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THE REGIONAL NOVEL IN CANADA, 1880-1925

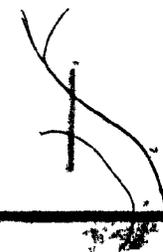
by  
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I am indebted to Professor Malcolm Parks for his painstaking help with every stage of this study and to Professors Malcolm Ross and Allan Bevan for their thoughtful advice..

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a consideration of the regional novel in Canada in the approximate period between 1880 and 1925. This time span was a highpoint of the popularity of regional settings and characters among Canadian writers. As this study will show, the regional novels written in this period represent the character of the late-Victorian sensibility in Canada, but also mark a significant transition to a literary consciousness more modern and less romantic and sentimental.

On one level this study is an attempt to survey this group of novels and give an impression of its quality and characteristics. On another level the relation of these novels to more modern Canadian fiction is considered as well as to the world of literary thought in general.

Chapter One contains a consideration of the nature of regionalism and some of the problems involved in dealing with it. This chapter also relates regionalism and the concerns of the Canadian novelists writing between 1880 and 1925 to the wide stream of pastoral thought that has run throughout world literature.

Chapter Two is concerned with the contemporary context of the novels and describes the main currents of thought and feeling running through the late-Victorian English-speaking world. It also considers the character of the three main regions of Canada between 1880 and 1925 and lays the groundwork for a comparison of the three regions as depicted in the novels.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five deal with the novels of the Maritimes, of Quebec and Ontario, and of the West respectively. Both the similarities

and differences between the novels of the three regions are noted as well as individual novels that went ahead to more modern developments in Canadian literature.

The Conclusion deals with several modern Canadian novels and their relation to the group of late-Victorian regional novels considered in the preceding chapters. It then considers these novels, both late-Victorian and modern, in the light of one theory about Canadian literature. The appendix contains brief notes about a number of novels not explicitly considered in the earlier chapters.

## CHAPTER I

### 'AN APPROACH TO REGIONALISM' AND ITS LITERARY MODES

The subject of this study is the group of regional novels written in Canada approximately between 1880 and 1925. Before one begins such a consideration, however, it seems clear that some remarks must be made about the nature of literary regionalism itself. Some prominent examples of literary regionalism are commonly accepted: Hardy's Wessex novels, Faulkner's novels of the South, and Frost's poetry of New Hampshire.

Yet, an effort to assign definite limitations to the concept of regionalism ends by confronting some questions to which the answers are various and inconclusive. The ultimate consideration of regionalism in literature involves the problems of myth-making, the artist's relation to his creation, and the relation of art to reality. This first chapter is an endeavour to recognize many of the questions involved in a discussion of literary regionalism; it is also concerned with establishing the approach to regionalism that guides this study of the Canadian regional novel.

It is best to begin such a consideration with the common notion that the setting of a regional novel will be rural or small-town as opposed to urban. The thought behind this premise reveals some clues about the nature of regionalism itself.

It has become a cliché to observe that Americans today are living in an era when the mass media of communications are bringing various peoples closer and closer to a common culture, a process particularly operative in urban environments where large groups of people, in conjunction with large-scale commerce and modern technology, achieve the

effect of a melting-pot that diminishes, and eventually eliminates, distinctions. To earn a living and participate comfortably in the life of a city, a man must speak the language spoken by the residents of that city. The availability to him of the same mass communications (via television, radio, and newspapers) that are available to other inhabitants of his city will make him aware of approximately the same issues (all interpreted in approximately the same manner) as all the other people in his city. Some people, of course, are more receptive to these influences than others, but the potential is about the same for everyone. The same thing is true of the development of man's sensibility as it is fostered by the various forms of culture such as films, popular music, and bookstores. Again, though there are different degrees of awareness, the potential is nearly the same for everyone, and the urban environment determines the mean. An example of how this melting-pot process works is afforded by European immigrants to Canada or the United States. Though the second generation may preserve the language of the homeland, it is often forgotten or relegated to the status of a sentimental tradition by the third generation, as are many of the ethnic customs. Thus, the inhabitants of a city come to be more and more alike, influenced as they are by like conditions. Moreover, this is true not only of the people in one city, but of the people in cities generally. Complex urban communities tend to develop along a common pattern, and, with the development of more and more sophisticated technology and elaborate communication systems, the result is the global village, the appearance of increasingly world-wide culture, and the disappearance of cultural distinctions.

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At the opposite pole from the concept of a global village is the idea of the region. The region is insular rather than in communication with other communities, and therefore its development or lack of development will be individual. It could be argued that communities, even at the level of isolated regions, develop approximately alike, but the phenomena through which this development will be expressed are particular and unique in that they derive their forms or materials from a specific environment. To express this in terms of art, we might say that, though the themes of art are universal, common to the existence of all men, an artist expresses these themes in the individual colours of his own imagination. The very nature of a city, its size, complexity, and dependence on resources outside of itself, makes it unlikely that it will have had this type of isolated, individual history. An exception to this general principle might be argued for the urban ghettos which, in a sense, are isolated and have their own cultures, probably even create their own myths. Generally speaking, however, the environment most likely to foster such an individual and insular development is a rural one which sheer space and geography, the character of the land, maintain largely to itself, free to hold to its own identity.

Culturally, artistically, this identity develops and manifests itself in the region's myths. By myths are meant the legends or archetypes through which the people of a region most personally or most exactly voice their chief concerns, express their conception of themselves as a group or society. We are accustomed to thinking of myths as they are expressed by the folktales, songs, dances, and rituals of primitive peoples, but it is more difficult to identify myth in modern,

more self-conscious art forms. In this age of growing environmental uniformity, a familiar myth is that of the artist as rebel within, rather than representative of, his social milieu,

We are faced then with the basic problem of the artist's relation, and the relation of his art, to the region which is the cultural entity. One way of approaching the various aspects of this issue is to consider the work of two critics whose treatments of the question represent two polarities. The two critics are the Canadian, Northrop Frye, and an Englishwoman, Phyllis Bentley.

Frye seems to assume about the genuine artist that, though his regional identity will make a deep impression on his mind and his attitudes to the world, the impression need not take an explicit form in his art. Though Frye is most concerned with Canadian poetry, his statements also apply to writers of prose fiction. He considers regionalism and the artist briefly in his essay "Silence in the Sea":

Many modern poets seem to strike their roots in a small and restricted locality. Thus Frost is a poet of northern New England, Stevens of southern New England, Yeats of Sligo, Eliot of the City of London... Dylan Thomas of Southern Wales, Jeffers of the Monterey and Carmel region of California. They may live in and write about many other places, but the relation to the specific environment is still there.

Thus, Frye sees the Canadian poet, E.J. Pratt, as one whose art is conditioned by his Newfoundland background. Writing at a time when "a growing settlement of the country that eventually began to absorb at least eastern Canada into the north temperate zone" was making the average Canadian's relation to nature increasingly less unique, "Pratt's

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<sup>1</sup>Northrop Frye, "Silence in the Sea", The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 191.

Newfoundland background helped to keep his centre of gravity in the elegiac."<sup>2</sup> Frye believes that Pratt is a regional poet (even when writing The Titanic or The Last Spike) because certain of his poetic characteristics, his affinity to the art of oral and pre-literate society, and his evocation of man's sense of "the mindless hostility of nature" can be attributed to the particular influence of his Newfoundland upbringing.<sup>3</sup>

This belief in the artist's conditioning by the region of his youth or chief experience is not peculiar to, or new with, Frye; it has been a common critical assumption. In 1925, Abel Chevally in his book The Modern English Novel implied the converse to Frye's statement about Pratt when he said that, though Robert Louis Stevenson often wrote about Scotland, "his point of view" remained "on the whole, Anglo-Saxon."<sup>4</sup> It is possible for a writer to write about the world outside his native region, yet for his work to have the peculiar colour or approach of that region. Conversely, a writer may write about a region while the colour of his mind, the character of his forms, will not be a true product of, or truly express, that region. Though this interpretation of regionalism involves the danger of turning to a work with preconceived ideas of what one will find there or of trying to categorize individual writers

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<sup>2</sup>Frye, "Conclusion to Literary History of Canada", Bush Garden, p. 244.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Abel Chevally, The Modern English Novel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925), pp. 136-137.

and their works in terms of the sort of attitudes or images one associates with their mother region, nevertheless it serves as a valuable caution. Some of the writers to be considered in the following chapters set their novels in Canadian regions and draw on the details of regional life for interest or colour, but a reader senses that these novels do not primarily express the myths of the region. The best known figure to whom this caution applies is Frederick Philip Grove, whose novels of the West seem essentially expressions of a philosophical position formed before Grove ever arrived in Canada.<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that Grove's work should be excluded from a consideration of Canadian literary regionalism, only that this external element must be taken into account.

At the opposite pole of this question is a critic such as Phyllis Bentley who treats literary regionalism as the use of material details from regional life. Miss Bentley calls a writer regional if he identifies his setting with a specific locale, describes the dress of the native, makes an attempt to represent the dialect, and introduces details of regional existence such as occupations, crops, and economic processes. Though this approach avoids the hypothesizing connected with the regional-mind assumption made by Frye, it fails to take into account anything except the material data pertaining to a region. Miss Bentley's view of regionalism seems wholly literal and tangible and has nothing to do with atmosphere or the regional mind. She measures regional distinctions in terms of racial and geographical differences, and of distances from other cultural centres, but does not deal with the effects of these factors on

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<sup>5</sup>Douglas O. Spettigue, Frederick Philip Grove (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969).

the mind and spirit. She asserts that, to be genuinely regional, plot and theme must arise from specifically regional conditions. Thus she remarks on the wealth of regional detail in Hardy's novels:

Passing from this [setting] to the plot element in Hardy's work we find that the episodes, the incidents of his stories are intimately interwoven with one or other of the Wessex trades. Following the fortunes of his characters we find ourselves involved in the various operations connected with sheep-rearing, cider-making, furze-cutting, timber-growing, stone-working, milking, harvesting, the keeping of pigs.<sup>6</sup>

Yet her idea of regionalism is not completely satisfied by such local colour. She cannot reconcile the essence of Hardy's thought with her conception of the region as completely individual and particular:

"Hardy's themes, in a word, are not regional. The aspect of life which he habitually wishes to present is a certain view of the workings of the universe as they affect humanity; for this philosophy, this comprehensive scheme of the Cosmos, he offers Wessex illustrations."<sup>7</sup> From one point of view this is carrying the regional-mind assumption to its ultimate conclusion. In effect Miss Bentley is saying that Hardy's essential colouring is that of his universal concern and that this concern somehow undermines the purity of his regionalism, an opinion that seems to limit greatly the significance of much regional art.<sup>8</sup> Surely human experience

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<sup>6</sup>Phyllis Bentley, The English Regional Novel (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1941), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>8</sup>Edward McCourt, writing about western regionalism in Canada, makes the demand of literary regionalism that it illustrate "the effect of particular, rather than general, physical, economic and racial features upon the lives of ordinary men and women," and he adds that he feels no western writer has so far accomplished this with complete success. This may be a more practical expression of the kind of regionalism described by Miss Bentley. McCourt also takes into account regional atmosphere, an intangible that Miss Bentley almost wholly omits from her study. See Edward A. McCourt, The Canadian West in Fiction (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1949), pp. 55-56.

is universal; only the forms of man's experience, his expression of this experience, and the materials available for its expression are individual.

Miss Bentley comes close to calling only novels with plots that hinge on regional social phenomena true regional novels. If accepted, this criterion would tend to limit regionalism to the novel of social concern (Miss Bentley praises Charlotte Bronte's Shirley) and to exclude more disinterested creations; the only pure regional novels would be those in which plots and themes were showcases for details of a particular regional life.

Frye's regional-mind assumption and Miss Bentley's view of regionalism are, in fact, not mutually exclusive. Yet their emphases are very different. While Miss Bentley's regional criteria are material and explicit, Frye's are much more a matter of tone, atmosphere, and viewpoint. Frye associates literary regionalism with the cast of the regional mind; Miss Bentley demands that the writer actually represent the sights and sounds of regional life in his art. Though both these conceptions of regionalism have validity, it is hoped that the framework for the treatment of the regional novel contained in this study can be fixed somewhere between the two in a reconciliation that takes into account Frye's statement of the region's effect on the outlook of the artist, yet also looks at the explicit expression of that effect in the artist's work.

The other side to this question of the region's effect on the mind of the writer is the writer's colouring of his regional material. Elizabeth Drew, expanding on a thought from Henry James, describes the process that alters experience to meet the demands of the artist's vision of life and its meaning:

A good novel is a selection of material by one individual who has excluded everything irrelevant or superfluous to his purpose and has synthesized or slanted or distorted or adapted "life" to serve his own vision. Life stretches around the novelist in all its meaningless prodigality of relatedness, and, as Henry James again says: "really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is ... to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so."<sup>9</sup>

At the end of the poem "Heat" by Archibald Lampman appears a metaphor for this process that might be called the "creative kiln":

And yet to me not this or that  
Is always sharp or always sweet;  
In the sloped shadow of my hat  
I lean at rest and drain the heat;  
Nay more, I think some blessed power  
Hath brought me wandering idly here:  
In the full furnace of this hour,<sup>10</sup>  
My thoughts grow keen and clear.

The artist is bombarded by a multitude of stimuli from the world around him, a world in which order, chains of cause and effect, values and significances, if such exist at all, are buried beneath a mass of detail and inter-connections. It is impossible to record actual life in all its super-abundance of phenomena. What the artist creates is an illusion of life; as we expose ourselves to his art, we feel that there is truth in it, that this is the way life is even though we may never have experienced, or been exposed to, the material that goes into his expression of it.

This illusion is brought about initially in the mind of the artist. Somewhere inside him where he harbours a vision or personal conception of man and man's meaning in the universe, somewhere in the

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<sup>9</sup>Elizabeth Drew, The Novel: A Modern Guide to Fifteen English Masterpieces (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1963), pp. 18-19.

<sup>10</sup>Malcolm Ross, ed., Poets of Confederation, New Canadian Library No.01. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960), p. 63.

creative kiln, the artist selects from among all received stimuli only those which belong to his vision; these he forms anew into the product of his art, and expression of his vision. If a novelist is a true artist, this will also happen to his regional material. In other words, the artist creates according to a decorum, a sense of what belongs to his art and what does not. This may be a conscious or unconscious process, and the visions of different artists are very unlike one another, but, where there is no such process of selection and modification under the heat of the creative impulse, there is not art but merely a documentary regionalism or a dilettantish tourism. If a novelist is an artist, all his materials, including the phenomena of regional life, will be essential parts of a cohesive unit. That unit is the novel, a harmonious and balanced expression of the artist's individual vision.

The controlling vision or decorum of the men and women who were writing between 1880 and 1925 regional novels set in Canada is primarily romantic. At the centres of these romances are heroes who are noble, upright, and true representatives of their societies' best qualities. Opposed to the heroes are the forces of disorder whether in the form of actual villains, the temptations of alcohol, or the influence of atheism and materialism. There is little doubt in these novels where virtue and the sympathy of the writer lie, and, in the end, right triumphs; the benign values of society and order are reaffirmed. Moreover, these Canadian novels exemplify various other characteristics of the romance mode. They will be found to bear out Northrop Frye's observation that "the perennially childlike quality of romance is marked by its extraordinary persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative

golden age in time and space."<sup>11</sup> These qualities—the nostalgia, the quest for a golden age, and of course the rural setting mentioned earlier—bring the Canadian romances within another related literary tradition, that of the pastoral. Indeed, the pastoral impulse is strong and pervasive in the regional novels written in Canada from 1880 to 1925.

Scholars agree in the observation that at the centre of the pastoral viewpoint lies an implied or explicit contrast that might simply be described as the difference between a complex way of life and a simple one. When Virgil wrote his eclogues, the contrast he focused on was that between a simple rural existence and life in a sophisticated city and court. Yet, as early as Virgil, this depiction of rural life in a region called Arcadia was, in the words of Peter V. Marinelli, "the projection of an ideal: the Arcadia of his [Virgil's] eclogues represents a conflation of Sicilian with Northern and Southern Italian landscapes, a union of reality and idealism which works to the idealization of all three. It becomes a universal."<sup>12</sup> It is this affinity of the pastoral tradition for symbolic values, for significances beyond the mere contrast between rural and town life that has guaranteed its continuing vitality. The basic pastoral contrast has frequently been used to represent the tension between childhood and adulthood, between a life in harmony with nature and the hectic world of man's technology, between trusting faith and complicated doubt, between the simple virtues and engulfing materialism.

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<sup>11</sup>Northrop Frye, "The Mythos of Summer: Romance", in Eleanor Terry Lincoln, ed., Pastoral and Romance: Modern Essays in Criticism (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 208.

<sup>12</sup>Peter V. Marinelli, Pastoral, The Critical Idiom No. 15. (London: Methuen and Company, 1971), p. 41.

The pastoral, perhaps more than any other branch of romance, is characterized by Frye's "persistent nostalgia", a yearning for the lost ideal represented by the rural world; the name most usually used for this lost, ideal way of life, as individual in character as the authors who write about it, is, of course, the Golden Age. The sadness or nostalgia that arises in connection with the Golden Age is associated with the idea of a fall; once man lived in a golden age, possessed an ideal order, an harmonious existence. Then somehow he lost this felicity and fell into his present chaotic state, a state variously depicted as disenchanting adulthood, an obsession with the material, or a sense of man's alienation from nature.

The pastoral tradition, then, centres on a depiction of rural life that represents various but related ideals. The green and golden land traditionally known as Arcadia, populated by cultured shepherds and the creatures of classical myth, has undergone many transformations in literature. Recent writers have adapted rural areas of their own experience to the pastoral form. Peter Marinelli has made some revealing remarks about this versatility of the pastoral:

Rural life, it would seem, is the essential matter of pastoral, for only here do we find the blending of the social and the natural orders to form the little world by which the pastoralist evaluates experience. Without the swain there can be no pastoral, yet both he and his world can be pictured as effectively in Devonshire or New England as in the lands of classical eclogue. So that while insisting upon the rural nature of pastoralism, we should allow it the diversity with regard to scenery and character which from Virgil onward it enjoyed with respect to the old tradition.<sup>13</sup>

It seems clear that writers of romantic regional fiction have at hand the materials of pastoral. Thus John F. Lynen, author of The Pastoral Art of

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. xi-xii.

Robert Frost, notes the close relationship between regional art and the pastoral tradition:

This [regionalism] is never a purely factual recording of local life. Its purpose, whether it deals with the Scottish highlands, the pioneering west, or any other exotic place, is to seek out local differences, and in emphasizing what is unique it always tends to distort reality, if not entirely to remake it. The motive appears to be a desire to recapture that old sense of connection between man and his physical environment which is lacking in a modern industrial society. This regionalism may be understood as a popular art which satisfies a vague but widely felt yearning to look back toward a simpler life.<sup>14</sup>

Lynen concludes that "regionalism is always potentially pastoral." This must be most true of a romantic regionalism, the kind chiefly written in the period covered by this study, in which the heroes are usually identified with a vision of social order and ideal virtue. Virtually all of the regional novels covered in this study are set in isolated rural regions. Their heroes are the best representatives of the regional virtues—those of a simple life and a simple faith. Moreover, many of these novels are told from a viewpoint looking back through time, a viewpoint characterized by nostalgia, another hallmark of the pastoral. However, Lynen adds a qualification: "The same fundamental contrast underlies both regionalism and pastoral, but regional art only becomes pastoral when the contrast is properly exploited. . . ."<sup>15</sup> Whether the novels that are the concern of this study exploit a contrast between simplicity and complexity in a way that justifies them being called pastoral will be considered later in this chapter and in following chapters.

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<sup>14</sup> John F. Lynen, The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

Before broaching this question, however, a few more remarks about the nature of pastoral will be helpful. Though the idealized rural life of pastoral embodies a type of existence identified with man's state before the fall, yet pastoral, properly understood, is not a literature of escape but of clarification. In the simple and harmonious rural world of the pastoral, the problems of everyday life in the great and confusing world beyond are seen in their true proportions. Man does not avoid his problems in the pastoral but comes to a truer understanding of them. Thus the characters of pastoral often enter the ideal rural world at a point of crisis when decisions are to be made, and they return to their everyday world with new insight into themselves and their situations. Walter R. Davies makes this point about the Elizabethan pastoral and relates it to the motif of the disguise:

The pastoral disguise signifies not only the discovery of a new aspect of the self, but the conscious acceptance of new values as well. Therefore it is no exaggeration to say that in Elizabethan romances, the pastoral land is first and foremost a symbol of an explicit ideal or a desirable state of mind through correspondence of a man's life to his context .... Then the action of the hero in dressing himself as a shepherd and going to live in this land can be best defined as an exploration of his mind, especially touching the relation between what his mind is and the state it might achieve.<sup>16</sup>

Nor is this true solely of the Elizabethan pastoral. Lynen makes a parallel point about the art of Robert Frost; Frost's rural New Hampshire, he says, becomes representative of a certain ethic, a certain relation of man to his context.

It is this dimension of pastoral that, in particular, suits the tradition for its place in the literature of Christianity. Obviously the

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<sup>16</sup>Walter R. Davies, "Masking in Arden", in Lincoln, ed., Pastoral and Romance, p. 73.

ideal of a lost golden age parallels the story of man's exile from Eden, the garden in which man lived in harmony with his God and his surroundings. Before the fall Nature produced her fruits without coercion and displayed an order without cultivation. After the fall, Nature suffered the contagion of man's sin and no longer manifested the same benevolent design. In this lapsed state the only ordered gardens are those which man has laboriously cultivated, chief among which is the city, ultimate product of man's artifice.<sup>17</sup> Romanticism, however, has a marked tendency to reject the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Fall and its consequences. From Rousseau onward one finds the belief that man is innately innocent and is corrupted by civilization. Therefore, since man is not doomed to corruption by his inheritance of the Original Sin, the solution is to return to the natural state of goodness. The Christian pastoral combines the potential of the secular pastoral to signify an individual state of mind and this belief in the beneficence of nature; the result is the Christian myth of the soul's regeneration in a pastoral framework. In a Christian context the return to the pastoral world can represent the working of the individual soul to its salvation and a state of grace. It is the view of this study that, at the centre of many of the turn-of-the-century regional novels in Canada, one finds the Christian myth of the fall in a pastoral framework.

Whether Christian or not, however, the pastoral is a form of greater complexity than, at first consideration, might be thought. The

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<sup>17</sup>Several scholars have pointed out that the city also has a positive value in pastoral as a sign of man's creativity and his ability to work back to salvation and God.

writer of pastoral chooses a stance between two worlds, that of the representative and ideal rural landscape and that which gives the ideal its point and impact, the world of his everyday experience. In other words, the ideal represented by the landscape of pastoral arises out of the writer's reaction, and is contrasted to the more complicated, unharmonious world of his present fallen state. The writer has known, or has intuitions of, the ideal, but finds himself in the midst of present reality; thus the backward-looking viewpoint of pastoral and its characteristic yearning. Therefore, each writer's representation of the pastoral ideal is directly coloured by his vision of the world and what ails it, and something of this vision must be present or implied in the representation of the ideal if, in the words of John F. Lynen, the basic pastoral contrast is to be properly exploited. Leo Marx, in his study of the pastoral impulse in American literature, calls the element of fallen reality that is present in pastoral the "counter-force", and, like Lynen, he distinguishes true pastoral by the use it makes of the contrast between this counter-force and the representative pastoral landscape:

Most literary works called pastorals — at least those substantial enough to retain our interest — do not finally permit us to come away with anything like the simple affirmative attitude we adopt toward pleasing rural scenery. In one way or another, if only by virtue of the unmistakable sophistication with which they are composed, these works manage to qualify, or call into question, or bring irony to bear against the illusion of peace and harmony in a green pasture. And it is this fact that will enable us, finally, to get at the difference between the complex and sentimental kinds of pastoral.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 24-25.

Marx's distinction, as we shall see, throws considerable light on the novels which are the concern of this study.

There can be no doubt that the turn-of-the-century regional novels of Canada at least fulfill the criterion of basic pastoral; they abound with "pleasing rural scenery" and, again in the words of Marx, with a "motion away from the centres of civilization toward their opposite, nature, away from sophistication toward simplicity, or, to introduce the cardinal metaphor of the literary mode, away from the city toward the country",<sup>19</sup> whether that country be Prince Edward Island, the woods of Glengarry, or the Rocky Mountain foothills. Whether or not the novelists perceived their idealized rural landscapes in contrast to a focused vision of man's actual state, an articulated counterforce, is a more difficult question and one to which the answers are as various as the novelists to be considered, as later chapters will show. Those novels which do employ a counterforce of any complexity often stand apart from others of the period, and the degree to which they admit the ambiguity of the pastoral contrast is often equivalent to the degree of interest they hold for the contemporary reader. It is the purpose of the rest of this chapter to demonstrate that a certain current of Canadian thought at the turn of the century and later was indeed undergoing a reaction to baleful aspects of the life of the nation, and that at least a few of Canada's regional novelists articulated this reaction. This awareness of the inadequacy of reality provided the men and women who articulated it (as well as others at second hand) with the contrast basic to their pastoral impulse.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10.

In March, April, and May of 1932, The Western Home Monthly ran an article by the regional novelist, Ralph Connor (in actuality, Charles William Gordon, an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church); the article was entitled "Is the Present Social Order Doomed?" and purported to be a serious economic consideration of money in Canada. Its central thesis was that Canadian life was being weakened by a misdirected materialism that valued money for itself and not for what it could ultimately achieve:

Money and Man. Money! The most important thing in the world—so says this age. The age is wrong.

Man is more important and for the simple reason that it is man that gives value to money. In fact money is without value except in relation to man. Indeed money is not value at all. It is but a marker of value. The thing of ultimate value in this world is Human Life. All our miseries and mistakes, all our vices and crimes arise from our ignoring of this fact.<sup>20</sup>

Connor went on to call "the passion for money" "the characteristic feature of our age. It is a fire in our bones, universal, consuming."<sup>21</sup> Also in 1932 Connor published The Arm of Gold, a regional novel set in Cape Breton. The general action of the novel centres around a simple Cape Breton minister's conversion of the town atheist from disbelief and of a New York businessman from self-serving capitalism to a sense of social responsibility. In the same year, the Reverend Bertal Heeney, an Anglican minister and author of Pickanock (1912), edited, and contributed to, a volume entitled What Our Church Stands For. Heeney's introduction begins with a statement of the national condition:

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<sup>20</sup> Ralph Connor, "Is the Present Social Order Doomed?", The Western Home Monthly (March, 1932), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

The writer believes that the Church has now the most favourable opportunity in many a day; there is nothing for it but Religion. The long prosperity brought little satisfaction—it has now collapsed altogether and left humanity gasping. "Man cannot live by bread alone." Religion has the only permanent thing to offer—the spiritual.<sup>22</sup>

Heeney added that the scientific "Criticism" that had shaken religious faith also was retreating before man's need for spiritual renewal.

These postwar expressions of dissatisfaction with the direction of national life were simply later manifestations (intensified by the depression of the thirties) of a current of opinion that was prevalent in Canada at the turn of the century and even earlier. With the appearance of big business and the beginnings of industrialism, men of the professions, particularly professors and clergymen, became more and more concerned with the effects of rampant capitalism and urban industrialism on the national life and character. In 1912 and 1913, a study aimed at establishing the causes of the migration from Canadian farms to the cities was sponsored by the Board of Social Service and Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church in Canada; the board wanted to know what the Church could do to help check this movement:

Few developments generated more apprehension than the relative decline in the rural population; few themes were as dominant as the vague feeling that Canadian development was unbalanced and unhealthy. The preference for agriculture and the expectation that it would continue to be a dominant factor in Canada, was reinforced and strengthened at the very time when agriculture was rapidly losing its primacy.<sup>23</sup>

A basic tenet of the Canadian imperialistic thought that dominated

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<sup>22</sup>William Bertal Heeney, ed., What Our Church Stands For: The Anglican Church in Canadian Life (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1932), p. vii.

<sup>23</sup>Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 191.

intellectual life during the decades around the turn of the century was a romantic conception of agriculture that associated a virtuous simplicity with rural life. On the other hand, the values of business were felt to be cold, self-centred, and ultimately corrupting. Such men as Colonel George Taylor Denison (founder of Canada First), George Munro Grant, and Sir George Robert Parkin shared a concern for the degenerating effect of industrialism and big business on the national character and a belief in the virtue of rural life. The pages of Andrew Macphail's University Magazine (1907-1920) again and again were given up to essays that lamented the materialism of the age and advised a return to a simpler life and faith.<sup>24</sup> For these men and many like them, the popular theory of Social Darwinism and its laissez-faire economics went hand in hand with the scientific and rational thought that undermined religious faith and the vigour of the national morality. The materialism and degeneracy of the times were, they thought, manifested by the removal of large numbers of rural people to the growing industrial towns and cities. Socialism as a force for reform was not to gain much ground in Canada until after World War I; what these pre-war thinkers saw as a solution to the country's dilemma was a vital Christianity and a developed sense of social responsibility, forces which also were identified with a return to the land. Probably the best known expression of the era's anti-materialistic feeling is Stephen Leacock's Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich (1914), an ironic treatment of ~~manon~~ and the men and women who worship it.

