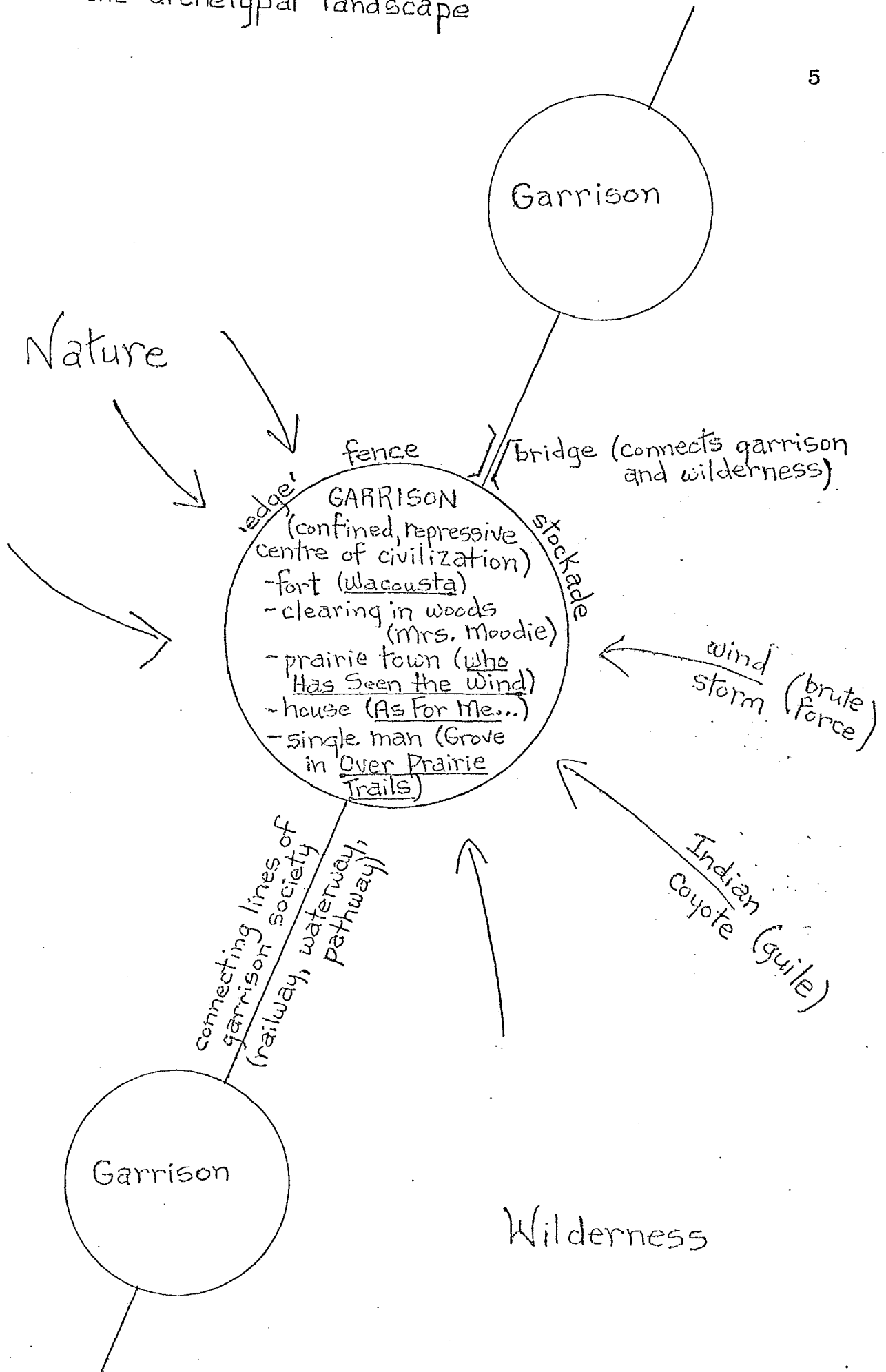
⁵Ibid., p. 846.

AN ARCHETYPAL LANDSCAPE

There is an archetypal landscape in Canadian fiction, a basic geographic pattern which appears in novel after novel, adapted by writers to their particular concerns, like a myriad of variations spun out from a central motif. Perhaps it is this recurrent image, and the themes which it amplifies, that give a focus and surprising consistency to so much of our prose literature. Our novelists and essayists frequently place at the centre of their works a landscape composed of the elements of small, self-protective social organism (whether it be a fort or clearing in the woods, a small town or single house or isolated man), linked to similar organisms (by waterway, pathway or railway), and surrounded by an alien, limitless and impinging wilderness (most typically forest, prairie or tundra). These are the major elements of the landscape I want to discuss, with the supplementary patterns of 'edge', 'horizon' and 'bridge'. But it is impossible to reproduce here in full the method by which one realizes the archetype, a long, slow inductive process involving detailed examination of a great many novels and other prose works. So, the method will be taken for granted and space devoted to an examination of the functions of these landscape elements as they occur in various works, and

the archetypal landscape

5



of their validity as archetypes.

The keyword to describe the archetypal landscape is 'dichotomy', for the land has evolved in the imagination of many artists as a vast entity which houses antipathetic elements--self-contained clearings of civilization inscribed into an unexplored and vast wilderness. Two forces have worked on the land to effect the final pattern. One of these forces is natural and has designed the geography of our country--the geological thrust and rift of rock, the movements of glaciers, the reshaping effects of wind, snow and rain; the other force is an imposition--man burrowing into the wilderness, claiming corners of the land for himself and superimposing patterns of civilization on the original face of the land. Why the patterns of man's society should be an imposition on the land follows naturally from an attitude taken by him to the land. This attitude is symbolized in the landscape which, in Edward McCourt's words, "combines a selection of existing physical features with others created to suit the author's particular intent".⁶

Because man has burrowed into the land, depositing his encapsulated settlements along rivers and pathways, the wilderness appears to threaten to engulf him; mountains and forests rise on every side of the fort and pioneer cabin,

⁶Edward A. McCourt, The Canadian West in Fiction (revised edition; Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1970), p. 108.

while prairie and tundra, limitless to the human eye, encircle many small towns and northern dwellings. Frye notes this psychological-physical phenomenon in "Conclusion":

But Canada has, for all practical purposes, no Atlantic seaboard. The traveller from Europe edges into it like a tiny Jonah entering an inconceivably large whale, slipping past the Straits of Belle Isle into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where five Canadian provinces surround him, for the most part invisible. Then he goes up the St. Lawrence and the inhabited country comes into view, mainly a French-speaking country, with its own cultural tradition. To enter the United States is a matter of crossing an ocean; to enter Canada is a matter of being silently swallowed up by an alien continent.⁷

One gets something of this effect, minus the claustrophobia implied in Frye's description, in the opening sections of Roughing It in the Bush and The Backwoods of Canada, when the ships that carry the Strickland sisters from England become slowly absorbed into the wilderness. Here the experience is a novel and mostly pleasurable one, but even the genial Mrs. Traill will later speak of her years "buried in the solitude of the Canadian woods" (B of C, 21). And the recalcitrant Mrs. Moodie will cry with dismay at the sight of her new home, "a miserable hut at the bottom of a deep descent", plunged into a short path cut through the woods "and surrounded on all sides by the dark forest" (RITB, 68). At some point in her narrative she refers to her clearing as "a tomb". One is reminded of Berenice Einberg's cry from

⁷Frye, op. cit., p. 824.

her island dystopia, "I thought I'd come into a world, but I'd come into a sarcophagus" (SS, 72). Similar images in other works are not so despairing, though they catch the menace felt by those buried in the wilds: the scraggly community of The Double Hook lives tucked "in the folds of the hills under Coyote's eye" (DH, 19); the English fort in Wacousta is hemmed in by the dark encircling forest and is encroached upon by hideous savages. The small prairie towns of Who Has Seen the Wind and As For Me and My House, crouching low to the land, almost hugging it and retreating from prairie in upon themselves, are hung up lost in immensity. One remembers Roy Daniells' Winnipeg, "the snow-bright city/ Set in the prairie distance without bound/ Profound and fathomless, encompassed round/ By the wind-haunted country and wide winter" ("Farewell to Winnipeg"). In Ralph Connor's Black Rock, "the clearing in which the camp stood was hewn out of a dense pine forest that filled the valley" around which "the mountains rose grandly on every side" (Bl.R., 10), a locale similar to that in The Mountain and the Valley, or to the "deep-bosomed land" of The Forge in the Forest protected by the Great Cape of Blomidon (FF, 11).

The garrison community is not only hemmed in, it is exposed to the forces of nature. Luzina's house on Little Water Hen island is "bare to the four winds of heaven"; the wind thrusts at the door and coyotes howl not very far from

where she sits in her living room.

The Tousignant dwelling, with its thick walls, its squat length, its small windows near the ground, was the first house the northwest gale encountered on its journey from the North Pole. The gale belaboured it furiously, as though there were some absolute need to make an example of this spearhead of man's encroachment which, were the wind to leave it alone, would tomorrow find reinforcement, sturdier means of resistance. (WNWH, 93)

This theme of nature's revenge on the garrison is a continuous theme. The weapons used against the garrison are significantly guile and cunning: the Coyote "who made the land his pastime" and whose ever looming presence in The Double Hook as the cosmic joker instils fear in the community while it makes a mockery of any human effort; Wacousta and his Indians who batter away at the English fortress through surprise attacks and breathlessly audacious displays of deceit and cunning, as in the lacrosse plot or the flagstaff episode; the sneak attacks by wolves and panther on Kirstie Craig's cabin in the heart of an ancient wood. More often the weakness of the defense is exposed by the use of brute force--the elemental storms of Over Prairie Trails, The Double Hook, Who Has Seen the Wind and As For Me and My House. The oppression that hangs like a numbing weight in the atmosphere of Horizon and in the minds of its townspeople, and threatens to crack the cool façade of false fronts, finds causes and analogues in the oppressive heat, choking dust storms and unnerving stillness visited upon them. In Mitchell's novel, Bent Candy has

his new barn levelled for daring to oppose Saint Sammy, nature's mad visionary. Infrequently the garrison is crushed in this way; more often it turns a brave front to the assault of the seasons, and shows few casualties (HAW, 19).

Besides being hemmed in by the wilderness and exposed to the elements, the garrison is dwarfed by the surrounding land. Luzina's island exists in a country "remote in its meloncholy region of lakes and wild waterfowl, an uninhabited wilderness of moving grass, wind and skimpy fir trees, spreading northward to infinity" (WNWH, viii). And northwards from this are "the region's uttermost habitations, just at the edge of the everlasting tundra" (WNWH, 31). The effect of this in Luzina's mind is to visualize her family huddled together, "one minute spot against the widest and most deserted of the world's horizons" (WNWH, 17). The Saskatchewan prairie of Ross's and Mitchell's worlds stretches tan to the far line of the sky and houses a silence that stretches "from everlasting to everlasting" (WHSW, 247). The towns themselves are mere spots hung up lost in immensity. From the plane flying high above the northland, Agaguk's hut is "a tiny excrescence on the tundra, like a mole hill" (Ag, 8).

. . . where Agaguk lived it was not yet the Arctic, and it was not the forest either. It was beyond the tree line, beyond the Laurentian shield, on the infinite tundra, land of changelessness. (Ag, 10)

The immensity of the land, Nature's unpredictable shifts of mood, her impingement on man's dwelling--all contribute

to man's sense of being lost and vulnerable in an alien landscape. So, man retaliates by tightening his control over himself and the piece of land he has filched from nature, and by setting up a chain of garrison command to surround the wilderness.

In most novels, particularly early novels like The Man From Glengarry and the works of Mrs. Moodie and Grove, the forces which throw people together and cause them to erect barriers around the community and ultimately around themselves are not merely the forces of social cohesion--ethnic, cultural, religious links with the old world, the common heritage of settlers which can be used to forge community bonds in a frontier society. The ultimate bond which binds every community is that forged in defence as a protection against the external forces of nature. Yves Thériault, the Québec novelist, has said in interview,

I am interested in people who struggle to survive. Having lived for many years in the Canadian wilderness, having myself experienced harrowing poverty, I believe I understand the human condition when it is driven by bitter geography into a corner.⁸

A garrison community is man driven by "bitter geography into a corner" and locked in upon himself. Within the 'charmed circle' of the garrison rages the struggle of a tightly knit group to form a community in the wilderness, "to preserve its identity, its customs, and the practise of its intense

⁸Yves Thériault, Time (March 29, 1971), p. 8.

and narrow beliefs when under pressure from indifferent or hostile outside forces",⁹ which forces may be other social groups or an impinging and seemingly malevolent Nature. As Frye, Jones, McCourt and others have pointed out, this is a basic and universal plot conflict. The first act of man's retaliation is to establish well defined boundaries to his existence, to inscribe into the landscape a 'charmed circle' within which he feels protected from malevolent powers. Ramparts (Wacousta), fences (The Double Hook), walls of a house (As For Me and My House or The Stone Angel), the walls of a forest around a clearing (Heart of the Ancient Wood), or merely the concept of 'edge' (Who Has Seen the Wind) all mark off 'garrison' from 'wilderness'. They are symbolic of the limitations of the garrison's horizons as opposed to the seeming infinity of wilderness; they stand for the garrison's taboos and prejudices, its narrow systems of belief, conduct and social structure. All garrisons are like Maggie Lloyd's cabin in the mountains, "a safe small world enclosing her" (SWA, 32). In Ralph Connor's Black Rock, the self-professed "personal liberty" of bush-men like Idaho Jack and Slavin is viewed by the community for what it is, a senseless and destructive renegade approach to life--the worst aspects of Wacousta devoid of the glory of his energy and imagination. When the members of such communities as Black Rock or Elgin

⁹McCourt, op. cit., p. 80.

or Horizon define strict boundaries to their values and systems of belief, they are creating defense mechanisms against those subversive, chaotic forces they recognize in man and which, in their response to the land, they place symbolically in the unexplored wilderness. One of these defense mechanisms that Mr. Craig's logging community establishes for itself is the creation of a total abstinence League, opposed by Idaho and Slavin, whose end is certain social, religious and economic controls over individuals and the community at large. Its major effect is the rise of intolerance in the village. Idaho Jack, as much as we may dislike what he stands for, makes a nice point about "the new public opinion in favour of respectability created by the league" (Bl.R., 135):

. . . the whole town was going to unmentionable depths of propriety. The organization of the league was regarded by (Idaho) and by many others as a sad retrograde towards the bondage of the ancient and dying East . . . He was shocked and disgusted when he discovered that a 'gun' was decreed by British law to be an unnecessary adornment of a card table . . . (and of the fact of) Policeman Jackson, her Majesty's representative in the Black Rock district. (Bl.R., 135f)

Exactly this kind of rigidity and bondage to Europe, and the hatred, suspicion and intolerance they effect are the causes for the human tragedy that occurs halfway through the novel: the first half of Black Rock is virtually a casebook in how to form a frontier garrison society. In the second part, where Graeme and Craig speculate on the reasons for the break-

up of Black Rock, Connor moves into a gentler, less evangelical vision of the relationship between society and nature. Graeme, like Mrs. Moodie, is an incipient misfit figure who is outgrowing the garrison vision when the novel ends. As he slowly discovers the beauty and potency of his own imagination, Graeme's response to the land is an awakening to nature, endowing it with imaginative qualities, but stopping short of viewing it as a metaphor for human experience. He longs to pierce the garrison walls and roam in the wilderness. This is a problem I will discuss in later sections.

When garrison man has laid claim to a section of the land--'staking off one's horizons' is the way Grove puts it (OPT, 51),--he attempts to impose order within the confines he has sectioned off. Gabrielle Roy illustrates this process in Where Nests the Water Hen. One of the schoolteachers that comes to Luzina's island wilderness is the loyalist Miss O'Rourke who experiences annoyance or discomfort in every aspect of nature. In one incident she has an English flag raised to fly over the clearing. "Beyond question", muses Luzina, "it would help to define an area which otherwise might have passed for unexplored" (WNWH, 64). Along with the British flag go British customs and a tyranny that is barely kept in check by the Tousignants. Luzina herself has a need to order, but she finds an outlet by telling herself stories "for the pleasure of resolving them at the end and

of seeing everything rightly ordered in her heart" (WNWH, 49). In this respect she is an artist and should be considered with Grove, David Canaan and the Bentleys rather than Miss O'Rorke. The attempt to impose rigid order on nature which is included in the attempt to order and control the land won over from the wilderness is a misplaced use of order. Symbolically it is, of course, an attempt to resist or suppress man's natural tendencies to imagination, passion or even chaos, where these forces might better be harnessed and explored. It is in this sense that the patterns of garrison society are an imposition on the landscape. Agaguk is punished by nature for attempting to transcend and encompass the elements.

"The wind", he cried. "It is stronger than I am.
 Nothing must be stronger than I am."
 He repeated it, his body trembling.
 "You hear me? Nothing!"

This defiance of nature has a nice contrast in a passage from As For Me and My House:

The wind was too strong for Philip or the choir,
 but Judith scaled it when she sang alone again
 before the closing hymn.

The rest of us, I think, were vaguely and secretly
 a little afraid. The strum and whimper were wear-
 ing on our nerves. But Judith seemed to respond
 to it, to ride up with it, feel it the way a singer
 feels and orchestra. (AMMH, 38)

Judith has bypassed the need to regulate or to impose; like Luzina's storytelling, her singing is an art which expresses her gentleness, imagination and freedom of soul, and which

discovers a harmony between herself and the natural force of wind.

The debate between the compulsion to order and the need to harmonize finds one of its most powerful and intricate expressions in Canadian letters in Réjean Ducharme's The Swallower Swallowed. Berenice Einberg is pulled two ways:

This is what I have to do to be free: swallow everything, spread out over everything, engulf everything, impose my rule on everything, from the stone of every peach to the centre of the earth itself. (SS, 134)

I'm up on a mound and there I stay, watching, waiting. Waiting for the ringing of the leaves and the warmth of the wind to take full possession of me. Waiting to be completely dissolved in the wind and the leaves. (SS, 15)

Berenice ultimately decides that this second experience ('harmony with nature') is merely 'being controlled', 'being swallowed', losing all self identity, and she sets out to swallow everything before it swallows her. A major reason, suggested by Ducharme, why she views 'harmony' as 'being controlled' is her inability to pierce behind the work-a-day reality and perceive another reality living behind it. She is surrounded by people with an ability to transform experience through imagination: Constance Chlour can make MacLeish's poetry "taste like maple syrup or barley sugar" which same poems leave a sour smell and sick feeling when Berenice reads them herself (SS, 126); Decamel envisions a submerged city in her drink of brandy where Berenice sees

only the bottom of the glass (SS, 91); Christian reveals things through his love and when she is with him Berenice vicariously experiences what radiates behind the surfaces (SS, 27f.). Her cry halfway through the novel might stand for that of many figures in the novels we have been looking at--for Luzina Tousignant, for Agaguk, for Brian O'Connell and David Canaan and Mrs. Bentley, for Maggie Lloyd, for Grove:

if imagination and will are applied to the appearances of life, it's possible for thought to become ecstatic, intoxicating. And this possibility is marvellously fertile, various and rich: it offers a thousand solutions to loneliness and fear.

(SS, 127)

This is the knowledge on which Berenice cannot act; she is too tightly ensconced in Einberg's control, in the tyranny of order and patriarchal concerns.