There were, however, many popular, though less known, treatments

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid. Berger devotes an excellent chapter solely to this aspect of Canadian imperialistic thought.

of the same theme; prominent among these were regional novels. Twenty years before Heenev wrote his introduction to What Our Church Stands For, he had written Pickanock, a novel of Gatineau life that is centred on a belief in the power of a revived Christianity and the virtuous effect of rural simplicity. Ralph Connor was famous for his Glengarry books and his novels about western missionaries, among the most openly didactic treatments of the theme in literary form. That both Heenev and Connor were clergymen is typical of their time and its concern. A fair number of the novelists to be considered in following chapters had connections with the rectory, a fact that is no doubt partially explained by the church's growing concern with social reform and the suitability of the pastoral tradition, as found in the regional novel, for expressing this concern.

Canadian regional novels written between 1880 and 1925 were, generally speaking, and with more or less success, expressions of the pastoral impulse, of a yearning for a simpler time and an anxiety about the direction of national life. Conditioned by this anxiety, they depicted their regional landscapes as undefiled, but revealed their regional people as often marred by moodiness or temper (these blots on otherwise admirable men and women suggest man's Original Sin), and only through experience and growth are such flaws overcome (the parallel to the soul's redemption through suffering and repentance is clear). Some writers were explicit in their treatment of the drama of redemption: most of Ralph Connor's novels concern the conversion of one or more characters, and Frederick William Wallace's Captain Salvation, though set only briefly in Anchorville, N.S., is the story of a hometown boy's lapse from faith

(reinforced by scientific criticism represented by writers such as Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley) and his eventual salvation. Other writers, perhaps unconsciously, followed the Christian pattern of error, experience, repentance, and reform. Thus, particularly in those novels that take advantage of the complexities of the pastoral contrast, the career of the regional hero in his ideal yet representative rural world becomes a comment upon Canadian life and a pattern for social reform through Christian faith and endeavour. In 1891, a reviewer of Marshall Saunders' Acadian romance, Rose à Charlitte, implicitly recognized the novel's relation to pastoral and the pastoral's universal significance by concluding, "And so, after all, life seems to run in Acadia much as it runs in more sophisticated quarters of the earth."<sup>25</sup> The remark plays on the resemblance between the words "Acadie" and "Arcadie", and in its implication that the complexities of real life are not forgotten in Arcadia, it is typical of the pastoral tradition.

It remains only to add that the novels to be considered in following chapters, though they arose from what seems to have been a widespread reaction to aspects of the national life and a common romanticism, are very different one from another. The basic pastoral contrast can be used for humour and satire as well as romance and sentiment, and at least a few of these writers took advantage of this versatility. After a survey of some of the social and cultural factors of the era which formed the background of the regional novel, this study will go on to a division of the Canadian regions and the individual novels that depicted them.

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<sup>25</sup>The Bookman, VIII (January, 1899), p. 490.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BACKGROUND OF LATE-VICTORIAN REGIONALISM IN CANADA

The regional novels written in Canada between 1880 and 1925 were, generally speaking, the product of two impulses. To varying degrees they arose out of, and represented a response to, the reality of Canadian life, a response described in the previous chapter as a pastoral viewpoint rooted in a reaction against materialism. Many of the novelists who chose Canadian settings for their works had actually lived in the regions they depicted, and there is little doubt that, though their novels conformed largely to the popular fictional modes of the day, they also arose from a genuine interest in the characteristics and spirit of particular regional experiences. The other impulse which influenced these novels was, as just suggested, their context in the common social and political attitudes, religious atmosphere, and literary conventions of the English-speaking world around the turn of the century. Later chapters will show that, in many cases, the debt of a novelist to the latter influence, to the general modes of the late-Victorian world, seems to undermine the former, his firsthand response to Canadian life. Consequently, in many novels the representation of the region is so bedded in conventional ideas and in inspiring but not very distinct scenery that little sense of vitality or individuality remains to them. In terms of the pastoral impulse that lies at the centre of many of these novels, this conformity often resulted in what Leo Marx calls "sentimental pastoral", novels in which pleasing rural landscapes and honest country folk are viewed with an uncomplicated nostalgia that ignores the complex relation between actuality and ideal,

present and past, progress and tradition.

Canadian writers were even more handicapped by the habit of following conventional modes than were their English or American counterparts. The reason for this will be explored later in the chapter, but at this point one must candidly admit that many of the novels written about Canadian regions between 1880 and 1925 are mediocre as literary works, and some are worse; the plots are predictable, the characterizations are often trite and unconvincing, and the writing is of very inconsistent merit. Yet, they are not without rewards for the modern reader. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the general unspectacular quality of these novels, their positive achievements are readily recognizable. For the person interested in the late-Victorian and post-Victorian period, reading a number of these novels is a means of gaining a sense of or feeling for the time. For the person who merely reads them for pleasure, their old-fashioned idealism and naiveté can be pleasing and even a welcome escape from the insistent and clinical realism of the present. However, for the follower of Canadian literature they offer the greatest interest. In their representations of the different regions can be seen the roots of patterns and ideas that have disappeared with the years and others that persist to this day in Canada. Above all, one can see in them Canadian literature struggling for ease, knowledge, and self-identity.

Before looking directly at the novels, it will be helpful to consider the times from which they arose. A brief description of the main regional divisions of Canada in the years after Confederation until approximately 1925 will provide a touchstone for a later discussion of the novels and bring into clearer focus the reality or "counterforce" to which

pastoral regionalism was a popular reaction. A consideration of several dominant characteristics of the late-Victorian age and the reaction of Canadians to them will help the reader to appreciate features of these novels that might otherwise be taken for granted or misunderstood.

For the sake of convenience and simplicity, the later treatment of the novels themselves has been divided into three chapters, the first for the Maritime region, the second for Ontario and Quebec, and the third for the Canadian West. These divisions are very general, and it will be apparent as this discussion goes on that, in the novels, the regions tend to be divided into smaller, more distinct divisions within the three larger blocks. For instance, from the area of Quebec and Ontario the Scottish Presbyterians emerge in the novels of Ralph Connor and Marian Keith as a definite regional group complete in itself. Similarly, in the novels of Charles G.D. Roberts and in Rose à Charlitte by Marshall Saunders, the Acadian/French represent a unique regional culture within the Maritime area. However, to a certain extent one can perceive valid general distinctions among the three large divisions of Canada that have been named.

The Maritime region was the first of Canada's regions to reach a status quo. In fact by 1880, its growth had virtually come to a stop. This must be at least a partial explanation for the insularity of the Maritimes at a time when central Canada was most outward looking and when the West was in the first stages of its great settlement: "The foreign-born, a mere 8 per cent in Nova Scotia and 14 per cent in New Brunswick, were post-famine Irish, largely in the port cities, or the last of a long influx of Highland Scots. Little exchange of population occurred between

the provinces of the region, and little between them and Canada."<sup>1</sup> No doubt this comparatively early levelling off of population led, in part, to an easy familiar dissolution into smaller regions within the Maritimes. The old loyalties to racial, religious, and geographical regions persisted and were taken almost for granted. The Acadians have already been mentioned; Prince Edward Islanders and the people of Newfoundland, because of their isolated geographical positions, tended to form smaller regional groups, as did the people along the coast of the mainland where the sea was a great unifying factor. A close relationship with the United States also characterized the people of the Maritimes. To some extent they owed their wealth to trade with the southern neighbour with whom there was a reciprocity agreement in effect from 1854 to 1865. Old ties of kinship and a common concern with the sea also played a large part in the bond between Maritime Canadians and the people of the New England states.

Having already achieved a fairly developed stage of social experience by 1867, and having established a generally satisfactory relationship with the United States, the Maritimes had less to gain from the union of the British North American provinces than Quebec and Ontario, and there was no widespread sentiment for Confederation in the region. In fact, many felt that the new connection with the other provinces would be detrimental to their profitable relationship with the Republic. The years after Confederation until the turn of the century were an economic disappointment for Canadians, and the first optimism that had attached to Confederation was tarnished. Settlement continued in the West, but the pace of progress

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<sup>1</sup> David Erskine, "The Atlantic Region", in John Warkentin, ed., Canada: A Geographical Interpretation (Toronto: Methuen, 1968), pp. 236-237.

in the rest of the country came almost to a standstill. The Maritimes even began to see some of their old glory decline: "Almost overnight Nova Scotia was transformed into an economic, political, social and cultural backwater.... old industries left the provinces because of the advantages of 'Upper Canada' and the new industries never came. Young Nova Scotians were compelled to emigrate and old Nova Scotians grew increasingly bitter and disillusioned subjects."<sup>2</sup> Even the years of prosperity after the turn of the century failed to bring much benefit to the Maritime region, which continued to feel the decline of shipbuilding and ship exporting as well as the diminution of the cod fishery. The Maritime region was also the first part of Canada to have its rural population decrease. If, as the previous chapter of this study maintains, fear of the effects of materialism and the decay of rural virtue was a central feature of the pastoral impulse as represented by the regional novels of the period, it is logical that Maritime writers should have produced the bulk of their regional novels about five years before their counterparts in central Canada and about ten years before the western regionalists. For the Maritime region was the first to suffer from the effects of growing industrialization. Though the problem here was that of being left behind by the new materialism, rather than being caught up in it, the roots of anxiety were the same as in the rest of Canada. The life of the nation was more and more characterized by an obsession with wealth, and the land, birthplace of virtue and simplicity, was losing its primacy.

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<sup>2</sup>G.A. Rawlyk, "Nova Scotia Regional Protest, 1867-1967", in Bruce Hodgins, ed., Canadian History since Confederation: Essays and Interpretations (Georgetown: Irwin-Dorsey, 1972), pp. 211-212.

Between 1820 and 1850 there came to what is now Canada a great immigration of people from Ireland and Great Britain. Most of these new arrivals bypassed the Atlantic area of Canada and settled, instead, in what is now Ontario and along the western border of Quebec. This area of Canada, therefore, was still in a state of flux when the Maritime region had achieved general stability. Racial and religious groups were still struggling for place and predominance in Quebec and Ontario by the time of Confederation and even later. In his book of anecdotes about his youth and early career as a Methodist minister in Ontario, the Reverend James Coburn recalls part of his flock who typified the spirit of dissension among the racial and religious groups of Ontario and Quebec:

In June, 1893, I was appointed junior preacher on the Mulmur Circuit in the County of Dufferin.... The people nearly all immigrants from the north of Ireland, or their descendants. They were warm hearted and hospitable. They were all ardent Protestants. From the days of the early settlement of the township, it was understood that Roman Catholic settlers could easily find some more congenial place in which to live than Mulmur. Most of the men belonged to one of the Orange lodges of which there were several in the township. They were a Church-going God-fearing people.<sup>3</sup>

In the face of such strong determination to preserve distinct cultural identities there is little wonder that antagonisms between different groups were prevalent. One of the most widespread manifestations of this antagonism was the predominance of the Protestant Protective Association of Canada, an organization motivated by anti-Catholic nativism. "In March 1893 the London Free Press remarked on the 'phenomenal growth of the P.P.A.', estimating its membership at fifteen hundred to two thousand in that city. Toronto bested that total with three thousand members

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<sup>3</sup>Reverend John Coburn, D.D., I Kept My Powder Dry (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1950), pp. 7-8.

enrolled in twenty lodges."<sup>4</sup>

Of course hostility between the French and English was one of the dominant issues of the region; no doubt one of the impulses behind Confederation was the desire of the two Canadas to be separated from one another. However, there was little popular feeling for Confederation in Quebec: "Widespread distrust was reported among the common people, suspended judgement among the clergy, and hostility among young intellectuals. Among the bishops themselves there were hesitations and reservations, and none of them expressed an official opinion about confederation until it had received the Queen's assent in March 1867."<sup>5</sup> The centre of enthusiasm for British North American union was located in Ontario where union ensured Protestant and English ascendancy in provincial matters. The Canadian Monthly, a magazine that owed its being to the brief outburst of national feeling associated with Confederation, was based in Toronto. The Canada First movement and its journal, The Nation (1874-1876), were the most self-conscious manifestations of this nationalistic surge and were also centered in Toronto. With the beginning of renewed prosperity at the end of the century, national feeling began to flourish anew. Journals such as The Week (1883-1897) urged Canadians towards greater national unity in the 1880s, and in 1893 "there was organized in Hamilton, Ontario, the first Canadian Club. Its objects were discussion

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<sup>4</sup>James T. Watt, "The Protestant Protective Association of Canada: An Example of Religious Extremism in Ontario in the 1890s", in Canadian History since Confederation, p. 251.

<sup>5</sup>John Webster Grant, The Church in the Canadian Era (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1950), p. 27.

of national affairs and promotion of national feeling."<sup>6</sup> Soon, similar clubs were appearing in adjacent towns and cities. There seems little doubt that Ontario was the province most involved in, and enthusiastic about, Confederation and the idea of nationhood. Other parts of the country participated in the new federal government and had their groups of ardent nationalists, but of no other area was Confederation so much a product as of Ontario. Thus, the English-speaking people of Ontario and Quebec presented a paradox around the turn of the century: racial and religious parochialism existed side by side with optimistic nationalism.

Economically, central Canada was the most prosperous and progressive region in the nation. As early as 1881 factory-type operations began to emerge in southern Ontario, and their expansion accelerated after the turn of the century. In Quebec the lure of industrialized Canadian and American cities caused the Catholic clergy to mount a campaign aimed at settling the North with the surplus rural population. "The idea was that to bring men to the lands was to snatch them from the corrupting influence of the materialistic city."<sup>7</sup> In central Canada too, therefore, the elements behind the pastoral impulse existed—industrialization, a new emphasis on capital and wealth, and a disintegrating rural way of life.

According to Edward McCourt, writing about the western provinces in 1949, "there is a remarkable unity of spirit prevailing among prairie dwellers; and a way of life distinctive as the region which fosters it."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur R.M. Lower, Canadians in the Making: A Social History of Canada (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Company, 1958), p. 347.

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Biays, "Quebec", in Warkentin, ed., Canada, p. 327.

<sup>8</sup> Edward McCourt, The Canadian West in Fiction, p. v.

Some part of this unity of spirit must be accounted for by the nature of the settlement of the West that took place approximately between 1880 and 1925.<sup>9</sup> Neither of the other major areas of Canada came into existence as a region in such a short time nor was surrounded by such an aura of romantic expectation. As late as 1936, Stephen Leacock wrote, "Going West, to a Canadian, is like going after the Holy Grail to a knight of King Arthur. All Canadian families have had... their Western Odyssey."<sup>10</sup>

The settlement of the Canadian West took place in two general phases, one before, and one after, the turn of the century. An Act Concerning the Public Lands of the Dominion, passed by the Federal government in 1872, heralded the beginning of mass settlement. The Act established the right of any person twenty-one years of age or over to apply for a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres of Dominion land. The land became the homesteader's at the end of three years if he had lived on the property and made certain specified improvements to it. However, though settlement continued throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century, the mid 1880s and the early 1890s were years of drought on the prairies and of depression across Canada. Many of the settlers who first went to the prairies ended by migrating south to the western United States. As late as 1896, there were complaints about the slow growth of

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<sup>9</sup> Though today British Columbia seems to have an identity quite separate from that of the prairie provinces, around the turn of the century, it, like the prairies, was just being opened and settled, and, for easterners, it held all the associations of adventure and a new life that were also associated with the prairies.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Leacock, Discovery of the West (Boston: Hale, Cushman and Flint, 1937), preface.

population in the Canadian West; it was only when the American west was well settled, after the turn of the century, that settlement in western Canada surged ahead with confidence. Yet, thanks to fast-developing technology, all of western settlement from the turning of the first sod and seeding of the first wheatfields to the arrival of roads, railroads, and Ford cars had been compressed into the short space of a man's lifetime: a school district could appear in a decade, a town spring up in a year, and fortunes be made overnight, or so it seemed. Little wonder that, to families in eastern Canada and to people in Great Britain and Europe who had only colorful newspaper reports and optimistic immigration brochures to inform them, the Canadian West should be a land of hope and opportunity. At the turn of the century, the sense of adventure and romantic optimism that was associated with the forests of British Columbia and the great expanse of the prairies made the West a unique phenomenon.

The truth of the West, as many raw newcomers discovered to their sorrow, did not lie necessarily in the romantic and hopeful future described by newspaper reporters and immigration brochures. Among the people to take advantage of the Dominion's Public Lands Act of 1872 was the Mooney family of Grey County, Ontario. Discouraged with farming and the aspect of the future in a region where the best land was all taken and patterns of wealth and society were already established, the Mooneys moved to Manitoba in the early 1880s: "The bad roads began at Base St. Paul, a great swampy place, dreaded by all prairie travellers. We met there a tragic family who had turned back, discouraged and beaten. It was the wife who had broken down.... She hated the country, she sobbed, it was only fit for Indians and squaws and should never have been taken from

them."<sup>11</sup> This actual incident was recounted fifty years later by the youngest Mooney daughter, a girl who was to become Nellie Letitia McClung, the popular regional novelist. The woman who cried that the land was unfit for people used to the basics of civilization had some truth on her side. Only short decades before, the Canadian West had been inhabited solely by men of the Hudson's Bay Company, a handful of adventurers, and the Indian nations: the Blackfeet, Bloods, Piegan, Stonies, Sarsi, and Crees.

The land and the elements presented the first challenge to newcomers. Hail and drought were ever-present threats to the crops in summer; in the winter, the bitter cold was the bane of man and beast. As subsequent discussion will reveal, extremes of climate are indelibly linked with the regional novelist's conception of the West. The vicissitudes of weather, blizzards, hail storms, and drought play an even more prominent part in the novels of the West than the ocean and her storms play in the novels of the Maritime region.

Even after the first few years had been survived, life on a prairie farm was often a seesaw battle between profit and loss. A farmer did well to keep his farm going, and few managed to make any profits that were not immediately directed back into more improvements on the land. The endless need for improvements was paralleled by the seeming need for larger and larger sections of land. The growing of wheat and flax on the prairies required farming on a much larger scale than had the crops of eastern Canada or the European countries from which many of the settlers

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<sup>11</sup> Nellie L. McClung, Clearing in the West: My Own Story (Toronto: Thomas Allen Limited, 1935), p. 58.

had come. The response of many to this discovery was to acquire more land and then more again.

Yet, there was an element in western life that made the whole struggle worthwhile. Above all, it was a free place where a man's ability and energy were his chief limitations. C.M. MacInnes, writing an account of the settlement of Alberta, makes this point in relation to the early prairie newspapers:

These journals frequently changed hands and apparently there were many potential editors in the country. On one occasion, for example, the proprietor and editor of the Medicine Hat Times got tired of his work, so he induced a man who was obviously without a penny in the world to take it over. It was typical of the West in those days that this apparent tramp turned out to be an able journalist and business man.<sup>12</sup>

It was a young open land that for a number of years did not recognize the existence of such petty change as coppers, a land in which an ordinary man might achieve a sense of freedom and destiny.

It is little wonder that, in a country of such youth where a great variety of races and religions came together in a common cause, there should be far less emphasis on differences and distinctions than in the older regions of Canada. It was even less wonder that a country of such mixed elements, a land where Ford cars and electric lights overlapped with Red River carts and sod cabins, a land that mixed, in such dynamic fashion, outcast and hardy pioneer, drudgery and inspiration, should regard itself and be regarded as a very distinct region within the older Dominion of Canada.

Yet, with the advance of the twentieth century, the West, like the

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<sup>12</sup>C.M. MacInnes, In the Shadow of the Rockies (London: Rivingtons, 1930), p. 324.

older regions of Canada, began to feel a certain nostalgia for a simpler way of life. In no other region had the victory of technology been accomplished in so short a time. Once the first heroic task of settlement was done, many men seemed to sacrifice the old pioneer spirit to an ever-spiralling obligation to land, crops, stock, and the machinery to maintain them, again and again the western regionalists emphasize the decay of the spirit that could come with life in this demanding region. Thus, though the pastoral impulse arose later in the West than in the other regions of Canada, it was no less strongly felt.

In the period between 1880 and 1925 each of the regions of Canada was feeling the consolidating and merging effects of an advancing technology that tended to blur the old, rural, cultural distinctions. This modernizing trend combined with a distinct feature of the English-Canadian consciousness further to undermine individual regional identities. This other feature was Canada's deferential attitude to Great Britain and, in a more ambiguous way, to the United States.

Much has been said about the colonialism of Canada's outlook, and it would accomplish little to attempt a full analysis of it in this study. Essentially, Canada, until at least the end of the First World War, was characterized by a sense of inferiority in contrast with the history and social traditions of Great Britain and the wealth and vigour of the United States. It was natural for Canada's bonds with Great Britain to be strong. The majority of the immigrants who came to British North America during the first half of the nineteenth century were from England, Scotland, and Ireland and had ties of kinship, affection, business, and religion with

the old land. Feeling themselves homesick in a young, undeveloped country, these immigrants energetically and passionately sought to maintain their bonds with the homeland, thus adding that strain to Canadian life that seeks to be more British than the British. Indeed, most pro-Confederationists were anxious to show that Confederation would in no way mean independence from Great Britain or at all jeopardize the cherished bond with the Old Country.<sup>13</sup>

The close ties between the Maritime region and the people of the United States have already been mentioned. However, in the nineteenth century, the feelings of Canadians toward the United States were not un-mixed. One of the more popular impulses behind Confederation was the desire to consolidate against the uncomfortably large and powerful southern Republic.<sup>14</sup> In 1872, the Reverend George M. Grant wrote his famous Ocean to Ocean, an account of Sanford Fleming's expedition through Canada to survey the route for the Canadian Pacific Railway. The epitome of enthusiastic nationalism, Grant's book lauds the future of the nation and is underlined by a sense of Canadian reaction to the strong influence of the United States: "By uniting together, the British Provinces had declared that their destiny was — not to ripen and drop, one by one, into the arms of the Republic — but to work out their own future as an integral and important part of the grandest Empire in the world."<sup>15</sup> Yet, in spite

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<sup>13</sup>L.F.S. Upton, "The Idea of Confederation: 1754-1858", in W.L. Morton, ed., The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), pp. 185-186.

<sup>14</sup>Frank H. Underhill, The Image of Confederation (Toronto: The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1964), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>George M. Grant, Ocean to Ocean, Coles Canadiana Collection (Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 7-8.

of Canadians' conscious resistance to the southern influence, that influence continued to make a great impression. The historian Frank Underhill points out that, as early as the 1860s, visitors to Canada noted the prevalence of American newspapers and magazines. Canada also resembled the United States in its publicly administered education system, political party conventions, and independent, family-operated farms. Underhill concludes that "the British-American people as a whole, in the beliefs by which they directed their lives in 1867, were not nearly so single-minded as they thought they were."<sup>16</sup> English-speaking Canada between 1880 and 1925 was the victim of a two-way sense of inferiority. On the one hand, immigrants from the British Isles consciously sought to reproduce the life style and cultural milieu of the land they had known; on the other hand, Canadians, though resentful of the power and tremendous growth of the United States, could not help being dazzled by that country's wealth and confidence. Imitation was inevitable.

Both her British and American attachments have put English-speaking Canada in the role of a junior, a role which has been evidenced on one level by a strongly derivative quality in the arts. It is probably natural for a young country to be imitative, and it is not surprising that Canada, with its lack of great wealth and population, should have been more imitative than her own people found desirable.<sup>17</sup> Another problem was that Canada had appeared as a nation just in time to feel the effects of modern technology propelling the English-speaking nations towards increased

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<sup>16</sup> Underhill, The Image of Confederation, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Wilfrid Eggleston points out that "A persistent sense of inadequacy and apology runs through the early accounts of Canadian letters....", The Frontier and Canadian Letters (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1957), pp. 1-2.

inter-communication and the global village. No wonder then that, in the Canadian regional novels written between 1880 and 1925, a debt to the literary conventions and popular ideas of the late-Victorians is, in many cases, more noticeable than any sense of an original or genuinely native conception of the regions.

One of the most striking characteristics of the Victorian English-speaking world, one which left its indelible mark on the regional novel, was its overwhelming romanticism. The eighteenth-century celebration of rationalism was long out of fashion. Although the Romantic movement in England had reached its zenith back in the 1820s, many of its conventions and preoccupations persisted throughout the century, and it is therefore reasonable to think of the Victorians as third-generation and fourth-generation Romantics. The Industrial Revolution threatened to destroy all inherited social patterns (based on an agricultural economy) and social values, while the new scientific criticism and the discoveries of Darwin heralded the downfall of religion.<sup>18</sup> The reaction of many was to flee into the past:

This yearning after the colour and mystery of a dim past is a principal mark of what is usually termed 'romanticism.' In this sense, 'romanticism' is nostalgia.... The transition from 'eighteenth century' to 'nineteenth century' is marked at every step by what might be called 'the romanticism of nostalgia.' The by-products of this attitude are to be seen in literature, music, architecture, the graphic arts, in religion, politics — in the whole range of society. But there was also another kind of romanticism, easily understood by those who had caught a gleam of hope, as every colonist had, one that might be called the romanticism of accomplishment. It was equally under the spell of the mystery of life... and equally convinced that

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<sup>18</sup> The developments that fostered the pastoral impulse among Canadian regionalists were by no means limited to Canada, though they appeared here later than in Great Britain or the United States.

things are bigger than they seem. It was logical for persons with this kind of dream to turn to the giant task of creating a 'brave new world.' The romanticism of accomplishment also affected the whole range of society.<sup>19</sup>

The first kind of romanticism distinguished in this passage, which in the nineteenth century often took the form of "mediaevalism" or "Hellenism" in the work of the Rossettis, Tennyson, and their imitators, takes another shape in these novels. It lies behind the conception that is basic to the regional novel of the period, the pastoral rural myth, "the idea that the basis of welfare and virtue was the land and its cultivation."<sup>20</sup> The other side of this impulse, the romanticism of accomplishment, ordinarily called progress, was the moving spirit behind the building of the Crystal Palace to house the Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations in 1851; it was also the centre of the enthusiasm surrounding the transcontinental railways. Romanticism pervaded popular literature, where it took the form of vague and sublime landscapes, the idea of nature working sympathetically on man's character, a strong sense of sentiment and feeling, and an overall idealism that frequently became didacticism.

'The romanticism of nostalgia' that arose from an idealization of, and regret for, the past in the face of a tremendously progressive age largely accounts for the popularity of the regional novel around the turn of the century, for nostalgia was the regional novelist's stock-in-trade. It was in the face of time and progress, forces that brought with them the death of the largely isolated and culturally unique regions, that the English-speaking world became fully aware, and appreciative of, the

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<sup>19</sup>Lower, Canadians in the Making, pp. 214-215.

<sup>20</sup>W.L. Morton, "Victorian Canada", in The Shield of Achilles, pp. 311-312.

way of life that was passing. In the United States, "The regionalist impulse in one form or another accounted for the emergence of almost every prominent writer in the Middle Atlantic States and the Deep South in the last quarter of the century."<sup>21</sup> This regionalist impulse reached its apotheosis in the work of Mark Twain and, in England, found its greatest artist in Thomas Hardy. Though, among Canada's regionalists, there was no one approaching the stature of these figures, nevertheless the regional novel flourished very much in the popular tradition of the genre and fell prey to its characteristic weaknesses, "structural deficiencies, labored histrionics, sentimental didacticism."<sup>22</sup> In the analysis of the Canadian regional novels in later chapters, the common romantic assumptions and mannerisms of the late-Victorian period and the prevalent weaknesses of the regional tradition will be apparent and will provide a touchstone by which to perceive and gauge the individual achievements of various writers. Also, in contrast to the general, popular romantic modes, the work of several Canadian regionalists distinguishes itself for its originality, its sensitive portrayal of regional atmosphere, or merely for its general superiority to the bulk of regional novels in terms of technique and conception.

One element of the late-Victorian, English-speaking world that was strongly affected by the prevalent romanticism, and one which was a central feature of Canadian life, was religion. The Victorians were a notably church-going people and none more than Canadians, among most of

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<sup>21</sup> Robert E. Spiller and Willard Thorp, eds., Literary History of the United States (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1953), p. 848.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 872.

whom the new Darwinian ideas circulated from Great Britain and the United States only after the usual time-lag. The Reverend Coburn's description of his Ontario Methodists might well be applied to the mass of middle-class Canadians between 1880 and 1925: "they were a church-going, God-fearing people."<sup>23</sup> Religion, in the words of one social historian, "was the chief guide of life for most Canadians; it touched all matters from personal conduct to state policy."<sup>24</sup> The religion of Canadians, like other aspects of their lives, was strongly coloured by late-Victorian romanticism, a trend which, in the area of faith, took the form of evangelicalism.

Canadian evangelicalism was the product of two main forces — romantic and reforming impulses within the old established churches in Great Britain, and American revivalism. The first of these forces was evidenced by the ever-growing popularity of Methodism, by the growth in Canada of the dissenting and relatively evangelical Presbyterianism of the Free Church of Scotland which upheld the need for conversion and personal piety,<sup>25</sup> and by the split in Anglicanism between high and low churchmen.<sup>26</sup> Revivalism, on the other hand, had been the chief means of the avowedly evangelical churches (Baptist, the Secessionist Presbyterian churches, Disciple and Congregational churches as well as many small revivalistic groups) of meeting the needs of Christianity on the American

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<sup>23</sup>Coburn, I Kept My Powder Dry, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup>W.L. Morton, "Victorian Canada", in The Shield of Achilles, p. 314.

<sup>25</sup>Grant, The Church in the Canadian Era, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup>Among Roman Catholics, the high church movement of the Church of England was paralleled by the rise of the ultramontanes.

frontier. It was characterized by regular revival meetings and marked by enthusiastic preaching and reforming activism.

Influenced by these two currents, Canada proved to be fertile ground for evangelicalism, which strongly affected all the Protestant churches. "Indeed one might argue that the dominant strand in Canadian Protestantism was evangelical,"<sup>27</sup> It was emotional, enthusiastic, idealistic, and concerned with social reform. One of the central premises of evangelicalism was the need for each individual to experience a personal conversion to Christ, and the good evangelical Protestant sought to achieve this goal. Conversion, however, was only the first step in a continuous process of spiritual growth. Evangelicals conceived spiritual growth as extending beyond the individual and into nature and society with heavy emphasis on social activism.

Evangelicalism and romanticism combined to re-emphasize the theory of divine immanence in nature. Canadian regional novels written between 1880 and 1925 are full of sublime and inspirational scenery, and implicit or explicit in most of them is the assumption that the awakened Christian can perceive God and his benevolent design working in and through natural phenomena. As the previous chapter pointed out, before World War I most Canadians who were concerned with the state of Canadian life looked to a revived faith and a strong moral sense of social responsibility to provide the solution. That these qualities were closely associated with a thriving rural population is itself a manifestation of the idea of divine immanence. It was felt that the rural person living close to nature spontaneously

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<sup>27</sup>Goldwin French, "The Evangelical Creed in Canada", in The Shield of Achilles, p. 18.

assimilated a kind of benevolent and inspirational guidance. Faith coloured the era's entire viewpoint.

Evangelicalism was marked by an enthusiastic, reforming belief that faith should and could permeate every aspect of life. "Evangelicals of all communions shared a vision of a more completely christianized Canada.... What they sought was essentially a sanctified nation -- moral, enlightened, and devoted to the principles of the Protestant Reformation."<sup>28</sup> Though all the churches were interested in Confederation, the most concerned, and ultimately those most in favour of union, were also the most evangelical. In fact, Presbyterians, harking back to the Scottish idea of a nation pledged to God by divine covenant, looked upon the new Canada as a "goodly heritage, the Canaan we are invited to occupy."<sup>29</sup>

Social activism took a prominent place in evangelical enthusiasm. The individual who had experienced conversion felt it incumbent upon him to save more souls for Christ. This sense of responsibility for one's fellow man was directed into several popular reform platforms, of which the most famous, or infamous, was the crusade against booze. Though the temperance movement was by no means new to Canada, it reached its peak in the period from 1880 to 1920. "The war against alcohol was the evangelical cause par excellence of the late-nineteenth century. To be a Methodist or a Baptist was almost automatically to be enlisted in it, and every evangelical denomination contributed a quota of warriors."<sup>30</sup> By the turn of

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<sup>28</sup> Grant, The Church in the Canadian Era, pp. 75-76.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 79-80.

the century the goal of the temperance workers was Dominion-wide prohibition as opposed to the local options which, too often, were revoked after four or five years and scarcely ever proved effective.<sup>31</sup> Apart from the immediate harm done by alcohol, most evangelical-minded Protestants tended to see the temperance movement as they had Confederation, in terms of an ideal of a reformed mankind dedicated to God.

The frontier society of the West was with some justice regarded as the centre of alcoholic depravity. The emotionalism of the religious reformers, combined with the romantic ideas of progress and adventure that were so strongly associated with the West, resulted in a great deal of temperance sentiment being concentrated on the frontier:

How close frontier life and the temperance movement were to each other is illustrated from a report of the meeting of a woman's temperance society in the eighteen-seventies, which passed a resolution to pray for "the two wickedest places in Canada"... Barrie — at 'end of steel' on the Northern Railway, and Winnipeg, in a similar position on the Red River.... Both were, in the language of the North, 'jumping-off points,' where civilization and the wilderness met, where strong men delighted to show how much swearing they could do, how many fights they could sustain, how much liquor they could hold....<sup>32</sup>

The fervour of temperance feeling is apparent in the work of many of the regionalists that will be considered in following chapters, but its prevalence can hardly be called a regional characteristic. Rather, it is another aspect of the influence of popular Victorian sentiments and attitudes. Therefore, in the later chapters, it has not been dealt with in much detail, though it enjoys obvious prominence in the work of the more

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<sup>31</sup>"An intensive campaign in 1884 and 1885 induced many Ontario counties to adopt the Scott Act [allowed localities to prohibit the sale of liquor]. Within a few years the people of Ontario worked up a rare thirst, however, and by 1889 every county had voted repeal." (Grant, The Church in the Canadian Era, pp. 80-81).

<sup>32</sup>Lower, Canadians in the Making, p. 319.

evangelical writers such as Ralph Connor and Nellie McClung. It also plays a special role in the novels about the Presbyterian Scots in Ontario, a point which is developed in Chapter IV.

An element of life in the West which derived its original impetus from a characteristic late-Victorian enthusiasm was its mission work. A zealous desire to win the world to Christ marked all the churches in the age of Victoria, and missions to distant, uncivilized parts of the world were taken up eagerly by men and women who were impressed by the urgency of their work and prepared to meet any hardships to save souls. At home, Canadians wanted to feel assured that their own nation had been saved to Christ. In the years immediately following Confederation, the men who were sent to convert the western Indians were regarded as establishing another branch of foreign mission work. With the rise of evangelical feeling within the churches, and with the arrival of many white men on the frontier, the impulse to spread the good news of the evangelical message motivated a new kind of missionary work among the labourers' camps and new settlers. Men of the cloth soon found that the unique conditions of life in the West required a new, less orthodox, and more secular approach to the faith: "Westerners associated churches more with community spirit than with the traditional forms of piety. They valued candour and approachability in their ministers: more than scholarship or even spirituality, responding warmly to the all-round man who would roll up his sleeves, and suspecting the introvert of pretensions to superior dignity."<sup>33</sup> Ralph Connor depicts the ideal missionary in several of his

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<sup>33</sup>Grant, The Church in the Canadian Era, p. 52.

novels about the West, the most famous of which is probably The Sky Pilot. The practical, community-minded religion of the Canadian West was an adaptation of "muscular Christianity", a familiar conception to most Victorians who would have associated it with the Reverend Charles Kingsley, author of several novels of social concern. The figure of the all-around practical Christian took on regional colouring on the frontier and has a central importance in the strongly evangelical novels of Connor and McClung and in The Frontiersman by H.A. Cody.

In conclusion, Canada between 1880 and 1925, though made up of regions characterized by genuine distinctions of social and religious outlook as well as by geographical differences, was also very much a part of the English-speaking world. Canadians, with their subtle feelings of inferiority and loyalty to Great Britain, and of envy for, and admiration of, the United States, were quick to follow popular Victorian trends, the most pervasive of which was a romanticism that affected every aspect of life. In the face of the progress of industrialization and the resulting social upheaval, this romanticism was, on one hand, characterized by a nostalgia for a vanishing way of life remembered as ideally simple and virtuous. On the other hand, it was characterized by an idealistic view of progress and of the very achievements which underlay the upheaval. This paradox left its mark on the literature of the day and is exploited with some complexity in a number of the regional novels of Canada. The result is a group of novels that plainly belongs to the pastoral tradition. Romanticism also entered the sphere of religion where it took the form of the enthusiastic, reforming, Christian world-view known as evangelicalism. The temperance movement and the home missionary work done in

the West were closely connected with evangelicalism and are reflected in the regional novels of Canada. In the following chapters, the influence of these popular Victorian trends will be seen side by side with expressions of Canadian regional consciousness in the regional novels of the period.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE MARITIME REGIONAL NOVEL

Regional novels of the Maritime Provinces written between 1880 and 1925, like those of the other regions of Canada, represent a wide range of uses of their regional material and a wider range of quality, from the trite to the surprisingly fresh and vivid. Some stand apart from the others because of striking atmosphere, characterization, or a complexity of conception. A few stand out as unique, and one feels that they deserve to be treated apart from the group.

Certain features of plot, characterization, and general attitude which were common generally among the romantic regional novels of the period are also found in the novels of the Maritime region. A brief consideration of four novels, Dr. Luke of the Labrador (1904) by Norman Duncan, Blue Water (1907) by Frederick William Wallace, Anne of Green Gables (1908) by Lucy Maud Montgomery, and The Harbour Master (1913) by Theodore Goodridge Roberts will reveal obvious similarities and help to establish a framework in which to discuss the romantic regional novel. The first step will be to identify the four novels and briefly summarize their plots. Then they will be examined again as examples of the regional novel.

Norman Duncan (1871-1916) was born in Brantford, Ontario. Though he spent most of his adult life in the United States, he visited Labrador many times, and his friendship with the famous Dr. Grenfell of Labrador was the inspiration for several of his novels, including Dr. Luke of the

Labrador.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Luke is actually the story of the narrator, a small boy named Davie Roth who is born and bred in Labrador. After Davie's beautiful and sensitive mother dies because a ship's doctor will not take the trouble to come ashore to attend her in her illness, Davie's father is strongly affected and, never completely recovering, eventually dies. Davie and his older sister, Bessie, are left to continue the family's trading business in the face of the evil machinations of Jagger of Wayfarer's Tickle, the villain who encouraged the doctor not to go ashore to Mrs. Roth. To the aid of Davie and Bessie, off a wrecked ship, comes Dr. Luke, a young man burdened by a past guilt, the root of which is never revealed in the novel. Strengthened by Davie's love and confidence and by the sweet influence of Bessie, Dr. Luke becomes a strong man and a noble doctor serving the people of Labrador both bodily and spiritually and eventually defeating Jagger through sheer moral dominance; Jagger's own sense of guilt drives him to his death by the teeth of his starving sled dogs. By the last chapter of the novel, Davie has grown into a strong man and a doctor in the mold of Dr. Luke.

Frederick William Wallace (1886-1958), fifteen years younger than Duncan, was born in Glasgow, Scotland, the son of a steamer captain; he was educated in Glasgow and settled in Canada only in 1904 at the age of eighteen. Here he worked with various shipping lines, began to write, and in 1913 started a magazine, Canadian Fisherman, which he edited. Besides three novels, he also wrote three volumes of short stories and several historical accounts of the days of sail in the Maritimes. He wrote about

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<sup>1</sup>Norman Duncan, Dr. Luke of the Labrador (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company Publishers, 1904).

what he knew; consequently all his fiction deals with the sea. Blue Water, which is set in Nova Scotia and Maine, is about the Grand Banks fishermen and contains a wealth of information about the Maritime fisherman's life and work.<sup>2</sup>

Wallace's novel is very similar to Dr. Luke in its concern with the initiation of a lad, this time named Frank (Shorty) Westhaver, into the ways of the sea and the life of his region. From a reckless and mischievous youngster Shorty develops into an able and upstanding man who is a financial as well as a moral success. Davie has good teachers in Dr. Luke, in his father, and in Skipper Tommy, an old sea captain who is also a kind of religious mystic; Shorty is well instructed by his uncle, and by several other old salts, and is impelled by his own thirst for knowledge. Davie helps to open a new medical practice among the poor people of Labrador; Shorty opens a new fish-catching and processing industry. Like many of the regional heroes to be considered, Shorty must face problems in love; he is rejected by the wrong girl, Carrie, only to be happily accepted by the right girl, Lillian.

Lucy Maud Montgomery (1876-1942) was born in Cavendish, Prince Edward Island, and was educated and taught school on the Island, though she also studied for a year at Dalhousie University in Halifax. The Island was her home, until, in 1911, she moved to Leaskdale, Ontario, with her new husband, the Presbyterian minister Ewan Macdonald. Though she had been writing since her youth, it was the "Anne" books, the first of which appeared in 1908, which made her fame and for which she is still known.

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<sup>2</sup> Frederick William Wallace, Blue Water: a Tale of the Deep Sea Fishermen (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1935).

Those who have read her most famous novel, the first of the "Anne" books, Anne of Green Gables, will readily recall the similarities it shares with the two novels already described.<sup>3</sup> It is the story of Anne Shirley, an orphan girl who is adopted as a child by the elderly Prince Edward Island brother and sister, Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert. Though it is much more feminine, as well as more humorous, in its tone than any of the other novels discussed in this chapter, Anne of Green Gables follows the general pattern as it tells of Anne's growing-up and development into a beautiful, poised and good young girl who wins prizes for her scholarship and praise for her elocution. Though Anne never falls in love with the wrong boy, she does stubbornly snub the right one, Gilbert Blythe, throughout most of the novel; however, by the end they are reconciled and, in a later "Anne" book, will be married. Like the heroes of the other novels, Anne has teachers who guide her development. Marilla, Matthew, and Mrs. Rachel Lynde are the chief ones; they teach Anne down-to-earth sense and simple goodness, qualities which are upheld by the regional teachers of most of the heroes. Though Anne may seem exaggerated to adult readers today, she had enthusiastic admirers among both young people and adults when Montgomery was writing. Bliss Carman called Anne "one of the immortal children of fiction", and Mark Twain declared her to be "the sweetest creation of child life yet written."<sup>4</sup>

The last of the four authors is Theodore Goodridge Roberts (1877-1953), son of the Reverend George Roberts and brother of the famous poet

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<sup>3</sup>Lucy Maud Montgomery, Anne of Green Gables (New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1908).

<sup>4</sup>Hilda M. Radley, The Story of L.M. Montgomery (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956), p. 87.

and writer of fiction, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts. Educated at the Collegiate School, Fredericton, and at the University of New Brunswick, he was later sub-editor and Spanish-American war correspondent for a New York paper, the Independent. He served in the First World War and wrote several volumes of military history as well as some verse and no fewer than thirty novels, most of which have Atlantic settings. After living in various countries, Roberts finally retired to Digby, Nova Scotia. The Harbour Master, which is set in Newfoundland, like the novels already described, is based on its author's personal knowledge of its setting.<sup>5</sup>

The Harbour Master, in various ways to be discussed, lies outside the pale of many of the novels considered in this chapter. Yet, in its own manner, it shares basic characteristics with them. The novel is the story of the brief rise to power and the fall of Skipper Black Dennis Nolan of Chance-Along, Newfoundland. Dennis is a young man, fierce, hard, and passionate, who, through strength of will and main force, organizes the surly and apathetic people of Chance-Along into a team of wreckers. All is going relatively without a hitch until, from one wreck, Dennis salvages a beautiful singer, Flora Lockhart, with whom he falls madly in love. His plan to keep her a prisoner in Chance-Along until she comes to return his feeling is undone by a daring young officer working in league with Mary Kavanagh and Dennis's own grandmother, Mary, keeping within the pattern of these novels in point of romance, turns out to be the right girl for Dennis. The novel closes with the marriage of Dennis to Mary and the end of his grand schemes for organized wrecking; a victory has

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<sup>5</sup>Theodore Goodridge Roberts, The Harbour Master, with an introduction by Desmond Pacey (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968).

been won for common sense and virtue.

All these authors treat their regional material differently, and it is probably the differences among them which are most meaningful in considering their individual work. However, before dealing with the ways in which they differ from one another, it is important for an understanding of the romantic regional novel to note their similarities. These novels, as well as many others which will be discussed in later chapters, share common themes and motifs. No doubt, these common elements arise from the dominant literary romanticism of the day; in Canada, as we have seen, this romanticism was reinforced by a pastoral reaction to growing industrialism and a declining rural life.

The most central motif these novels share is the strong and noble man who is the product or best type of the region in which he lives. Behind this motif lies the popular romantic ideal of man and nature interacting, the man nobly reared by nature's influence. Duncan strongly implies this relationship in Dr. Lake. The Labrador seamen of his novel are the peculiar products of their region and its way of life, which is the sea:

From the Strait of Chidley, our folk and their kin from Newfoundland with hook and net reaped the harvest from the sea — a vast, sullen sea, unwilling to yield: sourly striving to withhold the good Lord's bounty from the stout and merry fellows who had with lively courage put out to gather it. 'Twas catch and split and stow away! In the dawn of stormy days and sunny ones — the skiffs came and went. From headland to headland — dodging the reefs, escaping the shifting peril of ice, outwitting the drifting mists — little schooners chased the fish.<sup>6</sup>

This rugged, demanding life has made the men of the Labrador region in its

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<sup>6</sup>Duncan, Dr. Lake, p. 190.

image, an image that has its good and bad sides. The vigorous and manly work has made them courageous and strong, but the hardship and bleakness of the life has also made them rough and backward. Duncan is an emphatically moral writer who obviously writes within the traditional Christian pattern of sin, suffering, repentance, and salvation; his stark regional world, therefore, is certainly not unblemished, but shares the fallen condition of humanity. The suggestion of roughness is deepened and becomes violence and lawlessness in the men of the crew employed by the villain Jagger. Yet, the life of the region is distinguished by simplicity and a sense of harmony with nature, qualities that Duncan sees as a definite advantage in the struggle for redemption. Indirectly, Duncan implies that more complex, industrialized environments are at a disadvantage in the fight for salvation.

The element of violence and lawlessness in the strong men, emphasized more in some of the other novels, leads to a supplementary motif, the refining influence of a fine woman, of memories of home, of religious faith. Davie Roth is the best product of his Labrador home; he is honest, courageous, loyal, and clever, but also brooding and, at times, fierce. Under the feminine and spiritual influence of his mother and sister Bessie, the humorous tutelage of Skipper Tommy, and the inspiring example of Dr. Luke, all the best in Davie is enhanced and the worst is suppressed. The teachings of Skipper Tommy, an unlearned regional wiseman who instinctively perceives God's loving will, and the lessons of Mrs. Roth are closely bound up with religious faith and are strongly evangelical in character. After Davie returns from a trying experience on a rough sea, he is cradled by his mother who sings him the hymn "Jesus Saviour Pilot Me." In the

clarifying regional atmosphere, Davie's reaction to the song is one of passionate insight:

I protest that I love my land, and have from that hour, barren as it is, and as bitter the sea that breaks upon it, for I then learned — and still know — that it is as though the dear God himself made the harbours with wise, kind hands for such as have business in the wild waters of the coast. And I love my life — and go glad to the day's work — for I have learned... that whatever the stress and fear of the work to be done there is yet for all of us a refuge, which by way of the heart, they find who seek.<sup>7</sup>

Reinforcing the idea of Davie's responsiveness to feminine and religious influences is the restoration of Dr. Luke's physical and mental strength through the sweet guidance of Bessie and the companionship of other strong men hardly formed in the region. For, as Davie thinks to himself when Dr. Luke remarks it strange that Davie should want to comfort him, "it was not strange on our coast, where all men are neighbours, and one may without shame or offense seek to comfort the other." It is not only Davie or Dr. Luke, but all the people of Labrador who benefit from the presence of the divine in their lives; strongly present in Duncan's depiction of the Labrador region is the idea of divine immanence, the evangelical sense of God and his harmony acting through nature:

In our land the works of the Lord are not obscured by what the hands of men have made.... Here are no brick walls, no unnatural need or circumstance, no confusing inventions, no grasping hate, no specious distractions... to bind the soul, to pervert its pure desires, to deaden its fears, to deafen its ears to the sweeter calls.... great hills, mysterious distances, flaming sunsets, the still, vast darkness of the night! There are the mighty works of the Lord, and of none other — unspoiled and unobscured. In them He proclaims Himself. They who have not known before that the heavens and earth are the handiwork of God, here discover it: and perceive the Presence and the Power, and are ashamed and overawed. Thus our land works its marvel in the sensitive soul.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

Duncan's Labrador is a region peculiarly suited, through the nature of its very landscape, to be the home of good men. On the other hand, that the "confusing inventions", "grasping hate", and "specious distractions" refer to the urban world of business and industry is clear. In Dr. Luke, Labrador is the ideal rural world where the true proportions of existence become plain; Labrador is the foil against which the evils of a growing materialism are implicitly exposed.

Shorty Westhaver becomes the strong and true man of Blue Water. The first part of Shorty's story could be the archetypal account of a boy learning the Grand Bank fishing trade; it is from this education, so much a part of Nova Scotian fishing-port life, that Shorty learns strength, endurance and determination. Like Davie Roth and the men of Labrador; Shorty is formed by the conditions of his particular environment. He learns the details and requirements of this environment from other strong men such as his Uncle Jerry and Long Dick, but Shorty is the first among them to acquire a bookish education.<sup>9</sup> Books replace religious faith as a refining influence in Blue Water. Lillian, the girl Shorty eventually marries, has a college education and is able to encourage his propensity for learning. At the novel's close, Shorty expresses his consciousness that he is the product of two forces — the strong natural environment of his region and the refined sensibility of Lillian: "T'is from the sea I earn my bread, an' 'tis th' love of blue water an' you has kept me to my

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<sup>9</sup>The idea of education in Blue Water, as in all the novels treated in this study, is given a somewhat clumsy and naive handling. Few details of the hero's learning are ever given beyond that he has been reading the masterpieces of the greatest authors or something equally vague. This is as much a flaw in Connor's The Man from Glengarry and Stead's The Bail Jumper as it is in Blue Water.

purposes."<sup>10</sup>

Though the central character of Anne of Green Gables is not a strong man, Anne Shirley nevertheless fills a role equivalent to those of Davie in Dr. Luke and Shorty in Blue Water. As Montgomery describes Anne's growing-up on Prince Edward Island, though divine immanence is not as explicit a note as in Dr. Luke, nevertheless the natural beauty of the Island is represented as a strong influence on her. The novel is full of idyllic bits of scenery, all of them redolent of harmony and nature's benevolence. It is clear that these passages are not so much objective descriptions of scenes as the scenic correlatives of a state of mind and being characterized by simplicity, joy, and a sense of harmony with the natural world:

Matthew Cuthbert and the sorrel mare jogged comfortably over the eight miles to Bright River. It was a pretty road, running along between snug farmsteads, with now and again a bit of balsamy fir wood to drive through or a hollow where wild plums hung out their filmy bloom. The air was sweet with the breath of many apple orchards and the meadows sloped away in the distance to horizon mists of pearl and purple while

"The little birds sang as if it were  
The one day of summer in all the year."<sup>11</sup>

It is a combination of this lovely regional atmosphere, the wise, simple homelife of the Cuthberts (Matthew is a strong man, the product of his island environment and work on the land), and her own lively sensibilities (especially her love of books) that subdues both Anne's hot temper and hasty tongue. Though Anne's life could not be called rugged or her nature violent, it is clear that the knock-about life she has led with several

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<sup>10</sup> Wallace, Blue Water, p. 321.

<sup>11</sup> Montgomery, Green Gables, p. 13.

families before the Cuthberts has made her morbidly sensitive to slights and has developed the most fantastic side of her imagination. However, by the end of the novel she spends a year in Charlottetown taking her teacher's license at Queen's and winning a scholarship to a mainland university. When Matthew dies, Anne displays the true moral strength that Montgomery credits to her region when she gives up the scholarship to stay on the Island with Marilla.

The Harbour Master, too, has its strong man. He is the hero or anti-hero, as one chooses to see him, Dennis Nolan. Desmond Pacey thus describes Dennis:

He is presented to us at first as merely a tyrant, his only redeeming feature being physical courage; but as the novel proceeds we gradually become aware of subtler and more positive qualities in him — he is "ambitious... imaginative, daring... full of resources and energy, tender towards women and children, respectful of Father McQueen," "could master himself as well as others," charitable towards his neighbours — until his final redemption seems credible and even inevitable.<sup>12</sup>

"Redemption" may be too strong a word for the change that Flora Lockhart and Mary cause in Dennis, but, given the Christian pattern of sin, repentance, and salvation that is so common in these novels, the word is apt. As in the first two novels (and in a gentler form in Anne), the demands of his environment have made the strong man, Dennis, into a forceful and hardy character. As in the other novels, but more so, there is an element of ferocity and lawlessness in this natural upbringing: Dennis accepts as part of his leadership the need to let his followers feel the force of his hand from time to time, he has few qualms about keeping Flora

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<sup>12</sup> Desmond Pacey, "Introduction"; The Harbour Master, p. 12.

against her will in Chance-Along, and his wrecking scheme is predatory and illegal. It is the brilliant and refined Flora who first touches a vulnerable spot in Dennis: He rescues her from a wrecked vessel and insists on carrying her to warmth before continuing with the salvaging operation, an action which causes his men to wonder among themselves. The rude natures of all the Chance-Along people are stirred when Flora sings: "The wonder of her singing even set young Cormack's heart to aching with nameless and undreamed of aches. As for the skipper, he looked as if the fairies had caught him for sure!"<sup>13</sup> However, Flora's influence merely softens ground or makes place for the more fitting sway of the right girl, Mary Kavanagh, whom Dennis finally marries.

One more example will emphasize the prevalence of a common pattern among the regional novels of the period. A Colonel from Wyoming (1907) is the unlikely title of a novel by J.A.H. Cameron set mainly in Cape Breton. A Colonel is a work of very uneven quality ranging from the genuinely humorous to the bathetic. Its various qualities of writing can be equated fairly consistently with its various centres of interest. The most successful portion of the novel is made up almost entirely of humorous regional anecdotes related by one of the chief characters, Captain Roderick, the captain of a Cape Breton schooner. A generous proportion of the book is given over to Captain Roderick's story-telling, and it is clear that Cameron means to capitalize on the most characteristic and humorous details of Cape Breton life:

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<sup>13</sup> T.G. Roberts, The Harbour Master, p. 117.

Cape Breton, the greatest place in the world for nicknames. If it's not Donald the Hawk, it's Squint-eyed Betsie; and if it's not Mamy Duncan the Bleeder, it's Hector Lauchie the Elephant.

Now there was poor Axe-Handle Angus from little Frog pond.... He stole an ox onct, long ago, and sold it to Archy the Brewer for ten gallons of homemade whiskey: and when he came home, after spending three months in jail, instead of calling him Axe-Handle Angus, they called Angus the Ox; they called his brother Donald the Ox, and his sister, Nancy the Ox. Fact, they were all know'd as The Oxen. Kind of tough, wasn't it sonny?<sup>14</sup>

The humour afforded by Cape Breton nicknames is the crux of several of Captain Roderick's anecdotes, and, if a reader goes on to read The Woman Hater (1912), a novel which is almost entirely comprised of Captain Roderick's stories, nicknames will become exceedingly familiar.<sup>15</sup> In A Colonel from Wyoming, Captain Roderick presents only one, and it the lighter, side of the regional picture. Another centre of interest rests in the boyhood and development into manhood of the Cape Breton lad, Alex Squire Angus. Here again is the motif of the strong man, the best product of his particular region. One of Alex's teachers has been his Scottish grandfather, the scene of whose burial illustrates again the strong element of evangelical faith in the regional romance; it is also an example of the tendency of Cameron's regionalism to become bathetic when no longer funny:

Dong, dong, dong! then tolled the old bell sadly. After a few minutes spent in silent prayer, the coffin was raised by reverent hands, turned around, and carried out of the church; as it was being slowly lowered into the grave, the kind-hearted piper began that weird, soul-stirring piece of music — Farewell to Lochaber....

It was fitting too, that nature should rejoice for a long, long journey was at an end — a journey of over ninety years from the old

<sup>14</sup>J.A.H. Cameron, A Colonel from Wyoming (Toronto: The Copp Clark Company, 1907), p. 16.

<sup>15</sup>J.A.H. Cameron, The Woman Hater (New York: Christian Press Association Publishing Company, 1912).

wooden cradle, where as a baby, the aged Scotsman was rocked to sleep by his highland mother, to this humble grave in the distant country of his adoption, where his venerable corse was reverently laid to rest by his sorrowing friends. Farewell, then, farewell to Lochabar and the heather-clad hills of his boyhood days....<sup>16</sup>

To the stories of Captain Roderick and the growth of Alex is added a subplot to do with the adventures of one Colonel Gordon of Wyoming, whose only connection with Cape Breton is the friendship he forms with some of its people, Captain Roderick and Alex among them, while he is managing a coal mine there — an episode which takes only a chapter to tell. The three different centres of interest are too much for the novel to handle effectively. Colonel Gordon goes out West to be followed by Alex and, later, Captain Roderick; Captain Roderick turns his talent for humour on the parliamentary system in Ottawa and on some fellow travellers; Alex is frustrated in love, goes to prison for a murder he did not commit, and finally wins Flora Stuart, the saintly girl he loves, after a number of incidents and coincidences that are more fantastic than interesting. Cohesiveness is hopelessly lost.