Einberg exercises tyrannical control over Berenice in the way that most patriarchal figures place themselves in the leadership of their garrison and exert control over it. John Elliott, of Grove's Our Daily Bread, steers through life with a "single purpose" that "co-ordinated all things for him". He does not know that life cannot be explained by or confined to a system of scientific co-ordinates. His children rebel against him, as James rebels against the despotism of old lady Potter, she who would fish "if the reeds had dried up and the banks folded and crumbled down".

If God had come into the valley, come holding out the long finger of salvation, moaning in the darkness, thundering down the gap at the lakehead, skimming across the water, drying-up the blue signature like blotting-paper, asking where, asking why, defying an answer, she would have thrown her line against the rebuke. (DH, 20)

This kind of coolness and persistent defiance of forces antagonistic to the garrison is a characteristic of the English commander, Colonel de Haldimar, "all coldness, prudence, obsequiousness and forethought" (Wac, 250); of the despicably complacent and self-important Edward Vardoe (Swamp Angel); of the formidable Miss O'Rorke (Where Nests the Water Hen), Mrs. Abercrombie (Who Has Seen the Wind), Mrs. Finley (As For Me and My House), the self-righteous women who run things, "austere, beyond reproach, a little grim with the responsibilities of self-assumed leadership--inevitable as broken sidewalks and rickety false fronts" (AMMH,). All of these attempt an iron rule over their community or household. Wild Geese combines the controlling forces of nature and those of the family. At the centre stands Caleb Gare, limited and morose, the harsh, tyrannical patriarchal earth-figure, attempting to control his family as he controls his land, one man personifying the garrison mentality against which the next generation struggles for freedom.

One of the controls invented by the garrison and superimposed on the natural landscape is the 'pathway'.

This is the garrison sensibility at its most vulnerable, stretched thin across the wilderness, exposed to the elements. Grove is vulnerable on the road in Over Prairie Trails, young Dave on the forest trail in Heart of the Ancient Wood, Captain de Haldimar and Valletort on the trails and river in Wacousta. In these novels, storms, wild animals and Indians are the respective forces of nature that attack the pathways just as they attack the garrison itself. Again, nature appears to be revenging itself on man's imposition. A comment by Capt. Erskine illuminates the reason for this:

. . . more than once in the course of our progress through the wilderness did I wish myself at headquarters with my company. Never shall I forget the proud and determined expression of Pontiac's countenance when he told (Major) Rogers in his figurative language, 'he stood in the path in which he travelled'. (Wac., 109)

Pontiac, as a representative of nature, finds his movement inhibited by the English garrison. A similar image occurs in The Forge in the Forest, but here Marc, an ally of nature with his woodcraft, finds himself "an obstacle in (the) path" of the Black Abbe, who represents treacherous garrison forces (FF, 21). The path is also a metaphor for the 'limited' aspect of the garrison--the straight and narrow way, the paths of righteousness. One recalls Edward Vardoe "who walked with prim quick steps along the shabby sidewalk" (Sw.A., 25); the soldiers of Fort Detroit in "their limited walk, crossing each other at regular intervals" (Wac, 4); the "narrow circuit which Miranda was allowed to tread" (HAW, 93).

Garrison man keeps to the paths; iconoclasts do not. Iconoclasts look to the horizon, are imaginatively touched by the beauty, or the strength, or the mystery of what they see, and wander off into the wilderness. In the last line of Who Has Seen the Wind, Brian O'Connell is staring "out and out to the far line of the sky", searching for the feeling of culmination and completion that invigorates him. In a moment of clear-light at the end of Morley Callaghan's Such is My Beloved, Father Dowling realizes a peace within himself, a steadfast love, as he watches "the calm, eternal water swelling darkly against the one streak of light, the cold night light on the skyline". Mrs. Bentley, staring out to where the sun went down and to some clouds which had been lost in the daylight "come out on the sky in bright little flecks of red and gold like the incredible clouds young artists sometimes paint, dreams of escape from false fronts, and oppressed imagination in the daily routine of doing, living" (AMMH, 23). Finally, one might cite Agaguk's experience.

On the western horizon he could see the gold band of the midnight sun, the eternal light. (Ag, 8).

. . . on the western horizon where lies the long golden ribbon that never vanishes entirely and that bathes the tundra in a phantasmagoric half-light. (Ag, 25)

Agaguk follows the vision into the desolate tundra and emerges "so gentle, so good, so generous", endowed with "new

found happiness, of sudden and tremendous joy" (229), yet aware of the highly paradoxical nature of freedom.

The scheme of interconnected garrisons is like a great web thrown over the landscape by man: a chain of forts along the waterways, backwoods communities linked by trails, small towns bound together by a network of railways. Edward McCourt describes them as "settlements clinging like ugly nodules along the stem which nourishes them."¹⁰ Rivers, highways and railroads are means of transportation and communication for isolated communities or houses. Often, like the river in Wacousta or the trail in Heart of the Ancient Wood, they are essential to the survival of the garrison chain. More significantly in the culture-nature struggle, the entire garrison complex seems intent to surround and contain the wilderness:

Now there are pre-words,
Cabin syllables,
Nouns of settlements
Slowly forming, with steel syntax,
The long sentence of its exploitation.

(F. R. Scott, "Laurentian Shield")

"Why did (the Saganaw) take our hunting ground from us?" Pontiac asks Colonel de Haldimar. "Why have they strong places encircling the country of the Indians like a belt of wampum round the waist of a warrior?" (Wac, 118). Colonel de Haldimar's reply is an evasion of the question. Mythically,

¹⁰Ibid., p. 10.

the answer is---"merely another gambit in the garrisons's attempt to impose inappropriate order on nature".

Before ending this discussion of the garrison and the landscape patterns it evolves, one might consider a passage from Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist which pulls together a number of these themes and images. The debate is between Hugh Finlay, representing garrison man in this passage, and Advena Murchison. Both characters imagine Canada to be freed "from old habits, inherited problems", to be "in a fresh start . . . on the straight road as a nation, in most respects", without "any picturesque old prescribed lanes to travel" (Imp., 110). This shift of image from "old prescribed lanes" to "straight road" is nicely ironic; Canada, like Elgin, has not broken the garrison mold; there are still prescribed paths to be defined and followed which have their roots in European tradition. This is garrison Elgin, commented on by Duncan from the point of view of church-going:

It was the normal thing, the thing which formed the backbone of life, sustaining to the serious, impressive to the light, indispensable to the rest, and the thing that was more than any of these, which you can only know when you stand in the churches among the congregations. Within its prescribed limitations, it was for many the intellectual exercise, for more the emotional lift, and for all the unfailing distraction of the week. The repressed magnetic excitement in gatherings of familiar faces, fellow beings bound by the same convention to the same kind of behavior, is precious in communities where the human interest is still thin and sparse. (Imp.,)

At the level of will and conscious effort, Hugh Finlay's

vision is "only political, economic, material", only for the prescribed limitations and binding conventions. When he points out the advantages of the Canadian environment to Advena, he says, "You might put down space--elbow room". Again, the ironic implications of the image Hugh chooses reveal his 'garrison' concerns. In a great unexplored continent, in a 'limitless wilderness', Hugh's conception of 'space' is 'elbow room'--confined and defined space--Elgin locked in upon itself and remaining at the level of political, economic, material concerns. As Hugh himself admits, he sees "the obvious things", while Advena seems "to have an eye for the subtle" (Imp., 109). When Hugh mentions "elbow-room", Advena replies that it is "an empty horizon". I have already discussed the implications of 'edge' and 'horizon'. 'Space' means 'horizon' to Advena, as it does to those questors who fix their eyes on the horizon and include the wilderness in their vision. Advena, like these questor figures, argues the importance of creative imagination. Her "eye for the subtle" is like Philip Bentley's ability to pierce the work-a-day reality, to scale it off and see another reality hidden behind it (AMMH, 101). She admits the necessary role played by Hugh's vision, but argues that those who limit themselves to such a vision "can't conceive--the flowers--that will come out of all that" (Imp. 110). Hugh has resisted, though not rejected, the flowers--

the pull of nature and creative imagination:

he looked out upon the lawn, white where the chestnut blossoms were dropping, and his eyes were just wistful enough to stir her adoration . . . Finlay withdrew his glance abruptly from the falling blossoms as if they had tempted him to an expansion he could not justify. (Imp., 109)

I have overstated the view of Finlay as garrison man; his vision does, after all, include the effects of wilderness though he resists an imaginative response to nature as the 'blossoms' passage shows:

I sometimes think that the human spirit, as it is set free in these wild unblemished spaces, may be something more pure and sensitive, more sincerely curious about what is good and beautiful--

(Imp. 111)

This selection from The Imperialist has been an illustration of several landscape images at work in a novel; Miss Duncan has brought together wilderness expanse, confined garrison space, pathways and horizon in a syndrome of images that defines and illustrates a basic human debate. It might be useful to examine in detail a specific version of the archetypal landscape--in John Richardson's Wacousta.

SYMBOLIC AND ALLEGORICAL ASPECTS IN WACOUSTA

Wacousta is not, I think, a work which naturally opens itself up to complete symbolic interpretation, simply because there are not any continual and consistent symbolic patterns which give the work any meaning other than the one supplied by the action of the story and the characters involved in that action. As a general statement, this does not mean that a non-symbolic piece of fiction is, ipso facto, "shallow"; that would be to malign those writers like Samuel Richardson and Jane Austen whose perceptions of human behavior function mainly on a non-symbolic level, and who are yet read with interest. Although there does not appear to be a consistent, integral symbolic pattern, there are isolated symbols and fragments of patterns that intermittently bob above the surface of the plot, like so many archetypes anxious to coalesce and form a coherent symbolic structure. One of these is a particular form of the archetypal landscape, almost allegorical in design.

Richardson plots out his landscape well, a landscape based on a real frontier garrison society but transformed into a metaphoric landscape. In her poem "Père Lalemant", Marjorie Pickthall has this image of the frontier mission society:

St. Ignace and St. Louis, little beads
On the rosary of God.

That is basically an image for the structure of Canadian garrison society in the second half of the eighteenth century, the period in which the action of Wacousta occurs. The English forts are isolated and exclusive clearings of Old World society strung out along the Canadian waterways, and forced to contend with their alien New World environment and hostile neighbours, for outside of these clearings, and surrounding them, is the great dark forest shielding the uncertain movements of an enemy. The fort is assailed on every side by a powerful and vindictive foe who, by the seeming conspiracy of nature, is hidden in the semicircular sweep of wild forest which circumvents the fort. The situation of Michilimachinac is similar to that of Detroit:

Even the two Indian villages, l'Arbre-Croche and Chabouiga, situate about a mile from the fort, with which they formed nearly an equilateral triangle, were hid from the view of the garrison by the dark dense forest in the heart of which they were embedded . . . The forest, in a word, formed, as it were, the gloomy and impenetrable walls of the prisonhouse, and the bright lake which lay before it the only portal through which happiness and liberty could be again secured. (pp. 158-59)

In Chapter I we are told that "in the direction of the common the night was clear and starry, yet the dark shadow of the broad belt of forest threw all that part of the waste which came within its immediate range into impenetrable obscurity". These, it seems to me, are central and controlling images. Canada's lakes and rivers are the lifeline of the English forts--a source of supplies and communication, an escape

route, a symbol of hope and potential triumph over the Indian foe. For the European settlers in these early days Canada was almost literally a waterway, as she was a railway later in the nineteenth century. Throughout the novel the waters are conceived of in terms of light--"the bright lake" (159), "a sea of pale and liquid gold" (170), "the sparkling waters of the St. Claire". (In the early sections of the novel, it might be noted, light is mentioned as coming from heaven: "It was autumn when the gold light of heaven seems as if transmitted through a veil of tissue".) When Capt. de Haldimar overhears the Indian lacrosse plot, Richardson provides this description of his psychological state.

In the midst of the confused and distracted images that now crowded on his brain came at length one thought, redolent with the brightest colourings of hope,
(p. 151)

This one thought is to frustrate the massacre of Forts Detroit and Michilimackinac. He will use the treacherous river of hope to accomplish this. The consistency of the bright water image is juxtaposed with the dark forest--"the dark dense forest", "the forest formed the gloomy and impenetrable walls of the prison house" (159), "the skirts of the forest presented a gloomy aspect", "the wild, dark and thickly wooded ravines so common in America" (82), "in the direction of the thick woods all was impenetrable gloom" (94). The fort is more secure in light, while Wacousta is more effective in the dark.

For the Old World English, where light falls there is an éclaircissement; what it touches is made visible and known and familiar. It touches the garrison, the river, the commons and the wall of the forest, but never penetrates the forest itself.

Gradually the mists that had fallen during the latter hours of the night began to ascend from the common and disperse themselves in air, conveying the appearance of a rolling sheet of paper retiring back upon itself and disclosing objects in succession, until the eye could embrace all that came within its extent of vision. (p. 26)

And conversely, darkness harbours the enemy, Wacousta and his Indians, uncertain and unknown. As we learn that the young de Haldimars are beautiful and fair and blue-eyed, and that Clara is like an angel, we are shown the Indians as "a hundred dark and hideous savages" who, of course, inhabit the wild, dark and gloomy forest. While this dichotomy may be age old and facile in essence, it is not simpleminded or functionless in this novel. A lot of the tension in reading Wacousta arises from the psychological tension within the English characters and the garrison society, a tension generated by their position in the light-dark landscape, and which might be called the nucleus of garrison sensibility:

the period was so fearful and pregnant with events of danger, the fort being assailed on every side by a powerful and vindictive foe, that a caution and vigilance of no common kind were unceasingly exercised by the prudent governor for the safety of those committed to his charge; . . . and as it often happened in Canada during this interesting

period that a single regiment was distributed into two or three fortresses, each so far removed from the other that communication could with the utmost facility be cut off; the anxiety and uncertainty of these detachments became proportioned to the danger with which they knew themselves to be more immediately beset.

(p. 1)

The reader, like the inhabitants of Fort Detroit, is surprised by the sudden attacks and the uncertain movements of the Indians and, if he enters into the spirit of Richardson's aesthetic game, may find himself just as keyed-up and vigilant as Colonel de Haldimar and Sir Everard Valletort. The wilderness constantly threatens to encroach on and surround the garrison, like Great Birnam wood come unto Dunsinane.

The psychological mechanics of Wacousta are closely allied to the symbolic landscape. Consider the function of disguise in the novel. Captain de Haldimar and Sir Everard disguise themselves when they venture into the forest; Wacousta effects entrance to Fort Detroit under the guise of night. A person disguises himself for protection when he is passing into an alien and therefore dangerous part of the landscape. Such disguises provide suspense and provoke tension in both the fictional characters and the reader.

The Indians in Wacousta are most consistently described as devils--"dark and hideous savages" (32), "the yelling fiends" (175), "the whooping hell fiends" (230),--and their war cry similarly--"their infernal yells" (25), "a legion of devilish voices" (132), "devilish war cry" (175). This lexis

is also central to the descriptions of Wacousta--"the black warrior" (135), "the dark and ferocious warrior" (154), "his complexion a dusky hue, quick black penetrating eyes, coarse shining black hair". "Black" and "dark", descriptive terms which have been applied to the menacing forest, are brought together with the "Indian as demon" image in a significant passage on Wacousta:

Conspicuous at the head of these was he who wore the blanket--a tall warrior on whom rested the startled eye of every officer and soldier who was so situated as to behold him. His face was painted black as death, and as he stood under the arch of the gateway, with his white turbaned head towering far above those of his companions, this formidable and mysterious enemy might have been likened to the spirit of darkness presiding over his terrible legions. (p. 134)

Wacousta is a black, demonic, passionate warrior who rides out of a dark and menacing forest to visit vengeance on his enemy Colonel de Haldimar, the cold, logical, controlled man of the Old World, progenitor of fair children and guardian of the river of light. Perhaps that is the symbolic action of the story. It is certainly suggested in the epigraph that Richardson chose to preface the original edition:

Vengeance is still alive; from her dark covert,
With all her snakes erect upon her breast,
She stalks in view, and fires me with her charms.

Colonel de Haldimar, as commander of the fort, is certainly the representative of the garrison sensibility, a primitive version of the limiting, morose and tyrannical father (like Caleb Gare) who attempts to impose control on his family and

on his piece of land. This defined and boxed-in piece of land began as a symbol of Old World survival in North America --the English fort and Mrs. Moodie's clearing in the woods being the prototypes.

Richardson's symbolic chiaroscuro is not a simple psychomachia--the dark forces of evil at war with the forces of light and goodness. Because of de Haldimar's treachery in Scotland, Wacousta, in moving to the new world, has undergone a metamorphosis. He who was a careless, impetuous youth ranging in the sunlit Scottish highlands has forsaken the light when de Haldimar, the ally of light, has proven specious and hypocritical. The Old World described to Clara by Wacousta in the Scotland chapters is in many ways the antithesis of new world wilderness and hostilities. Wacousta's memories of the highlands and of his relationship with Clara Beverley picture an idyllic, pastoral world of peace and romance suddenly broken by the treachery of betrayed loyalties. Where the Old World was ultimately one of disillusionment and remorse, the New World is one of cunning and revenge. Because Wacousta is so strongly identified with the wilderness and is pictured as "a child of nature", his revenge implies more than a personal vendetta. If Wacousta is to be identified with vengeful nature, he is certainly a Heathcliffian figure, the dark, demonic and passionate side of nature raging down from the forest to extinguish the light (a false light?) by encompassing and possessing it.

Wacousta, in transfiguring himself for the New World, has retained the glory and splendour of his former enthusiasm, independance and power, but has coupled it with the darkness of revenge and murder, has become a figure both of glory and of fear to the English in the fort. ("Vengeance . . . from her dark covert . . . fires me with her charms.")

In their attempt to preserve some old world customs and values, these English have been forced to erect barriers around themselves and their community. A garrison community is formed as a protection against the external forces of nature, personified in the savage Indians led by Wacousta. From this frontier society evolves a garrison mentality which will linger long after the frontier has itself disappeared, a mentality that believes in the encroachment of hostile environmental forces upon the bulwark of civilisation--whether that civilisation be centred in the fort, or clearing in the woods, in prairie town, or house, or an isolated man in the wilderness. And while the escape route for this garrison mentality is the waterway, as for the later prairie novels it is the railway, these are escapes only to another garrison, never into a confrontation and "showdown" with nature.

One might elaborate this by examining more closely the character of the English commander. The nature of the garrison in its most rigorous aspect is the nature of its commander, Colonel de Haldimar. The self-protectiveness,

caution and vigilance of the English fort, which are repeatedly stressed, issue from the colonel; an ordered, structured, self-contained life of routine and discipline characterises the military garrison. A passage in Chapter I describes the men in "their limited walk, crossing each other at regular intervals" (Wac, 4). The Old World culture, transplanted to a New World wilderness and imposed upon the landscape, must circumscribe its existence, limit its horizons and its development, with the result that strict discipline and rigid adherence to tradition inscribe a circumference to belief, to tolerance, to creativity and intellectual development. The English fort, a precious drop of English life beside the great St. Clair River, one in the chain of English culture along the Great Lakes system, must be preserved from whatever barbarism and chaos exist in the dark forest. This duty devolves upon the Colonel, and his "cautious discipline" sets the tone for the garrison's activities.