Yet, in spite of the run-on and patchwork nature of A Colonel from Wyoming, many of the features common to the regional novels that have been described are still apparent. The Colonel's wife, Alex's beloved Flora, Alex's mother, and a more unlikely person, Captain Roderick's mother, are all the typical fine women of the romantic regional pattern, women who exercise a refining influence on the sensibilities of the regional strong men:

He [Captain Roderick] grew reminiscent; his mind wandered back to the days of his boyhood. He thought of the happy time he had spent with

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<sup>16</sup> Cameron, A Colonel, p. 185.

his widowed mother in their little log-cabin by the shore of the beautiful Bras d'Or, and of his grief, when, at the early age of thirteen, he had to face the world alone; and two large tears, mute tributes to his mother's memory, left their drouthy sources and rolled down his weather-beaten cheeks, showing that there was a tender chord somewhere in the heart of this quaint old smuggler who had for so many years defied winds and wave, and outwitted the vigilant revenue-officers of the Canadian government.<sup>17</sup>

Alex also follows the romantic regional pattern as he grows into a strong and wise man who proves the practicality of this upbringing by becoming a business success, President and General Manager of Colonel Gordon's Gap Gold Company in the heart of the Canadian Rockies.<sup>18</sup>

Though A Colonel from Wyoming is inferior to the others in most respects, it is worth adding to this portion of the consideration of Maritime novels because it is one more example of the pattern so prevalent in the regional novels of the time. Like Blue Water, Dr. Luke of the Labrador, Anne of Green Gables, and The Harbour Master, it has a hero, Alex Angus, whose development the novel traces to manhood. As do the other novels, A Colonel from Wyoming closely connects its hero's development to the character of his region's natural and spiritual environment; his teachers are older regional strong men who intuitively perceive the teachings of virtue and faith. In all these novels, one or more refining influences (good women, religious faith, or books) acts upon the regional strong men, and the hero in particular, to subdue the rougher, and to encourage the best, sides of their nature.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> The fact that Alex must leave the Maritimes and go to the opening West to make his fabulous success seems a reflection of the economic stagnation of the Maritimes and of the ideas of opportunity and adventure associated with the West that were described in the previous chapter.

Another characteristic that these novels have in common, though it varies in intensity among them, is a quality of nostalgia attached to the concept of the region. Just as fine women and religion exercise a refining influence on the strong but fierce nature of the regional men, so settlement and progress gradually refine the character of the regional setting and atmosphere. The conception of the region as a small world in itself, breeding its own race of men, is only possible while the region is in the early stages of development. In Dr. Luke, Davis Roth's harbour is so isolated that no doctor is available to come to his dying mother though her illness lasts some six months to a year. In Blue Water, Long Cove is isolated enough for Shorty never to have taken a train before his first trip to sea. Avonlea, the little community where Anne grows up in Anne of Green Gables, besides being located on an island miles from the mainland, is enough of a closed unit that it is a noteworthy event to see someone dressed up in a buggy obviously bound for outside the community. However, all the elements Anne shares with the other novels are softer, more feminine, and less extreme, and Marilla Cuthbert's recognition of the neighbourhood of Nova Scotia indicated that the region of Avonlea is farther along in the process of assimilation than are places like the Labrador coast and Long Cove: "There's risks in people's having children of their own if it comes to that — they don't always turn out well. And then Nova Scotia is right close to the Island. It isn't as if we were gettin him from England or the States. He can't be much different from ourselves."<sup>19</sup> No such concession, however dubious, is made by the people

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<sup>19</sup>Montgomery, Anne of Green Gables, p. 10.

of Chance-Along in The Harbour Master. That the village is named Chance-Along while all the rest of the world is called "up-along" suggests the peculiar isolation and obscurity of Robert's setting to which word of "up-along" comes only in faint echoes.

At this point it is interesting to recall Leo Marx's statement that the pastoral of any substance represents a complex attitude to its own ideal and isolated rural landscape. True pastorals, says Marx, "do not finally permit us to come away with anything like the simple affirmative attitude we adopt toward pleasing rural scenery. In one way or another.... these works manage to qualify, or call into question, or bring irony to bear against the illusion of peace and harmony in a green pasture."<sup>20</sup> In all these novels, in tension with the motif of regional isolation, there is an awareness of coming change and the approach of the outside world, an element that undoubtedly sprang from what we have already seen was a strain of anxiety in Canadian thought about the growth of materialism and the decline of rural regional life. Yet, the novelist's view of change was by no means totally negative. For one thing, the strong man in these novels must prove himself capable of preserving his strength outside the region. Though the region has raised him, he must show himself a man of enough vision to see beyond the close regional community. In Dr. Luke, Davie, having seen the good work that Dr. Luke has done for the people of the Labrador coast, goes away to study medicine. Though Labrador itself is relatively untouched at the end of the novel, the deaths of Davie's parents and of Skipper Tommy create a note of sad transience.

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<sup>20</sup> See p. 16.

that is like the nostalgia associated with the inevitable loss of childhood. Of course, in all these novels, because the region is represented as a nursery for the hero whose development is followed from early youth to manhood, when the hero is no longer a child, an almost inevitable note of nostalgia attaches to his early experience of the region. In Blue Water, Shorty's education as a Grand Banks fisherman can only be completed by his leaving Long Cove and sailing out of Maine. It is Shorty himself who first brings change to Long Cove in the form of a great new fish-processing plant that ships fish all the way to Brazil. Anne of Green Gables resembles Dr. Luke in that the change that comes to the home region is largely the result of the movement from childhood to adulthood and of the deaths of some of the older characters. Anne is also required to prove herself outside the immediate region when she recites in the summer concert given by a neighbouring tourist hotel and when she goes to school for a year in Charlottetown. In A Colonel from Wyoming, all three of the central characters, Alex, Captain Roderick, and Colonel Gordon, foster change in Cape Breton because all are involved in Colonel Gordon's new coal mine, an enterprise that means jobs, railways, a new shipping-pier, and overall development for the home region. Later, Alex, the regional hero, proves himself a successful businessman in the exciting and distant West. The Harbour Master works on a variation of this motif, but all the elements are there. It is Dennis Nolan who brings change to Chance-Along with his wrecking operation which is to put food on the tables and gold in the pockets of every man in Chance-Along. Flora Lockhart and her rescuer, John Darling, are the only people from "up-along", the outside world, to stay for any time in the region. Ships from outside are wrecked on the

coast, and their survivors are guided blindly away from Chance-Along in the fog. Yet the isolation of Chance-Along seems precarious. Mary Kavanagh extracts a promise from Flora and Darling that they will not bring the law to wreak vengeance on Dennis and his little kingdom. So the two disappear from the settlement, and, after a gang of marauding thugs has been beaten back, everything returns to normal; Dennis gives up his plan for organized wrecking and marries Mary Kavanagh. The marriage seems to break the enchanted-fortress spell around Chance-Along. Suddenly the barriers between "up-along" and Chance-Along are lifted, and Dennis and Mary set out to honeymoon in St. John's. In all these regional romances, the sheltered pioneer region nurtures strong men who are influenced by good women, religious faith, and education. The heroes grow beyond the native region which then passes away before, or feels the effect of, time and change.

From the examples just cited, it is plain that the regional novelists' attitude to change was an ambiguous one. In these novels change, the very element that causes the disappearance of the unspoiled region and its simple way of life and thereby evokes a nostalgic backward yearning, at the same time is necessarily associated with the growth of the regional hero and is regarded with the characteristic approval that the Victorians felt for "progress". As the previous chapter suggests, both these attitudes arose from the prevalent romanticism of the period; the result of this paradox is tension. The effect of this tension, in the pastoral tradition, is to call into question the complete desirability of regional simplicity and isolation, even while presenting these elements in their most ideal light.

Though many Maritime regional novels written between 1880 and 1925 have been omitted from this survey, any reader of Charles G.D. Robert's Acadian novels, of H.A. Cody's The Fourth Watch, of Ralph Connor's The Arm of Gold, of Marshall Saunder's Rose à Charlitte and many others, will recognize their affinity to the romantic regional archetype that has been described. Even in the rare case where few traces of the archetype itself are found, the basic values are the same. These romantic regionalists valued a life lived close to God's land and the simple but noble virtues such a life fostered. Yet, in these little settlements, much remains to be done for man's comfort and good, and there is still room for confident, idealistic heroes who do not question the ultimate good of man's ingenuity and ambition.

Before going on, it is important not to lump all the romantic regionalists together without making any distinctions between them. Though they upheld common values and employed a common archetype, the regional novelists whose work is discussed here were markedly individual in the details of their use of regional material. It is their various treatments of this material that reveals most about them as artists.

Of all the novels mentioned in this chapter, Blue Water by Wallace draws most heavily on realistic regional detail. In fact, for the first half of the book, Shorty's personal story is dominated by the account of the typical initiation of a boy learning the trade of Grand Banks fishing and all the details of a Nova Scotian fisherman's life. Long passages are filled with fishing jargon. At times the novel reads much like a documentary for sailors:

The successive dories were prepared and launched in a similar manner, but when they swept astern the first dory painter was handed down to

them and made fast to their stern becket while theirs was belayed to the vessel's taffrail until another dory was launched. Thus in twenty minutes there were two strings of five dories each towing from the port and starboard quarters of the vessel, and Frank was mopping the perspiration from his face.<sup>21</sup>

For two long paragraphs Frank has been almost forgotten while Wallace portrays the sea and the details of its life. Wallace's book is appropriately entitled Blue Water: a Tale of the Deep Sea Fishermen because it is as much a chronicle of Grand Banks fishing and life in the port communities of the east coast as it is the story of Shorty Westhaver. None of the other novels makes such use of realistic details from its regional setting.

The idyllic nature of Prince Edward Island as depicted in Anne of Green Gables has already been mentioned. There is not a single unpleasant scene on the Island as far as Montgomery is concerned, and her regional setting makes the impression of a latter-day Eden. Cameron's treatment of Cape Breton in A Colonel from Wyoming is much the same in its idyllic quality, though less specific in its natural detail. Neither Montgomery nor Cameron seems very concerned with communicating the region in terms of concrete details, though Montgomery does make frequent use of orchard landscapes and lush gardens. Rather, their novels provide examples of the tendency among these late-Victorian romantic regionalists to depict the region largely in terms of an atmosphere of softness and nostalgia. The passage from A Colonel from Wyoming that describes the burial of Alex's grandfather is an example of this type of atmospheric regionalism. Short scenic passages, frequently used to introduce incidents and chapters in

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<sup>21</sup>Wallace, Blue Water, p. 80.

Anne of Green Gables, reinforce the overall atmosphere of harmony and innocence: "The orchard on the slope below the house was in a bridal flush of pinky-white bloom, hummed over by a myriad of bees."<sup>22</sup> Again, "Mrs. Rachel stepped out of the lane into the backyard of Green Gables. Very green and neat and precise was the yard, set about on one side with great patriarchal willows and on the other with prim lombardies."<sup>23</sup>

Charles G.D. Roberts makes the same stylized use of nature in his Acadian novels, the most popular of which were The Forge in the Forest (1896) and A Sister to Evangeline (1898). In one typical scene, Paul Grande, the hero of A Sister to Evangeline, returns to Acadie from Quebec:

The vale of the Five Rivers lay spread out before me, with Grand Pré, the quiet metropolis of the Acadian people, nestling in her apple-bloom at my feet. There was the one long street, thick-set with its wide-saved gables and there its narrow subsidiary lane descending from the slopes upon my left. Near the angle rose the spire of the village church, glittering like gold in the clear flood of sunset. And everywhere the dear apple-blossoms. For it was spring in Acadie when I came home.<sup>24</sup>

Described from a distance, this scene is especially suggestive of a world apart, and the overall perspective, which allows many details to be observed, strongly evokes a sense of harmony, proportion, and an ideal state of mind. That Paul Grande is returning to this ideal landscape from war and military duty under a corrupt French court completes those elements of ideal and counterforce necessary for basic pastoral. Roberts's Acadie is made up of stock physical details which appear over and over again until, for Roberts's reader, Acadia is forever a land of red mud, changeable tides, apple

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<sup>22</sup>Montgomery, Anne of Green Gables, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>24</sup>Charles G.D. Roberts, A Sister to Evangeline (Boston: Lamson, Wolfe and Company, 1898), p. 3.

orchards, lakes, church-spires, marshes, and eaved cottages. In the Acadian novels by Roberts there is hardly a description in which one or two or more of these details do not appear, and their effect is to create the kind of romantic, nostalgic atmosphere that is so strong in the last passage.

Not all the regional novelists of this period use the details of their chosen regional settings for such stock effects. Some, particularly those who wrote of the sea, made more of the dramatic and psychological potential of their regional material. The regional atmosphere of The Harbour Master stands out among the novels treated in this chapter. Theodore Goodridge Roberts spends little space in actually describing his region, though the reader is constantly aware of elements peculiar to his regional setting — the sea, the rugged shoreline, the storms. Yet Roberts achieves more than this; the landscape of Chance-Along, Newfoundland, exercises an influence in The Harbour Master like the influence of the lonely moors in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights. The land becomes the externalization of the internal lives of the people. The sense of isolation that the names Chance-Along and "up-along" suggest has already been mentioned. When Flora Lockhart, the famous American singer, is stranded in Chance-Along, her vivacity, brilliance, and likeness to a mermaid or a fairy deepen one's impression of the barrenness of Chance-Along. The people of Chance-Along are poor (a condition of their environment) and rough (in sympathy with the land and elements around them) and often dull (an indication of their isolation and the bleakness of their surroundings). The specific description (one of the few) that Roberts gives of the region at the beginning of the novel is made up of details well chosen to create an

impression of bleak isolation and elemental control. The description of the erratic currents of the coast suggests the character of the people of Chance-Along: "Along this coast for many miles, treacherous currents race and shift continually, swinging in from the southeast and snarling up (but their snarling is hidden far below the surface, from the tide-vexed, storm-worn prow of old Cape Race). The pull and drift of many of these currents are felt far from land, and they cannot be charted with any degree of accuracy, because they seem to be without system or law."<sup>25</sup> Any other physical description is usually confined to mention of the weather. The wrecks occur on wild, foggy nights, and most of the story takes place in winter when, as Cormack remarks to Dennis, "It bes desperate weather", the sort of weather that kills Foxey Jack Quinn in his attempt to escape from Chance-Along with Dennis's necklace. Half-frozen and blinded by snow, Foxey loses his way and is whirled over a "blind, unheeding cliff" by the storm. Theodore Goodridge Roberts in The Harbour Master, like Cameron, Montgomery, and Charles G.D. Roberts in their novels, creates an impression or atmosphere rather than a detailed picture. However, Roberts is more complex than the others in his use of setting and sees his region primarily as a tool to enhance and reinforce the characterization, plot, and themes rather than as a means of colouring his entire novel with a softening aura of romance and nostalgia.

Norman Duncan's use of regional material, though less striking, resembles that of The Harbour Master in that the descriptions of the region and its climate are made to reflect the mood of his characters and to give

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<sup>25</sup> Theodore G. Roberts, The Harbour Master, p. 14.

depth to their words and actions. The preliminary description from Dr. Luke recalls that from The Harbour Master, though the impression left is less bleak and fierce:

A cluster of islands, lying off the cape, made the shelter of our harbour. They were but great rocks, gray, ragged, wet with fog and surf, rising bleak and barren out of a sea that forever fretted a thousand miles of rocky coast as barren and as sombre and as desolate as they; but they broke wave and wind unflinchingly and with vast unconcern — they were of old time, mighty, steadfast, remote from the rage of weather and the changing mood of the sea....<sup>26</sup>

This could as well be a description of the men of Duncan's Labrador as of the harbour rocks. Duncan makes frequent use of the pathetic fallacy, a device which was very much at home with the idea of divine immanence; on the night when Davie's mother dies, fog shrouds the settlement so that "wharves, cottages, harbour water, great hills beyond — the whole world— had vanished. There was nothing left but a patch of smoking rock beneath."<sup>27</sup>

It is when Duncan turns to the type of sentimental romanticism seen in A Colonel from Wyoming that he falls prey to melodramatic excess, the absence of which from The Harbour Master distinguishes Roberts's book from many of these novels. Just as Skipper Tommy assures Davie that his mother awaits him in Heaven, nature gives a sign of confirmation:

Far off, at the horizon, the sky broke — and the rift broadened— and the clouds lifted — and the east flamed with colour — and all at once the rosy hopeful light of dawn flushed the frowning sea.

"Look!" the skipper whispered.

"Ay," said I, "the day is broke."

"A new day!" said he.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Duncan, Dr. Luke, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

Though similar in kind to the use of setting in The Harbour Master, the sea and sky of Dr. Luke are far more prone to accommodate evangelical and romantic clichés.

One other novel deserves special consideration here for its effective use of its regional setting. The Mermaid was written in 1895 by Canadian authoress Lily Dougall, who later settled for life in England. Less striking in its use of regional atmosphere than The Harbour Master, The Mermaid nevertheless attempts a larger scope, not without some success, and is, on the whole, more complex in its technique.<sup>29</sup> It begins, in keeping with the romantic regional pattern, by describing the youth of its hero, one Caius Simpson, the son of a Prince Edward Island farmer. Caius grows up to become a doctor, as do several other regional heroes, but it is not with his professional success that the interest of the book lies. During his youth he sees a small girl child drowned and unsuccessfully attempts to recover her body. Later, in the best pastoral tradition, Caius returns to his region as a world-weary young man at a point of decision in his life. Before he leaves again, Dougall has him undergo suffering and achieve insight, self-denial, and self-discovery. This Christian pattern begins when Caius sees what he takes to be a mermaid near his home off the coast where the child had drowned. Several encounters with the creature make him enamoured of her though she hardly speaks and seems more a symbol of beauty and natural harmony than a real woman. When she fails to reappear after some time, Caius answers the written request of an unknown woman to go to nurse the fever-ridden people of the Magdalen

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<sup>29</sup>Lily Dougall, The Mermaid; a Love Tale (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895).

Islands. His employer, Madame Le Maître, is a nunlike woman who turns out to have been the mermaid. Under her influence, and while doing good work among the sick, Caius develops a fresh appreciation of life. Finally, when Madame Le Maître's errant husband returns from an absence of years, he is killed in an accident (caused by a loving servant of Madame), and Caius is able to marry his mermaid. One can only regret Dougall's final explanation of the original mermaid appearances (Madame Le Maître in a homemade body float); it jars ludicrously against the mystical atmosphere associated with the heroine and is a let-down to the reader's sense of possibilities. However, taken as a whole, The Mermaid has much that makes it superior to most of the novels considered in this chapter; the use of regional setting is noteworthy, and the style is vivid and dramatically effective. Dougall creates precise, concrete descriptions of landscape which subtly contribute to the psychology of her characterizations as well as painting a vivid picture of the region. Sometimes she uses her regional landscape in the conventional romantic-idyllic mode, as when Caius first sees his mermaid:

The hour which was so fateful to Caius came flying with the light winds of August which breathed over the sunny harvest fields and under the deep dark shadow of woods of fir and beech, waving the gray moss that hung from trunk and branch, tossing the emerald ferns that grew in the moss at the roots, and out again into the light to catch the silver down of thistles that grew by the red roadside and rustle their purple bloom; then on the cliff, just touching the blue sea with the slightest ripple, and losing themselves where sky and ocean met in indistinguishable azure fold.<sup>30</sup>

Anne of Anne of Green Gables would not feel out of place in this aspect of her Island, though she might notice that things seem in better focus.

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<sup>30</sup> Dougall, The Mermaid, p. 41.

However, Dougall uses shadow as well as light, and the aspect of the Island is altered on the day when the little girl is drowned: "His path [Caius's] now lay close by the house and on to the sea-cliff behind. The house stood in front of him — four bare wooden walls, brown, painted, and without veranda or ornament; its barns, large and ugly, were close beside it. Beyond, some stunted firs grew in a dip of the cliff, but on the level ground the farmer had felled every tree."<sup>31</sup> In this passage, the desolate farm reflects the psychological condition of its residents. Dougall uses descriptions of regional setting to make less tangible suggestions after Caius goes to the Magdalen Islands. The Magdalens are the home of Caius's mermaid love who has, by this time, become for him a symbol of harmony with the spirit of life and nature. Here, therefore, all of nature is given a special significance and vitality: "As he watched now, the momentary brightening was very perceptible. The heights and shadows of the sand hills stood out to sight; he could see the line where the low herbage stopped and the waving bent began. In the sky the stars faded in a pallid gulf of violet light. The mystery of the place was less, its beauty a thousandfold greater...."<sup>32</sup> Like The Harbour Master, The Mermaid makes the reader always aware of the features of its regional setting and, as in The Harbour Master, these features contribute to the psychology and atmosphere of the book. As the two heroes of the novels, fierce Dennis Nolan and sensitive Caius, differ, so do the atmospheres in which they move, but both their authors have used regional setting and atmosphere for artistic purposes that go beyond mere background, a general aura of nostalgia,

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

and the stock effects associated with the theory of divine immanence.

In this consideration of the romantic regional novels written in Canada between 1880 and 1925, The Mermaid brings the discussion to a noteworthy point — the beginnings of contemporary realism in the concept of the region. This chapter has described the common romantic motif of the region as a nursery and teacher of strong men, a home that provides benevolent influences in a sympathetic landscape, fine women, and older regional wisemen. This motif depicts the region and the hero in harmony, and he is the best exemplar of its virtues and values. However, a close reading of the Maritime novels of the period reveals the beginnings of a new, more critical attitude to the region, an attitude which has come into full growth in the work of contemporary writers such as Buckler and Nowlan. The degree of this criticism of the region varies greatly in these late-Victorian novels, but The Mermaid furnishes an example which is basically representative of many of the others, though it is more skillfully executed than they are.

Dougall is both critical and admiring of Caius's home region, the coastal farmland of Prince Edward Island. She praises the effect of the honest toil required by the rural life, but gently exposes the insularity and insensibility of its outlook. Caius's parents are unconscious of their own best virtues, those acquired from long association with the soil, and want nothing better for Caius than that he take on the manners of the city: "For three or four days [after Caius returns from school] he feasted hilariously upon these dainties [an excess of food prepared by his mother] until he was ill. He also practised all the airs and graces of dandyism that he could think of, because he knew that the old folks, with ill-

judging taste, admired them."<sup>33</sup> Dougall implies that Caius's mother is typical of the rural women when she affects what she thinks are elegant table manners in Caius's honour and loves to indulge in sly jokes about Caius and his cousin Mabel: "... it was just her natural way never to see two young people of the opposite sex together without immediately thinking of the subject of marriage, and sooner or later betraying her thought."<sup>34</sup> Even the natural beauty of the regional landscape in full bloom goes unnoticed by the dulled eyes of the regional people: "The meadows outside were brimful of flowers, but no flower found its way into this orderly room [the Simpsons' kitchen]. The furniture had that desolate sort of gaudiness which one sees in the wares of cheap shops. Cleanliness and godliness were the most conspicuous virtues exhibited, for the room was spotless, and the map of Palestine and a large Bible were prominent objects."<sup>35</sup> None of Dougall's criticisms of the people of Caius's home are harsh, and one senses that her chief feeling for them is affectionate. This is true of the criticisms expressed in almost every one of these novels. What makes The Mermaid different from the others in this respect is that there is the suggestion that, left in his home region, Caius might either have been as insensible as his parents, or have become a self-romanticizing fop. It is only in another setting, the wild Magdalen Islands, within the sphere of his beloved mermaid's influence, that the best in Caius is developed. The Mermaid therefore combines facets of a

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 37-38.

developing realism with more prominent romantic characteristics. The Harbour Master depicts the people of Chance-Along probably less favourably than Dougall's Islanders. Yet, although Dennis Nolan's followers are ignorant and brutal, somehow these faults seem more desirable than the prim narrowmindedness depicted by Dougall.

Many of these novels are not as explicit in their criticisms of the region as The Mermaid and The Harbour Master. For instance, in Dr. Luke, Davie regrets the backwardness and superstition of the Labrador people even while professing his great love for them and their qualities of courage and endurance. Anne of Green Gables is an interesting case of regional criticism with any sting removed. Montgomery's representation of the insular, nosy, and prim people of Avonlea has all the potential for satire, but is presented instead in a tone of most gentle and affectionate irony. Even Marilla Cuthbert, one of Montgomery's most beloved characters, as she complains about the difficulties of hiring help, reveals a narrowness of outlook that might well have damned her in contemporary Canadian fiction:

There's never anybody to be had but those stupid, half-grown little French boys; and as soon as you do get one broke into your ways and taught something he's up and off to the lobster canneries or the States. At first Matthew suggested, gettin a Barnado boy. But I said 'no' flat to that. "They may be all right — I'm not saying they're not — but no London street Arabs for me," I said. Give me a native born at least....<sup>36</sup>

However questionable such an outlook might be in a modern regional novel, in Montgomery's work it is merely humorous, of a kind of humour that detracts not at all from Marilla's status as a regional wise woman. It was

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<sup>36</sup> Montgomery, Green Gables, pp. 8-9.

observed briefly at the end of Chapter I that the basic pastoral contrast can be used for humour and satire as well as romance and sentiment.

Montgomery, as she gently pokes fun at her characters; and Dougall, as she exposes the deficiencies of her regional people, both imply an ironic view of universal foibles; in so doing, they take advantage of the great versatility of the pastoral tradition which accommodates realism as well as idealistic romanticism.

Two other novels resemble Anne of Green Gables closely in the features of the home region that they criticize — prying curiosity, gossip-mongering, prudery, and narrowmindedness. Though in neither of these novels does the criticism of the region dominate over affection for it, both are closer to satire than the gentle irony of Green Gables. The novels are In the Garden of Charity (1903) by Basil King and The Heart that Knows (1906), a novel by Charles G.D. Roberts. In the Garden of Charity, set in Fisher's Grant, Nova Scotia, is another of the novels of this group that, together with The Harbour Master and The Mermaid, stands somewhat above the others. It is distinguished by some lovely and not excessively romanticized description of regional scenery, a quiet humour, and a gently ironic attitude to the regional character that saves the book from its own sentimentality. Even Charity Pennland, the heroine of the novel, who is the best product of her region, though a beautiful and completely feminine woman, has only a limited intelligence. The rest of the people of Fisher's Grant unconsciously acknowledge Charity's superiority to themselves, and village opinion becomes almost a separate voice recalling the chorus of Greek drama. In one scene, at Hennie Boutilier's quilting party, the men are outside discussing Charity while the women are inside doing the same thing:

'If I've said once I've said twenty times,' Miss Ellen Schlagenweit exclaimed, pausing with her hook in the air to accompany her words with gesture, 'that Charity Pennland ought to be spoke to. She's always had the fault o' sperrital pride — a-dressing of herself better than her neighbours when she'd fitter far be thinking of her latter end.'" It becomes clear that the seeds of regional realism tend to appear in a common motif, varying from book to book in degree rather than kind. This motif is the conception of the region as narrow and somewhat priggish though basically conducive to the qualities of endurance and honesty.

The Heart that Knows is more vivid than Roberts's Acadian novels and is considerably more realistic, probably because a large element of it is autobiographical. This book, in fact, can be divided quite distinctly into two parts, one fairly original and the other very much in the late-Victorian romantic tradition. The original part centres around the heroine, Luella Warden, and the malicious interest of the village people in her affairs once she has been abandoned, soon to have a child, by her fiancé. The heavily romantic part takes up a smaller proportion of the book, but it strikes the note on which it ends; it centres around the sailor, Jim Calder, who is Luella's fiancé, around his foreign travels, his meeting with his own and Luella's illegitimate son, and his eventual return to Luella. However, it is Roberts's depiction of the village of Westlock, basically goodhearted but given to complacent prudery and malicious gossip-mongering, that makes The Heart that Knows memorable. A comparison of the

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<sup>37</sup> Basil King, In the Garden of Charity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1903), pp. 240-241.

scene of the quilting party in In the Garden of Charity and the scene in The Heart that Knows when Luella, the first signs of her pregnancy showing, enters the sewing-circle with the minister's wife, Mrs. Goodridge, reveals the different degrees of criticism implied by the two authors:

The moment that she [Luella] entered the room, however, she realized that she had made a mistake in coming. The buzz of conversation stopped, and all eyes turned upon her, — some with indifference, some with curiosity, but some with a sudden penetrating, pitiless comprehension.... She had seen Mrs. Finnimore, with a lift of the eyebrows flash a look of malicious comprehension at Mrs. Ackerley, — and she knew that her secret was discovered. Without speech, it thrilled electrically from one to another, till all the married women in the room but Mrs. Goodridge felt the signal, looked and knew.<sup>38</sup>

After the sewing circle, "the news about Luella, of course, went over the village like wild-fire. Some spread it with laughter, some with pretence of tears; but no one failed to spread it."<sup>39</sup> Westlock is condemned in its creator's very tone to a deeper degree than Fisher's Grant is by King.

The alienation of the central character from the regional values is presented most clearly in The Heart that Knows when Luella moves out of the village to live with the eccentric Mrs. Bembridge, whom Westlock opinion considers "bad" and "queer". Luella scarcely goes into Westlock again until the return of Jim, when harmony and goodwill are not very convincingly restored.