In Chapter II, the Colonel appears coldly unemotional when he learns of Murphy's death; he is severe and authoritative towards Valletort, Halloway and Ellen, where a more pliant humanity would have shown compassion and mercy, even to the point of risking the improbable possibility of Halloway's treason. But tradition and military rule, in the strict service of preserving the garrison, demand the court martial and death of the innocent Halloway. As governor de

Haldimar remarks with energy towards the end of the novel, "Private feelings must no longer be studied at the expense of the public good" (Wac, 291). In the opening section of the novel, the Colonel betrays emotion only at mention of the mysterious intruder, but quickly checks himself and reassumes "his stern and authoritative bearing". This practice of stifling emotion, or any susceptibility to 'passion' or 'irrationality', is developed in the interplay, in Chapter II, between "the etiquette and strict laws of military discipline" which "chained all speech" and displays of emotion, and "the workings of the inward mind" which "remained unchecked" (Wac, 13ff.). Richardson reveals these tensions in the ceremonial-like scenes of Halloway's charge and defence, and the reprimand to Valletort. Here, the repression and checking of emotion find expression in the importance placed on outward form and prescribed ritual, on "the rigidity of manner which (the Colonel) seems on all occasions to think so indispensable to the maintenance of authority" (Wac, 22). These precepts are imparted to the rest of the garrison. Frank Halloway, condemned to die for a treason that is decided by the letter rather than the spirit of the law, requires "all his self command to enable him to abstain from giving expression to his feelings towards those who had so generously interpreted the motives for his dereliction from duty" (Wac, 69f.). When gratitude and pleasure threaten to find expression

in words and tears, he overcomes "his weakness", and exhibits "his wonted air of calm and unconcern".

Such a rigid attempt at discipline and control leaves the English fort vulnerable to surprise attacks. Wacousta's entry into the fort in Chapter I causes a "midnight tumult" ending in death for a member of the garrison; he creates confusion in the routine and structured life of the garrison; suddenness, surprise and cover of darkness are among his most effective weapons. Later, as the regiment is marching orderly toward the bridge, the shot fired by Wacousta from the auberge occasions "a temporary confusion in the ranks". When Capt. de Haldimar, a garrison spy at the Indian camp, overhears the cunning lacrosse plot, the immediate psychological effect is one of "confused and distracted images that crowd upon the brain" (Wac, 151). The accumulative effect of these and similar images is the suggestion that, not only is there a natural and complete antagonism between the extremes of garrison and wilderness elements, but that their continued co-existence in a dichotomous landscape is impossible and is directed toward the destruction of one or both. The fore-shadowed holocaust does occur. Wacousta is killed in the frenzy of revenge when he overbids his own audacity. And when Wacousta's apparently successful revenge undercuts the patriarchal drive of de Haldimar, the inflexibly traditional Colonel dies believing that no future generations of de Hal-

dimars exist to perpetuate the right and duty of tradition.

The deaths of Wacousta and Colonel de Haldimar do not negate the landscape, or cause the forces which inhabit it to cease functioning. The reader might ponder the possible emergence of a third force which is unique yet a synthesis of elements of reason and culture from the garrison, and passion and nature from the wilderness. The end of the novel does hint at such a synthesis, but it does little more than hint. Richardson may have more to say about this 'synthesis' in a sequel to Wacousta entitled The Canadian Brothers; Or, The Prophecy Fulfilled, 1840. Throughout Wacousta, Oucanasta (a woman from the dark forest) has been co-operating with Capt. de Haldimar (a man from the garrison). Neither of these characters is an extreme example of what their section of the landscape stands for, as Wacousta ("an air of bold daring and almost insolent recklessness pervading every movement" p. 146) and the Colonel ("all coldness, prudence, obsequiousness and forethought" p. 250) are extreme embodiments of antagonistic forces. The real triumph in human terms, the triumph of peace at the end of the novel, results from the conciliation of Indian and English man, of wilderness and garrison. The search for peace has been a search for synthesis, and the synthesis, the ending implies, is not merely co-existence. The rather tentative resolution of Wacousta is the mingling of the two peoples from the opposing factions

of the landscape. The doors of the fort are thrown open to allow free passage and commerce between garrison and wilderness.

Pontiac had expressed a generous determination to conclude a peace with the garrison, and henceforth to consider them as his friends . . . English were to be seen once more issuing from their fort . . . Time rolled on, and in the course of years Oucanasta might be seen associating with and bearing curious presents, the fruits of Indian ingenuity, to the daughters of de Haldimar . . .; while her brother, the chief, instructed his sons in the athletic and active exercises peculiar to his race.
(p. 298)

Historically this may be nonsense, but if we are reading the book as an allegory on the extremes that war in man's soul--logic and irrationality, cold reason and imagination, restraint and frenzied indulgence--these final incidents take on a richer implication. After the rejection of the tyranny of extremes of the individual and society, Richardson may be arguing for a third landscape, a middle ground between extremes, although the argument is not explored in this novel. As the co-operation of Oucanasta and Capt. de Haldimar ends in triumph, a peaceable conciliation of passionate and intellectual drives (the reason sunlit by the passions and softened into an expression of magnanimity) can lead man to fall into a gentleness of humanity.

While Richardson's novel encompasses a number of symbols and archetypes, it does not, I think, quite succeed in moulding them into a consistent, organic form, whether

this was ever an artistic intention or not. Wacousta is not very satisfying artistically but there is still some interest in an archetypal landscape that exemplifies the thematic concerns. Because Wacousta occurs so early in the literary history of Canadian prose narratives, and because, in its psychological and symbolic aspects, it is concerned with so many of the themes and images to which our writers keep returning, one might designate it the prototype of a stream of journals, novels, reminiscences and other prose works which share its central concerns, particularly the symbolic structure of a dichotomous landscape, and the clash between garrison and wilderness, between culture and nature.

Fort
Michilimacinac

39

Indian
camp
(Wacousta)

Detroit
River

Wacousta
the geographic-
historic landscape

Forest
Wilderness

bridge

French
village

commons

high
road

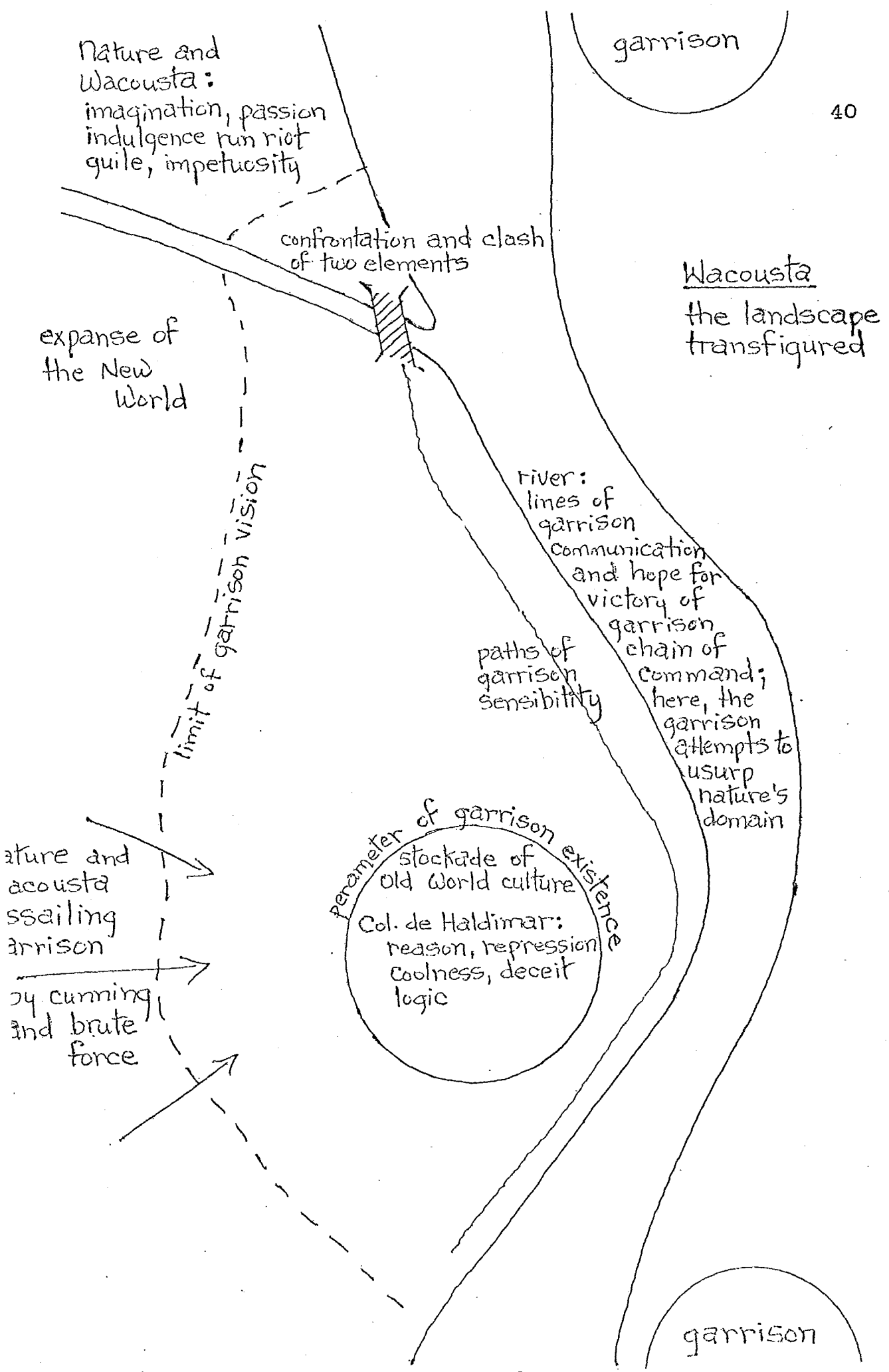
Fort
Detroit
(Colonel de
Haldimar)

Indian
raids

Forest
Wilderness

Fort
Niagara

edge of forest



THE TRANSFIGURED LANDSCAPE AND A DIALECTIC

The relationship between the two landscapes---the real and the symbolic---exists in a delicate balance. I have said in my 'Introduction' that the geography of the country has been transfigured by Canadian writers into a metaphoric landscape, rather than transformed into a metaphoric landscape. 'Transformed' is an entirely inappropriate word to describe the imaginative process by which the geography of the country has evolved into a literary symbolic structure. The word 'transformed' implies a change in form, but there has been no change in form from the real to the symbolic; each consists of the same arrangement of forests and prairies, the same small towns and railways and rivers. The geography you see in a cross-country tour is the same geography described in a selection of novels about Canada. Because the symbolic landscape has retained the same geographical form as the real landscape, the word 'transfigures', which suggests a change in aspect or meaning, better describes this imaginative process of adapting 'real' to 'symbolic', or more correctly, of aligning 'real' and 'symbolic'. But the identical form shared by the two landscapes, the functioning of the landscape in many novels as 'real' and 'symbolic' at the same time, causes inevitable confusion.

The major outlines, and many of the details, for a thesis concerning the continuum of themes and images in Canadian literature and the relation of these to the cultural history of the country have already evolved, particularly in The Literary History of Canada, Douglas Jones' Butterfly on Rock and the Frye essays collected in The Bush Garden. These, and other works,¹¹ have intermittently touched on landscape images, particularly on the meanings of 'house', 'garrison' and 'river', but I have not yet seen a sustained effort to show the persistence of a complete geographical pattern in Canadian fiction. What has been carefully explored is the symbolic nature of the landscape. Frye and Jones have pioneered critical discussion of the level of interpretation of a particular work at which one can even justify the term 'symbolic'. I suggest that the 'real' (geographical, historical) and the 'symbolic' landscapes have never been truly discrete entities, and further, that to understand the meaning of the transfigured landscape one must search in the pre-literary writings of Canada--in journals, logbooks, folktales and travel books--for the historical origins of myth. Since this is a topic too large for detailed discussion here, I

¹¹See especially Susan Jackel, "The House on the Prairies", Canadian Literature, XLII (Autumn, 1969), pp. 46-55; Edward A. McCourt, op. cit.; Donald Stevens, "Wind, Sun and Dust", Canadian Literature, XXIII (Winter, 1965), pp. 17-24; Warren Tallman, "Wolf in the Snow", A Choice of Critics, ed. George Woodcock (Oxford University Press, 1966).

will outline what I understand as the main development.

America before the coming of European man was a trackless wilderness, though this statement would undoubtedly provoke strong objections from any Indian reader. 'Trackless' merely implies that a pattern of European culture had not been superimposed on the landscape; there was no chain of garrisons or interconnected clearings in the woods, no dichotomous landscape, because there were no whitemen to construct them. Nature held complete and unobstructed sway in the absence of garrisons of culture and paths of righteousness.¹² The first period of European history in Canada, the era of initial exploration, of fur trading stations, of the New World as commercial outpost for Europe, was also the pioneer era of tracking the wilderness. The trails hacked into the forest as portage and fur trade routes and the crude camps and fur stations dotted along the way were the first tunnels of European sensibility into the wilderness; the men who made them brought certain cultural traditions with them, instincts and beliefs bred of an ancient civilization, which were inveterate and unshakeable, and somehow clashed with the wilderness (see Wacousta and Roughing It in the Bush). These first explorers were 'pathfinders', as history books

¹²Indians and Indian culture have been traditionally considered part of nature, blending into the landscape "wolf-eyed, wolf-sinewed, stiller than the trees". (Marjorie Pickthall's "Père Lalemant")

are fond of labelling them, but they were also 'pathmakers'. In this dual identity we find the first manifestation of a dual attitude to the land: 'pathfinder'---interested in getting through the wilderness, in experiencing the excitement and imagination of the land and of exploration; 'pathmaker'---aware of his cultural tradition in an alien wilderness and interested in establishing a centre of civilization, either temporary or permanent, for survival in that wilderness. The journals of Samuel Hearne, Alexander MacKenzie and Simon Fraser are excellent evidence of these attitudes.¹³

There is something in the idea of traversing a vast and unknown continent that gives an agreeable expansion to our conceptions; and the imagination is insensibly engaged and inflamed by the spirit of adventure, and the perils and the novelties that are implied in a voyage of discovery.¹⁴

Here, The Edinburgh Review has touched upon these elements that man may discover in nature---perils and novelties, an inflamed imagination, an expansion of conceptions---which Frye's 'garrison culture' considers anathema to civilization and human progress.

¹³See The Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser, 1806-1808, ed. with an introduction by W. Kaye Lamb (Toronto: MacMillan and Co., 1960); Exploring the North-West Territory, Sir Alexander MacKenzie's Journal, ed. with an introduction by T. H. McDonald (University of Oklahoma Press, 1966); Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor Between the Years 1774 and 1792, ed. with an introduction and notes by J. B. Tyrrell (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).

¹⁴Klinck, op. cit., p. 29.

The European emigrants who followed the explorers, or came with them to settle the land, are 'pathfinders' in a different sense. They found the existing paths and clearings and adapted them to their social needs; the pattern of settlement which they established (the archetypal landscape) has been reiterated all over the country, even when trail and cabin have evolved into railway and prairie town. Tracking the wilderness continued into the period of settlement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the distinction between settlement and wilderness became more marked. The lines of settlements grown up along rivers and pathways are more distinctively, and self-assertively, pockets of European culture. This is a frontier society in the true sense--existing as the borders of a foreign civilisation, but, of necessity, operating as much as possible within the context of that civilization in order to provide the necessities, of food, shelter, dress, law, religion, moral code, and other cultural habits, that their heritage implies are the basis for a successfully operative society.

From the arrival of European settlers, then, the land contained two differentiated elements--pockets of society and unexplored wilderness. Keeping to the paths and within the boundaries of the clearings reduced danger from nature's pitfalls (wild animals, bogs, Indians) and even from unmerciful exposure to the elements. A cabin in the

woods or a fortress was a shelter that housed familiar and comforting cultural traditions. A path indicated that some man had gone before, and pointed a safer route than mere meandering through bush or over prairie; somewhere along the path one would likely find human habitation anyway. Where the dangers and rigours of the land were real, the fear and self-protectiveness of the European immigrants are understandable. For contrast, one might consider the easy, unfettered reaction of Catherine Parr Traill, described in The Backwoods of Canada. A tiny number of people could not, at any rate, hope to permeate an immense continent and submerge its wilderness in their civilization, as Europeans, in their tiny countries, had done.

From the beginning of Canada's cultural history, nature provoked a response in European man that compelled him to converge on certain points in the landscape and mark himself off from the wilderness. The dichotomous landscape, as an historical and cultural phenomenon, was generated by the immensity and rigours of environment which manifested, to a European mind preoccupied with social structure and individual discipline, a threat to human society and moral constructs. Nature, showing itself now beneficent and harmonious and then suddenly irrational and chaotic, insists that there is something outside man's constructs, outside the boundaries that the garrison mentality has designed to encompass the

confines of permissible human activity and thought, that is a vital force to be reckoned with and that is unaccountable in terms of the garrison scheme of existence. Nature appears patternless. In this psychological interplay between man and the wilderness, the landscape is transfigured.

Douglas Jones, in Butterfly on Rock, considers this as one level of interpretation for the antagonism between culture and nature that informs a good deal of our literature. He extends Frye's metaphor of the garrison culture confronting a hostile wilderness by showing how "the division between culture and nature dramatised in some of the literature goes far beyond any purely Canadian colonialism", how "it can only be considered to reflect an antagonism towards nature characteristic of western culture generally . . . that western culture is itself a garrison confronting a hostile wilderness". His argument implies that Canadian writers have found in their history and their literary and cultural traditions, vital, ready-made images to express their human experience. The archetypal landscape is a Canadian literary manner of symbolically exploring man's original relations to the universe.¹⁵ The way in which the Canadian land functions symbolically is as a microcosm of the macrocosmic creation. Our writers discern the paradoxes and double-pulls of the universe in

¹⁵In connection with this idea see R. E. Watters, "Original Relations", Canadian Literature, VII (Winter, 1961), pp. 6-17.

our forests, prairies, mountains and tundra, in our sudden climatic shifts, in our animal kingdom; here is embodied the magnificence, violence, harmony, chaos, justice and lack of justice that alternately flash out in the prismatic shifts between man and the rest of creation.

Garrison man, huddled within the confines of his circle of existence, deliberately walls out the seeming irrational impetuosity of nature. Although the effect may be astringent, even sterile, cramping all but a modicum of artistic expression, tolerance and freedom of the human spirit, this 'walling-out' process is garrison man's solution, really a negative alternative, to dealing with the irrational and imaginative aspects with which man symbolically endows nature. The existence of garrison men and their prohibitive attitude to nature transfigures a mere geographic landscape into a 'symbolic' landscape, endowing the landscape elements with the kinds of meanings that I suggested in "An Archetypal Landscape".

Douglas Jones has outlined a plausible and coherent extension of Frye's original metaphor about garrison-wilderness antagonism. I would like to suggest an extension of the proofs that Jones offers in support of his thesis. In the 'Introduction' to Butterfly on Rock, Jones notes the tendency of western man "to discriminate the whole range of (his) experience into light and dark", western man exhibiting "a marked inclination to ally himself wholly with the so-called

forces of light in an all-out attack on the so-called forces of dark . . . the material world, the world of the flesh and the devil, . . . all that is mortal and seemingly irrational in nature".¹⁶ As one might expect in a literature of the western world, images of light and dark proliferate in Canadian poetry and prose. If nature represents a mortal and irrational force to be vanquished or shut out, one might anticipate that Canadian writers would conceive it in terms of darkness, and the garrison in terms of light. Such a scheme of images seems consistent with the dichotomy which has evolved in the landscape. But even for those who seem concerned to preserve, or to promote the garrison way of life (cases might be made out for Mrs. Moodie and Ralph Connor, among others), the total view of the landscape is not simply bright garrison spots high-lighted in a blackened wilderness. Dark elements of physical or moral disease and decay are recognized within the garrison confines, as are the lights and glories of nature. And these elements of corruption in the garrison do not always have their source in contact with nature. The murder of Brown in Agaguk results from the economic greed and the tyranny of whiteman over Eskimo that are part of the accepted social structure of arctic garrisons (Ag, 22-28). Or, the destruction of Billy Breen in Black Rock stems from the tyranny and righteousness

¹⁶Jones, op. cit., p. 6.

of the total abstinence League. All men, it seems, are naturally attracted to the irrational and are compelled to flirt with 'the world of the flesh and the devil' which may be found in any man. For the garrison man this affinity is a weakness to be submerged in rigid moral, physical and intellectual disciplines, often in strong 'Puritan' sensibilities; nature is a Jezebel to be cast out of the charmed circle of society. Other men--like Grove and David Canaan, Mrs. Bentley, Agaguk and Brian O'Connell--are willing to pass over into the sphere of Nature's influence. For these people, the 'light' and 'dark' are ambiguous forces.

One set of images--the glory and the fear--emerges from the body of light-dark metaphors, first because our writers return to use it so often, and second because it marks the development of 'dichotomy' into 'dialectic'. Garrison versus wilderness, culture versus nature is schematically simplistic, merely a conflict of antagonistic forces (although the implications may be profound). The 'glory and fear' is an expression of an individual's ambiguous attitude to the simplistic duality of light versus dark. When this tightly defined dichotomy merges with the concept of 'glory and fear', the two experiences do not coincide perfectly. The magnificence, beauty and harmony of nature manifest in the wilderness are 'glory', as are the magnanimity, selfless love and generosity of the human soul manifest in some human actions and in some

elements of society. Again, the seemingly irrational violence and antagonism of nature manifest in storms and drought, or symbolized in attacks by Indians or vicious animals are 'fear', as are the intolerance, cupidity and prejudices which the human mind is capable of expressing in action. A correspondence is established between the glory of nature and the glory of the human soul, a kind of mirror image which empathetically reflects the human and natural glories in each other. In this way, man perceives and articulates a symbolic contact between himself and nature. The experience of an individual, born and educated in the garrison, imbued with the duty to oppose and shut out nature, yet touched by the 'glory and fear' of both sides of the dichotomy, is inevitably one of tension between a traditional view of the landscape (garrison versus wilderness) and a new vision. When this happens, a feeling both of belonging and not belonging to the traditional culture pulls the individual--the misfit figure--in two directions, towards the centres of civilized culture and towards the uncivilized wilderness.

In those novels which have a misfit figure for a protagonist, the culture-nature dichotomy has expanded into a three point tension of individual, society and wilderness, with the individual functioning as a link between the other two. The misfit's exploration of the nature of this link is a quest for a part of the landscape which embodies the 'glory'

and shuts out the 'fear'. The growth of the misfit's vision leads him away from such an idealistic quest to the realization that the dark elements of nature are potentially liberating especially for the artistic individual, as so many of our misfits seem to be, and are not to be totally shut out, and that, as much as one would like to shut out the dark, corrupt forces in the garrison, these exist as an inescapable fact of garrison existence. Part II will develop these ideas, illustrated by two novels, a journal and a short story cum autobiographical anecdote.

The terms 'glory' and 'fear' have not been chosen indiscriminately. As part of the continuum of images in Canadian literature, they occur in many of the works listed in my bibliography--Wacousta, Swamp Angel, The Forge in the Forest, Who Has Seen the Wind, Clearing in the West--and are favourite words of Mrs. Moodie and Ralph Connor. The list might be extended. Sheila Watson may have been conscious of this when she wrote The Double Hook.

He doesn't know you can't catch the glory on a hook and hold on to it. That when you fish for the glory the catch the darkness too. That if you hook twice the glory you hook twice the fear.

(DH, epigraph)

This image crystallizes the misfit's predicament, at least at the beginning of his quest. In his discovery of nature and his peaceable overtures to it, which presume his rejection of traditional garrison antagonisms to the wilderness, he inevitably hooks both the glory and the fear of nature. He

is caught in a dialectic: on one side the inveterate dependence on culture and tradition, and on the other, the need for the imaginative experiences which can be indulged in nature, but not in the garrison.

The landscape in which the author places the misfit figure is, therefore, a symbolic structure which exemplifies the thematic concerns. Landscape metaphors have evolved as part of the Canadian novelist's fund of images on which he can draw to dramatise the tensive, dichotomous nature of the misfit's experience in the land (wilderness and society) and in himself; Old World and New World, society and individual, civilization and nature, among others. The writer may effect the metaphoric connection between the images of the land and the particular themes which preoccupy him by an internalization of the landscape--placing the geographical structure of the metaphor within the mind or memory of some created character, making the mind or memory into a map, as Leacock does in "L'Envoie", the final chapter of Sunshine Sketches, or as Hugh Hood does in his short story "Getting to Williamstown". Or, the connection is made by an externalisation of the mind or memory--identifying the cerebral faculties with the physical environment which surrounds the character, as Grove does in Over Prairie Trails. But always, the misfit's reaction to the land is an expression of his awareness that he exists in an environment composed of dichotomous elements,

and that his quest, which is symbolically acted out on the land, is for a synthesis of dualities.

North American mythologies seem to be the images of a people's unsatisfied desires--a desire to know or a desire to forget--and, as such, function as catalysts in the historical routine of real life. The archetypal landscape, drawn from that historical routine, is, like more traditional myths, an attempt to flesh out an explanation concerning man's relations to his environment and the workings of that environment--the mechanics of order and chaos. An interval of choice exists between man's perception and his reaction or expression, and from this fertile moment when freewill and intellect act in mutual stimulation springs our entire imaginative life and our preoccupation with illusion-reality. Thus, mythmaking man appears as an image-engine, utilizing the powerhouse of his inventive faculties to churn out fables and dreams in proportion with his need to supplement and sustain reality.

North Americans are dynamic dreamers, on both an individual and a corporate level; they have to be in order to survive the unrealities and inadequacies of the life-complex they build for themselves. But I would make a distinction within the artistic culture of North America. The theme of the isolated individual and his quest for identity has evolved two popular hero figures, each somewhat distinct in nature

from the other--the misfit and the dropout. Many of the most powerful and outspoken cultural statements from new American artists are informed with a disillusionment that borders on the paranoid and belies traditional American optimism. This is the milieu in which the dropout flourishes. In Dennis Hopper's and Peter Fonda's Easy Rider, for example, there occurs a reverse quest and a collapse of the frontier-covered wagon myth; two cyclists withdraw from the pioneer Eden. When 'westward-ho' becomes 'eastward-ho', the disenchantment with society, symbolized in the disenchanted, demythicized American landscape, and the ultimate tragedy at New Orleans are more severe and more patently apocalyptic than the standard fate met by people like Steinbeck's west-seeking Joad family. Any disillusionment which tinges the experience of the Joads, or other pioneer figures who trek west, is outweighed by the optimism and hope of a people who are compelled forward by a promise that flickers on an ever-receding western horizon. The return east for the dropouts Billy and Wyatt is a journey backwards through American history to a place, New Orleans, that epitomizes both the inferno of the Old World from which the American settlers escaped, and the inferno of the New World which arose when that escapism confronted the harsh realities of the American land and of human nature. Now that Americans have pushed as far west as possible with impunity (Hawaii?), and have polluted the mountain air and created oil slicks on the pacific coast, the explosion of

the American frontier dream is occurring to them as a nation. F. Scott Fitzgerald grasped this as early as 1925 when he wrote The Great Gatsby, but then artists are so often prophetic as well as ignored. 'Keep America Clean' 'Help Beautify America' 'Clean Up Our Air and Water Resources' 'Remember, Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires': in the popularity of ecology one can read that a mad scramble is on to preserve the fragments of a dream.

In 1946 appeared one of the dwindling numbers of memorable American characters who fight to fit into a society; this is Carson McCuller's Frankie Adams, A Member of the Wedding, who suddenly realizes that she has just been an 'I' person, that all other people belong to a 'we', and, pathetically, that her brother and his bride are the 'we' to whom she belongs. Frankie is a misfit and so are most Canadian questors, but they are not searching for a 'we' to belong to. They are people, like Grove and Brian O'Connell and Mrs. Bentley, who desperately want and try to belong to the established garrison 'we', who are not social outcasts or refugees from society, but who are conscious of being set apart from the narrow, defined community in a larger context of dichotomy and paradox. The vision is neither paranoid nor apocalyptic; these are not the misfit's predicaments. The initial point I want to make concerns a distinction between two kinds of heroes, for America has a different type of popular hero.

Disillusionment and betrayed hope have evolved the figure of the dropout who doesn't want to belong--the Huck Finns and Holden Caulfields who find more contentment on their own rafts than in 'sivilisation'.

Huck Finn drifting down the great river with Jim, and preferring hell with Jim to the white slave-owner's heaven is a similar figure (as Thoreau retreating to Walden), one of the bums, hoboes and social outcasts who reach a deeper level of community than the rest of us. This outcast or hobo figure is the hero of most of the Chaplin films; he also finds a congenial haven in comic strips. The juvenile delinquent or emotionally disturbed adolescent may in some contexts be one of his contemporary equivalents, like the narrator of The Catcher in the Rye.¹⁷

Timothy Leary's life imitates the myth; Horace McCoy's proto-existentialist Gloria, from They Shoot Horses, Don't They, has been reinstated as a heroine because she embodies this popular mood, recaptured from another era.

The focus of the American quest is a dream, usually of some type of Promised Land, a new Jerusalem or personal Eden. This is not the central concern of most Canadian questors. The landscape motif in American and Canadian art plays different roles in the myths of the two countries. While grasping for its primeval innocence and virginity, Americans try to conquer but effectively despoil their landscape. The dropout self-imposes a psychic-physical exile from social corruption and despoiliation of the land. Huck

¹⁷Northrop Frye, The Modern Century; (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 77.

Finn's voluntary exile on the Mississippi is both psychic and physical--an attempted escape from corrupt 'sivilisation' into a game world of innocence. Holden Caulfield, hemmed in by the restrictions of school and the walls of the city, escapes into a pastoral dream, imagining himself the guardian and preserver of childhood innocence. Canadians seem still in awe of the towering and undeveloped wilderness around them, seem aware that this wilderness is both a welcome playground and the other half of a dichotomous landscape that opposes the "uptight" centres of repression and pressurized civilisation. While the dropout remains a constant questor for a "fresh green breast of the New World", the misfit is struggling with the dualities of his environment, attempting to realize some unity of experience. There are surprisingly few dropout figures in Canadian literature: characters who, in a mad response to human corruption, leave the centres of culture for the wilderness, or retreat into insanity. The dropouts of Canadian fiction are either hermit figures like Saint Sammy (Who Has Seen the Wind) and Grûl (The Forge in the Forest), mad visionaries of prairie and forest who have a preternatural understanding with nature, or they are social outcasts like Kirstie Craig (Heart of the Ancient Wood), whose home in the wilderness is a softened version of the garrison society.

The misfit leads a kind of shuttlecar existence on

the land, moving back and forth between the geographical embodiments of dualities, moving between the controlled civilised centres of garrison, clearing in the woods, house, or prairie town, and the surrounding liberating expanse of nature--forests, prairies, mountains, lakes--to which the misfit is bound in empathy. He is often of artistic sensibility, but always unable to remain static in either aspect of the landscape, resisting the repression and restraint on expression fostered by the garrison sensibility, and in awe of the uncontrolled, paradoxical forces of nature with which he cannot completely cope, or even understand. There is a passage in Tom Jones which describes the dynamics of the universe as a mechanism of great and small wheels which revolve in inter-relationship with each other. Some of the wheels are so minute that man's knowledge and reason cannot discriminate them. Are these small wheels, on which the larger wheels are said to depend, really there to prove the mechanics of order in the universe? Or are there no small wheels, no complete plan of world order to guide the universe, only a cosmic struggle between good and evil, order and chaos? To the garrison mentality which has sold itself on a mechanical universe and structured a society in proximate imitation of it, the paradox of nature, where the small wheels cannot be evinced, represents a threat to the ideal of order and must be shut out. But the greater vision of the misfit prompts

him to ask, and to explore, the questions I have asked above. So, Brian O'Connal moves between town and prairie, as do Mrs. Bentley in As For Me and My House and Grove in Over Prairie Trails. David Canaan moves from the security and limiting protectiveness of the valley to the mountain where he finally achieves his vision, a movement similar to James' ironic journey in The Double Hook. Leacock escapes the city in Sunshine Sketches for the mythic innocence of Mariposa. The double-pull on Luzina Tousignant compels her back and forth between the town of Rorketon and the wilds of Little Water Hen island, as Graeme vacillates between the British Columbia logging camp and the eastern town where he was born in Black Rock. What they have in common might be summed up as changeable souls in a vast unchanging solitude, and in a staunchly intransigent society.

Connecting the centres of civilisation are waterways (as in Wacousta and The Double Hook), the railway (as in most prairie novels and Sunshine Sketches), or pathways and highways (as in pioneer novels and journals, and modern works). These are part of the patterns of culture imposed on the land; they are the confining paths of garrison sensibility that, while they range across expanses of prairie or forest, allow for a confrontation but rarely an interaction with the passionate, elemental forces of nature. While the circle of the garrison itself may be a piece of land won over from the

wilderness, these connecting lines of civilisation between garrisons are in contention, open to attack from the impinging forces of nature--the Indian raids of Wacousta, the storms of Over Prairie Trails, the wolves in Agaguk or the panther in Heart of the Ancient Wood. The only chance for the misfit, who is not totally possessed by a garrison sensibility but who is a product of the garrison society, to break the bonds of that society is to pass beyond the defenses of the garrison into the surrounding expanse of nature and risk her dangers, in other words, to loosen the ethnic, cultural or religious straightjacket of his upbringing^{ing} and by association with nature to gain some freedom of fancy, of passion, perhaps even of irrationality.

At this point in the discussion it will be useful to introduce the word 'dialectic' as a critical term. I have outlined the antagonism between two rather discrete aspects of the land. One of these aspects, centred in the garrison, fights to achieve and to maintain its discreteness. Many writers, working in the tradition of Richardson's Wacousta, have imagined the landscape essentially in terms of a dichotomy, the tension and opposition of anti-pathetical forces. But the concept of 'dichotomy' in the landscape has been slowly drained of its validity as the unique land pattern as writers have become aware that it is too simplistic a scheme to account for their reaction to the Canadian envir-

onment, or to exemplify the human-moral debate which the landscape elements symbolize. Grove's Over Prairie Trails, Ross's As For Me and My House, Mitchell's Who Has Seen the Wind, Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley--these are works which have passed beyond the concerns of dichotomy into those of a dialectic experience. The works of those who experience the land as a dichotomy are written by an essentially 'garrison mentality'--Mrs. Moodie's Roughing It in the Bush, Nellie McClung's Clearing in the West, the novels of Ralph Connor--all of these are ultimately interested in maintaining the discreteness of garrison and wilderness. But the old bipartite struggle between society and nature has evolved into a three part tension between the individual, society and wilderness.

The typical dichotomy schema does not explore the possibility of synthesis, of reconciliation between wilderness and garrison elements, of the creation of a third landscape. The hint of reconciliation at the end of Wacousta seems, in this regard, unusual. But Wacousta does not explore the synthesis. The misfit, as a questor figure, is searching for such a synthesis, a consolidation of diverse elements in his experience--garrison and wilderness, glory and fear -- into some meaningful, integral statement of his identity and his original relation to the universe. Because he is rooted in the garrison culture and has inviolable ties to it, and yet is mysteriously driven to nature, the misfit is caught

in the energy of thesis-anti-thesis, and it is only in the misfit's vision of human experience that this interplay occurs. An energy, which consists partly of the various pulls on the misfit, of his frustrations and insecurity, flows between the antithetical elements within the misfit's mind during the process of his quest for self-identity. In his 'Conclusion' to Literary History of Canada, Northrop Frye uses, in another context, the phrase "alternating current of the Canadian mind". This an apt capsule description of the misfit's psychological state, even of his mental processes. This alternating current of the mind keeps him shuttling back and forth on the landscape, continually piercing the wall between the centres of civilisation and the encompassing wilderness. He is repelled by the general astringency, repression and falseness of the garrison, yet this is his home and an undeniable part of his nature. Further, there are moments of glory within the garrison, moments of generosity, gratitude and a feeling of potential social harmony. Out in the wilderness, nature exhibits similar traits of glory and magnificence. But in the dark elements of the land which inspire fear--in the violent storms, merciless drought, or the vicious workings of the animal kingdom, all of which the garrison sensibility holds in fear and disdain--the misfit discerns a compelling gentleness to the mystery of violence and an awesome beauty in the mystery of strength. Nature

does not exist within confines as does the garrison; there is no parameter (that man can grasp) to its power or its magnificence or its changes of moods, as there is no limit to its horizon for the human eye. While, after the rigidity of the garrison, nature is liberating as if its breezes blew the choking dust from the mind and its springs refreshed the soul, the wilderness is also undeniably dangerous.

The energy which flows in the misfit's mind, the energy of dialectic, finds its source partly in the attraction-repulsion which the misfit feels for the land outside the garrison. He is alive first to the dichotomy outlined in Part I, second to manifestations of glory and fear, and third to his ambivalent attitude to the dark elements of nature. Some garrison men who are incipient misfit figures, people like Mrs. Moodie who feel strong attractions to the glories of nature but keep them suspiciously in check, stop short of dealing with nature's darker aspects. The misfit flirts with these dark aspects, tentatively at first and then with a bolder curiosity about their meaning, a curiosity which never quite overcomes his ambivalent attitude to them, or his fear of them.

I am going to examine four works, and focus on the energies that work on the misfit in dialectic interplay of elements. Charles G. D. Roberts' The Heart of the Ancient Wood is a study of the human possibility of returning to

nature. The heroine, Miranda, a prototypical misfit figure, attempts to live both in the garrison and in the wilderness, and to satisfy completely the demands of both while keeping the landscape a dichotomy. Sussana Moodie, telling her own story in Roughing It in the Bush, is an incipient misfit, cut short by a move to the city from developing her growing attachment to the land; she is also strongly a garrison woman. Frederick Philip Grove is the prototype of Canadian misfits. In Over Prairie Trails he presents an allegory of the roles of garrison 'empiricism' and wilderness 'fancy' in the creative process of the misfit artist. Sinclair Ross's As For Me and My House also deals with the artist-misfit-questor figure, but it is more a study of ambiguity of attitude and ambiguity of resolution than the others. Miranda, Grove and Mrs. Bentley all shuttle back and forth between their centres of culture and the wilderness. This symbolic movement, a metaphor for the dialectic energy, is at the centre of the discussions.