The image of the home region as narrow-minded and prudish is carried farthest in these Maritime novels by a peculiar book entitled Solo (1924), written by one William C.S. Davison; little is known about the author except that he was a native of Nova Scotia, lived abroad, and used the

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<sup>38</sup> Charles G.D. Roberts, The Heart that Knows (Toronto: The Copp, Clark Company, 1906), pp. 113-114.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

pseudonym "Pierre Coalfleet". He wrote three other novels of which only one, The Hare and the Tortoise (1925), is set in Canada — in Alberta. The hero of Solo is Paul Minas, an orphan boy who grows up under the care of a spinster Aunt Verona in the little village of Hale's Turning, Nova Scotia. Once Paul becomes a young man, the setting changes to Australia, Venice, Cairo, Paris, and the wide world in general as Paul roams the globe seeking some intangible vision or message. Paul, like his aunt, is a musician and an intellectual who never really belongs in Hale's Turning. His one visit back to his home reveals Hale's Turning as, if not the most malicious and small-minded of the villages described in these novels, certainly the least loved by its author. This impression is created largely by the attitude of Paul himself; as he grows older and becomes more introspective; more obsessed with finding the elusive "message", Paul, whether Coalfleet intends it or not, begins to sound like a snob. This is the only one of the regional novels discussed in this chapter which uses a tone of condescension in its presentation of regional personalities:

Walter Dreer, who was the cashier in the Bridgetown bank, had begun by hailing him [Paul] as a priceless acquisition to the life of the community. But when Paul had failed to find satisfaction in the bucolic merriment of evening parties at which Walter was the scintillating jeune premier, Walter's attitude became resentful. Through the inevitable roundabout channels Paul learned that his old chum spoke of him as "a smart-Alec." This criticism was weakened by the fact, obvious to the village at large, that Walter aped him.

John Ashmill, his former oppressor, was more satisfactory. John's very grossness gave him a tolerance which approximated breadth of vision.... When Paul, acceding to clamorous invitations, accompanied John and Bessie to Halifax on a riotous weekend excursion, he was voted by members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, "Not so nice, as he seemed."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Pierre Coalfleet, Solo (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1924), p. 225.

All Paul's values favour cosmopolitanism and universality; thus Hale's Turning, the hero's home region, becomes a symbol of limitations and complacency. However, it would be a mistake to credit Solo with very significant beginnings of contemporary realism. The region is criticized chiefly that the hero may appear the more romantic in contrast; Paul Minas is to Hale's Turning what Byron was to the British middle-class. The author of Anne of Green Gables and The Mermaid indulge in a gentle humour at the expense of their central characters' romantic notions of themselves; Pierre Coalfleet seems as impressed with Paul as Paul is with himself. The real beginnings of regional realism can be found in the beloved but very human communities depicted by Basil King, Lucy Maud Montgomery, Charles G.D. Roberts, and Lily Dougall.

Before going on to a consideration of the regional-national awareness of the Atlantic writers, a number of "potboilers" should be named. These are novels which are only mentioned here because they have Maritime settings; in most cases their settings serve as mere backdrops for conventional romantic plots and characters. Several novels by Susan Jones — A Detached Pirate (1903), The Micmac (1904), and The La Chance Mine Mystery (1920) — have Maritime settings. Of these the most specifically treated is that of A Detached Pirate, which is set mainly in nineteenth-century Halifax. However, the heroine and all the main characters are British; the climax of the book comes only after the setting has changed to England, and, for the novelist's purposes, any garrison town remote from England would have served as well. The chief characteristic of the settings of The Micmac and The La Chance Mine Mystery is that they are wild and isolated and offer, not improbably, one or two stock Indians as minor charac-

ters. All the main characters are rich Americans with no connection at all to any spirit of Canadian regionalism.

Alice Jones uses her Maritime settings to more advantage in The Night-Hawk (1901) and Bubbles We Buy (1903). The Night-Hawk is an historical romance concerning the American civil war and its British and French sympathizers. It is concerned not at all with Nova Scotia except as it provides a foothold for British sympathy for the South. The other settings are Paris and the Southern States, and it is from these two backgrounds as well as England, not Nova Scotia, that the central characters come. In Bubbles We Buy, Jones draws on Nova Scotian history as connected with the ancestry of her hero, Gilbert Bauer, to add interest and romance to her novel. Gilbert's grandfather was a sea captain who collected a treasure on the Spanish Main, and it is this treasure, hidden in the family house near Bridgewater, that makes Gilbert's fortune. Though Jones's description of the Bridgewater district is appealing, it provides only one setting out of several, some in the United States and some in England, that add colour to this conventionally romantic novel. Gilbert himself has not grown up in Nova Scotia. None of these books can truly be called regional novels.

The previous chapter touched on the question of the Maritime attitude to Confederation and the United States as well as Canadian colonialism. Of the Maritime regional novels mentioned at this point, very few show themselves concerned in any way with the relation of the Maritime region to the rest of Canada. The authors seem to have chosen the regional settings for their isolation and wildness; probably any introduction of the subject of nationhood would be out of place in terms of atmosphere as well as plot

context. A Colonel from Wyoming does display a national consciousness; it has three central characters move from Nova Scotia to the great West, and, while in Ottawa, Captain Roderick satirizes the members of Parliament. However, the introduction of the national theme detracts from the cohesiveness of the book and adds little except a clichéd acknowledgement of the nation's great range and potential. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables uses less national material but what there is is integrated more smoothly into the depiction of the region. An awareness of the Canadian nation of which Avonlea and Prince Edward Island form a small part is revealed by a few very casual incidents, as when Marilla asserts her preference for native Canadians over foreigners for hired help and as when she and Mrs. Lynde attend a political rally.

Generally, however, the Maritime novels seem much more aware of other countries than of Canada. The "potboilers" with their combinations of settings reveal the value placed on exotic European, or sophisticated American, centres; characters from the upper-classes of New York, London, and Paris bring with them an aura of sophistication and elegance that seldom attaches to a genuine regional hero or heroine. Theodore Goodridge Roberts recognises this when he has Flora, the singer who so disturbs the rough nature of Black Dennis Nolan, come from a successful tour of Europe on her way to New York. This background gives credibility to her magical beauty and voice and makes them more exotic.

Carrie Jenkins Harris is a writer who is especially conscious of the allure of American wealth and European titles for Canadian readers. Indeed, in her novelettes (it seems she paid for the printing herself), the centre of interest usually lies with brilliant European social débuts

and vast American fortunes. Her four novelettes — Mr. Perkins of Nova Scotia or the European Adventures of a Would-be Aristocrat (1891), A Romantic Romance (1893), Cyril Whyman's Mistake (1894), and A Modern Evangeline (1896) — are all set, for a short time, at least, in Nova Scotia. Their usual heroes or heroines are native Nova Scotians, but they could be bland, trite-talking young people anywhere. Jenkins communicates no sense of regional atmosphere at all. The values that emerge from her books are those of wealth and social success, and the simple, home-brewed virtues. If these seem contradictory, she does nothing to make them less so, and the reader must conclude that this is the pastoral contrast between rural simplicity and urban sophistication in an unaware, and often confusing state. While Jenkins derides social pride and obsession with money on the one hand, on the other she usually ends by crowning her heroes and heroines with an abundance of each as a reward for their home-brewed virtues. For instance, in A Romantic Romance, the heroine, Eva, is a success among "the haughty and graceful women" of New York because of her native intelligence and simple charm. Yet, once she returns, a wealthy widow, to her home in Grand Pré, the author makes clear that Eva is above the aspirations of her old acquaintances:

Walter had left her, unconditionally, the greater part of his fortune; and, even in this little country village, she found people ready and determined to worship the wealthy young widow.... had any person the audacity to suggest that the glittering prize — if she contemplated matrimony at all — would look pretty high for a successor to her talented and gentlemanly husband, they would in all probability have been almost annihilated for their presumption. That a person born in Grand Pré, even were she the chosen friend of England's proudest nobles, would not consider one of her countrymen a fitting mate, never for a moment occurred to one of those unsophisticated youths.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Carrie Jenkins Harris, A Romantic Romance (Windsor, Nova Scotia, 1893), pp. 111-112.

It is difficult to determine which way the wind is blowing with Jenkins; does she really value the wealth, fashion, and power represented by New York and the social prestige represented by England and Europe, or is it with the simple people of the Nova Scotia region that her heart lies? The reader is never sure, and it seems doubtful whether Jenkins is herself. If for no other reason than that her interest in the United States and Europe probably represents a general Maritime characteristic and that her ambivalence resembles the typical Canadian dilemma as the northerly neighbour of the great Republic and the daughter of the British Empire, as well as the complexity of the pastoral contrast, Jenkins deserves mention.

One group of novels, only briefly mentioned to this point, is of special importance when the regional-national subject is considered. These are the Acadian novels. Charles G.D. Roberts wrote a number of historical romances about the Acadians, examples of which are The Forge in the Forest (1896), A Sister to Evangeline (1898), The Prisoner of Mademoiselle (1904), and The Raid from Beauséjour (1894). The Raid from Beauséjour was one of Roberts's earliest adaptations of Acadian history (he was to publish A History of Canada in 1897) and also the most detailed of his Acadian novels. The later novels establish a pattern that dominates most of Roberts's Acadian fiction: a man and a woman, often of the two nationalities — French and English — meet in an ideal pastoral world and fall instantly in love; they must overcome some evil scheme of the Black Abbé, fanatic henchman of the French loyalist hierarchy; they are eventually united, and their marriage is a victory for virtue, peace, and national harmony. Roberts's books display many of the common romantic regional motifs already described: his heroes and heroines are the best products of their regions

— but also of their different cultural traditions; many of them have proved themselves as warriors, statesmen, and people of good-society outside the region; they themselves, primarily through their love affairs with characters from outside the region, initiate change. The motivating vision of these novels is that of a nation founded on "the increase of understanding and confidence between the two great Canadian peoples."<sup>42</sup> Roberts values both the region and the nation; in his fiction the latter is the best instrument for preserving the peace and harmony of the former, and the Acadian novels seem written largely to illustrate this thesis.

Marshall Saunders, most famous for Beautiful Joe (1893), her story of a dog, also wrote an Acadian novel — Rose à Charlitte (1897). A book which contains some very sympathetic insights into the Acadian self-identity, Rose echoes the pattern of Roberts's novels. Rose Le Forêt is a beautiful and good Acadian woman, the finest flower of her region and race. She falls in love with a cultured young American, Vesper Nimmo, a gentleman whose great grandfather had killed one of the Nova Scotians deported during the Acadian expulsion. Nimmo, with his tolerance, empathy, courtesy, and urbanity, restores to several Acadians their sense of racial dignity as well as strengthening the bonds between English and French by marrying Rose. Though Rose à Charlitte allows more detail to regional description, thought, and atmosphere than do Roberts's Acadian novels, the regional-national thesis is the same.

The Acadian novels employ a special, very romantic portion of

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<sup>42</sup>W.J. Keith, Charles G.D. Roberts (Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1961), p. 61. The quotation is from Roberts's second preface to The Canadians of Old.

Maritime history, and they are unique among the Maritime regional novels because of their romantic representation of the regional-national partnership. On the whole, the other novelists who employ regional material emphasize those qualities which lend themselves most readily to romance (isolation and bleakness or ideal, Eden-like beauty), qualities that preclude a concern with the region's national context. If a writer does look beyond the boundaries of his region, more exotic and sophisticated settings recommend themselves to the late-Victorian, romantic pastoral viewpoint of the Maritimes. However, in the very midst of romantic regionalism, the beginnings of contemporary realism are to be found in the form of common motifs, motifs which, given the affinity of the pastoral mode for suggesting far-reaching significances, imply a humorous or ironic view of mankind in general and of sections of Canadian society in particular.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE REGIONAL NOVELS OF QUEBEC AND ONTARIO

The regional novels of Quebec and Ontario written between 1881 and 1925 share some characteristics with the Maritime novels, but, as the product of a different region, they reveal some differences in conception. Therefore, after a discussion of the common romantic regional archetype described in the previous chapter as it is revealed in a few novels of Quebec and Ontario, this chapter will go on to consider the differences. A brief summary of three novels from Quebec and Ontario — The Man from Glengarry (1901)<sup>1</sup> by Ralph Connor, Pickanock (1912)<sup>2</sup> by Bertal Heeney, and Jean Baptiste (1915)<sup>3</sup> by J.E. LeRossignol — will quickly discover the same regional themes and motifs and the same basic pastoral viewpoint that appeared in the Maritime novels.

Charles William Gordon (1860-1937), whose pseudonym was Ralph Connor, was born in Glengarry County, Ontario, the region which provided the setting for two of his most popular novels, The Man from Glengarry and Glengarry Schooldays (1902).<sup>4</sup> His father was a Presbyterian Highlander who had settled in Canada; the devout Presbyterian Scots of The Man from Glengarry were drawn from Gordon's personal knowledge. Gordon

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph Connor, The Man from Glengarry, intro. by S. Ross Beharriell (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960).

<sup>2</sup>Bertal Heeney, Pickanock: A Tale of Settlement Days in Older Canada (Toronto: Bell and Cockburn, 1912).

<sup>3</sup>J.E. LeRossignol, Jean Baptiste: A Story of French Canada (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1915).

<sup>4</sup>Ralph Connor, Glengarry Schooldays (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902).

was educated at the University of Toronto, was ordained and, for a period, served as a missionary to the miners and lumbermen of the Northwest Territories. Even that brief part of The Man from Glengarry which takes place in the forests of British Columbia had its source in Gordon's own experience. From 1894 until his death in 1937 he was the pastor of St. Stephen's Church, Winnipeg, and, as Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly, he toured Canada speaking in favour of church-union. Of his many books, a collection of short stories entitled Beyond the Marshes (1897), a novel entitled Black Rock (1898), and the Glengarry books were the most popular.

The Man from Glengarry is basically the success story of a Glengarry boy, Ranaid Macdonald, who, because of the courage, strength, and simplicity inherited from his race and the gentle and devout Christian influence of Mrs. Murray, the Presbyterian minister's wife, rises from boyhood obscurity as a pioneer farmer and lumberman to become a successful politician, a pioneer of the West, a lumber tycoon, and, most important in Connor's eyes, a good and strong man. In the process he falls in love with Maimie, the wrong girl, is rejected, and is finally accepted by the right girl, Kate, who is an almost exact, if somewhat younger, replica of the minister's wife.

Bertal Heeney (1873-1955) was the author of two novels, Pickanook and D'Arcy Conyers (1922). He was born in Quebec, was ordained a priest of the Church of England, and spent most of his career as rector of St. Luke's Church, Winnipeg. Pickanook draws on his familiarity with the Gatineau woods and lumber industry and bespeaks his devotion to the Anglican Church. It is an episodic and not very successful story of a

model Church-of-England family, the Hanleys, who leave their little farm in the Carp Valley in Ontario to settle in the richly wooded Gattineau area. The novel is divided into two distinct sections, one in which Heeney is a conscious regionalist taking care to note the details of domestic life and the natural scene, and another in which he is a teller of vague, romantic stories. Pickanock contains several such stories, and the novel retains a kind of unity only because the characters are from the same family and travel through the same setting. The three main stories concern young lovers wooing and winning the mates of their choice in the face of minor difficulties. Additional episodes include the conversion of a friend of the Hanleys from alcoholism and the zealous and determined efforts of the Hanley father to obtain an Anglican priest for their new settlement. Difficulties in the paths of the chief characters are hardly sufficient to create tension and are invariably overcome by virtue and faith.

James Edward LeRoussignol, born in Quebec and, later, a Professor of Economics at the University of Nebraska, wrote collections of short stories about his native province, Little Stories of Quebec (1908) and The Beauport Road (1928), as well as his novel Jean Baptiste. Jean Baptiste resembles The Man from Glengarry more closely than Pickanock in that it is the story of the career of one boy, Jean Baptiste Giroux. The novel tells of his growing up a fatherless only son, tutored by his noble mother and the good priest, Monsieur Paradis. Jean becomes not only a hardy and enterprising man with an eye for business and the future, but, as does Ronald Macdonald, a virtuous and upstanding hero. In the course of his development, he falls in love with the right girl, Gabrielle, is

offered a tempting dowry with the wrong girl, Blanchette, and, in the end, wins his true love.

The archetypal features of the regional hero and his career are apparent even in these summaries. As we have seen in Chapter III, the motif central to the romantic regionalism of these novels is the hero and regional strongman, product and best type of the region in which he lives. The regional world in these novels is essentially an expression and symbol of ideal pastoral virtues, virtues which frequently spring from the writer's reaction to the actual, less innocent world; the regional hero, therefore, as the best product of his region, becomes the chief embodiment of the desired virtues. That Connor consciously reacted to the materialism of his time was pointed out in Chapter I. That he created his novels, among them The Man from Glengarry, as expressions of this reaction and of the only solution he perceived, is clear from the novels themselves. The last paragraph of Connor's "Preface" to The Man from Glengarry plainly implies his pastoral viewpoint: "In the Canada beyond the Lakes, where men are making empire, the sons of these Glengarry men are found. And there such men are needed. For not wealth, not enterprise, not energy, can build a nation into sure greatness, but men, and only men with the fear of God in their hearts, and with no other. And to make this clear is also a part of the purpose of this book."<sup>5</sup> The ideal virtues represented by the pastoral Glengarry world are faith and humility; only these virtues, Connor implies, can remedy man's blind pride and his reliance on materialism ("not wealth, not enterprise, not energy"), the characteristics of a more modern,

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<sup>5</sup> Connor, The Man from Glengarry, p. xiii.

sophisticated national life. This contrast between a simple, ideal way of life and a more corrupt urban world (representative of the author's view of his age) works throughout Connor's novel. Maimie St. Clair, a girl tainted by the distorted values of a sophisticated urban social life, is preserved from being completely spoiled by her contact with Glengarry. "For every week a letter came from the country manse, bringing with it some of the sweet simplicity of the country and something like a breath of heaven."<sup>6</sup> After a visit to Glengarry, Maimie testifies to a new insight and sense of proportion: "You have taught me so much that I never knew before. I see everything so differently. It seems easy to be good here...."<sup>7</sup> Such insight, a viewpoint that eliminates essentials and reveals basic issues of existence, is characteristic of life in the pastoral world. When Ranald Macdonald, the regional hero, leaves his region for Montreal and Toronto he meets for the first time snobbery, hypocrisy, and the sordid facts of business life. However, true to his origins and his creator's didactic purposes, Ranald carries the pastoral virtues with him and thus brings about that paradox found in so many of the pastoral novels of the period — a hero who wins material success in an urban world because of his simple regional virtues. In a small way this exemplifies the complexity of the pastoral contrast; even as Connor upholds the qualities of a simple rural life, he cannot resist crowning his ideal with the rewards of progress and of the very materialism for which he blames the decay of the national character.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

Closely connected to the motif of the regional hero is the romantic idea of the important presence of nature in the hero's upbringing and its ultimate uplifting and strengthening effect on his character. The Highlanders in The Man from Glengarry are the peculiar product of their region. The conditions of life in their region, that portion of Glengarry County known as the Indian Lands, have made them strong men, but have also fostered "a certain wildness which at times deepened into ferocity."<sup>8</sup> This streak of violence, which was established as a characteristic of the regional strongmen in Chapter III, leads to the supplementary motif of the refining influence of a fine woman, of memories of home, of religious faith, and sometimes of books. Ranald Macdonald is the ultimate product of the Indian Lands; he is strong, courageous, loyal, and steadfast, but also brooding, and, at times, savage. Under the feminine and spiritual influence of Mrs. Murray, all the best in Ranald is enhanced, and the worst is suppressed. Certain passages between the two suggest a chivalric knight pledged to honour his lady's name with noble deeds.<sup>9</sup> Kate, the girl Ranald eventually marries, strongly resembles Mrs. Murray in character and enthusiasm. One short conversation between Ranald and an elderly colonel who knows Kate and Mrs. Murray is typical of the enshrinement of the fine

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> The relationships between Connor's mothers and sons, to the modern reader at least, seem strangely chivalric, and there is a curious exclusion of the husbands and fathers, usually represented as less sensitive than their wives, from the finer rapport that exists between their wives and their sons. The sick-room scenes between Thomas Finch and his mother in Glengarry Schooldays provide a good example of an ideal mother-and-son pair in rapport.

woman in these novels. The Colonel asks Ranald to leave the two photographs of Kate and Mrs. Murray where he can see them:

"There, that makes the room feel better," said the Colonel. "That there is the finest, sweetest, truest girl that walks this sphere," he said pointing at Kate's photograph, "and the other, I guess you know all about her."

"Yes, I know about her," said Ranald looking at the photograph; "it is to her I owe everything I have that is any good."<sup>10</sup>

Of course a ~~large~~ part of Mrs. Murray's influence over Ranald springs from her strong religious faith, and that Connor, himself a minister, sees such faith as the basis of the strongmen's strength is clear from his preface to the novel. In these novels, the influence of a good, true woman works hand-in-hand with religious faith.

In Pickanock, all of the five Hanley children, but notably the eldest, Luke, are the best product of their region, the fields and forests of Quebec and Ontario. They are first introduced to the reader as they work at the harvest on their Carp farm, and Heeney creates an impression of harmony between man and nature, man deriving grace and spiritual health, almost unconsciously, from his natural environment:

Unwittingly the beauty of the scene impressed itself upon them — the golden stump-dotted acre, on one side darkened with the shadow of the forest, on the other dashed with sunlight; and everywhere surrounding it the autumn-tinted woods — motionless, noiseless — and the ruddy light of morning glinting through them.

All forenoon the reapers bent their backs under the burning sun, the wheat, wheat, wheat of their sickles mingling with the crackling and swishing of the ripe grain being quietly cut and twisted.<sup>11</sup>

The day ends with a few moments of family prayer led by the father, William

<sup>10</sup> Connor, The Man from Glengarry, p. 273.

<sup>11</sup> Heeney, Pickanock, pp. 2-3.

Hanley. The same strong mingling of God's benevolent influence working through nature continues to characterize the life of the Hanleys once they move to the Gatineau woods. Again and again Heaney intersperses the activities of his characters with bits of natural description that emphasize the closeness of their lives to God's natural world.

That the natural world is God's world is never doubted and is several times asserted by the author through the spoken convictions of his chief characters. The healing and inspiring influence of nature, religious faith, and love of a fine woman all come together in the scene in which the minister, Martin Bosworth, betakes himself to the forest to weigh his new-found feeling for Evelyn Hanley: "And there by the roadside, high on the mountain's brow, overlooking range after range of hills all green with the mingled tints of June, glinting in the sunshine, alive with the noiseless flight of birds and joyous with their happy song, — there came on Martin's soul a calm, a peace, a joy like the delicate breathing of the spirit world, the gift of Infinite Omnipotence."<sup>12</sup> Again, this retreat into the ideal pastoral landscape for wisdom and clarification is typical of the pastoral tradition. Though the good women take a secondary place to faith and nature in Pickanock, they are nonetheless honoured, of which nothing is better proof, given the values upheld by these novels, than the harmony of their influence with that of religious faith and the natural scene.

Though the Hanleys themselves display none of the ferocity of the Glengarry men, some of their woodsmen companions are drunken and violent,

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

and it is only because of their own noble upbringing that the Hanleys are able to exert an influence for the better on the renegades. One incident which involves Luke's conversion of his friend, Bill, from brawling and drunkenness closely resembles an incident in The Man from Glengarry in which Ranald spares the life of the savage Frenchman, Le Noir, and thereby wins his respect and friendship in addition to his vow to give up excessive whiskey-drinking. Though, like Connor, Heeney did articulate an anxiety about the character of Canadian life in his time, and though his pastoral landscape obviously represents Heeney's ideal virtues, the counterforce or reality against which Heeney reacted is given little or no expression in Pickanock. This absence of any real representation of the "counterforce" leaves the novel without crisis or tension, and the result is a bland tale of one almost effortless Christian triumph after another.

There is no doubt about the regional hero of Jean Baptiste. Jean Baptiste Giroux is the product of all the best influences available in his region:

From the library of Father Paradis he got a knowledge of books such as few students obtain in all their years at college and seminary. From his work on the farm he acquired an extraordinary facility in the use of all the implements, especially the axe, the best friend of the backwoodsman. From the hunting and fishing expeditions he obtained a knowledge of woodcraft equal to that of an Indian, while he learned to know beasts and birds of the forest, the rocks, trees, wild flowers, and all the objects of Nature, as they are known to few naturalists. The growth of his body, too, kept pace with the development of his mind, until he was as fine a specimen of young manhood as one could wish to see, the like of whom could not be found in ten parishes.<sup>13</sup>

In short, he is an ideal regional hero, and, as befits a hero from French-Catholic Canada, Jean has considered becoming a priest. The priesthood,

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<sup>13</sup>J.E. LeRossignol, Jean Baptiste, p. 19.

however, loses out to the right girl, Gabrielle, and to Jean's own desire for worldly activity. Eventually Jean needs the help of all his region's most soothing influences -- the balm of nature, religious faith, and Gabrielle's love -- to conquer the darker side of his character. In a violent fight provoked by Pamphile Lareau, he hits Pamphile's head on some stones and believes him dead. In black remorse, Jean retreats to the woods to brood until his surroundings, his faith, and the appearance of Gabrielle restore his mental balance, thus assuring his place as a true regional hero. It is clear by now that Jean's retreat into the ideal pastoral landscape for clarification and renewal is in keeping with his role as a romantic pastoral hero. In all these novels, most of them expressions of Christian concern with what seemed a degenerating national life, the heroes are archetypal Christians in their natural flaws, their errors, and their suffering followed by new insight and faith. It was in such terms that most of these regional novelists viewed the errors of Canadian society and the possibilities for reform.

The strong men and heroes of these three novels resemble the regional heroes of the Maritimes in their pastoral context in that they too may count, among the influences that form them, the teachings of older wisemen. In The Man from Glengarry, Ranald is coached along the road to noble manhood by Mrs. Murray and by several of the fierce, religious and upright Glengarry men with whom he lives and works. In Pickanock, the Hanley children are themselves wisemen to their less elevated fellows and have, as their own exemplar, their father William, an upright, God-loving school-teacher, who regards the community's need for a Church-of-England priest as his personal crusade. Jean Baptiste Giroux, like Ranald, has

several regional teachers including his mother, the parish priest, and a strange, wise hermit who was once the youthful companion of Jean's dead father. All these teachers encourage the regional heroes in their nobler traits and help them to overcome the blacker, less refined aspects of their characters.

The reader will recall from Chapter III that another characteristic of the romantic novels of the Atlantic region is an aura of nostalgia which attaches to the presentation of the region. The region as the nursery of the regional strongman, a figure who represents the culmination of its best attributes, is a little world in itself, still young and relatively undiluted by outside influences. As was noted in the previous chapter, the glow of childhood memory is often associated with the region. The sense of regret for a lost, ideally harmonious existence, whether that of Eden or childhood, is a basic element of the pastoral viewpoint. It seems inevitable that, as the narrator proceeds and as the hero grows older and often leaves, the region must change and fade. Thus, there is a strong quality of nostalgia about these novels which is, if anything, more marked in those of Quebec and Ontario than in those of the Maritimes. Usually the region in which the hero develops is still in the earliest stages of settlement. In Connor's novel, for instance, the Glengarry men are still clearing fields, and wolves still roam the woods. In Pickanock, William Hanley and his sons are the first settlers to clear the land on their Carp farm. The parish where Jean Baptiste Giroux lives is part of an older settlement, but the journey from it to Quebec City is still troublesome, sometimes even dangerous.

In all three of these novels and in most of the others to be

discussed in this chapter, this primitive stage of settlement must inevitably pass, and this change is reinforced by the growth of the regional heroes. In The Man from Glengarry, Ranald not only proves himself able to adapt to the social and business life of Montreal, but he moves beyond it and sets himself to open new regions in the vast forests of British Columbia. At the same time, the character of the home region changes.

With the advance of time and the forces of civilization, the region vanishes. Connor expresses this transience in his preface to the novel:

"The solid forests of Glengarry have vanished, and with the forests the men who conquered them. The manner of life and the type of character to be seen in those early days have gone too, and forever. It is part of the purpose of this book to so picture these men and their times that they may not drop quite out of mind."<sup>14</sup> True to the author's stated intention, a note of nostalgia underlies all that part of the novel that takes place in Glengarry. When Ranald returns to Glengarry after an absence of several years, he finds something of its old, fresh spirit gone: the minister's wife is growing old; the minister is a trifle complacent; and Hughie, the minister's son and childhood friend to Ranald, is impatient and selfish. Glengarry in its prime has passed just as Canadian life, in Connor's view, has lost its best virtues:

A clue to the peculiar nostalgia created in Pickanock is to be found in the novel's full title, Pickanock: a Tale of Settlement Days in Older Canada. The narrator assumes the vantage point of many years after the events recounted, and it is largely from this backward-looking view

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<sup>14</sup> Connor, The Man from Glengarry, p. xlii.

that the nostalgia of Pickanock arises. Within the time of the events contained in the narrative, the region is still young and being formed; the Hanleys are its pioneers, and there is no sense of sadness attached to the changes that Luke introduces, a logging camp and a new settlement in the Gatineau. Because the nostalgia does not arise within the span of the events, but entirely from the author's viewpoint looking back through time, much depends on mood and authorial tone. It is one of Heeney's weaknesses that he interjects expressions of nostalgia into his writing with no subtlety and hardly any regard for the overall tone of his novel. The result is that these doses of sentiment seem highly artificial and leave the impression that the author was trying, without much success, to fulfill a popular formula for romantic regionalism. At one point, Heeney takes time from his narrative, already interspersed with many details of lumbering life, to devote almost four pages to a description of a typical carter. He prefaces the description with a sentimental aside to the reader: "He was a picturesque figure, the carter, and one which has passed for ever from this region, as indeed has all that brought him hither — the rich forests of white pine; let us stop, therefore, and observe him more closely ere the memory of what he was and the part he played, vanish with him."<sup>15</sup> Later on, in a similar vein, Heeney apostrophizes the canoe: "We fain would keep you, old log canoe, fragrant with memories, but the hand of time is on you as on all things created and you must pass to the land of the forgotten."<sup>16</sup> The nostalgia of Pickanock is a spasmodic

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<sup>15</sup> Heeney, Pickanock, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

impulse, the jerky use of a stock device rather than a smoothly integrated element of Heeney's concept of the region.

LeRossignol's novel, Jean Baptiste, makes interesting use of the basic pastoral contrast and is less nostalgic than either Pickanock or The Man from Glengarry, but it resembles Connor's novel in that what nostalgia there is is fully integrated with characterization and description. A hint of nostalgia lies in Monsieur Paradis's opposition to Jean's scheme for enriching the neighbourhood through tourists; the curé foresees a time when, rich and modernized, his people will no longer be humble and faithful. Le Rossignol seems to realize the complex tensions between rural simplicity and urban sophistication, and Jean's desire for progress as opposed to the more traditional attitudes of the priest and the people is a central theme of the novel, one which, in the end, is left open-ended with no ultimate conclusion. It is possible to detect a certain wistfulness in LeRossignol's observant portrayal of the details of habitant life, but they are presented with so much humour that the nostalgia is never more than a gentle undercurrent. Recalling the habitant routine of former years, LeRossignol remembers that many adventurous habitants became voyageurs:

But times had changed. The Indian and the voyageur had passed away, and now the adventurous youths, when seized with the spirit of the old-time rovers would spend a winter or two in the shanties, work for a while in the coves and lumberyards of Quebec and Ontario, whence they drifted southward and westward to the factories of New England, the lumber camps of Michigan, the wheat fields of Minnesota, or the gold mines of California and British Columbia.

Thus the young men of St. Placide, the relations and friends of Jean Baptiste, kept going away one by one, always promising to return, but never coming back to stay.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> LeRossignol, Jean Baptiste, p. 21.

Nostalgia is present in Jean Baptiste, but, throughout the novel, it is overshadowed by a tone of intelligent observation and genuine interest in the situation of the Quebec habitants. Whereas The Man from Glengarry communicates a strong mood, and a mellowness and sense of tender familiarity pervade all that part of the novel that takes place in Glengarry, and whereas Pickanock fails to unite comfortably its sentiments with its matter, Jean Baptiste gives regional nostalgia a secondary place to humour and observation.

These three novels illustrate the great similarities between regional viewpoint and motifs in romantic novels of both the Maritimes and Quebec and Ontario. The regional strongman and hero, the best exemplar of his region's highest qualities, is the central figure. The novels trace his growth into virtuous manhood and his eventual worldly success, a success which sometimes involves changes for the home region. Closely related to the romantic motif of the hero's growth in his region are several refining influences: regional nature which has the power to elevate and heal the spirit while it strengthens the body; religious faith; older regional wisemen and bookish education. A prominent element is an aura of nostalgia closely bound up with the pastoral viewpoint which mourns the passing of the region's ideal character and youth, a process often parallel with the hero's growth into manhood. Nostalgia in these novels also stems from the narrator's viewpoint as they look at their characters and events through time. Considering all these similar features, there is little doubt about the family connection between Dr. Luke, Blue Water, Anne of Green Gables, and The Harbour Master on the one hand, and A Man from Glengarry, Pickanock, and Jean Baptiste on the other. The conception

of the region they represent amounts to a common regional archetype.

Before leaving the three books that have served as an introduction to this chapter, it is worthwhile to note a few of the features which make them individual and, in the long run, give them their chief interest. Their differences in tone and their various uses of nostalgia have already been mentioned, but there are other distinguishing features.<sup>18</sup> For instance, though Pickanock is the least successful of the three, it is also the most consciously, or conscientiously, regional. As one reads, one gets the impression that Heeney would have been better off writing a short history of settlement in the Gatineau. For it is only when he leaves his storyline with its stereotyped, rather bland characters and turns to the domestic details of settlement life that his writing becomes vivid and concrete. The long sections of descriptive detail form the most cohesive element in the book and strongly recall the almost documentary passages in Wallace's

Blue Water:

His [Luke Hanley's] shanty was made of small white pine logs left whole; not even the bark was taken off them, much less were their sides hewn away; they crossed at the corners of the building, where they were made to fit one astride the other by a process of cutting known among the lumber men as 'saddling.' The logs approached each other but did not touch throughout their lengths, and the cracks left had long pieces of split pine forced into them, filling the greater part of the openings, while the remainder was stuffed tightly with moss gathered about the foot of the ash-trees.<sup>18</sup>

Such passages of description are found mainly in the first half of the book and make it far more alive and interesting than the second half, which is given up chiefly to the episodic and sentimental storyline filled out with very general and effusive observations of God's natural world.

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<sup>18</sup>Heeney, Pickanock, p. 45.

In the matter of sentiment, Jean Baptiste is at almost the opposite pole from Pickanock. It has already been remarked that LeRossignol's novel is characterized by a tone of intelligent affection and observation rather than an overflowing of emotion. Though LeRossignol's observations of regional detail are not as technical as those of Heeney in his documentary passages, they have the grace of seeming to arise naturally from the narrative and are coloured by a touch of humour sadly lacking in Pickanock. The parish gossip condemns Jean as a fool when, in spite of the enthusiasm of his mother and Monsieur Paradis, he decides not to go to the seminary:

"What a big fool, that Jean Baptiste Giroux!" said Mere Tabeau, gossip and wise woman, as she sat on the doorstep of her cabin at the crossroads, smoking a black pipe and talking volubly to all the passers-by.

"What a fool he is to let slip a chance like that!... To be a priest, that is well worth while; to live in a large comfortable house, to receive tithes, to have everything that one could wish, plenty of good bread and butter, pea soup every day, potatoes, onions — all that. Sapré, I should like that me."<sup>19</sup>

In this one scene LeRossignol accomplishes several things. He registers one section of public opinion concerning Jean's decision and establishes a certain disapproval of Jean, a feeling which is to grow as the story continues. The passage also contributes humour, an impression of community involvement, and some keen observations of French-Canadian thought concerning the priesthood and the best things in life. Yet, all these effects combine in a skillfully integrated whole.

The Man from Glengarry resembles Jean Baptiste in its organic blending of regional detail with plot and characterization. Unlike

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<sup>19</sup>LeRossignol, Jean Baptiste, p. 16.

Pickanock, it unites fiction, sentiment, and reality. For example, the process of boiling sap to make sugar is not explained in documentary fashion, but by means of a dialogue between Ranald and the minister's wife. Not only does this dialogue supply the reader with interesting regional detail; it also advances both plot and characterization. It illustrates Mrs. Murray's sensitivity to Ranald's feelings and her skill in touching a response in Ranald, a bond which is one of the major threads in the novel. More than either of the other writers, Connor is able to create physical descriptions of his region that convey vivid images and impressions while, at the same time, communicating the mellow atmosphere already discussed in connection with regional nostalgia:

Straight north from the St. Lawrence runs the road through the Indian Lands. At first its way lies through open country from which the forest has been driven far back to the horizon on either side.... when some dozen or more of the crossroads marking the concessions which lead off to the east and west have been passed, the road seems to strike into a different world. The forest loses its conquered appearance, and dominates everything. There is forest everywhere. It lines up close and thick along the road and here and there quite overshadows it. It crowds in upon the little farms and shuts them off one from another and from the world outside, and peers in through the little windows of the log houses looking so small and lonely, but so beautiful in their forest frames.<sup>20</sup>

No doubt it is Connor's ability to imbue his matter with sympathetic feeling and to animate his Glengarry region with a spirit of its own that has given his book popularity after the others have been forgotten.

In the context of a consideration of the romantic regional novel in Canada, The Man from Glengarry takes on a significance that extends beyond its singular popularity. It is also one of the best examples of a

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<sup>20</sup> Connor, The Man from Glengarry, p. 20.

specific group of regional novels within the larger region of Quebec and Ontario. During the period from 1880 to 1925, the popularity of the regional novel was at a peak, and none were more successful with the public than those which told of the Presbyterian Scots who settled in Ontario. Connor's The Man from Glengarry and Glengarry Schooldays are probably the best known of this group today, but they are only two of many. Others include The Lone Furrow (1907)<sup>21</sup> by William A. Fraser, Duncan Polite (1905)<sup>22</sup> and The Silver Maple (1906)<sup>23</sup> by Marian Keith, St. Cuthbert's (1905)<sup>24</sup> and The Handicap (1910)<sup>25</sup> by Robert E. Knowles, to name only some. The Imperialist (1904)<sup>26</sup> by Sara Jeanette Duncan is of the same group, though it tells of a later period than the others. These Presbyterian-Scots novels fit plainly into the regional pattern already established, but are marked by their own distinguishing variations. Once he has read four or five of these novels, the reader begins to feel that Scottish Presbyterianism as found in Ontario is a kind of region in itself, regardless of author or exact location of setting. Similarities from novel to

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<sup>21</sup>William A. Fraser, The Lone Furrow (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1907).

<sup>22</sup>Marian Keith, Duncan Polite: The Watchman of Glenoro (Toronto: The Westminster Company, 1905).

<sup>23</sup>Marian Keith, The Silver Maple (Toronto: The Westminster Company, 1906).

<sup>24</sup>Robert E. Knowles, St. Cuthbert's (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1905).

<sup>25</sup>Robert E. Knowles, The Handicap: A Novel of Pioneer Days (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910).

<sup>26</sup>Sara Jeanette Duncan, The Imperialist, intro. by Claude Bissell (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971).

novel go as far as identical incidents, stock characters, and standard scenes.<sup>27</sup> One common scene is that in which the precentor prepares the pulpit for the minister. It occurs in almost every one of these novels, and the precentor is always a stern, upright Presbyterian taking scrupulous pride in his duties. All of these books have their elders who usually come in for equal shares of praise and humorous criticism. A meeting of the elders, whether in the kirk or in the tavern, is another common scene. In The Handicap by Knowles, an honest Irishman's subscription to the kirk is turned down because the man is a tavernkeeper, turned down by the very elders who, several chapters before, are seen lingering in his establishment. In The Silver Maple by Keith, an informal gathering of the elders takes place in Thompson's store to discuss the question of the mingling of the several races in the region:

Praying Donald's rumbling voice had arisen again. "Yes, oh yes, the Evil will be growing; and the Judge will be coming in His wrath and we will just be like Sodom and Gomorrah!"

"Oh, indeed," broke in Store Thompson, "the good Lord is slow to anger and of great mercy, Donald, ye mind!"

"Mercy!" roared Praying Donald. "Eh, James, do not be deceiving yourselves! He will be just. We must be reaping what we sow."<sup>27</sup>

In The Lone Furrow, Malcolm Bain, a regional strongman and hero, describes a meeting of elders eager to stop waiting for the return of their own minister, who has mysteriously disappeared, and to call a new man in his place. Even when these novels do not actually depict gatherings of elders, there are always a few elders among the characters, and they contribute humour and authenticity to the portrait of the region.

Not one of these books is without one, even two, ministers,

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<sup>27</sup> Keith, The Silver Maple, p. 90.

characters who fall clearly in with the regional pattern already described, but who have about them the particular colour of Scottish Presbyterianism. These ministers are depicted, almost without exception, as upright and true, and they are among the most inspired of the regional wisemen who guide the growth of the regional heroes. In The Handicap, Irwin Ainslie, an illegitimate child, grows into a regional hero and counts among the wisemen who are his teachers his uncle, who is an elder of the kirk, and the gentle, manly minister, Dr. Leitch. In Duncan Polite, old Duncan himself is a regional hero whose spiritual growth has been guided by the example of the minister, Mr. Cameron: "Under Mr. Cameron's wise, loving rule all classes in the congregation had been unanimous; the elder folk believed him perfect and the younger respected him too deeply to disagree with him."<sup>28</sup> However, with the death of Mr. Cameron comes church faction and moral laxity, a state of affairs that is aggravated by the worldliness of the new minister, a young man named Egerton. To this younger man, old Duncan plays the part of wiseman and, through his own death, chastens Egerton's pride and fixes the resolve of Donald Neil, a younger regional hero, to enter the ministry. The reader knows that, in their time, Donald and Egerton will be wisemen to the next generation. In the more modern novel, The Imperialist, Dr. Drummond is no less a regional wiseman because his flock are twentieth-century townspeople instead of rugged pioneers. The doctor enthusiastically encourages the career of the regional hero, Lorne Murchison, and takes a spiritual father's attitude to all of the Murchison family. Indeed, Dr. Drummond's guidance goes as far as arranging

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<sup>28</sup> Keith, Duncan Polite, p. 35.

for a younger minister to marry the right girl, Advena Murchison, while he himself marries the wrong woman, thereby removing the only obstacle to true love's course. The part of the minister as regional wiseman and tutor of the regional hero in these novels of the Presbyterian Scots in Ontario is epitomized by one short episode in The Silver Maple. The career of Scotty, the hero in this novel, is traced from childhood to manhood. At one point he has been launched into business with a firm he finds not strictly honest (the kind of incident frequently employed by these pastoral regionalists to depict the corruption of the materially-oriented business world), and his conscience struggles within him. During this inner crisis, he meets the famed old minister, John McAlpine, deep in the forest, a retreat into the ideal landscape that recalls Jean Baptiste and others; McAlpine senses Scotty's danger and wrestles for his salvation: /

It seemed as if all his own [Scotty's] soul's struggle had been transferred to the man at his side. Old John McAlpine had a wondrous gift of prayers, one that never failed to cast a solemn spell over his hearers, and to-night he pleaded for the soul of this young man as if for his life. His big hands were knotted, the perspiration stood in beads on his white forehead, and his agonised voice rose and went ringing away into the forest. Scotty was awesomely reminded of One who prayed in a garden, quite unlike this one of nature's wild making, and sweat drops of blood because of the sin he was to bear.<sup>29</sup>

In this scene, John McAlpine is representative of all the ministers of these Presbyterian-Scots novels who work and pray for the good of the regional heroes. The motif of the concerned and often Christlike minister is plainly just a particular expression of the regional wiseman motif that has already been discussed, but it is an expression particularly

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<sup>29</sup>Keith, The Silver Maple, p. 304.

characteristic of this "region" of Scottish Presbyterianism.<sup>30</sup>

The motif of the regional wiseman who is a minister leads to another feature of the Presbyterian-Scots novels, the distinctively religious character of their regional virtues. In Glengarry Schooldays, when Jack Craven, the new schoolmaster, arrives in Glengarry, he writes to a friend that he has "struck the land of the Anakim" where "the 'tremenjousness' of their religion is overwhelming",<sup>31</sup> and in The Silver Maple, a notable part of Scotty's regional upbringing lies in learning to read the Bible before he is old enough to go to school and in repeating by memory the Shorter Catechism.<sup>32</sup> In all of the novels of the Presbyterian Scots, the highest regional virtues are connected with a stern righteousness and a religious zeal found in only a few of the novels of

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<sup>30</sup>One point of difference that relates to the ministers is the identification of denominations in the novels of Quebec and Ontario. Religion in the novels of the Maritimes tends to be evangelical in tone, but unidentified as to church or sect; in many of the novels one merely assumes, or cannot even distinguish, the denomination of the pastoral characters. If denominations are identified, little emphasis is placed on their particular character or creeds. There are exceptions to this observation, but it is, nonetheless, generally true. On the other hand, the novels of Quebec and Ontario frequently state, and even emphasize, the religious denominations of their characters. The explanation may lie in something as simple as Rupert Schieder's comment in his introduction to The Curé of St. Philippe. He remarks that "Religion naturally assumes a prominent role in any novel about French Canada." The same thing may be said of novels about the Presbyterian Scots. It is impossible to ignore the parallel between this concern with denominations and the actually existing religious unrest and prejudice that was characteristic of Quebec and Ontario in this period and has been described in Chapter II. To some extent at least, the predominance of creeds and strictly defined religious groups in the novels of Quebec and Ontario must be a genuine reflection of the regional reality.

<sup>31</sup>Connor, Glengarry Schooldays, p. 249.

<sup>32</sup>Keith, The Silver Maple, p. 107.

other regions. Something of this has been revealed in the observation of the many ministers and elders of the novels. The passages in The Handicap that describe the morning of Margaret Menzie's public confession to the kirk of her illegitimate conception of Irwin capture the stern and zealous character of the Presbyterian Scots depicted in all these novels:

Sabbath morning "slumbering had not yet become the fashion in Glen Ridge. One of the fixed opinions of the good Canadian pioneers was that encroachment on the hours of the Lord's Day through indolence, was just as sinful as through any other indulgence of the flesh; wherefore the early dawn found them as usual about their tasks, confined though they were on the first day of the week to those of necessity and mercy.

...the hearts of all Glen Ridge and all the countryside, were turned this morning towards the House of Prayer and the more than usually solemn exercises to which they were looking forward. Even on ordinary occasions these solemnities were the chief features of their uneventful lives.<sup>33</sup>

The climax of St. Guthbert's puts even more emphasis on the value of spiritual grace as it is found in these novels: "Then the sacred emblems were poured and broken by our sinful hands, redeemed by love alone. The elders bore them forth to the waiting souls, and when Angus came to his mother's place, great grace was upon us all."<sup>34</sup> Unswerving rectitude and religious fervour mark the regional virtues of the Presbyterian-Scots novels, but they simply give a unique colour to, and do not replace, the virtues of bravery, strength, honesty, simplicity, and intelligence common to all the novels that have been discussed.

A similar observation may be made of the faults of these characters. It has been observed that the regional strong men are often tainted by

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<sup>33</sup> Knowles, The Handicap, p. 125.

<sup>34</sup> Knowles, St. Guthbert's, p. 335.

failings such as violence, lawlessness, and moods of despair. These faults are as characteristic of the regional make-up as are its virtues. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that the vices of these Presbyterian Scots, like their virtues, have a character peculiar to themselves. The vices of the righteous Ontario Scots often arise from an excess of virtue; rectitude becomes harshness, and religious zeal becomes prejudice and spiritual pride. These failings are depicted in all the novels of this group in tones varying from grave to humorous. In Duncan Polite, Keith makes good use of descriptive details in two different buildings to communicate an impression of strict utility that, while virtuous, is also plain and harsh. One is the Glenoro church with its rows of stiff pews, and the other is the home of the Johnstones, an upstanding Presbyterian family. The young Mr. Egerton, while paying a pastoral visit to the family, is taken to the parlour where "its black haircloth furniture, its bristling white lace curtains, its coffin-plate of a former Mrs. Johnstone in a black frame on the centre table" do little to lift the gloom of the visit.<sup>35</sup> The incident is one of the most humorous in the book and provides a nice insight into the life of the region. In The Lone Furrow, Mrs. Paisley objects to the introduction of an organ into the kirk to such a degree that for ten years she has observed the Sabbath in another district rather than be reconciled to what she considers her kirk's "lapse from grace."<sup>36</sup> In Glengarry Schooldays, old Donald Finch provides another

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<sup>35</sup>Keith, Duncan Polite, p. 105.

<sup>36</sup>Fraser, The Lone Furrow, p. 52.

example of the harshness that can stem from religious zeal. When he hears a mistaken story from other church-goers about his son's misdeeds at school, Donald, his pride smarting, returns home: "'It is the Lord's judgement upon me,' he said to himself, as he tramped his way through the woods. 'It is the curse of Eli that is hanging over me and mine.' And with many vows he resolved that, at all costs, he would do his duty in this crisis and bring Thomas to a sense of his sins."<sup>37</sup> The Ontario Scotsmen represented in these romantic novels are prey to the extremes of their virtues.

Another of their characteristic faults also arises from a kind of virtue. The Scots are extremely proud of their racial heritage, a feeling which gives many of these books a warm sense of tradition. Yet their racial pride frequently becomes racial prejudice. Regional prejudice did appear in novels of the Maritimes, but nowhere is it so pronounced as in the depictions of the stern Scots. Connor's Glengarry woodsmen are as hostile to the gangs of French and Irish lumbermen as those gangs to them. In Duncan Polite, Andrew Johnstone fondly recalls the days when Scots and Irish clashed before the tavern "an' ye could hear the fechtin' over on the Tenth."<sup>38</sup> In The Silver Maple, racial antagonisms go even farther, and Scotty's young wife and the Irish girl he loves are drowned while fleeing from their angry pursuers, both Scots and Irish. Scotty himself is for a time ashamed of what he feels to be the stigma of his birth, the fact that his father was English. While keeping clearly within the common

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<sup>37</sup>Connor, Glengarry Schooldays, p. 119.

<sup>38</sup>Keith, Duncan Polite, p. 20.

regional archetypes, the novels which tell of the Presbyterian Scots in Ontario form their own sub-region within the larger region of Quebec and Ontario. Their basic themes and motifs are the same as those of the other regional novels, but they share certain emphases and variations that proclaim them the unique manifestations of the region.

This is as good a time as any to mention the evils of drink frequently encountered in these regional novels. A wave of prohibition agitation had begun both in the United States and Canada in the 1870s. It reached its crest in Canada in the early 1920s when most of the provinces were "dry".<sup>39</sup> Pamphlets and novels aimed against taverns and the use of alcohol were a phenomenon of the years between 1880 and 1925, such a common one that demon liquor in these novels becomes almost a stock issue, one guaranteed to test or display the hero's mettle and to provide matter for dramatic scenes and incidents. Of course the evils of drink are by no means limited to the regional novel, but it is probably their ideal vehicle. The virtues fostered by the region — industrious and simple domesticity, honesty, nobility, courage, and health — find a direct enemy in drunkenness and its fruits — broken homes, fallen pride, desperation, and debilitation. The short episode in Pickanock in which Luke wins his friend Bill back from the verge of alcoholic despair and returns to him his manhood and resolution has already been mentioned. Liquor is condemned indirectly

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<sup>39</sup>The province of Quebec was the least responsive to prohibition and adopted it only during the last year of the First World War, largely as a patriotic measure to conserve grain. After the war, the "wets" won a popular referendum in Quebec. See Carl Wittke, A History of Canada (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928), pp. 332-334. Also see Chapter II for a description of the evangelistic fervour attached to the fight against booze.

in The Harbour Master when Foxey Jack Quinn's worst temper is excited by whiskey and in Rose à Charlitte because Rose's reprobate husband is a heavy drinker, as is the coarse husband of Madame Le Maître in The Mermaid. However, in none of the regional novels discussed to this point have the evils of alcohol played such a prominent role as in the novels of the Presbyterian Scots. In Glengarry Schooldays, when Craven returns to the minister's house one night in a state of intoxication, his respect for Mrs. Murray is greatly strengthened because she says no word of it to anyone. At the end of the novel, when Craven is saved from his old ways, there is no doubt that alcohol is one of the evils he has abandoned.

Drunkenness is one of the great enemies of the lumbermen in The Man from Glengarry; it incites all their other vices and provides the matter of several battles as well as for several conversions to abstinence. In St. Cuthbert's, Geordie Lorimer is the town drunkard and one of the narrator-minister's trials; though Knowles is ultimately an anti-alcohol as any of these writers, some of the scenes between the two are quite funny. The evils of tavern-keeping are of central interest in The Handicap because Dinney Riley, the father of the regional hero's beloved, keeps The Buck Tavern. Several melodramatic incidents surround the issue, including an alcoholic father taking shoes off his dead child to trade for a drink. Dinney, a well-meaning soul, eventually is brought by his daughter to see the error of his ways and closes his tavern. In The Lone Furrow, the heroine, Jean Munro, bears several crosses, and sorest among them is the drunkenness of her younger brother, Robert Craig. Robert is rehabilitated during convalescence after an accident, and he, in turn, converts the man, Archie MacKillop, who caused the accident:

MacKillop's plea for forgiveness was crude in sincerity, just a repetition of the boy's name and confession of the blackness of his treachery.

"I know, Archie, you wouldn't injure me willingly," Robert said, his voice weak, uttering the words wearily. "I forgive you — you didn't mean it."

"I didn't, Bob — I didn't...."

Presently Robert spoke again: "Archie, this 'smash isn't all bad, for I've conquered the drink-devil that caused it; will you do something for me — to make good?"

"Anything you ask, Bob."

"Will you promise to cut out the whiskey? You were a good man before it got the upper hand."

"With God's help I will!"<sup>40</sup>

The fervour and melodrama of this passage are typical of the treatment of alcohol and its victims in the romantic regional novel. Besides reflecting the reality of the temptation and threat for these early settlers, no doubt the theme occurs as often as it does because something in the black features of demon drink best suits it to play the devil to the stern, upright Presbyterians; certainly the confrontation affords drama.<sup>41</sup> Whatever is the reason, the prevalence of the anti-liquor issue throughout the novels about the Ontario Scots again emphasizes the strong family resemblance among them.

One other feature of the Presbyterian-Scots novels deserves mention

<sup>40</sup> Fraser, The Lone Furrow, pp. 272-273.

<sup>41</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, recalling his youth among the Scotsmen of Ontario, testifies to the prominence of alcohol in the community: "The Scotch were divided into two groups, those who drank and those who didn't. If a man drank like a gentleman, it would not hurt his position in the community. Unfortunately it was not on record that anyone ever had. Men drank for only one reason, namely to get drunk. No one imagined that alcohol had any other purpose." However, he offers no answer to the question about the special emphasis placed on drink in the fictional representation of his people and seems to assume that the problem was no worse than among other races. See John Kenneth Galbraith, The Scotch, with Illustrations by Samuel H. Bryant (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada, 1964), p. 48.

before the discussion leaves them. This chapter has twice mentioned Ralph Connor's talent for filling his books with feeling and an atmosphere of mellow time. Sentiment and nostalgia were almost obligatory elements of the romantic fiction of the period and were by no means limited to Ralph Connor's books or even to the regional novel. Yet, though this study has mentioned many novels of nostalgia and romantic feeling, the Presbyterian-Scots novels as a group are particularly marked by feeling, atmosphere, and an abundance of romantic sentiment of which the nostalgia already discussed is part. In St. Cuthbert's, the narrator's sentiment and feeling colour this recollection of his congregation's departure after hearing him preach for the first time:

The congregation swayed slowly down the aisle, Scottishly cold and still, like the processional of the ice in the spring-time. They reminded me of noble bergs drifting through the Straits of Belle Isle. It was a Presbyterian flood, and every man a floe. But I suspected mightily that they were nevertheless the product of the spring, and somehow felt that they dwelt near the confines of summer.<sup>42</sup>

In The Lone Furrow, Fraser has a particular talent, too often hidden behind his melodramatic plot, for animated natural description:

I floated along (in reality I walked) between the fields of burnt gold, wherein rustling wheat whispered to the wind secrets of the ground dwellers — the moles and the beetles and the slugs that had their holdings down in the depths of the gold tasseled forest. Then the bronze turbans of the grain gods faded into the gray-green of hay meadows where the slender-penciled timothy, patrician and of high caste, topped its brother, the full-bodied clover, a commoner of good-living, sensuous, sweet of breath, wine-colored and cream-tinted of blossom.<sup>43</sup>

Something of the sensual enjoyment of nature communicated in this passage colours Knowles's entire novel and is its best charm. Feeling in these

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<sup>42</sup> Knowles, St. Cuthbert's, p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> Fraser, The Lone Furrow, p. 47.

novels has its excesses as well as its beauties, and these are displayed in nothing better than in the deaths of which the Presbyterian-Scots novels have more than their share. Of all these novels only The Imperialist, which will be treated separately, has no deathbed scene; most of them have more than one. One of the most skillfully handled is the death of the saintly Mrs. Finch in Glengarry Schooldays. At the end of the novel, the story of it is told by the schoolmaster, Jack Craven, to one of his professors who knows the Glengarry people. After describing all that has gone before, Craven reaches the climax:

"And the end" — Craven's voice grew unsteady — "it is difficult to speak of. The minister's wife repeated the words about the house with many mansions, and those about the valley of the shadow, and said a little prayer, and then we all waited for the end, myself, I confess, with considerable fear and anxiety. I had no need to fear. After a long silence she sat up straight and in her Scotch tongue she said with a kind of amazed joy in her tone, 'Ma fayther! ma fayther! I am here.' Then she settled herself back in her son's arms, drew a deep breath, and was still. All through the night and the next day the glory lingered round me. I went about in a strange world. I am afraid you will be thinking me foolish, sir.<sup>44</sup>

Craven's story, of course, is another variation of the Christian pastoral. Corrupted by the vices of a more sophisticated urban existence, in the ideal Glengarry world he discovers a new, harmonious view of life and comes to a sense of his own sin and need for repentance. As a result of what he experiences in Glengarry, Craven, once cynical and degenerate, resolves to enter the ministry along with several Glengarry youths. Connor is the best of the group of novelists who wrote about the Scots in Ontario, but they were all attempting the same thing; in their novels passages heavy with feeling and an atmosphere heightened by emotion abound. Among the regional

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<sup>44</sup> Connor, Glengarry Schooldays, pp. 319-320.

novels of Canada written between 1880 and 1925, sentiment and evangelical fervour are nowhere more apparent than in the novels about the Presbyterian Scots. These novels repeat the motifs found in the other regional novels of the era. Yet, they also share so many distinctive modifications and bear such a resemblance to one another that Scottish Presbyterianism in the romantic novel is established as a region in itself.