Part II;

DIALECTIC AND THE MISFIT

THE HEART OF THE ANCIENT WOOD

W. J. Keith has called Charles Roberts' The Heart of the Ancient Wood a "moral fable",¹⁸ and that seems an apt description. This improbable story of the friendship between a girl child and a she-bear has a Disney-like scenario--a secluded cabin, a plucky taciturn mother, a backwoods beau, a true grit approach to hardship, animals who respond to human command--all percolated in an atmosphere of romance. But the improbabilities are superficial, existing merely at the level of story components. The work may be interpreted as a debate on the extent to which man may succumb to the forces of nature while he continues to function in society. One way to structure a critical discussion of Roberts' work is to consider its various elements in turn--the landscape, Kirstie Craig, Miranda, Kroof, young Dave. This is what I have done prior to examining the debate itself.

Roberts devotes his two first chapters to landscape patterns, which are archetypal in nature. Kirstie Craig's cabin is set in "a spacious solitude of a clearing" where "the gloom of the woods" falls apart in a spreading of daylight (HAW, 17):

¹⁸W. J. Keith, Charles G. D. Roberts (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing Co., 1969), p. 68.

Though a spur of black, uncompromising spruce woods gave it near shelter on the north, the harshly naked clearing fell away from it on the other three sides, and left the cabin bleak. . (HAW, 18)

It was still bleak, and overbrooded by a vast unroutable stillness, for the swelling of the land lifted it from the forest's shelter and made it neighbour to the solitary sky. (HAW, 164)

There are already suggestions here that the clearing is both differentiated from the wilderness, and yet has an undeniable affinity with it. Roberts consistently reminds the reader of this differentiation-affinity relationship between the clearing and the woods, a relationship that becomes more marked when humans come to live in the cabin and to cultivate the land around it. When Dave Titus first arrives at the abandoned clearing, he has to push through "the harsh belt of blackberry and raspberry canes, which grew as a neutral zone between forest and open" (HAW, 17). The choice of the word "neutral" hints at an undercurrent of antagonism between clearing and forest. Later, when Kirstie settles into the cabin, she augments the distinction between these two areas of the landscape by building fences around the edge of her domain. If paths and clearings are sections of the land won over from nature and marked off for man's dominion, then this passage by Roberts has special meaning:

A path once fairly differentiated by the successive passings of feet will keep, almost forever, a spell for the persuasion of all that go afoot. (HAW, 3)

All the animals described in the first chapter are signifi-

cantly 'watchers of the trail'; they are neither trailblazers nor, particularly users of the trail (with two exceptions to be noted later). The paths and clearings have taken shape under the axes of men from the Settlement, with all the violent perils they bring to forest life. Old Dave's boots padding quietly down the trail ring out "the sound of alien footsteps"--man, "the one unvanquishable enemy to all the folk of the wood" (HAW, 7, 10). Here, an antagonism is explicit.

At the beginning of the story, the long deserted clearing is in the process of being reclaimed by nature. The sharp outlines of man's pattern of civilization are blurred by nature run riot with shrubs and weeds and wild flowers over the clearing, and by the corrosive effects of the seasons on the cabin and barn. But still there persist marker's of man's former intrusion:

The space between the two buildings (cabin and barn), and for many square yards about the cabin door, was strewn thick with decaying chips, through which the dock and plantain leaves, hardy strangers from the Settlement, pushed up their broad, obtuse intrusion . . . and in the centre of the space, where the chips gathered thickest and the plantains had gained least ground, lay a split chopping-log, whose scars bore witness to the vigour of a vanished axe. (HAW, 19-20)

When Dave and Kirstie cut back nature's encroachment by clearing the land, they are reasserting man's efforts to order and control the wilderness.

Then the wild folk began to take account of the fact that the sovereignty of the clearing had been resumed by man, and word of the new order went secretly about the forest. (HAW, 28)

When old Dave first discovers the cabin, it is dilapidated but turns "a brave front to the assault of the seasons" and shows few casualties (HAW, 19). (Much of this reminds one of Mrs. Moodie's clearing in the bush.) During the course of the narrative, Kirstie and Miranda will experience assault upon their settlement in the clearing not only from the elemental forces of storm and intense heat but also from attacks by wild animals--wolves, a lynx and a panther. Besides being susceptible to natural forces, Miranda's small pocket of civilisation is encompassed by the greater wilderness around her:

Miranda was all the time vividly aware of the white immensity enfolding her. The lifeless white level of the lake; the encircling shores all white; the higher fringe of trees, black beneath, but deeply garmented with white; the steep mountain-side, at the foot of the lake, all white; and over-brooding, glimmering, opalescent, fathomless, the flat white arch of sky. (HAW, 56)

This is not the paranoid vision of The Swallower Swallowed, but there is a subtle suggestion, particularly in the first section of the book when Miranda is confined to the clearing, that nature hovers over and around this backwoods settlement. Many of the landscape images that I discussed in "An Archetypal Landscape" operate in Roberts' story--garrison, path, 'edge', surrounding and encompassing wilderness, natural forces imping-

ing on a centre of civilization. The particular function of these in Roberts' "moral fable" will become more clear if one examines the characters who inhabit the landscape.

Kirstie Craig is a trailblazer and settler. Her mission in the heart of the ancient wood is to impose order on the wilderness clearing, to create a social organism that can sustain her family's needs while it acts as a protection against the more violent and fearful aspects of nature. Her backwoods life will be a more gentle version of the Settlement from which she flees. This Settlement exhibits certain characteristics that are more familiarly associated with small town 'garrisons'--for example, self-righteousness and a superstitious fear of nature:

Kirstie, they said, was being very properly punished by Providence, and it was well to show that they, chaste souls, stood on the side of Providence. If Providence threw a stone, it was surely their place to throw three. (HAW, 44)

"She ain't skeered o' nothin' that walks", mutters young Dave at one point. "Yes, I am, Davey", Kirstie answers, "I'm afeard of evil tongues" (HAW, 35). Her self-imposed exile from the Settlement is an escape from a "wasting world" (HAW, 42). If Kirstie thinks that the Settlement is the wasting world, the Settlement, which is the self-proclaimed official culture, thinks that her clearing in the woods is an "unholy solitude" (HAW, 144):

To the most skeptical homespun philosopher in the Settlement it seemed obvious that Kirstie and

Miranda had something mysterious about them, and had forsaken their kind for the fellowship of the furtive kin. (HAW, 145)

It was said by some that Kirstie and Miranda held converse with the beasts in plain English such as common mortals use, and knew all the secrets of the woods, and much besides that "humans" have no call to know. By others, more superstitious and fanatical, it was whispered that no mere animals formed the circle of Kirstie's associates, but that spirits, in the guise of hares, foxes, cats, panthers, bears, were her familiars at the solitary cabin. (HAW, 131)

Here is the 'garrison mentality' in full blossomed prejudice and misconception of the unknown, which it will not explore because the unknown exists outside the defined parameters of permissible thought and action. The attitude of Kirstie and Miranda, and perhaps of Roberts himself, is crystallized in Miranda's view of Gabe's clearing, her first contact with Settlement life:

Her own cabin was lonely enough, but with a high, austere, clear loneliness that seemed to hold communion with the stars. The loneliness of this place was a shut-in, valley loneliness, without horizons and without hope. (HAW, 254)

This is the impression that the novel conveys of the official centres of civilized culture. The lexis of the second sentence quoted above triggers a series of associations with the 'garrisons' in other Canadian works: the shut-in valley loneliness of David Canaan or the characters of The Double Hook; the town of Horizon without horizons for the Bentleys; Maggie Lloyd escaping her lonely house without hope and passing beyond Hope to discover a paradoxical freedom of the

soul.

Kirstie Craig's clearing in the woods is a softened version of the Settlement; it has its rules and regulations --for example, that Miranda may not penetrate beyond its boundaries--and it is alternately wary and self-protective of the wilderness around it. One of Kirstie's first activities in her new home is to define the autonomy of the clearing by building fences around it. James Weston's illustration of the wild lynx preparing to attack the cow in the clearing captures this discreteness in the landscape well. (See the illustration facing page 102 in the edition cited in the bibliography.) The lynx would not appear so menacing or so much of a trespasser if that fence did not function as a physical and symbolic demarcation between 'wilderness' and 'civilized centre'. Kirstie's role as settler who defines the dichotomous landscape is complimented by her role as trailblazer; paths are essential to the success of her back-woods community.

Then there were the paths to be kept clear after every snowfall,--the path to the spring, the path to the barn door and hen house, the path to the woodpile. (HAW, 53)

Much of Kirstie's success in the woods depends, in fact, on skills she has learned in the Settlement--building fences, milking, ploughing, swinging an axe--or more domestic crafts like knitting, for "in truth", Roberts tells us, "she was little learned in woodcraft, and by her mere eyes could

scarce have tracked an elephant" (HAW, 85).

All of this comprises Miranda's physical and social environment. She lives in a dichotomous landscape which is not of her making and against which her nature rebels. Where Wacousta had described an attempt to perpetuate distinctions within the landscape, The Heart of the Ancient Wood shows an attempt to resolve distinctions. Miranda's resolution is her natural kinship with the wilderness, particularly with the animals of that wilderness who come to know her "as a creature in some way not quite alien to themselves" (HAW, 49). When she wanders into the woods outside of path or clearing, she expresses her rejection, albeit an unconscious rejection for most of the novel, of the divided landscape.

Kirstie's influence over Miranda predominates in the first section of the story, until Miranda breaks free into the forest in the chapter entitled "The Initiation of Miranda". Until this incident, Miranda's confinement to the clearing is well documented; there is an everpresent awareness of "forest edges--which she was not allowed to pass (HAW, 46)." And there are Kirstie's sharp warnings, as the one issued when Miranda is attracted to the bear cub, a "lovely, glossy little dog" in her view :

"Dog," (Kirstie) exclaimed sharply; "didn't I tell you, Miranda, it was a bear? Bears are mostly harmless, if you leave them alone; but an old bear with a cub is mighty ugly. Mind what I say now, you keep

by me and don't go too nigh the edge of the woods."

(HAW, 71)

But Miranda does, of course, pass beyond the edge of the woods and it is her naive attitude to wild animals that compels her to do so. In her ignorance of the subtleties and dangers of the wilderness, she perceives the fierce lynx as a pussy, as she had viewed the bear cub as a dog, and bounds unthinking after it into the lights and shadows of the wood. (There is evidence even in these incidents - in the 'dog' and 'pussy', - that the frame of reference is, for some inveterate aspect of her nature, the traditional culture of the Settlement.) Roberts chooses this point in the narrative to introduce explicitly the dialectic and to begin to explore it. Miranda's enthusiasm for the woods, her empathy with nature, is given its first test when the lynx disappears and she discovers herself lost :

She knew that she was lost. All at once the ancient wood, the wood she had longed for, the wood whose darkness she had never feared, became lonely, menacing, terrible. (HAW, 79)

Here is the initial step in a familiar experience for characters in the novels we are examining, the primal consciousness of attraction-repulsion to the land, the dialectic of glory and fear.

Miranda herself does not explore this dialectic, at least she resists it and shuts it out of acknowledged

experience until the antagonism between Kroof and young Dave forces her to a realization and a decision concerning her own nature and attitude to the landscape. Ultimately she must redefine herself and her landscape in terms of the aforementioned antagonism which is played out on the landscape and which mirrors analogous tensions within herself.

In the shuttlecar movement between clearing and forest, Miranda attempts to shut out those darker aspects of wilderness life - viciousness, killing, death - which manifest the darker aspect of nature and which inspire fear. The Pax Mirandae is the device which allows Miranda to ignore these elements for a time and to indulge her perceptions of 'gentle nature', for she regards the folk of the ancient wood "as a gentle people, living for the most part in a voiceless amity (HAW, 124)." And this view is nurtured despite the evidence of vicious wolves and the attack on the cows by a lynx. By ignoring the evidence of her senses and by permitting herself to indulge in an idyllic conception of nature, Miranda has, in effect, built a fortress around her sensibilities and by extension around her perceptions. The Pax Mirandae is the fortress wall, and it is a lie. Viciousness, killing, death --- these are the ultimate blackness for Miranda and the Pax attempts to deny them, to partake exclusively of the glory,

the joy and beauty and friendliness of the wilderness.

(The folk of the forest) never killed in her presence, so that a perpetual truce, as it were, came at last to rule within eyeshot of her inescapable gaze. (HAW, 128)

Here is the deceit, not only a denial of an inescapable fact of the wilderness, but a denial too of an inescapable aspect of Miranda's own nature. While she vehemently opposes the killing of animals for meat, she herself kills fish for food, forgetting that they too are furtive folk. But Roberts does not suggest that such inconsistencies should be resolved into logic, rather they are 'natural' aspects of human behavior.

Wherever Miranda moves, she takes with her a private vision ("a private sanctuary", W.J. Keith calls it) which, to the barriers of her own lack of insight, enfolds her in a false idyll. Even when she realizes the danger from the panther and that Kroof is "just like the wolves" when he kills and eats the hares, such realization somehow fails to carry the force of comprehension and subsequent selfquestioning about the validity of the Pax Mirandae. Roberts explains that this truce which she has created about her "had so long kept her eyes from the hated sight of blood that she had forgotten death, and did not more than half believe in pain (HAW, 149)." But this is an

explanation after the fact of the Pax. But this is not the entire explanation. At the beginning of the novel both Roberts and Kroof acknowledge that Miranda's eyes have "the keener vision, the subtler knowledge", "eyes that see everything and cannot be deceived (HAW, 36, 37)." Later, Miranda herself grows to the realization "that she could see more clearly than even the furtive folk themselves (HAW, 96)." Roberts makes much of Miranda's eyes; they are "solemn" (47), "initiated" (121), possess "a singular transparency akin to the magical charm of the forest shades (147)." As a symbol they stand for Miranda's woodcraft, her surprising kinship with the furtive folk and her intuitive response to the brighter, gentler aspects of the wilderness. But they betray her, for they do not lead her to insight :

Her seeing eyes quite failed to see the unceasing tragedy of the stillness. She did not guess that the furtive folk, whom she watched about their business, went always with fear at their side and death lying in wait at every turn. She little dreamed that, for most of them, the very price of life itself was the ceaseless extinguishing of life itself.

(HAW, 124)

The Pax Mirandae, her idyllic view of the world (virtually a brave new world as is suggested by her name), her lack of insight all react together to motivate Miranda to resolve distinctions in the landscape as she has attempted to resolve the double-edged aspects of wilderness

life. The boundary between clearing and woods, between civilization and wilderness becomes blurred as Miranda makes the entire landscape her home and invites her forest friends, especially Kroof and Ten Tine, into the clearing and even into the cabin. But the attempt to integrate completely and harmoniously the civilised with the uncivilised, the garrison with wilderness is exposed as impossible to achieve in the clash between young Dave and Kroof, and more particularly in Miranda's inability to reconcile her feelings and loyalties to both.

Miranda's 'initiation' into the ancient wood has not been an education. This education evolves through the clashes between young Dave and the forest animals. First, Miranda's interdict against meat is challenged when Kirstie becomes ill and Dave prescribes "good, frêsh, roast meat." Miranda is adamant against the killing of animals and her protests prevail until Dave makes a cunning parallel between humans and bears, between Kirstie and Kroof who are the two creatures most beloved by Miranda. "We're built like the bear," says Dave, "to live on all kinds of food, includin' flesh." (HAW, 222) The appeal is successful and Miranda's love for Kirstie forces her to rethink and ultimately modify her strict law against eating flesh. In a later episode, when a doe is attacked by a lynx, Miranda encourages Dave to shoot. In the climactic episode,

when Dave himself faces death at the hands of Kroof, Miranda's decision is to kill Kroof. The craving for human love which she has attempted to suppress overwhelms her when the source and object of that love faces extinction. In this one act of killing the Pax Mirandae is irrevocably broken and a more human aspect of Miranda's nature is given full play for the first time. A significant aspect of the education which evolves throughout these incidents is Miranda's ever-increasing awareness of the dialectic, though she would undoubtedly not call it this. The fable ends with this realization for Miranda - that the "beautiful, lost, little world" has been killed in the necessity of that final act of violence, that the distinctions in the landscape and in Miranda's nature have reasserted themselves in denial of those artificial and false syntheses which Miranda had attempted to impose on the land and on herself. At the end of the novel, Miranda, Kirstie and Dave leave the neverland of waterfalls, fawns and sudden sun.

ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH AND
OVER PRAIRIE TRAILS

Mrs. Moodie's disappointment in the backwoods of Canada reminds me of a pseudo-historical anecdote about the first Vikings to reach Greenland and the way in which they supposedly enticed their fellow countrymen to its shores. Eric the Red, an Icelandic outlaw, discovered a large, barren island far to the west of his own land about the year 1000. In order to attract settlers after he returned to Iceland, he named the island Greenland. The disappointment of the emigrants landing on its bleak, icy shores can be imagined. This was certainly not the "eden" that old Eric had promised them.

If one looks at emigration as an Exodus, a dream of finding a promised land, then Sussana Moodie feels that hers is a failed quest and that Canada is rather less than an Eden, if not a paradise lost. Such an attitude results from the constant juxtaposition of expectation and reality, and Mrs. Moodie's realization of the disparity between the two. Mrs. Moodie's disappointment threatens to turn her sour for a time, but she emerges, in the words of her London publisher, a delineation "of fortitude under privation", and a lover of the new world:

You will soon learn to love Canada as I now love it, who once viewed it with hatred so intense that I longed to die, that death might effectually separate us forever. (p. 30)

How does this disappointment arise? Like the Viking emigrants to Greenland, Mrs. Moodie is caught in an interplay of hope and disillusionment. Not the hope and betrayal motif that is more common to American literature. 'Betrayal' seems to be the radical reaction that follows upon the dissolution of hope--the belief that society and the land are corrupted, that a state of innocence can be sought only in escapism. And the escape can be achieved only by dropping out of the community, like Huck Finn or Holden Caulfield. Mrs. Moodie's movement as questor from Old World to New World is the following of a dream.

The ordinary motives for the emigration of such persons may be summed up in a few brief words--the emigrant's hope of bettering his condition, and of escaping from the vulgar sarcasms too often hurled at the less wealthy by the purse proud, commonplace people of the world. But there is a higher motive still, which has its name in that love of independence which springs up spontaneously in the breasts of a high-souled children of a glorious land . . . they go forth to make for themselves a new name and to find another country, to forget the past and to live in the future, to exult in the prospect of their children being free and the land of their adoption great.

"Introduction to the first edition"

She speaks of the emigrants to El Dorados and lands of Goshen, and how "disappointment, as a matter of course, followed their high-raised expectations" (Introduction). "It looks a perfect

paradise at this distance", she says of the New World as she looks at it from the ship at sea. And the answer comes back, "Don't be too sanguine, Mrs. Moodie; many things look well at a distance which are bad enough when near" (RITB, 24). This is the prelude to her dilemma in the bush.

In the first two chapters of Roughing It in the Bush, Susanna Moodie delineates the predicament of the Canadian misfit in a series of vivid images. Even before the boat from England lands at Grouse Point, Mrs. Moodie is exposed to the dual aspects of her new home which will preoccupy her almost daily until she moves to the town. The two doctors who board the ship, "a little shrivelled-up Frenchman" and "a fine-looking, fair-haired Scotchman", become emblems in her mind--"one, of vigorous health, the other, of hopeless decay" (RITB, 19). Health and sickness become dominant themes in the journal, from the cholera epidemic in Quebec to Mrs. Moodie's final illness in the woods, but they are not discrete motifs unrelated to larger mythic patterns. A larger pattern does exist in the dichotomous nature of Mrs. Moodie's environment:

glory
hope
health
prosperity
splendours of nature
civilization, gentility
God as designer
 creator of an Eden-
 like land (p. 33)

darkness and fear
disillusionment
sickness
adversity
rigours of nature
barbarism, rudeness
man as spoiler
 and originator of
 trouble (p. 33)

Mrs. Moodie's awareness of these dualities causes her to mythicize the landscape, placing the credits, as far as possible, within her clearing in the woods, a clearing which functions as a garrison to shut out the debits. But the longer Mrs. Moodie lives in the wood the greater becomes her dim awareness that this prejudice is neither true nor reasonable to impose upon her environment. The flowering of this awareness is nipped by a move to the city. Mrs. Moodie remains only an incipient misfit.

As in Wacousta, two aspects of the land are distinguished by images of glory and of darkness, by reactions of awe and fear.

As the sun rose above the horizon, all these matter-of-fact circumstances were gradually forgotten and merged in the passing grandeur of the scene that rose majestically before me. The previous day had been dark and stormy and a heavy cloud had concealed the mountain chain, which forms the stupendous background to this sublime view, entirely from our sight. As the clouds rolled away from their grey, bald brows, and cast into denser shadow the vast forest belt that girded them round, they loomed out like mighty giants--Titans of earth, in all their rugged and awful beauty--a thrill of wonder and delight pervaded my mind. The spectacle floated dimly on my sight--my eyes were blinded with tears--blinded by the excess of beauty. I turned to the right and to the left. I looked up and down the glorious river; never had I beheld so many striking objects blended into one might whole. Nature had lavished all her noblest features in producing that enchanting scene. (pp. 22/23)

Or these passages might be placed against each other.

. . . my soul at that moment was alone with God. The shadow of his glory rested visibly on the stupendous objects that composed that magnificent

scene . . . Canadians, rejoice in your beautiful city. Rejoice and be worthy of her . . . and exclaim, "She is ours--God gave her to us in her beauty and strength--We will live for her glory--We will die to defend her liberty and rights--" (p. 29)

The lofty groves of pine frowned down in hearse-like gloom upon the mighty river, and the deep stillness of the night, broken alone by its hoarse wailings, filled my mind with sad forebodings-- alas, too prophetic of the future. (p. 37)

The majesty and awe which the land inspires imply a kind of freedom, but for Mrs. Moodie the land is also barbarous, inhabited by "incarnate devils", thieves and people of low breeding. The land of all her hopes is also the land of toil and hardships. She shuts herself up in her clearing in the woods with her English babes, her Old World servants, her English gentility, her social mores which are inappropriate to her position in Canada, and her cultivated garden, transforming her wilderness home into a bulwark against the dark elements of the landscape. She is not unassailable. Where the fort in Wacousta was subjected to Indian raids, the Moodie cabin is exposed to the rigours of nature;

The last night of the old year was ushered in with furious storms of wind and snow; the rafters of our log cabin shook beneath the violence of the gale, which swept up from the lake like a lion roaring for its prey, driving the snowflakes through every open crevice, of which there were not a few, and powdering the floor until it rivalled in whiteness the ground outside. (p. 228)

The storm sums up all the hardships--natural and social--that Mrs. Moodie has endured in the bush.

Once again, a typical North American mythmaking process is in operation and is focused on the land. When she tries to impose the standards of genteel English society on backwoods conditions, she fails because her standards are inappropriate. As a result of this gulf between her code of behavior and the demands of her environment, a type of romantic, self-dramatization occurs. She pictures herself in struggle with an alien society and an over-powering landscape, isolated in the woods from her true milieu; the journal might be subtitled "The Romance of Social Desolation". On the other hand, her romantic views are sometimes undercut by her own irony, especially after moral outbursts or passages of conventional literary attitudes. One visualizes Mrs. Moodie as a victim of her environment, one of the first in a long line of Canadian misfits who cannot fit comfortably into the land and society around them. Catherine Parr Traill, Mrs. Moodie's sister, accepts the wilderness as she finds it and easily adapts. Susanna can seemingly not react that way. At first she considers it a better lot not to become part of the Canadian society, not to bend to the will of the wilderness, not to partake of the bush society because that would be to embrace inferior values. In her view, those who succeed best in the backwoods society are those who resist it, who erect barriers to keep out the savage new world and isolate themselves in the sanctity of their own beliefs. Susanna Moodie's

initial solution is to practice the romance of social desolation. But Roughing It in the Bush betrays the presence of a rebellious artistic temperament.

It is this artistic temperament and Mrs. Moodie's romantic ability to internalize the landscape that save her from the confines of her own rigid beliefs, for she does not exist simply within the narrowness of a garrison sensibility.

I could once more hold sweet converse with nature,
and enjoy the soft loveliness of the rich and harmonious scene.
(p. 40)

It was while reposing beneath those noble trees
that I had first indulged in those delicious
dreams which are a foretaste of the enjoyments
of the spiritland. In them the soul breathes
forth its aspirations in a language unknown to
common minds; and that language is Poetry.
(p. 55)

The cheerless and uncomfortable aspect of things
without never fails to produce a corresponding
effect upon the minds of those within . . .
(p. 151)

Northrop Frye's comment that Mrs. Moodie is a "one woman garrison" is not entirely just. There is a movement between 'garrison' and nature in her sporadic empathy with the wilderness.

Towards the end of her journal, Mrs. Moodie seems nostalgically willing to accept the dualities of her environment, although she is being compensated for her trials in the bush by an escape to the city, a centre of civilisation. "Our condition is so much improved", she notes (p. 226), "that we look less to the dark than to the sunny side of the land-

scape". Her romanticism and responses to nature, her tendency to self-dramatization have, to some extent, functioned as outlets for her confining, quasi-puritanical attitude to life. She has not broken the garrison mold, but one senses that there is more resilience (one almost wants to say tolerance) in her attitude to the wilderness and backwoods society; certainly there is a note of nostalgia:

Many painful and conflicting emotions agitated my mind, but found no utterance in words, as we entered the forest path, and I looked my last upon that humble home consecrated by the memory of a thousand sorrows. Every object had become endeared to me during my long exile from civilized life. I loved the lonely lake, with its magnificent belt of dark pines sighing in the breeze; the cedar swamp, the summer home of my dark Indian friends; my own little garden with its rugged snake fence . . . where I had so often braved the tormenting mosquitoes, black flies and intense heat, to provide vegetables for the use of the family.
(p. 231)

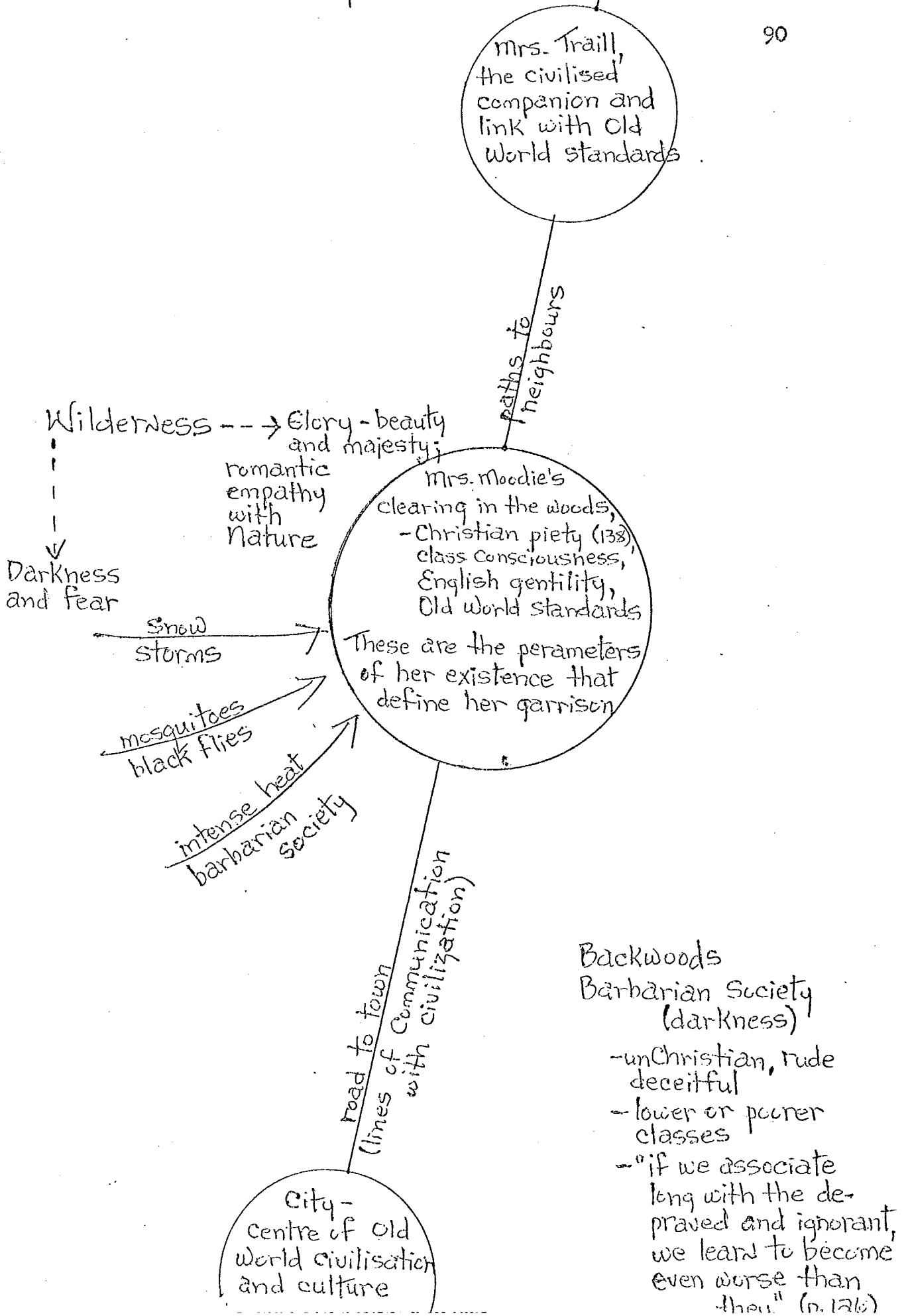
Again the juxtaposition of glory or magnificence and darkness. Certainly, she acquires empathy, a sensitivity to the strivings and accomplishments of the settlers.

One of her final religious outbursts on the nature of man is composed of images which seem to have been learned from her dim awareness of the dialectic of her environment-- the glory and the darkness set in a Christian context:

Man still remains a half-reclaimed savage; the leaven of Christianity is slowly and surely working its way, but it has not yet changed the whole lump, or transformed the deformed into the beautiful child of God. Oh, for that glorious day. It is coming. The dark clouds of humanity are already tinged with the golden radiance of the dawn, but

the sun of righteousness has not yet arisen upon the world with healing on his wings; the light of truth still struggles in the womb of darkness, and man stumbles on to the fulfillment of his sublime and mysterious destiny. (p. 221)

This destiny is not pictured as a synthesis of light and dark, but as a triumph of light over dark, as it properly is in the Christian tradition. But the journal Roughing It in the Bush is not a demonstration of such a triumph. And less is it a synthesis of the glory and the darkness, unless the acceptance of both, existing side by side in a duality, be accepted as a synthetic solution to the misfit's predicament. Mrs. Moodie, in retiring to the city, seems to have been spared the necessity of testing this solution by endurance in the bush, and to have left the reader with a sense of missed opportunity for personal growth.



Mrs. Moodie was a woman at war with herself. She built a fortress in the woods to house certain Old World sensibilities and standards, and yet occasionally liberated herself from the boundaries of that fortress in romantic communion with nature. But her narrative realizes an archetypal pattern by symbolically placing garrison sensibilities in the clearing in the woods. Frederick Philip Grove, a single man moving across the Prairie landscape in his cutter, is both man and fortress. He houses within himself dual attitudes to the land arising from tensions between different kinds of perception and artistic purpose, as Mrs. Moodie had experienced social and moral tensions. At the same time, Grove in his cutter stands for garrison man in his fortress. Again, the landscape provides a ready-made symbolic structure with which to express those tensions.

Over Prairie Trails is a particularly pure form of the 'man-in-an-alien-landscape' story, not only of the direct and elemental confrontation of nature and man, but of the man who loves nature. As Grove himself says in the "Preface":

These drives soon became what made my life worth living. I am an outdoor creature--I have lived for several years 'on the tramp'--I love Nature more than Man. (XV)

From this affinity with nature Grove grasped that the Canadian environment could be utilized as a metaphor for the human condition, which was tragic at worst and contradictory at best. This aspect of Grove's art is best exemplified in his social

novels, Settlers of the Marsh and The Yoke of Life. In Over Prairie Trails, as in In Search of Myself and other autobiographical work, Grove, by observing the processes of nature, and by seeing nature as a metaphor for the human condition, discovers his unique role to be that of artist--artist as observer and explorer of the human condition, and artist as articulator of what it means to be a human being.

In these descriptions of seven journeys, Grove is playing variations on a theme, contriving moods and rearranging perspectives as the changeable elements in nature (the weather and the seasons) alter the constant (the physical terrain). These are journeys of self-discovery--Grove in a process of honing his awareness and perceptions on the whimsical and paradoxical forces of nature.

Each chapter begins with a departure and ends with an arrival; seven times the movement swings from uncertainty and determined steeling of the nerves as Grove sets out to brave the hazards of the Prairie, to emotional relief in the knowledge of security and safety at his wife's cabin or the town where he teaches. The movement is also from town to rural community, from residence to home, from civilisation through wilderness to civilisation. In between lies the meat of the book, the journeys themselves--experiments in isolation, tests of endurance, confrontations with nature. And what arises from each of these is a confrontation with self, the

subject of the natural metaphor. Each journey is a rediscovery and reorientation of both route and traveller; and each is also one man's excursion into the realm of Nature, conceived by the traveller in terms of imagination and whimsey. There is only one character in the book--Frederick Philip Grove, schoolteacher, traveller, and author--but there is more than one personality. This is why Grove chose to relate the same journey several times. He wants the reader to realize how the variety of sensibilities that the different Groves have in the book operate when plummeted into the imaginative, artistic world of Nature, which is ripe for this interpretation placed upon it by man. Nature as both artist and work of art is most explicitly shown in the chapters entitled "Snow" and "Wind and Waves". I note with interest that the changeable aspects of nature (fog, snow, wind) are pictured as an artist who disguises and transforms the constant, invariable physical landscape. Thus, the author's vision may be personal, focussing on the solitary figure of himself in the landscape, but it also encompasses a kaleidoscope of personalities. Nature becomes a metaphor for the human condition.

As the title suggests, "Farms and Roads", the initial journey for both Grove and the reader, is a mapping out of the physical terrain over which Grove must travel to his wife; it is a journey of initiation and orientation to the geography,

involving all the surprises and novelty of the first time. Grove's attention, in this time of discovery, is focussed on landmarks and those natural aspects of which he is most fond--wildlife, trees and bushes--the varieties of prairie existence. More than anything else, the reader is forced to see the author's surroundings and, at the same time, is allowed to watch the author behave in those surroundings. Thus, an interesting double perspective is set up for the reader. While Grove the traveller feeds us information about his environment that will be useful in subsequent chapters, we have the opportunity to perceive the manner in which he is impressed by nature--the "how" as well as the "what" of his observations. Grove the author leaves the door open for ironic and satiric comment on his own personality.

I have said that Grove's attention in the first chapter is on seeing and noticing, on filing away for future reference; another way of putting this is to say that his interests are founded on observation: for example, his long, pseudo-scientific excursions into the nature of fog formation or snow adfoliation. Such observation shows a scientific and empirical sensibility, a belief in knowledge that originates in accurate observation of experience. Throughout the seven journeys it appears at war with the artistic, intuitive and imaginative forces. Yet, as one slowly realizes, Grove gives free play to both aspects of his personality, utilizing now

one, now the other in moments of reverie or crisis. As he says in "Wind and Waves",

Observing means to me as much finding words to express what I see, as it means the seeing itself.
(p. 108)

An overview reveals that science and empiricism not only generate Grove's artistic compulsions, they are important forces in the artistic act. The wedding of 'fact' and 'mood' in an integral system of artistic creativity and of aesthetic appreciation is jarred several times in the book, but Grove's acknowledgement of this only reinforces a basic affinity between the two. Here is a passage from "Snow" immediately following the accident with the cutter on the snowbank. The accident has shocked Grove out of his reverie and made him more wary of watching the path. He has regained his equilibrium in the real world.

On the bush road the going was good again--now and then a small drift, but nothing alarming anywhere. The anti-climax had set in. Again the speckled trunks of the balm poplars struck my eye, now interspersed with the scarlet stems of the red osier dogwood. But they failed to cheer me--they were mere facts, unable to stir moods (p. 88)

The dialectic for Grove is the confining methodology of science, empiricism and fact (the path), versus the liberating, but dangerous expanse of mood, reverie and intuition (the Prairie wilderness). The energy of the dialectic rises from his dependance now on one, now on the other, his quick shifts between the two and his attempts to synthesize them so that

they will mesh and work for him together. The problem in Over Prairie Trails is, at one level of interpretation, specifically artistic and is revealed in the drama between man and Nature played out on an archetypal landscape.

The chapter "Fog" pits the eyes--instruments of scientific observation--against imagination and intuition--artistic faculties. What are the expectations raised about a journey in heavy fog along a familiar route? We know that because physical vision is blurred, past experiences and stored observations will have to co-operate with imaginative and intuitive faculties in avoiding the traps that fog designs for the unwary. The word "designs" admits the idea of fog as artist; fog, like darkness, snow and wind, is treated as a transforming agent, altering the geography set up in the initial chapter "Farms and Roads".

"Fog" begins with a description of the painstaking precautions that Grove the realist makes before he ventures into the fog; he utilizes past experience and acquired knowledge in anticipation of possible hazards. After buying a second horse, with scientific perspicacity he outfits himself and his cutter; all the preparations are outlined in detail for the reader. When Grove says, "Now maybe the reader has already noticed that I am a rather thorough-going person", he merely underlines what emerges from the text--the analytic manner in which he approaches phenomena and the systematic

ways in which nature impresses him. A primrose by a river's brim would never be just a primrose by a river's brim for Grove. It would be of a certain species with definite characteristics, or it would be a fairy's boat moored to the river bank, depending on his mood. One very quickly becomes clued to sentences like, "I have made a study of just such mists on a very much smaller scale"; they invariably herald an excursion into scientific observation and experiment. But on this journey, the fog frustrates this part of Grove's character, the delight in discerning the workings of nature:

I had hardly time to take in the details that I
have described before I was enveloped in the folds
of fog. (p. 22)

The rest of the journey concerns obscured vision and sharpened perception.

First, the fog is seen merely as a natural phenomenon and an object of study. "I am interested in things meteorological", says Grove. This begins the section (pages 27 to 32) in which Grove becomes disoriented, the narrow path which links the centres of civilisation and security (town and wife's cabin) is lost, and he calls upon his knowledge of fogs and his meticulous preparations to set him right again. Everything starts to go wrong--the lantern goes out; he has immense difficulty lighting a match; the horses bolt and he loses his sense of direction. Even his "habit of observing the smallest details" betrays him; in the enveloping fog he simply cannot

"reason out" the correct direction. Fog has upset the efficacy of his realistic preparations and his scientific personality.