To this point in the discussion there has been little to distinguish the regional novels of Quebec and Ontario from those of the Atlantic provinces, except that the Ontario novels include the peculiar sub-group made up of all the novels about the Presbyterian Scots. These latter are notable more for their shared interpretation of the regional archetype than for any marked divergence from it. It is now time to note a feature of the romantic regional novels of Quebec and Ontario that separates them from those of the Maritimes: the prominent place occupied by political awareness on a national and international level. On this point the contrast between the two regions is dramatic. There is not one election in the novels I have mentioned from the Maritime region and hardly a hint of Canada, the Dominion, beyond a brief Ottawa incident in A Colonel from Wyoming and a political rally in Anne of Green Gables. The novels of Quebec and Ontario present a very different case; in them, regional heroes run for election to parliament, elections are critical events, and the Dominion and Empire are grand themes.

In the novels of the Presbyterian Scots, pride of race, with the passage of time, becomes national pride. In Duncan Polite, the narrator mocks Watson, the schoolmaster, for his unsuccessful attempts to imitate the pomp of an American patriotic society among his Canadian pupils:

If he [Watson] had remained long enough in Glenora, he might have witnessed a condition of affairs which would have surprised him. Could he have seen the boys he taught in the school, grown to men, pushing and jostling each other in their efforts to be of the glorious chosen few who marched away to uphold the old flag on the African veldt... he might have confessed that he had mistaken British reticence for lack of sentiment.<sup>45</sup>

Knowles's St. Cuthbert's is dedicated "To the Canadian Pilgrim Fathers", and, towards the end of the novel, one of the characters, Mr. Blake, while in England sees a battered remnant of Canadian soldiers returning from an unnamed battle. He sees a Canadian emblem on a Union Jack and understands that Canadians have fought to ensure "that Britons never shall be slaves." "All this surges in upon him, and the savage joy of empire fills his heart."<sup>46</sup> In The Handicap, the regional hero, Irwin Menzies, becomes a Conservative member of parliament, and excitement over Canada's nationhood reaches its zenith when John A. Macdonald himself enters the novel and approves the young M.P. In The Silver Maple, another regional hero, Scotty, proves himself worthy while working on a British mission in Egypt. While there, his chief companion is an Irishman, and he saves the life of an Englishman who turns out to be the brother of the girl he loves; the spirit of the unified Dominion and of cooperation within the Empire is advanced. Though The Lone Furrow is one of the least political of the Presbyterian-Scots novels, one amusing scene in it deals with party loyalties. The whole village of Iona is keen to get news of Munro, the missing minister, and, consequently, at

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<sup>45</sup>Keith, Duncan Polite, p. 247. See the description of Ontario in Chapter II and the mention of the popularity of patriotic societies in the area of Toronto.

<sup>46</sup>Knowles, St. Cuthbert's, p. 303.

the village store there is a run on newspapers that bewilders the storekeeper:

"You're just like the others, man," he [the storekeeper] said.

"How's that?" I asked.

"Well, you're a Tory, and you're taken' home the Liberal organ, The Globe, to read. Are you gettin' on the fence — is there any word of a turnover in the Government? I never saw the like. Here's Postmaster Mackay buying a Liberal organ, a man that for thirty years has sworn by the Conservative's Bible — the Mail... Up to now I could just take the voters' list and tick them off, Liberals and Conservatives; and order their party organs without askin' what they'd have. It's fair confusing."<sup>47</sup>

Examples of the political theme in these novels can be found in abundance and strike several notes, from the comic and sordid details of local politics to the loftier song of the region's part in Canada and the Empire.

There are two remarkable novels, one set in Ontario and one in Quebec, in which the political theme reaches its height. They are The Imperialist (1904) by Sara Jeanette Duncan and The Curé of St. Philippe (1899) by Francis William Grey.<sup>48</sup> In them, the romantic, regional archetype becomes a vehicle for a study of politics in both its loftier and more sordid aspects; in fact, the full title of Grey's novel is The Curé of St. Philippe: a Study of French-Canadian Politics. The Curé of St. Philippe gives the impression that it exposes a cross-section of the life of the French-Canadian parish of St. Philippe. Characters include the Bishop, the parish priest, the mayor, the doctor, several lawyers, the local M.P., a newspaper editor, one or two farmers, businessmen, and some young people. Though such a group does not make up a representative cross-section, the

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<sup>47</sup>Fraser, The Lone Furrow, p. 42.

<sup>48</sup>Francis William Grey, The Curé of St. Philippe: a Study of French-Canadian Politics, intro. by Rupert Schieder (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970).

impression of having a bird's-eye view<sup>of</sup> all of St. Philippe remains with the reader. No one character holds the centre of the stage, though several are of greater interest than the others. The romantic storyline is based on a love triangle; the young fellow who emerges victorious is Tom Fitzgerald, whose many faults the narrator freely admits and who is called a hero only because he wins the right girl, Alice Charette. A truer regional hero is Tom's father, the truest representative, even with his faults, of the Irish-Canadian in Quebec. The curé, Monsieur Lalonde, might be called another regional hero; he is one of the best representatives of the French-Canadian people, and Napoleon Fortier, one of Alice's suitors, is another.

One of the central motifs of this novel is the juxtaposition of racial types, and Grey has a knack for creating characters that are representative even while they are alive and individual. He depicts the French feeling about the English and English feeling about the French, and the conclusion of his thought, subtly given and never belaboured, is that good men of both races can find a common ground. Typical of the mutual recognition that the novel promotes is the insight that arises from an alliance between the curé and an English Protestant named Brampton. They both want to put a stop to the distribution of alcohol in the parish and agree to join forces:

It was the first time he [Brampton] had ever shaken hands with a priest; almost the first time he had spoken to one, and he found the experience rather agreeable than otherwise. Probably, it did him good. His views about "clerical tyranny" certainly underwent a rapid change — for the present.

Monsieur Lalonde, also, was favorably impressed. As frequently happens, in French Canada, he had met very few Protestants; their ideas, their beliefs, were as wholly strange to him as if they had belonged to a different order of beings. This, in a few words, is the

race-problem of the Dominion; two nations — no other word is adequate — separated, not only by race and creed, but by language as well.<sup>49</sup>

This is the lofty song of the united Dominion, though it is sung in an impressively low-key and intelligent tone. Grey foresees no miracles or overnight conversions to goodwill, perceives only the common ground waiting to be discovered. He realizes that the high ideal of the Dominion has its foundation in the real world of political compromise, party patronage, and graft, and it is the details of these, exposed with humour and complexity, that comprise one of the chief interests of the novel. Mayor Fisher donates the town-hall for a Catholic bazaar and hopes thereby to secure Catholic votes. If Fisher is re-elected, a certain Peltier will get the contract for the new waterworks. The entire parish of St. Philippe is interested in whether or not the Catholic Church will openly support the Conservatives in the federal election of 1896, and ill-gotten information on the subject is bought and sold. Alphonse Bilodeau, M.P., a disenchanted Conservative, sells his talents and the votes of the people of Quebec to the Liberal party for the price of a Lieutenant-Governorship. The character of Bilodeau, by the way, is one of the most memorable in Canadian fiction; the man is a shrewd, even brilliant, opportunist wholly concerned with his own welfare and yet, something of a philosopher who wins the reader's grudging admiration. The Curé of St. Philippe stands in the first rank of regional novels because of its many perceptive insights and memorable characters as well as its unique, unsentimental handling of political themes.

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

The Imperialist by Sara Jeanette Duncan also gives something of the impression of a cross-section, but not to the same extent as The Curé of St. Philippe. For The Imperialist has a definite romantic hero, Lorne Murchison, the best product of his region. His region is Fox County, Scottish Presbyterianism, and the little town of Elgin, Ontario. That Duncan's subject is the Dominion and its place in the Empire is suggested by her title, and she wastes no time in establishing her theme: "Elgin was in Canada. In Canada the twenty-fourth of May was the Queen's Birthday.... Here it was a real holiday, that woke you with bells and cannon... and went on with squibs and crackers till you didn't know where to step on the sidewalks, and ended up splendidly with rockets and fire-balloons and drunken Indians vociferous on their way to the lock-up."<sup>50</sup> Duncan carries her imperial theme throughout the novel, and Lorne becomes a strong advocate of Canada's ties with England and the Empire; the implication is that the ideal Empire is made up of the best representatives of its regions. Duncan treats the concept of the Dominion more enthusiastically and more romantically than her Quebec counterpart, but, like Grey, she understands that even the loftiest ideals are rooted in sordid reality. When describing the by-election in which Lorne runs as the Liberal candidate, Duncan suggests that ballot-spoiling, bribery, and intimidation are customary activities, and ultimately, though Lorne wins the by-election, he is asked by his party to step down before the coming federal election. His fellow Liberals are afraid that Lorne's high-minded speeches on behalf of the Empire may have frightened their hard-headed constituents. Duncan also

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<sup>50</sup> Duncan, The Imperialist, p. 12.

resemble Grey in her interest in the juxtaposition of racial traditions, in this case the Canadian middle-class and the British upper-middle-class. The Milburns, an Elgin family with pretensions to British social habits, provide the object for humorous satire though the daughter, Dora, is the pretty but not very admirable girl with whom Lorne falls in love. The novel introduces Alfred Hesketh, a young man of the British upper-middle-class whose failure to understand the free spirit of the young Dominion is the crux of several vivid incidents. However, for Lorne the best example of the Englishman remains Wallingham, the statesman whose genius has grasped the significance of the concept of Empire, and, despite sordid politics and temporary setbacks, the book concludes with Lorne's loyalty to his vision reaffirmed. Like the other novelists writing about the Ontario Scots, Duncan has a talent for imparting to her writing an atmosphere coloured by sentiment, though she does not fall into the other novelists' excesses. Though she is a skillful and precise writer, her novel has a warmth and mellowness of atmosphere that distinguish it from The Cure of St. Philippe. The Imperialist is rich in vivid and appealing regional details and an underlying mellowness, qualities which are illustrated by the description of the twenty-fourth of May celebrations:

Such a day for the hotels, with teams hitched three abreast in front of their aromatic barrooms; such a day for the circus with half the farmers of Fox County agape before the posters — with all their chic and shock they cannot produce such posters nowadays, nor are there any vacant lots to form attractive backgrounds.... The hotels, and the shops and stalls for eating and drinking, were the only place in which business was done; the public sentiment put universal shutters up, but the public appetite insisted on expecting the means to carnival. An air of ceremonial festivity those fastened shutters gave; the sunny little town sat round them, important and significant....<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

This passage enchants the reader with its vivid details, its mellow charm; and its regional insight all the time that it is subtly establishing the centrality of its Imperial theme.

Both The Curé and The Imperialist are notable for their prevailing sense of irony; the effect of this element in both novels is to colour the reader's outlook with the strong sense that he is considering an amusing play, an awareness that life goes on in St. Philippe and Elgin much as in the rest of the world. In this respect both these novels are distinguished from most of the novels considered in this study. They express more than a straightforward opposition between city and country, urbanity and simplicity. Their irony serves to undermine or blur the lines between the basic pastoral poles and to foster closer examination. The Curé and The Imperialist, to use Leo Marx's description of the "complex pastoral", "manage to qualify, or call into question, or bring irony to bear against the illusion of peace and harmony in a green pasture."<sup>52</sup> There is no doubt that Marx's distinction between "complex" and "sentimental" pastoral is helpful in articulating the very real differences between the bulk of regional novels written in the first two decades of this century and novels such as The Curé and The Imperialist. The simplicity or naiveté of the former deprives them of the power to grant insight and proportion with their view of life. Among the novels we have considered, this power is found in that small group, including The Curé and The Imperialist, which takes advantage of the potential of pastoral to move beyond mere sentiment.

The political interest that is a distinctive feature of the regional

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<sup>52</sup> Marx, The Machine in the Garden, pp. 24-25.

novels of Quebec and Ontario is no doubt to some extent a reflection of the reality of the regional situation; national and religious antagonisms were prevalent between Protestants and Catholics, the English and the French, the English and the Irish and Scots, and Confederation was more the child of Quebec and Ontario than of either of the other two main regions of Canada. The reader has only to turn to The Curé of St. Philippe and The Imperialist to find the themes of politics and Dominion in their most interesting and readable forms.

As well as being the novels most involved in the subject of Canada's nationhood, The Curé of St. Philippe and The Imperialist also notably diverge from the romanticism that characterizes most of these works. Both authors expose the pettiness and corruption of their regional people as well as of politics. In The Imperialist, Dora Milburn rationalizes her greedy acceptance of Lorne's engagement-ring, though she feels no commitment to him and eventually becomes engaged to Alfred Hesketh without having returned Lorne's ring. She is vain, shallow, and unprincipled, though Duncan succeeds in making her attractions quite credible in spite of her moral failings. Dr. Drummond, the minister, a genuinely devout and good man, is also a bit of an autocrat who is not unfamiliar with the sin of pride. The story of Advena Murchison and Hugh Finlay, the heroine and hero of the romantic sub-plot, runs true to the romantic pattern in that Hugh first becomes entangled with the wrong woman before the obstacle is overcome and he and Advena are united. Though the narrator has a great affection for her characters, this affection encompasses their very human foibles as well as their virtues; it is the tongue-in-cheek representation of their self-romanticizing and mistaken ideas of nobility that make Advena

and Hugh such a touching pair. Duncan least indulges her gentle wit at Lorne's expense because he is her regional hero and represents the qualities that the narrator seems to admire most — confidence modified by the common touch, and moral and emotional sincerity and intensity softened by a sense of humour even at his own expense. Yet, though both the politicians and electors of Elgin gladly acknowledge Lorne's merit and claim him as their own in the town newspapers, they are less confident about supporting him at the polls and prefer to elect Carter, a more hardened politician though a less admirable man. Lorne's noble refusal to compromise his vision of empire strikes them as disturbingly idealistic and not very good business. Lorne is left a sadder and shrewder man.

The reader will recall Lily Dougall's The Mermaid from the previous chapter and remember that Caius Simpson had to leave Prince Edward Island, the home region, in order to develop his full potential; the home region was not quite sufficient to the hero it produced. In The Imperialist, Duncan suggests the same limitation about Elgin; Lorne, the hero, must compromise something of the best in him if he wishes to find a place for his talents within the region. In contemporary fiction, Lorne might have become the hero in rebellion against the values of his region, but Duncan treats his disillusionment as a fact of life that in no way diminishes her affection for the region she depicts. Her representation of Elgin is characterized throughout the novel by a tone of the most indulgent, even admiring, irony:

Main street expressed the idea that, for the purpose of growing and doing business, it had always found the days long enough.... a certain number of people went up and down about their affairs, but they were never in a hurry; a street car jogged by every ten minutes or so, but nobody ran after it. There was a decent procedure; it was felt that

Bofield -- he was dry-goods, too -- in putting in an elevator was just a little unnecessarily in advance of the times.<sup>53</sup>

The Imperialist lacks none of the insight of contemporary regionalism, but that insight is mellowed and transformed by the author's backward-looking viewpoint (the nostalgia of the regional novel) and her affection for the region.

The Curé of St. Philippe, of the two novels, is less mellow and diverges farthest from the popular romantic outlook. A comparison of the description of the twenty-fourth of May in The Imperialist with the following description of a church bazaar in The Curé of St. Philippe clearly reveals the difference in tone between the two novels:

The Curé's bazaar lasted three days, and was a great financial success. People spent money freely, as is usual in such cases, for the sake of the present gratification of appearing generous, to say nothing of the future reward which their "Charity" must surely gain for them. Possibly, very probably, some of them may have grumbled...; if so, they grumbled in private. In public everything was "couleur de rose," or rather purest azure.... His church, so the Curé thought, with a satisfaction highly natural under the circumstances, was half-built already.<sup>54</sup>

Less a master of vivid descriptive detail than Duncan, Grey derives his irony from situations and characterization alone; though, like Duncan, his irony is humorous, Grey's novel lacks the aura of mellow affection that colours The Imperialist. In The Curé of St. Philippe, the business and dealings of politics have central importance and overshadow the romantic story of boy and girl, which amounts only to one of several sub-plots; even here, irony dominates, and Alice, with a woman's inconsistency, loves and marries Tom Fitzgerald, though she realizes that Napoleon Fortier loves her

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<sup>53</sup>Duncan, The Imperialist, p. 25.

<sup>54</sup>Grey, The Curé, p. 26.

better and is the nobler man, the true regional hero. Most of the novelists mentioned in this discussion grant unqualified worldly and romantic success to their regional heroes. Grey and Duncan do not; theirs is a sadder, and more contemporary, representation of life. For instance, there is a great difference between Connor's ideal Glengarry landscape and Duncan's Elgin. Whereas Connor's Scots, though flawed by violence, seem largely superhuman, Duncan's people are unquestionably human and often petty in their humanness. And yet, Duncan, no less than Connor, is creating in Elgin County an ideal landscape that embodies the virtues of enthusiasm, innocence, and, above all, a sense of intimacy or belonging. Leo Marx's statement that the true pastorals "manage to qualify, or call into question, or bring irony to bear against the illusion of peace and harmony in a green pasture"<sup>55</sup> is again called to mind by the comparison. Certainly Connor's very awareness of the preciousness of regional life bespeaks a sophistication that is at odds with that life. Yet, without a doubt, the irony that Duncan attaches to her depiction of her ideal realism is a much keener and more effective expression of the complexities of the pastoral viewpoint, one that calls into play the ambiguity of the reader's own responses to the human comedy and its contradictory strivings and nostalgia. The Imperialist and The Curé of St. Philippe stand apart among the novels of their period in that they give fuller expression to the richness of the basic pastoral contrast.

What Necessity Knows (1893)<sup>56</sup> by Lily Dougall, author of The Mermaid,

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<sup>55</sup> Marx, The Machine in the Garden, pp. 24-25.

<sup>56</sup> Lily Dougall, What Necessity Knows (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1893).

deserves individual attention not only because it contains an interesting treatment of the national theme; it is also one of the best, though least known, of the regional novels treated in this study, and it is regrettable that it has not been brought back into print as have the two novels by Duncan and Grey. What Necessity Knows has two story-lines that run side-by-side and eventually overlap. One is the story of Sissie Cameron, a motherless girl who has been reared by her father on an isolated backwoods farm in Quebec. When her father dies, his partner, Bates, proposes marriage to Sissie, but her only thought is of the wide world, and she manages to elude Bates by hiding in her father's coffin. During her escape, she meets a newly immigrated English family, the Rexfords, and settles with them in Chellaston, Quebec. Here, the other story predominates. Sophia, the oldest daughter of the Rexford family, is admired and loved by Robert Trenholme, an Anglican minister and head of a respectable boys' college in Chellaston. His younger brother Alec has been indirectly involved in Sissie's flight and has met Bates. When Alec arrives in Chellaston, Sissie's anonymity is threatened and so is Robert Trenholme's peace. Alec wishes to take up his father's trade, that of a butcher, and Robert dreads the social disgrace. In the end, Sissie and Bates are happily united, Alec marries Sophia, and Robert is a chastened and better man. What Necessity Knows has a depth, vitality, and an occasionally mystic quality that cannot be captured in a plot summary. Dougall's characters are complex and believable, and, as in The Mermaid, she skillfully uses vivid descriptions of the regional landscape as a subtle counterpoint to the action of her characters. The description of Sissie when she learns that Bates will try to stop her from leaving the farm blends the girl's movements with natural detail:

The frozen furrows of the ploughed land crumbled beneath her heavy tread. The north wind grew stronger. When she reached the edge of the maple wood and looked up with swollen, tear-blurred eyes, she saw the grey branches moved by the wind, and the red squirrels leaped from branch to branch and tree to tree as if blown by the same air. She wandered up one-side of the clearing and down the other, sometimes wading knee-deep in loud rustling maple leaves gathered in dry hollows within the wood, sometimes stumbling over frozen furrows as she crossed corners of the ploughed land, walking all the time in helpless, hopeless anger.<sup>57</sup>

Throughout the novel, as in this passage, nature is a vital, expressive force. Sissie, growing up in the region of the Quebec backwoods, has few people from whom to inherit or learn a tradition, and she reflects the character and moods of the land rather than a people. In this passage the result is a striking impression of the girl's feelings and a vivid, dramatic image, the kind of effect that distinguishes Dougall's novels.

One of Dougall's interests in What Necessity Knows is the difficulty of the upper-middle-class English immigrant in Canada. Physical hardships are present, but Dougall is more concerned with the social adjustment. Introducing the English gentry of Chellaston, Dougall writes that "they prided themselves upon adhering strictly to rules of behaviour which in their mother-country had already fallen into the grave of outgrown ideas. Their little society was; indeed, a curious thing, in which the mincing propriety of the Old World had wed itself right loyally to the stern necessity of the New."<sup>58</sup> The national theme adds depth to the plot; the spirit of young Canada, which is represented as offering the possibility of laying aside old and pointless social forms, is a touchstone against which many of the characters take on added significance. For instance,

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 97-98.

Sophia Rexford, though able to claim a place apart from her family in English society, adapts well to the Canadian environment. One proof of this occurs when the Bennetts, a stiffly proper English family, pay a formal call: "A Frenchman, a butcher in a small way, drove from door to door with his stock, cutting and weighing his joints in an open box-sleigh. To see the frozen meat thus manipulated in the midst of the snow had struck Sophia as one of the most novel features of their present way of life."<sup>59</sup> However, Miss Bennett is insensible to the charm of the custom and tells Sophia that Mr. Bennett slaughters their own meat: "'Really!' cried Sophia. This was an item of real interest, for it suggested to her for the first time the idea that a gentleman could slaughter an ox. She was not shocked; it was simply a new idea, which she would have liked to enlarge on; but good-breeding forbade, for Miss Bennett preferred to chat about the visit of the Prince...."<sup>60</sup> In this one scene, Dougall accomplishes much. The butcher's cart in the snow is a vivid regional image that will gain greater significance from Alec's later arrival in Chellaston and his desire to take up the trade. Sophia is revealed as a correct but flexible young woman, and her later acceptance of Alec and his trade is foreshadowed. The scene also presents an example of social inflexibility in Miss Bennett, who is probably representative of the English community of Chellaston in her political views:

Her interest in such matters appeared to sum itself up in a serene belief that Disraeli, then prominent, was the one prop of the English

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 144. The Prince of Wales actually visited Canada in 1860. Of this occurrence, Arthur Lower remarks, "The visit gave new lease of life to the old class pretensions which, after the winning of Responsible Government, had begun to slumber." (Canadians in the Making, p. 281).

Constitution, and as adequate to his position as Atlas beneath the world.... Miss Bennett was not sure that there was anything that "could exactly be called politics" in Canada, except that there was a Liberal party who "wanted to ruin the country by free trade."<sup>61</sup>

Though the national theme is not as central to What Necessity Knows as to The Imperialist or The Cure of St. Philippe, it is nonetheless an important and interesting element of the book. That Dougall does not employ this theme at all in her two other novels set in Canada, The Mermaid and The Madonna of a Day (which is set in the West), reinforces the observation that national and political interests are a characteristic of the regional novel in Quebec and Ontario.<sup>62</sup>

Stemming from a consideration of Dougall's treatment of the national theme in What Necessity Knows is an observation of the novel's anti-romantic elements. Chellaston, though it has its virtues, is not a perfect community, and, when the story closes, Alec, Sophia, and Robert have still to face the stigma that will surely attend Alec's public declaration of his trade. The only character who can claim to be a Canadian regional hero in What Necessity Knows is Sissie Cameron; she is the only one who has grown up in the country, and her region is the backwoods of Quebec. Like Caius in The Mermaid, Sissie must leave the home region if she is to complete her development into a woman. Dougall is perceptive

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>62</sup> There are fewer Americans in the novels of Ontario and Quebec than in those of the Maritimes, a phenomenon probably explained by the old ties of trade and kinship between the Maritime provinces and the New England states. However, The Man from Glengarry includes an American in the Macdonald gang; Jean Baptiste's friends are drifting to the United States in Jean Baptiste, and What Necessity Knows includes a portrait of an American dentist, Cyril P. Harkness, who talks about "Uncle Sam" and strongly recalls Haliburton's Sam Slick.

enough to see the bleak drabness of Bate's farm as well as its stern beauty, and Sissie inherits all the drawbacks of her region — moodiness, willfulness, and insensitivity — as well as its virtues — strength, courage, and endurance. The final mating of the big, beautiful, and fiery Sissie to the small, shy, but tenacious Bates is more comic than romantic. As in The Mermaid, in What Necessity Knows Dougall uses elements of realism to give an extra dimension to basic romanticism.

In contrast, the Jalna books by Mazo de la Roche are full of the stuff of stock romanticism: an old estate called Jalna, a picturesque grandmother with a pet parrot who curses in Hindustani, a dashing attractive master of the estate, and a large group of younger brothers, all of whom get entangled in their own romantic dilemmas. Most of the Jalna books were written in the 1930s and 1940s and so can hardly be considered within the time period of this discussion. However, de la Roche remained impervious to developing realism and deliberately clung to the romanticism of the earlier era. That her decision to remain more romantic than the romantics was a profitable one and one that satisfied a large public is evidenced by the continuing success of the sixteen Jalna books, all of which have gone into many editions and still remain in print. Actually, though the Jalna estate is placed in Ontario, any reader familiar with at least one or two of the books will realize that they are not regional in any significant sense. Jalna is a world apart, largely untouched by the peculiarities of the Ontario region to which it is supposed to belong. Nature is always idyllic at Jalna, except when lovers need a storm to trap them together, and the sort of descriptions de la Roche gives are so general that no one image is formed, as in this passage about the early Jalna:

Tall, unbelievably dense pines, hemlocks, spruces, balsams, with a mingling of oak, ironwood, and elm, made a sanctuary for countless song birds, wood pigeons, partridges and quail. Rabbits, foxes and hedgehogs abounded. The edge of the ravine was crowned by slender silver birches, its bank by cedars and sumachs, and along the brink of the stream was a wild sweet-smelling tangle that was the home of water rats, minks, raccoons, and blue herons.<sup>63</sup>

The effect of such abundance is a romantic impression of a lush, idyllic nature rather than any particular regional scene. Ronald Hambleton in his biography of Mazo de la Roche sees her "as the chief mourner for the dying English influence in Canada."<sup>64</sup> Certainly there are many details of the kind of old-fashioned upper-class attitudes and domestic habits that are associated with the last stronghold of aristocracy exiled among colonials. However, Hambleton attaches an unreal significance to the author's treatment of these details. They merely provide picturesque material for her romanticism, and occasionally for irony, but can not truly be said to comprise a thematic interest in the social attitudes of the upper-class immigrant as they do in What Necessity Knows.

In conclusion, the regional novels of Quebec and Ontario, like those of the Maritime region, are of varying quality and represent many uses of regional material as well as degrees of divergence from the popular romantic pastoral viewpoint of the era. Among the novels of this region, the substantial number written about the Presbyterian Scots in Ontario forms a unique group that establishes its own idiosyncrasies even while conforming to the common, romantic regional pattern. Throughout the novels

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<sup>63</sup> Mazo de la Roche, Jalna (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1927), p. 24.

<sup>64</sup> Ronald Hambleton, Mazo de la Roche of Jalna (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966), p. 217.

of Quebec and Ontario, the themes of politics and developing nationhood are prominent and distinguish them from the novels of the Atlantic region. However, despite such distinctions, the novels of the two regions share the same basic values and a common regional archetype.

## CHAPTER V

### THE REGIONAL NOVEL IN THE WEST

Between 1880 and 1925, the Canadian West was a distinct region in the making, and the eyes of the rest of Canada as well as of the world looked toward it with special curiosity and interest. Under these circumstances, in an era when the regional novel was already popular, it was inevitable that many novels would be given Western settings.

Despite the distinctiveness of the West, the newcomer who came to settle there and the men and women who eventually wrote about it had close ties with older Canada and the world. At the turn of the century there was hardly a Western family that could not remember the days before they had come West, days when Eastern Canada, England, the United States, or Europe had been home. Books and magazines from these older lands were prized possessions on isolated prairie farms; Nellie McClung remembered that the young Englishmen who came to learn farming with the settlers brought with them coveted treasures such as Kingsley's Westward Ho! and volumes of Dickens. The popular Family Herald from Montreal, "with its great wealth of reading, from Family Remedies and the Etiquette Department to the continued story and the Irish News for Father",<sup>1</sup> was read with as much enthusiasm in the West as in the East. The external lives and problems of the Western settlers might be different, but their emotions, values, and general sensibilities remained closely akin to those of their relatives in other parts of Canada. One indication of this resemblance lies in the

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<sup>1</sup>McClung, Clearing in the West, p. 81.

regional novels of the West.