Imaginative perception fills the vacuum left by the inoperation of the eyes, and Grove moves easily into the realm of fantasy:

Now, as soon as I was well engulfed in the fog, I had a few surprises. I could no longer see the road ahead . . . The stillness of the grave enveloped me . . . the silence was oppressive--the misty impenetrability of the atmosphere was appalling . . . Darkness was falling fast, falling, for it seemed to come from above: mostly it rises--from out of the shadows under the trees--advancing, fighting back the powers of light above. (p. 27)

At first, the reality-oriented part of Grove is frustrated by the demands of imagination; he has "many a stumble" because he cannot forsake "new observations of the fog" (OPT, 30). But finally, the minute observation of particulars and the scientific spirit surrender themselves to a more fanciful aspect:

I leaned back again and I watched the whole of the light-cone. Snow white wisps would float and curl through it in graceful curves, stirred into motion by the horses trot. Or a wreath of it would start to dance, as if gently pulled or plucked at from above; and it would revolve, faster towards the end, and fade again into the shadows behind. (pp. 32-33)

As he watches the fog, defeated in all attempts to rise above its hazards, it becomes an object of beauty and magic in Grove's imagination; but while he becomes mesmerized, his attention to real hazards on the road lapses:

. . . this silence of the grave was still more perfect, still more uncanny and ghostly, because it

left the imagination entirely free, without limiting it by even as much as a suggestion. (p. 33)

By abandoning himself to fancy, the traveller effectively loses control of operation in the real world. As Grove drifts into reverie, he presents a parable-like story concerning fog-bound marshes in Finland and how travellers were found in the mornings, dead in the woods, victims of fog and mist. This is an artist's vision, but a nightmare vision à la Baudelaire. The artist is depleted at the end, sucked dry from an overactive imagination too far removed from realities. The fog is a trap for the fanciful; the vision ends in death. If the reader has been 'buying' Grove's little allegory, he is forced to conclude that a complete separation from reality and a surrender to uncontrolled imagination creates a sterile artistic milieu. At this point, Grove is jolted back into reality as the buggy rumbles over the bumpy logs of twelve-mile bridge; he is pulled away from the fog's trap by a familiar experience, a known landmark that the fog cannot disguise. The interplay between reality and imagination is now an overt aspect of Grove's consciousness;

I was trying even at the time to decide how much of what I seemed to divine rather than to perceive was imagination and how much reality. (p. 36)

The incident at the flooded bridge illustrates the interaction of illusion and reality. At first, the glimmers of the lantern and the small thin voice coming out of the fog have an eerie otherworld quality; but as these obscured

phenomena define themselves more clearly, Grove realizes that they are a child with three lanterns guarding the bridge. The boy's signal is designed to lead his father, who is out in the fog, to the bridge; the youth operates on intuition but does something practical about it in a manner--light--well suited to the circumstances--fog and darkness. Grove, on the other hand, in consoling the boy's fears of a possible accident to his father at the bridge, is being deductive and 'reasonable', figuring out that if the father had not come already he probably wouldn't be along. When the boy acts on his intuition, he effectively accomplishes what observation and reasonableness alone cannot accomplish in the fog; he sets travellers on the right track and helps them avoid obscured pitfalls.

Grove is strongly attracted to the impressions and transforming power of the fog:

. . . a new impression thrust itself upon me. I call it an impression, not an observation. It is very hard to say what was reality, what was fancy on a night like that. In spite of its air of unreality, of improbability even, it has stayed with me as one of my strongest visions. (p. 40)

But he does not completely reject observation and reality for imagination--the parable of the Finnish fogs warns against this; there is a delicate balance between them, the expression of which is Grove's art. When he comes to write the stories of his journeys, he tells us,

I have my very definite notes, and besides there is the picture in my mind. In spite of my own

uncertainty I can assure you, that this is only one-quarter a poem woven of impressions; the other three-quarters are reality. But, while I am trying to set down facts, I am also trying to render moods and images begot by them. (p. 41)

The scientific mind which confines itself to an empirical view of the world and the artistic sensibility which surrenders itself to fantasy find themselves partners to the same disease:

It shows to what extent a man may be hypnotized into insensibility by a constant sameness of view, that I was mistaken. (p. 41)

Grove, in his dialectic experience, is led to realize the meaning of the landscape in which he operates. Neither the pattern of confined paths nor the patternless meandering wilderness are by themselves workable ethics for life or for art.

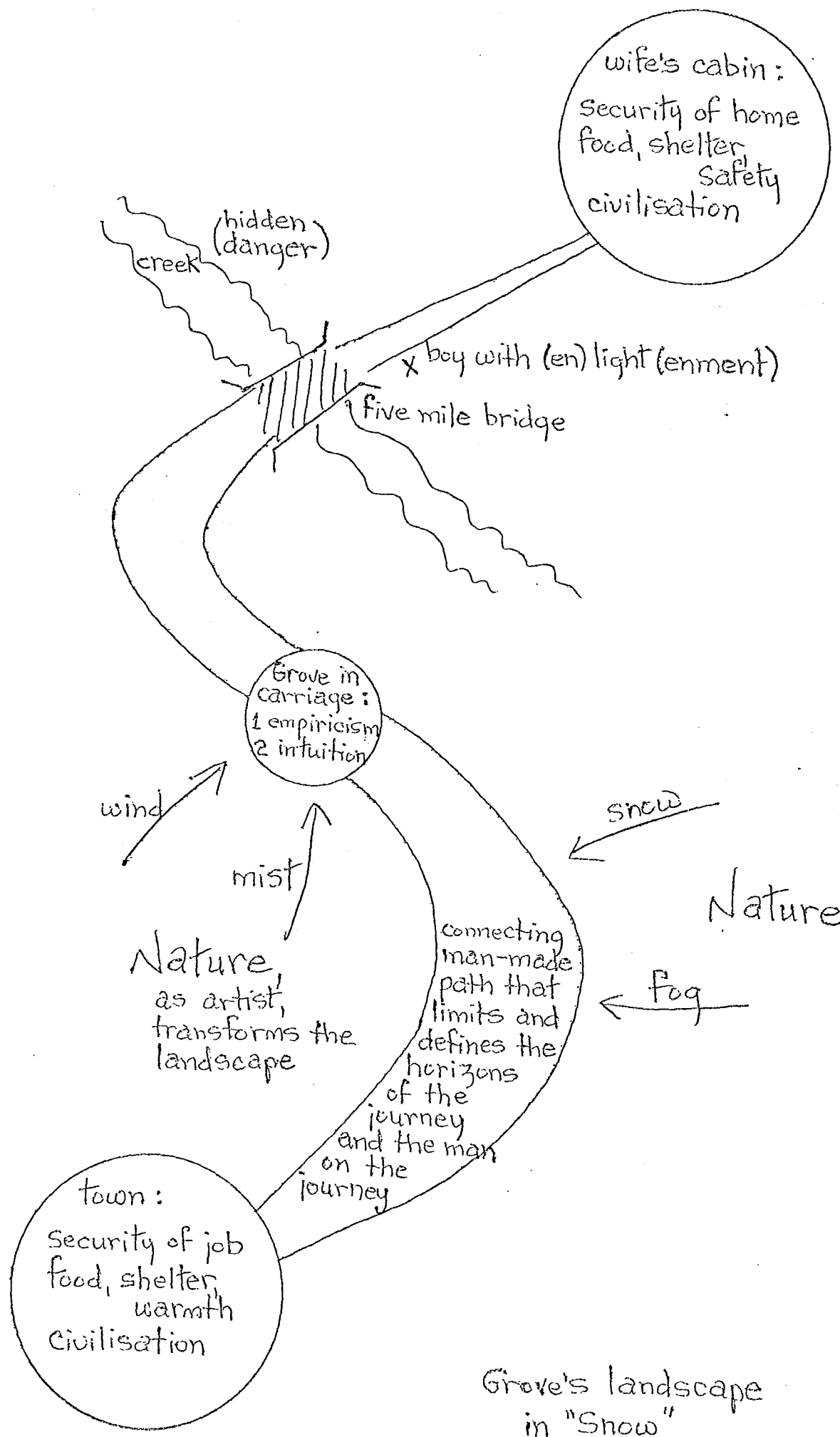
The final incident strengthens the effectiveness of the interaction between intuition, imagination, observation and practicality. All the careful preparations of the cutter prove useless when Grove tries to avoid slipping down the icy grade into the swamp. Grove has to employ both intuition and past experience to figure out where he is on the grade. What finally steers him in the right direction is, once again, a light set up by a person acting on intuition and a real sense of danger--his wife comes out to meet him.

Something told me. He's at the culvert now, and if I do not run, he will go down into the swamp. (p. 42)

"Fog" ends with the assertion that the drive, despite all

hazards, was "in itself . . . a thing of beauty, not to be missed by selfish me".

Grove's aesthetic and his artistic process are in some sense a 'synthesis' of his empiricism and his imagination and intuition. But the synthesis is one of co-existence and interaction rather than of elements from the two halves coalescing to form a distinct third. The artistic problem of dialectic experience and the search for synthesis, as it is symbolized in the landscape, is analogous on one level to Mrs. Moodie's moral-social dilemma and to the paradox of Wacousta, with their symbolic, dichotomous landscapes of garrison, clearing in the woods and forest wilderness. Each of these presents a duality of experience which necessitates a shuttling back and forth between the two aspects concerned in order for the central figure to partake of each aspect.



AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE

Wacousta and Roughing It in the Bush are works which deal with the forces that cause people to erect barriers around their community. These are both the forces of North American wilderness, a rigorous and hostile land with no precedents for social organization, and the familiar characteristics of Europe, cultural standards and traditions which fill the social vacuum of the New World by providing a continuum with the old. Because the above works were written at a time when Canada was still being settled, they suggest that those forces are rooted in the frontier existence, are, in effect, nourished by those ethnic, religious and cultural bonds with Old World European civilisation which provide a common heritage on which groups of pioneers can draw for a coherent sense of community. Inevitably the frontier-pioneer society dies out. As the wilderness recedes and bows to improved communications, greater numbers of emigrants and urban development, the parameters which limit and define this society fade. Eventually the pioneer nucleus of the community dies out too. But the literature of the country, having drawn themes and images from frontier times, does not acknowledge this passing away; the major Canadian motif of a community bound together in opposition to and protection against the

external forces of nature survives as a potent myth for literary artists. In both the frontier and the post-frontier ages, the frontier garrison society often becomes the family (as in Wild Geese), and the house or small town takes over the role of English fort and clearing in the woods. As For Me and My House and Who Has Seen the Wind are prairie novels of this type; they also present a more fully developed picture of the Canadian misfit's dilemma than we have seen so far.

Sinclair Ross is a writer who chooses to write within a cogent, recurrent cycle of myths and symbols--the Prairie metaphor, the misfit artist isolated from a generally alien society, the shuttlecar existence of the misfit between 'garrison' and 'wilderness'. As we have seen, other Canadian writers had already formulated these themes and images by the time Ross came to write As For Me and My House; they had already given form to a national mythology. The writer who draws upon such a body of material (as Ross and Mitchell have done in their novels and short stories) must utilize these symbolic patterns with an economy and artlessness that does justice to the intentions of his art, that avoids the extremes of loading every rift with ore on one hand or, on the other, of leaving exposed the bony structures of imagery and symbolism. Mitchell and Ross are both subject to these shortcomings. At times the symbols are asked to do too much, to illuminate

characters who seem unable to flesh out themselves, and the symbols end in ambiguity. While Who Has Seen the Wind and As For Me and My House are perceptive enough and artful enough to successfully communicate the sensitivities of artists in conflict, the images and symbols from which they draw sustenance can be a yoke on the novelist's expression. I cannot agree with Roy Daniells who says in his "Introduction" to As For Me and My House:

The inner and outer worlds of the Bentleys correspond perfectly, but there is no need to think of symbolism or a mirror image, for the truth is that in the simplest fashion their lives are the product of living in such an environment. Now and again some detail takes on symbolic force, as when the false fronts of the little street, so prominently displayed at the beginning of the novel, are at the end blown down by the storm. But, by and large, the rock-bottom strength of the plot, achieved at the cost of deliberate limitation, insures that almost the full weight and pressure of the narrative will be experienced by the reader who takes all in the most literal fashion.¹⁹

The mirror image, nature as metaphor for the human condition in the landscape, is an all too conscious aspect of Mrs. Bentley's perceptions to function in the hidden way that Daniells suggests. I want to look first at the geography of the novel, and at the images of centre and receding perspective, and how they illuminate the dialectic experience of Mrs. Bentley.

¹⁹Roy Daniells, "Introduction", As For Me and My House (New Canadian Library edition; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. vi.

In the one hundred and sixty pages of the novel, Philip Bentley can't have more than a half dozen pages of dialogue, possibly not as much as the minor characters Paul and Mrs. Bird. Yet, Philip is ostensibly the focus of the narrator's interest, the central aspect of Mrs. Bentley's life. Although the reader will ultimately know more about Mrs. Bentley and will understand her better, this will be only after concentrating his attention with Mrs. Bentley on her husband. Part of the difficulty of the novel's resolution is this lack of knowledge about Philip that the reader has, especially the ambiguity about his capabilities, or at least his potentialities as an artist. Philip's emergence from the suffocating, inhibiting town (blowing down the false fronts), his shuffling off the masquerade of clergyman in preparation for artistic triumphs have been determined by Mrs. Bentley as the motives in her scheme of escape and as the culmination of the novel. But what is the nature of the Bentleys' "escape"? And what are Philip's chances of success as an artist?

The first diagram represents the Bentleys' existence at its most typical in the landscape of alienation. Philip is at the centre of the landscape, alone in his study. The study is a stronghold against his wife, against the townspeople who are his unwanted parishioners, and against his own failures as an artist. As with her ventures into the

town, Mrs. Bentley feels alien and a trespasser in the study; this is Philip's retreat, away from even her. The study is a centre for both Philip's religious and artistic activities: the former a meaningless ritual in which he is trapped but which he performs well, the latter a condition to which he aspires but in which he is not inspired. Philip is a spiritually mummified clergyman, huddled within the dark tomb of what he does not want to be and, at the same, time he is an embryonic artist within the womb of art, waiting to be born. The study is at the centre of the landscape, furthest possible away from the outer circle of prairie and nature, where inspiration and revitalization are to be found, as Mrs. Bentley finds them. This is the image of Philip in his study. He has closed the door against his wife and a door has closed in her mind; he has locked out nature and has cut himself off from inspiration and the sparkle of insight--the non-communication is complete. The Bentleys, in their house and in their emotional and social lives, are two small circles mobile within the confines of a larger circle; two small circles often touching, never merging, separate from each other but joined in mutual awareness and in isolation from the community outside.

Mrs. Bentley is mistress of the rest of the house, a personage (symbol of Philip's failure, edifice of the Bentleys' false front), a home which holds them together and

functions as a protective shell to the inner study, allowing Philip his secret role as 'artist'. The house is a stronghold against the repressive forces of the town, against its hypocrisy and prejudices, its false fronts. Only Paul and Judith and Mrs. Bird who have common bonds with the Bentleys are truly welcome. Within his study, the inner core of the landscape, Philip is not merely aware of the town, he is preoccupied with the town. Again and again he draws a street of false fronts battling with the wind to remain standing. The picture as symbol can refer to the antagonism of garrison sensibility and nature, or more specifically to Philip's false front of clergyman at war with his artistic yearnings. Perhaps the symbol of the drawing is somewhat inadequate (or ambiguous) as an analogy to the picture of Philip that Ross and Mrs. Bentley present to the reader. Except for the holiday on the ranch away from the town when he paints, Philip's artistic nature seems more petulance and groping for articulation than the rage and energy suggested by the wind in the drawings.

If one follows Mrs. Bentley moving outward from the house, one passes through the garrison town of false fronts, a stronghold against the prairie wilderness, smuggled self-protectively close to the landscape, like the town in Who Has Seen the Wind and the community in The Double Hook. As in Philip's pictures, in real life the town is subject to the forces of nature---the wind, the suffocating dust and the

oppressive heat. The town is physically similar to the Bentleys' mental experience of it. Again, the inner and outer worlds correspond in a mirror image as the narrator-author utilizes the landscape as a metaphor for the human condition. Surrounding the town, dwarfing it, hemming it in is the illimited Prairie, "the wilderness outside of night and sky, with this one little spot of Horizon hung up lost in its immensity". While the house is a stronghold against the town, the prairie is a haven from it, a place to go and think things out, to be touched by nature and stirred with imagination, to be alone and outside the inner, hostile circles of confined existence. Mrs. Bentley is drawn naturally to the prairie; Philip is not. In Over Prairie Trails and Who Has Seen the Wind the prairie functions as a stimulus to artistic sensitivity and growth, as it does in the ranch section of Ross's novel. Out of her experience of the prairie and her grasp of the dialectic energy that compels her back and forth on the landscape, Mrs. Bentley keeps a diary, which is the novel we are reading. Hers is the concrete artistic achievement. The prairie around Horizon is most typically seen as a symbol of temporary freedom from the town, from the house and from Philip. The prairie is Mrs. Bentley's study. She discovers a kind of freedom there.

Cutting across the landscape is the railway, a symbol of escape, but not, I think, necessarily an escape to freedom

from repression and false fronts. The train may move across the prairie wilderness, but it stops only at various 'garrisons' along the way; and it is at these that the Bentleys inevitably disembark. When Philip was young the train offered the means of escape, the Church, the object of escape; but that "escape" has trapped him in a relentless thin, cold, narrow life.

Mrs. Bentley's walks along the railroad tracks are consciously taken as a temporary escape or relief. In her greater wisdom and courage, developed in the prairie wilderness, she realizes that true freedom does not lie in taking a train away from this Horizon to another horizon which will be exactly the same, but in ending their ill-fitting roles within the church to develop the artist in Philip. Freedom is in self-fulfillment and self-expression, not merely in escape. Mrs. Bentley is the true productive artist; as I have already pointed out, she writes the novel which we are reading.

A large, outer circle which encompasses all might be drawn to represent Mrs. Bentley's mind--her perception and imagination which transform the prairie geography into a landscape metaphor of her existence. She provides such an overview because she moves from circle to circle. But one must remember, as the diary structure of the novel suggests, that this overview originates from somewhere near the centre, from the parsonage itself. As a participator in the events her point of view is from the ground and it is her experience at

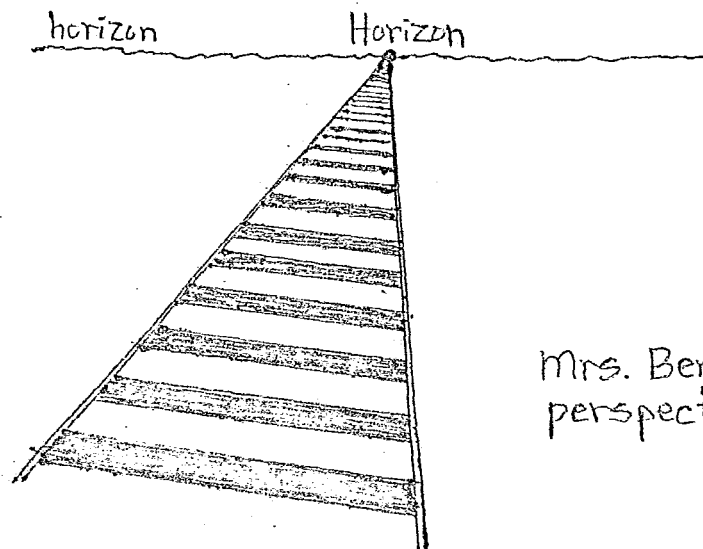
this level that provides her with the natural metaphor, the correspondence between inner and outer worlds. The overview is an accumulative effect of the novel, built of her descriptions and her reflections.

Moving down to ground level, the points of view become diagrams 6 and 7. Throughout the novel one is aware of these two pictures, of the image of a perspective receding to a vanishing point. Mrs. Bentley consistently returns to that railway track stretching away from false-fronted Horizon, receding and diminishing to a point on the prairie horizon. One is reminded of Tennyson's "Ulysses",

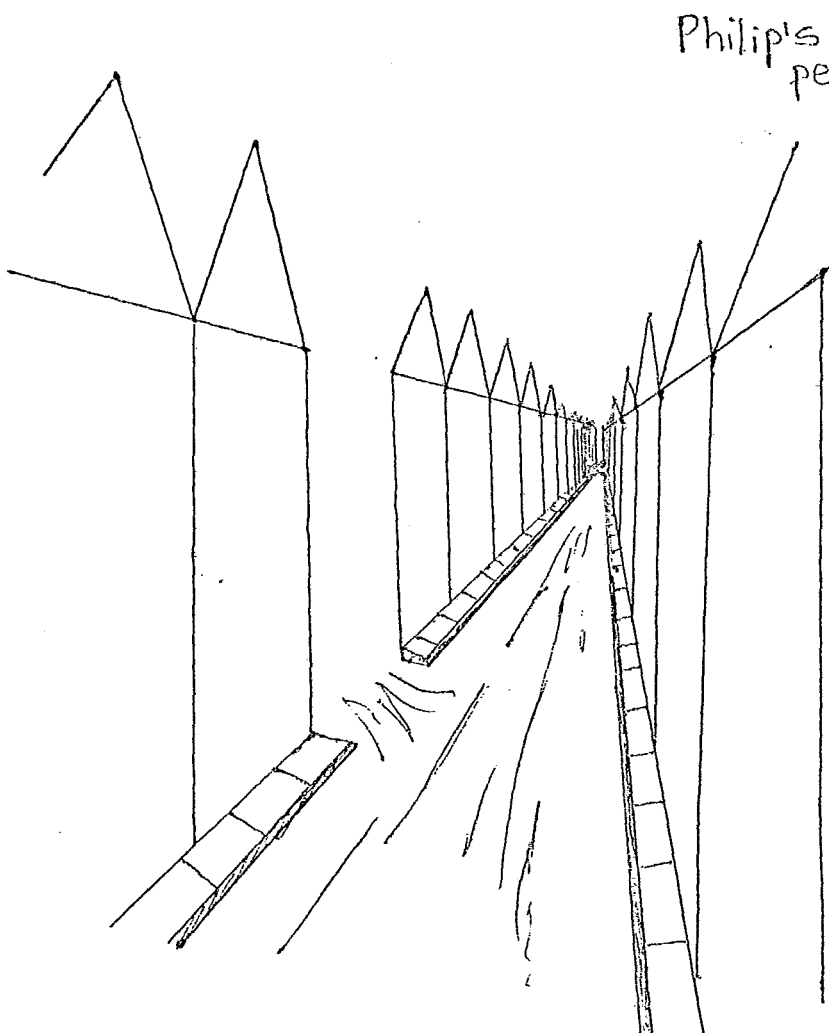
All experience is an arch where thro'
Gleams that untravelled world whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.

Mrs. Bentley, on the prairie, is aware of that ethic of life and aspires to the horizon, seeking the fulfillment of self for both herself and for Philip. Her perspective on the wide-open expanse of existence and human potentiality puts the limited town of Horizon in its proper place--one confined little spot hung up lost in immensity. As she looks out along her receding perspective, unobstructed by false fronts, outside the restrictive circles of house and town, she is capable of dreaming of escape and finally of scheming to realize that escape. Because Philip is a shadowy, ambiguous figure, whether that escape is to freedom is ambiguous.

Ross has made Philip's perspective similar in design.



Mrs. Bentley's
perspective



Philip's
perspective

But in his drawings, Horizon usurps the entire landscape; the false fronts block out nature and the horizon of possibilities, limit his view and, perhaps, minimize his artistic abilities.

Something has happened to his drawing this last year or two. There used to be feeling and humanity in it. It was warm and positive and forthright; but now everything is distorted, intensified, alive with thin, cold, bitter life.

(p. 17)

The dog El Greco is named after an artist who, I would say, in his distorted, intensified paintings, discovers feeling and humanity in the spectres of thin, cold, bitter life. The mirror image of the drawing is effective for Philip's morose, reclusive emotional and social state. The vacation at the ranch reawakens Philip to the horizon of his potentiality as artist, as the girl Judith from the prairie pierces through all the circles of protectiveness to touch his tenderness of spirit and revitalise his awareness of self as a man. Judith's voice, we learn, is in harmony with the wind, responds to it, rides with it (AMMH, 38), so one aspect of nature does reach Philip in the fortress of his study. These ideas are suggested in Mrs. Bentley's narrative.

Only when the wind blows down the false fronts at the end of the novel does Philip's point of view seem to approximate his wife's. Their landscapes have, in a sense, merged, just as they have moved closer together in their eradication of the false front of 'clergyman and dutiful wife', and in

their caring for Philip and Judith's illegitimate child. But the resolution of the novel is highly paradoxical. First, the train is a double-edged symbol for escape; it will take the Bentleys, after all, only to another garrison and to another limited set of circumstances. Any effective escape must be imaginative. Inspiration, leading to artistic fruition, must intervene and allow them (particularly Philip) to transcend those limitations with which the garrison will shackle them. In a moment of clarity which precedes Philip's union with Judith, Mrs. Bentley despairs about their future:

All I see is the futility . . . The next town--
the next and the next. There doesn't seem much
meaning to our going on. (AMMH, 103)

This is a bleak prophecy that jostles the more optimistic vision of hope and liberation, even at the end of the novel.

Second, Philip's creative abilities and his imaginative responses to the world around him are shadowy and ambiguous. What Philip lacks in the novel is inspiration, the kind of imaginative stimulation that has been placed in the prairie wilderness, that derives from nature and that is blocked out by the false fronts that usurp the entire canvas of Philip's pictures and Philip's mind. Mrs. Bentley is wrong when she says that "life has proved bitter and deceptive to Philip because he has kept seeking a beauty and significance that isn't life's to give" (AMMH, 94). Philip is on the right track (not a garrison track) seeking a beauty and significance

that life does have to offer. This is the essence of freedom in these novels--that one be exposed to nature, and realize the imaginative experience, the inspiration of nature. Philip almost blossoms during the holiday on the ranch when he presents his painting of the stallion to Laura. "Laura took it from him with a strange soft look in her eyes, and said it was the nicest thing that anybody had ever given her" (AMMH, 104). At this point, Mrs. Bentley notes that her husband experiences the glow that an artist can feel when his art (even if it is only a copy, "a good likeness") successfully reveals another dimension of 'reality' to his audience. This is one of the most positive incidents in the book.

Ross's novel is a lot about the forces that repress, and very little about the forces that liberate. Within this plan, the work is perceptive and, at times, amazingly well written. The complex of human relationships and human responses, complete with ambiguities, that filter through Mrs. Bentley's perception of the world around her magnificently reveals the paradoxical nature of reality. But the dialectic of the work consists in the energetic interplay between the forces that repress and the need to exist in a social context on the one hand, and the desire to escape a 'garrison' into self fulfillment and the forces that liberate on the other. The narrative, intentionally or otherwise, fails to supply much information about the characters' experience of the

latter--and thus the ambiguity of the resolution. There is an imbalance of authorial concern with the dialectic built into the novel.

The forces of liberation that work on the misfit figure are inevitably the forces of nature. Misfits are, like Grove, essentially outdoors creatures who waste away spiritually when locked in a garrison.

I am essentially an outdoor creature; and for several years the fact that I have been forced to look at the out-of-doors from the window of a town house only, had been eating away at my vitality. (OPT, 45)

Luzina Tousignant is drawn to the big city, but during these visits to civilised parts, the plaintive, monotonous, persistent call of the water hen draws her back to the natural realm. On Little Water Hen island she is able to catch "a glimpse of the vastness of the power to which she had recourse" (WNWH, 32). Nature in its gentler aspects of strength, beauty, unchangableness is a mirror for human potential; Luzina has her children learn the names of everything around them, "the knowledge of which confers possession" (WNWH, 55). When Maggie Lloyd breaks out of her house and her shell-like existence, she has experiences similar to Grove's in his rides through the prairies.

Her tormented nights of humiliations between four small walls and in the compass of a double bed were gone, washed away by this air, this freedom, this joy, this singleness and forgetfulness. (SWA, 124)

What power these rivers were already yielding, far beyond her sight! Even a map of this country--lines arranged in an arbitrary way on a long rectangular piece of paper--stirs the imagination beyond imagination, she thought (SWA, 67)

She exulted in each small sight and sound, in new time, in new space, because now she had got free . . . and she had long formed the habit of seeking and finding, where she could, private enjoyment of the sort that costs nothing but an extension of the imagination. (SWA, 16-17)

This is the kind of inspiration denied to Philip Bentley, about which the ending of the novel raises questions. Brian O'Connell's 'strange enchantment' with the prairie and the wind reveals that the greatest pull on the misfit's imagination is not, perhaps, the physical environment or the elements, but something which these things manifest, and which I have been calling 'nature':

Prairie's awful, thought Brian, and in his mind there loomed vaguely fearful images of a still and brooding spirit, a quiescent power unsmiling from everlasting to everlasting to which the coming and passing of the prairie's creatures was but incidental. (WHSW, 129)

Or, similarly for Maggie Lloyd:

The sky was an intimation of something still vaster, and spiritual. (SWA, 124)

These forces often direct the misfit towards art; through writing or painting or music, he may structure and order his experience, he may act out his quest, his anxieties and frustrations, without imposing a too rigid and unnatural order on real life (on the real landscape). The work of art becomes, in a way, the unique third landscape where the dialectic is

explored and where a synthetic expression of the artist's perceptions and inspirations is evolved. The variegated rug trimmed with white that Ellen finishes weaving at the end of The Mountain and the Valley is symbolic of this creative process. At the other extreme is Lorne Murchison who, at the end of The Imperialist, prepares to participate in "the task among those by whose hand and direction the pattern and the colours will be made"---"weaving the will of the nations" (Imp., 268). This way of ordering experience by attempting to fashion the routine of history was the impetus to the 'garrison culture' and 'garrison mentality' that Frye discerns.

CONCLUSION

Since I have tried to describe a development in Canadian literature, the evolution of landscape patterns and images from a simple dichotomy to the dialectic of the misfit's experience, there is nothing to summarize. Or rather, I have stated my conclusions in the process of describing the development.

Grove apart, there is a stage beyond the misfit figures we have been looking at, the Bentleys and others like them who are artists (more often than not failed artists, or artists of garbled articulation), people like David Canaan, Brian O'Connell (who is a child but for whom I speculate no satisfying creative future), or the hero of The Favourite Game. Beyond these, there is the artist who articulates his creativity, and who successfully conveys his vision of nature or society in some medium of expression. Such figures are not in vogue as the protagonists of Canadian novels. A Philip Bentley metamorphosed into such an artist might be one with the successful nature artists who painted in the Canadian wilderness--Emily Carr, Tom Thompson, the Group of Seven. Can there be any doubt that the works of these painters are meant to address the imagination, that they are romantic in spirit and are a successful articulation of what eludes so

many fictional artists? When Carr expresses affinity with a twisted, primeval nature or Thompson creates a serene jewelled landscape, they are attempting to cut through to the essence of nature, to expose the mystery and force of her vitalities, to find out what makes her tick. And, perhaps, they are also trying to catch the Eden that has eluded North Americans since the time of Columbus. Northrop Frye glosses these ideas in The Modern Century:

The painting of Tom Thompson and Emily Carr, and later of Riopelle and Borduas, is an exploring, probing painting, tearing apart the physical world to see what lies beyond or through it.²⁰

What is interesting about Frye's brief description is the concept of violence ("tearing apart the physical world") as a means to expose an idyll or to find one's relationship to that idyll. The idyll is, of course, perpetually elusive; the mystery of nature is only a question and never an answer no matter how close a Thompson or a Carr may come, just as the promised land is always a dream and never a fulfillment.

When considering the myth of the promised land, one must remember that the idyll is also an ideal. This, I believe, is what gives impetus to the image of the slain animal that occurs so often in our literature and that so easily wounds the sensibilities of the misfit. Remember the gopher that Artie kills on the prairie in Who Has Seen the Wind; the rabbits killed by Kroof in The Heart of the Ancient Wood; El Greco killed by coyotes in As For Me and My House; the

²⁰Northrop Frye, The Modern Century; op.cit., p. 122.

caribou killed by foxes in Agaguk; and the respective sorrow, anger, bewilderment of Brain O'Connal, Miranda, Mrs. Bentley and Agaguk. Because it exists as a part of incorruptible nature and yet lives in a similar way that man lives, the animal bridges a gap. It easily becomes a symbol of the nature ideal and also has the power to evoke sympathetic identification in an audience of human animals. Grove has an image in Over Prairie Trails that operates in this way.

To this very day these yellow grades of the pioneer country along the lake lie like naked scars on Nature's body: ugly, raw, as if the bowels were torn out of a beautiful bird and left to dry and rot on its plumage. Age will mellow them down into harmony. (p. 14)

The dead bird becomes a metaphor for man's imposition on the Prairie landscape (which is Grove's new Jerusalem). In the desperate, futile quest to discover an ideal in existence (a real Eden) the pioneer settlers have marred the face of what dissatisfied them, and then, presumably, retreated into their garrisons. For Grove, this is the great indignity inflicted on the Prairie landscape.

Our artists oppose the destructive pioneer settlers. Carr, Thompson and the Seven (excepting Fred Varley) rarely include the human beings in the subject of their paintings. Their art is not about figures in a landscape, unless one considers the painter in the wilderness such a figure. The landscape itself, as a manifestation of Nature, fills the scope of their imagination and provides sufficient material

for artistic comment. If you consider realism in art an attempt to reiterate the surface likeness of the subject, then these Canadian artists do not approach realism. But if realism as an aesthetic term transcends technique and likeness, if it encompasses the attempt to get behind the surface, to investigate and celebrate the dynamics of Nature (as other artists investigate society), then they are pre-eminently realists. And this is true because they have made us see nature in a new way, not simply as an environment but as a vital force with a fascination and magic of its own. They portray more "how they feel" about the Canadian landscape than "what they see". Apart from the visual beauty of their work, I treasure these artists for their ability to transform one from a Berenice Einberg,

. . . the ichneumon fly, which a moment ago, on its petal, looked (to Christian) like an arrow about to shoot from the bow, now only looks like a grub as it struggles feebly in the muddy water.
(SS, 28)

into a Brian O'Connell,

The boy was aware that the yard was not still. Every grass blade and leaf and flower seemed to be breathing, or perhaps whispering--something to him--something for him . . . Within himself Brian felt a soft explosion of feeling. It was one of completion and of culmination (WHSW, 60). A tiny garden toad suddenly became magic for him one summer day--the smell of leaf mold, and clover, and wolf.
(WHSW, 123)

A myth has grown up about these Canadian landscape artists. I do not know to what extent it is true, but national publications enjoy celebrating the closeness that these artists

reputedly enjoyed with the nature they portrayed.

In parties of two or three, they (the Toronto group) went on weekend sketching trips to the Georgian Bay district and spent their holidays in northern Ontario. They soon became strongly attached to this rocky, pine-covered wilderness, with its silent lakes, burnt-over forests, and brilliantly coloured autumn foliage.²¹

What are the epithets that one wants to use when describing the works of Tom Thompson and the Group of Seven--mystical attitude to nature (MacDonald's Mist Fantasy, Varley's Georgian Bay); lyricism (Tom Thompson's The Jack Pine, Carmichael's The Silvery Tangle); quietude and majesty (especially the works of Arthur Lismer); grandeur and immensity (most evidently marked in the Lawren Harris' paintings of the north-lands and Rockies); vibrancy and brilliance (A. Y. Jackson's vital depictions of Indian Summer). All of these artists portray a living nature which is more than a mere object of observation; here is an attempt to capture the spirit of the landscape on canvas.

Wilfred Watson's poem 'Emily Carr' elaborates this idea with respect to an individual artist.

Like Jonah in the green belly of the whale
Overwhelmed by Leviathan's lights and livers
Imprisoned and appalled by the belly's wall
Yet inscribing and scoring the uprush
Sink vault and arch of that monstrous cathedral,
Its living bone and its green pulsating flesh--

In this part of the poem, Emily Carr is imprisoned in the

²¹The Arts in Canada; Ottawa Press (Government publications), 1965, p. 74.

belly of that whale. Within the limits of this environment, the painter, "overwhelmed . . . and appalled by the belly's wall", records the impressions of what she sees--"inscribing and scoring the uprush/ Sink vault and arch of that monstrous cathedral". But according to Watson, her art at this point is only an anatomy lesson, a careful and perceptive description of the bone and green flesh. When she finally bursts the bounds of her restricted world, she is outside the whale and gains a new perspective on the "river of life". Like the poet seated on Ararat in F. R. Scott's "Lakeshore", her view is from "the coasts of eternity". It is not made clear why this happens, as it is never made clear why the misfit is touched by nature and responds. For some reason it is attributed to the whale, which I understood as a metaphor for limited human (one is tempted to say 'garrison') perspective. The whale's belly, then, is the confines of normal human understanding or perception. Does she gain new insights because she is made privy to the secrets of the whale? Or does she become too big to be contained by the whale, transcending the physical aspects of her environment and growing artistically when she recognizes that the bones live and the green flesh pulsates, that there are dynamic forces behind the material facade? This second explanation seems more consistent with the latter half of the poem.

Then, as for John of Patmos, the river of life
Burned for you an emerald and jasper smoke

And down the valley you looked and saw
 All wilderness become transparent vapour,
 A ghostly underneath a fleshly stroke,
 And every bush an apocalypse of leaf.

Here, the artist perceives stirrings underneath the surface of nature, as do our misfits from the novels; all physical wilderness becomes transparent to her vision, and perception opens up a new area of understanding. Thus, the fleshly strokes of paint express the 'ghostly' or internal workings of nature. The artist explores, probes, to see what lies beyond or through it. When Watson says that every bush is an apocalypse of leaf, he understands the ability of the artist to reveal what is hidden to ordinary eyes, not merely to experience it, as do so many misfits of artistic sensibility. A painting like Carr's Reforestation shows the painter struggling to come to terms with the impelling aspects of the landscape. Emily Carr depicts with great intensity the vigorous, living aspects of Nature.

I have gone off on this tangent in conclusion because the silence or garbled articulation of most artist figures in our prose literature is ultimately exasperating. Grove is always an exception. At the end of a long consideration of repression, antagonism and frustrated articulation, one needs the refreshment of artistic inspiration transformed by the sparkle of insight into delightful expression.

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