The reader will quickly recall the main motifs of the regional novels of the Maritimes and of Quebec and Ontario. The novels considered in the two previous chapters have all had a regional hero or heroine. This character is a regional hero, rather than just a hero, because the qualities that enable him to claim our interest and win success have been fostered by his upbringing in his peculiar regional environment. He is usually the best or ultimate product of his region, the finest example of its strong men; the people and nature of his region have imbued him with special regional characteristics and strengths. Emphasizing the hero's relationship to his region is his closeness to the natural features of his home environment. Though the concept of divine immanence in nature is often not stated explicitly, it seems to be implicit in many of the descriptions of regional nature; nature reflects the mood of the hero and can uplift him through intimations of a divine and benevolent interest. In most of the novels dealt with, this harmony with nature has been depicted in extremely hazy and idyllic terms as in Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables, Connor's Glengarry books, Charles G.D. Roberts's Acadian novels, and Le Rossignol's Jean Baptiste, to name just a few. Exceptions such as Theodore Goodridge Roberts's The Harbour Master and sections of Dougall's The Mermaid are rare.

At the centre of these various regional landscapes, whether hazy or distinct, is the pastoral impulse and the tensions that arise from it. A number of the regionalists of the period were reacting to what they considered the dangerous growth of materialism and the influx from the land to the cities in Canada. Thus, they wishfully created the regional landscapes of

their novels to represent the virtues of a simpler way of life which they feared was dying and which they now idealized. Tensions often arise because, at the same time as they longed for the past, these writers shared with most of their peers the turn-of-the-century belief in man's destiny and the value of progress. Therefore, their regional heroes mature and often leave the region or bring some type of change back to it. No doubt these motifs arose largely from general late-Victorian trends in literature throughout the English-speaking world, but, as this study has shown, they defined themselves in a particularly consistent manner in the regional novels of Canada.

They appear again in the regional novels of the West. This becomes immediately apparent in a brief outline of several Western novels, The Frontiersman (1910)<sup>2</sup> by H.A. Cody, North of Fifty-Three (1914)<sup>3</sup> by Bertrand W. Sinclair, The Prairie Child (1922)<sup>4</sup> by Arthur Stringer, and Settlers of the Marsh (1925)<sup>5</sup> by Frederick Philip Grove.

Hiram A. Cody (1872-1948), the author of over twenty-five novels including The Frontiersman, was born, as was the hero of his novel, in New Brunswick. He was educated at King's College in Windsor, Nova Scotia,

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<sup>2</sup>H.A. Cody, The Frontiersman: a Tale of the Yukon (Toronto: William Briggs, 1910).

<sup>3</sup>Bertrand W. Sinclair, North of Fifty-Three (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1914).

<sup>4</sup>Arthur Stringer, The Prairie Child (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1922).

<sup>5</sup>Frederick Philip Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, with intro. by Thomas Saunders (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965).

where he received a Master's degree. For the five years between 1905 and 1910, Cody served, as does the novel's hero, as a missionary for the Church of England in the Yukon and Northwest Territories. The Frontiersman is the highly romantic and melodramatic tale of the struggle of Keith Steadman, missionary to the Yukon settlement of Klassan, to overcome the ignorance of the Indians and the malice and degeneration of the miners. The novel centres on the conflict between Steadman and Bill Pritchen, a depraved and brutal prospector who seeks to thwart Steadman's efforts for good in the settlement. However, Steadman ultimately triumphs, and, like the heroes of the novels already described, he wins the girl of his choice. At the close of the novel, he has begun to spread God's word among a new tribe of Indians.

In The Frontiersman, Keith Steadman is the regional hero, even though a naturalized one rather than a native. He loves the regional people and fights to bring improvement and change to the region. The strong men of the region are Old Pete, a prospector, and his cronies, men who have lived long in the Yukon and been seasoned by the land:

They were prospectors, the pathfinders of the country, the advance guard of civilization. Calm, temperate, sons of Anak in size and strength, they were noble friends but stern enemies.... Across rugged mountains, through vast forests, and over sweeping plains they were ever wandering, their only roads the mighty inland streams, placid lakes, or crooked Indian trails; and their dwelling place, the log hut, the rude brush house, the banked-up snow, or the open vault of heaven.<sup>6</sup>

This passage strongly recalls Connor's description of the fierce and rugged Scots in The Man from Glengarry. Like the Glengarry men, the Yukon prospectors have been molded by the conditions of the land in which they live

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<sup>6</sup>Cody, The Frontiersman, pp. 69-70.

and reflect both its strength and its ferocity. There is another secondary group of strong men in the Yukon — the Indians. Keith Steadman's tribe, the Tukudhs, are described as "a proud race of men, unsubdued and untarnished by contact with civilization," and as "free men, in whose veins flowed the blood of a race which will break, but not bend." Even the fierce tribe of Quelchie Indians, though unenlightened, are courageous and honest with a strong sense of dignity.

Constance Radhurst is the fine woman of Cody's novel. Not only do the strong men love her, but even the degraded and drunken ones are susceptible to her influence. In the face of an incipient brawl among the prospectors and Pritchen's cronies, Constance appears and begins to sing about "some old, sweet song": "For an instant there was silence when Constance ended. 'Three cheers for the lady,' shouted one strapping fellow. 'Three cheers,' came the response, and how their voices did ring as they roared and stamped their approval."<sup>7</sup> Even the old chief of the Tukudhs is touched by the beauty of Constance; it is an unquestionable mark of Bill Pritchen's depravity that he is immune to her gentle influence.

In The Frontiersman, the motif of religious faith, seen so often in the regional novels of the previous chapters, is embodied in Steadman himself. His trust in God's support and guidance sustains him through trial after trial. The influence of his faith makes his mark on all the Indians and is exalted in an Indian catechist named Amos, who is described as having "a noble face... full of earnestness." On the other hand, the forces of materialism and cynicism are represented by the dissipations of the civilized

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

whitemen whose influence taints the innocent Indians. Obviously, The Frontiersman shares the same motifs as, and is a close relative to, the regional novels of the Maritimes and of Quebec and Ontario.

Bertrand W. Sinclair was born in Scotland in 1878, but grew up in the eastern foothills of the Rockies. He travelled extensively in western North America and wrote several novels about western life besides North of Fifty-Three. Simply, North of Fifty-Three is the story of Hazel Weir, an attractive young person who has her good name falsely besmirched by a ruthless man in her native Ontario town. Having lost her reputation, her fiancé, and her contentment with the East, she takes a job as a teacher in the isolated British Columbia community of Cariboo Meadows. She is not there long, however, before a travelling salesman, an acquaintance from Ontario, happens along, makes unwelcome advances, and drives Hazel into the woods where she promptly becomes lost. Rescue arrives in the person of the regional hero, Roaring Bill Wagstaff. Instantly enamoured of Hazel, Bill, instead of returning her to Cariboo Meadows, takes her against her will to his comfortable cabin in the wilderness. After a year of picturesque imprisonment, Hazel returns to civilization only to discover that she loves Bill, and so hurries back to the wilderness to marry him. From there, the novel goes on to record Hazel's renewed dissatisfaction, the couple's life in an Eastern city, and their eventual happy return to the West.

Bill Wagstaff is both regional hero and regional wiseman in North of Fifty-Three. He is almost the personification of the fresh untainted country and its great potential and combines in his one person the two sides of the pastoral contrast. For, though simple-living and closely akin to the land, Bill, Sinclair assures us, can draw on amazing funds of sophistication

and a keen eye for business when necessary. Paradoxically, these very qualities make most of the other characters who possess them suspect. Bill opens the region to Hazel and teaches her to adapt to its life until she, too, becomes one of the best products of the regional environment. Hazel also fulfills the part of the fine woman; it is her presence that deters Bill from the playful carousing that gained him the epithet "Roaring Bill", and it is because of her that he first feels a desire to help establish a settled community in his beloved wilderness, thus working as an agent of regional change. In a modified form, North of Fifty-Three employs the familiar regional motifs.

Arthur Stringer was born in 1874 in Chatham, Ontario, and spent the rest of his life in the northern United States and Canada. He worked at journalism, tried ranching in Alberta, and was a keen agriculturalist who produced the first peanuts and sweet potatoes grown in Canada. The Prairie Child is the final novel of a set of three dealing with the life of a sophisticated young woman, Chaddie McKail, who marries a western pioneer and comes to live on an isolated prairie farm during the years of first settlement. Chaddie bears children, grows older, copes with the vicissitudes of prairie life, and becomes a regional heroine. The novels are written in the form of Chaddie's letters to a friend and herself, and, though sometimes too self-consciously precious for contemporary tastes, they nevertheless make brisk reading that communicates a vivid picture of the harsh routine and grim isolation of life in the opening West. In The Prairie Child, Chaddie and Duncan, her husband, have grown inseparably apart. In line with the usual tension between simplicity and materialism at the centre of these novels, he has been caught up in greed for money

and power and wants to leave their prairie farm for a rich house in Calgary. Dubiously, Chaddie joins him only to realize that he is a brutal father and an unfaithful husband. She returns with her children to the farm and the right man, a rich rancher who has been in love with her since the second novel of the series.

Throughout the three novels, the reader watches Chaddie become one of the best products of her region, a resourceful and proud woman who develops a passionate love for the prairie. In this final novel, her son Dinkie is a developing regional hero, the real product of what is best on the prairies. In Chaddie's words, "My Dinkie is a prairie child. His soul is not a cramped little soul, but has depth and wideness and undiscerned mysteries."<sup>8</sup> Chaddie is the regional wisewoman who teaches the wisdom she has learned from her life on the prairie to this hero of the future; though still a child, Dinkie displays her courage and determination, and, above all, her love for the region. Yet, despite her passion for the West, Chaddie also partakes of the pastoral irony, and her ambitions for Dinkie reach beyond regional simplicity:

I want him [Dinkie] to be somebody. I can't reconcile myself to the thought of him growing up to wear moose-mittens and shoe-packs and stretching barb-wire in blue-jeans and riding a tractor across a prairie back-township. I refuse to picture him getting bent and gray wringing a livelihood out of an over-cropped ranch fourteen miles away from a post-office and a world away from the things that make life most worth living.<sup>9</sup>

Chaddie recognizes the bleak side of prairie life as well as its beauty, and her ambitions for Dinkie will no doubt produce another regional hero

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<sup>8</sup>Stringer, The Prairie Child, p. 124.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

who brings change and progress to the cradle that nurtured him. This region, too, contains the seeds of its own passing.

Frederick Philip Grove (1871-1948) is one of Canada's best-known novelists. He came to America from a scholarly background in Europe; in fact, he had made his living chiefly as a translator into German of the work of the most avant-garde writers of the time; Beardsley, Wilde, Browning, Swinburne, Pater, Wells, Gide, and Flaubert were among them. For years he hovered on the edge of two intellectual circles, one devoted to Neo-Romanticism and the other to Naturalism, but, despite producing original essays and poetry as well as a novel, he never achieved the recognition or acceptance he desired. The reader familiar with Grove's novels of the Canadian prairie as well as with Hardy's novels will note the similarity in their treatment of rural life. Hardy's ironic (often tragic) view of his pastoral characters is summed up in his ironic use of the first line from Thomas Grey's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" as a title for a novel full of tragic passion and dark fate — Far from the Madding Crowd. Grove also, in the words of his biographer, Douglas O. Spettigue, undermined "the myth of the innocent land." Though not ironic, Grove, like Hardy, was aware of the caprice of human passions and the dark fate that often seems at work in the affairs of men. To depict his vision he drew on the new thought and techniques he had learned in Europe.

Settlers of the Marsh is the story of a Swedish immigrant to the prairies, Niels Lindstedt. Niels is a man of great strength and complete innocence. With determination and force he makes his way to prosperity in the new land, falls in love with the right woman, Ellen Amundsen, but is seduced by, and marries, the wrong woman, Clara Vogel. His life with Clara

quickly deteriorates until he makes the shattering discovery that she is the district whore. Temporarily mad, Niels shoots and kills Clara. There follows a prison term and Niels's final return to his farm and Ellen. Paraphrase does not do justice to Grove's characterizations and his ability to evoke the spirit of life in the new world. Settlers of the Marsh is clearly distinguished from the regional novels of the time by Grove's realism. Though the story is told chiefly in terms of Niels and though Niels is a sympathetic character, the author avoids sentimentalizing him; Niels's limitations are revealed as well as his strengths. He is strong to the point of being inflexible, and his ability to understand others is strictly limited by the margins of his own experience. Clara, the "wicked" woman of the novel, is painted with so much psychological insight that she is seen to be as much victim as villainess. Here there is no relieving strain of religious faith. Grove sees man as a helpless speck in an indifferent world. Only other men can give him significance, and that is hardly secure. Settlers of the Marsh, thus, is striking in its significance for the Canadian novel. Its position as a transitional work can hardly be overemphasized.

Yet, it too shares the basic regional motifs. Like the missionary, Keith Steadman, and like Chaddie McKail, Niels is a naturalized regional hero who comes to love the land and to represent the best qualities of the men it nurtures: "Already, though he had thought he could never root in this country, the pretty junipers of Sweden had been replaced in his affections by the more virile and fertile growth of the Canadian north. The short, ardent summer and the long, violent winter had captivated him: there was something heady in the quick pulse of the seasons...."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, p. 55.

Niels is the hardest-working, most responsible, and strongest settler in his district, and he loves the region and the face of its nature; he is a regional hero in the best traditions of the Canadian regional novel as it appeared between 1880 and 1925. Ellen Amundsen is the fine woman of Settlers of the Marsh; she it is for whom Niels builds his large house, and it is Ellen to whom he returns from prison and with whom he prepares to start a new life.

Several critics have noted that Grove deplored the dehumanizing effects of technology and industrialization.<sup>11</sup> There is no doubt that an awareness of the pastoral contrast between the basic values of family, land, and humanity and the specious distractions of industrialization and acquisition for its own sake is the impulse at the centre of much of his work. In Settlers of the Marsh, Clara Vogel represents sophistication and culture and is closely associated with the city, whereas Niels is simple and direct to the point of naiveté and feels ill at ease and out of context when removed from his rural landscape:

On his land he was master; he knew just how to act. Here in town, people did with him as they pleased. Store-keepers tried to sell him what he did not want; at the hotel they fed him with things he did not like. The banker with whom he had sought no interview dismissed him at his own imperious plea....

And the attitude of superiority everybody assumed.... They were quicker at repartee — silly, stupid repartee: and they were quick at it because they did not do much else but practise it....<sup>12</sup>

As the ideal regional landscape of these pastorals is essentially a harmonious state of mind and a way of life that has its basic values in clear

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<sup>11</sup> Frank Birbalsingh, "Grove and Existentialism" and Stanley E. McMullin, "Grove and the Promised Land" in Donald Stephens, ed., Writers of the Prairies, Canadian Literature Series (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1973).

<sup>12</sup> Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, pp. 89-90.

view, Niels's discomfort in the town is the result of an alien, less basic system of values. Yet, Grove, perhaps more completely than any of the writers we have looked at so far, manages to qualify the picture of an ideal life in an ideal landscape. Clara, though a dissipated and neurotic woman, is in many ways more sensitive than Niels. She reads Madame Bovary and identifies with its heroine. On the other hand, Niels's simplicity verges on inflexibility or even stupidity, and he is repelled by and unable to understand the book. Though Clara is the catalyst that destroys Niels's peace and harmony, Grove manages to portray her with a genuine insight and sympathy. And, as usual in so many of these novels, the pastoral is qualified by the acknowledgement of inevitable change.

Regional change is a key note in Settlers of the Marsh. Grove is ever aware of the tragedy of the pioneer whom time has passed by and left with no new land to subdue and develop. Niels returning from prison is such a figure:

Four or five miles from town he found things so changed that he could no longer follow the oldtime trail athwart the sandflats. An almost continuous settlement covered the formerly wild land over which the trail had angled.... Niels felt intimidated. This prosperity which had invaded the Marsh was unexpected; the old pioneers had receded to the margin of civilisation; a new generation had taken hold. The change was not entirely welcome: he was of the old generation which had been evicted. On almost every farmstead he saw a garage: cars had always been his pet aversion....<sup>13</sup>

The region that he helped to open is already showing signs of replacing the pioneer's basic view of life with a more materially oriented set of values. Niels is saved from the tragedy of becoming a human anachronism only by his love for the land and his hopeful future with Ellen.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

As with all the novels treated in this study, the regional motifs of the four Western novels just described are greatly modified by the context of the plot in which they occur and, above all, by artistic individuality. However, in these four novels, the regional motifs that were discovered in the novels of the older regions, despite differences of emphasis and individual modifications, are apparent. The reader discerns again the central figure of the regional hero, best product of conditions of life in his region. Though the hero's character is made up largely of his region's best qualities, he also has in him elements of its darker side — usually sullen or savage moods. To help him counteract these weaknesses are the love and influence of a good woman and the sage example of regional wisemen as well as religious faith and education. What the wisemen teach the heroes is a point of view that is characterized by simplicity and a sense of proportion that assigns material success a secondary place to virtue and inner harmony. However, time and the world overtake the old ways, and the hero usually contributes to these events. The kinship of the regional novels of the West to those of the East is obvious; they arise, after all, from the same literary milieu and a common sensibility.

In the period between 1880 and 1925, Western Canada was a region where peculiar qualities of climate, geography, and history combined in dynamic fashion. It will be interesting now to consider various novels of the West to see if it is possible to discern recurring features of their representation of the region that distinguish them from novels of the rest of Canada and that reflect actual conditions of life in the new region.

One minor modification of the regional archetype appeared in the

brief review of the four novels by Cody, Sinclair, Stringer, and Grove. The regional heroes of these novels are naturalized rather than native inhabitants of the region; often they have come west to escape conditions in older regions where life is cramped, closed, or even oppressed. A naturalized hero is rare in the novels considered in the previous two chapters. Anne Shirley in Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables comes to the Island from a Nova Scotia orphanage, but she is still a child when she is introduced to the region of which she is to become the best representative. In Dr. Luke of the Labrador, Dr. Luke comes to the Labrador coast off a shipwreck and has had a mysterious past outside the region. However, the novel has an equally important character and a true regional hero in Davie Ross, the narrator; Davie was born in Labrador, and his nature is unquestionably a reflection of the peculiar characteristics of the region. Whereas imported regional heroes are the exception in novels of the older regions, they are much more the rule in novels of the West. Keith Steadman is a missionary to the Yukon, sent by the older communities of the East. Roaring Bill Wagstaff, who despises the jaded life of the eastern cities, is not a native of the Western wilderness, though where he does hail from is left a mystery. In The Prairie Child, Chaddie McKail has known a varied life flitting about among the most sophisticated cities and social circles of Europe and America before becoming the wife of an Alberta farmer. Niels Lindstedt in Settlers of the Marsh is a Swede, one of thousands of European peasants who came to claim the Dominion's free land and escape the oppression of life in a mediaeval society. The motif of the older, often corrupt worlds from which the Western regional heroes have come is not often stressed in these novels, but it does, quite consistently and in keeping with the

pastoral impulse, form a basic foil for the idea of the West as a new, unspoiled land with its possibilities still all in the future. There is the implication that the flaws of the West arise from untutored energy and a kind of savage innocence as opposed to the sophisticated degeneration of the old-world centres. Ralph Connor, who wrote several novels with Western settings -- Black Rock: a Tale of the Selkirks,<sup>14</sup> Sky Pilot,<sup>15</sup> The Prospector,<sup>16</sup> The Doctor of Crow's Nest,<sup>17</sup> and The Settler<sup>18</sup> -- follows the same pattern. In all these novels, the central figures and regional heroes come originally from outside the region, usually from eastern Canada. In The Settler, however, the regional hero is a boy of Russian birth named Kalman Kalmar. Like Niels Lindstedt, Kalman's background is shadowed by the memories of old-world oppressions, but, also like Niels, he is renewed in the new land and becomes one of its best representatives and keenest admirers. Woodsmen of the West<sup>19</sup> by M.A. Grainger, Our Daily Bread<sup>20</sup> by

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<sup>14</sup>Ralph Connor, Black Rock: a Tale of the Selkirks (Toronto: The Westminster Company, 1898).

<sup>15</sup>Ralph Connor, The Sky Pilot: a Tale of the Foothills (Toronto: The Westminster Company, 1899).

<sup>16</sup>Ralph Connor, The Prospector; a Tale of Crow's Nest Pass (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1904).

<sup>17</sup>Ralph Connor, The Doctor of Crow's Nest (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906).

<sup>18</sup>Ralph Connor, The Settler: a Tale of Saskatchewan (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909). This novel is interesting for its rare representation of the Eastern European community in Winnipeg. Connor attempts to capture the customs and habits of the immigrants and the difficulty that they have adjusting to the laws and institutions of the New World.

<sup>19</sup>M. Allerdale Grainger, Woodsmen of the West (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1908). Also with intro. by Rupert Schieder (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964). References are to the Musson edition because the McClelland and Stewart edition is abridged.

<sup>20</sup>Frederick Philip Grove, Our Daily Bread (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1928).

Grove, Big Timber<sup>21</sup> by Sinclair, and The Homesteaders<sup>22</sup> and Neighbours<sup>23</sup> by Robert Stead all feature regional heroes who have come originally from outside the region. Even in those Western novels in which the regional hero is a native of the region, his parents have usually been newcomers, as in The Bail Jumper<sup>24</sup> by Stead or in Nellie McClung's three novels about the Watson family of Nova Scotia. The brief account of the development of the West which was included in Chapter II stressed the relatively short period in which the West was settled. When these novelists were writing between 1880 and 1925, the West was still a young, forming region. Few of its families included more than one generation native to the prairie. The Western regionalist's use of imported regional heroes is a reflection of actual circumstances in the region.

There are other and less superficial modifications to the regional pattern in the Western novels; they affect central themes and the view of the hero and his relation to his region. One notable distinction in the Western novelists' treatment of their region lies in the relationship of man and hero to regional nature. In the novels of the Maritimes and of Quebec and Ontario, nature is largely idyllic. One needs only to think of novels such as Anne of Green Gables, The Heart That Knows, In the Garden of Charity, Rose à Charlitte, Pickanock, Duncan Polite, and The Silver Maple to confirm this point. Other less conventional writers such as

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<sup>21</sup> Bertrand W. Sinclair, Big Timber: A Story of the Northwest (New York: A.L. Burt Company, 1916).

<sup>22</sup> Robert Stead, The Homesteaders: a Novel of the Canadian West, with intro. by Susan Wood Glicksohn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

<sup>23</sup> Robert Stead, Neighbours (Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914).

<sup>24</sup> Robert Stead, The Bail Jumper (Toronto: William Briggs, 1914).

Dougall in The Mermaid and What Necessity Knows or Roberts in The Harbour Master use a greater variety of scenic moods and tones, but usually only as they relate to the minds and actions of the characters. The regional hero remains the centre, the controlling factor, and, though he is represented as the best reflection of the regional spirit, in fact it is usually the case that the region is described as mirroring the hero. It seems only "natural" and in keeping with the romantic and evangelical traditions of the era that nature should reflect the joys and sorrows of him who is in closest harmony with her spirit and beauty. The result is a rather stock depiction of beautiful rural scenes, of woods and country lanes. Within this tradition, nature is seldom angry unless some turn of plot or mood of the hero requires a convenient storm. The sea itself, for all its potential violence and menace, is somewhat bland in the Maritime novels; its wild bleakness is described most effectively by Roberts in The Harbour Master, but even there it is chiefly a device for communicating the character of the regional people.

Something new begins to happen to the novelist's depiction of nature in the West. In the eastward provinces, the initial struggle with nature and the elements had been accomplished decades, even centuries, before these novels were written; by 1880 man in the older regions had come to terms with his environment. It was different in the western prairies and forests. Here, men were just beginning to put down roots in the land. Though there was much that was beautiful about the new region and though literary convention made the old idyllic view of nature difficult to depose, in the opening West it was impossible not to realize that the elements could be cruel, totally unrelated to man's moods, and that day-to-day communion with

the soil could be slavery. Thus, the reader finds a new sense of dynamism about man's relationship with regional nature in the novels of the West. In them, a character may be the regional hero, best representative and truest lover of regional conditions, even while he struggles against and fears those same conditions. It would not do to exaggerate this point. On the whole, what appears, always excepting the work of Grove, is not the developed idea of an amoral nature that is found in contemporary fiction, nor is it, in general, even a representation of nature free of the conventional pathetic fallacies. However, the reader does discover a clear departure from the conventions of regional fiction in the older regions. The romantic assumption of divine immanence in nature, fostered by the evangelical mood of the day, is in the Western novels frequently found side by side with a new, more secular view of landscape and natural elements. This secular view of nature is clearly developed in the novels of Frederick Philip Grove, who came to Canada familiar with the newest European literary thought, but something of its influence is found in the work of even the more conventional writers of the West.<sup>25</sup>

In a novel as conventional and romantic as Sinclair's North of Fifty-Three, descriptions of sublime mountain ranges and praises of the

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<sup>25</sup>On the whole, the concerns of evangelicalism that were apparent in the novels of the other regions — dramatic conversions, deathbed relations, resolutions to enter the ministry — are not, except in the work of several unquestionably evangelical writers to be discussed shortly, nearly as common in the novels of the West. In this region a concern with the immortal soul is often replaced by a more secular concern for the aesthetic sensibilities of the regional people. Part of the reason for this secular outlook in the West may be explained by the difficulty the churches had in reaching all the communities of this large, newly-opened region; in the West as much enthusiasm was directed into farmers' co-operative organizations as into religious activities.

untainted wilderness are interrupted several times by passages that recognize an element in the land that is hostile even to the regional hero. Roaring Bill and Hazel set out to go prospecting in one of the most isolated areas of the British Columbia mountain ranges, "a God-forsaken region", "a lonesome, brooding land, the home of vast and seldom-broken silence." Davie Ross's Labrador, for all its drab loneliness and bleakness, was never "God-forsaken", and its faults were redeemed by the hero's understanding and affection. In North of Fifty-Three, Roaring Bill enters this brooding wilderness only because he wants gold, and Sinclair creates a sense of strain and tension about the entire journey through this forbidding area. At first the grim land is entirely out-of-keeping with the optimism of the hero and heroine, but, as they journey deeper into this isolation, they begin to feel the burden of nature's indifference, even hostility. In the novels of the older regions of Canada, nature almost invariably mirrors man's emotions. In North of Fifty-Three, the reverse is also found, and the colour of human emotions responds to the oppression of an unsympathetic natural environment.

In the novels of Frederick Philip Grove, nature, even when beautiful and endearing, expresses no divine benevolence. For as often as nature is lovely, it is cruel and indifferent to man's sorrows and joys. In Settlers of the Marsh, the scene opens with Niels and a friend combating a winter blizzard: "A merciless force was slowly numbing them by ceaseless pounding. A vision of some small room, hot with the glow and flicker of an open fire, took possession of Niels."<sup>26</sup> This description of hostile, threatening

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<sup>26</sup>Grove, Settlers, p. 17.

elements strikes a note that continues throughout the novel and is central to one of Grove's major themes, the need for man to bulwark himself about with the affection of friends and loved ones. Permanent happiness and satisfaction do not lie, implies Grove, in solitary communion with the land. Nature can be as capricious as she is lovely:

The crops grew well; they promised a bountiful harvest in June, but in July the drought came: the first drought Niels had ever experienced. What did it matter?

Sometimes clouds sailed up, obscuring the sky; and with a big bluster of wind they blew over, not a drop coming down from their bursting udders. The grass parched in the meadows; cattle bellowed on the Marsh; the grain ripened, so light that there was hardly any difference between straw and ear....

And then the hail-storm came, like a sudden catastrophe....<sup>27</sup>

This is a nature with which man has no communion.

In the slightly later novel, Our Daily Bread (1928), Grove's depiction of nature as amoral and untouched by the affairs of men darkens. In this novel, the regional hero is another importation from the East, an aging prairie farmer named John Elliot. When he and his wife first came to the prairie it was "like the land of sun-set, bare, naked prairie hills, sun-baked, rain-washed, devoid of all the comforts of even slightly older civilizations."<sup>28</sup> Yet John Elliot persevered, prospered, and achieved a sense of harmony with his environment that is expressed in his basic conviction that the land will catch up with you if you try to cheat it. This is, at best, the hope that rewards will come of patience and effort; as the novel progresses and John Elliot approaches death, even this rather austere sense of harmony seems to shrink and be judged illusory or inadequate. In

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 150,

<sup>28</sup> Grove, Our Daily Bread, p. 5.

the context of the pattern of regional motifs discussed in this study, John Elliot may be seen as a last believer in the pathetic fallacy, a belief which, in the twentieth century, an era of shattered ideals and lost faiths, Grove exposes as an illusion. None of Elliot's children share his sense of the land's justice, and they are unable and unwilling to identify with the aging man's convictions and his commitment to the soil and the region. The difference between the generations is exemplified by a short conversation between John Elliot and his son:

The summer was dry. There was no crop, not even on John Elliot's summerfallow. That fallow would yield feed, no more. John junior plowed his wheat under; it stood only finger-high.

One day when he met his father in the road — the two households were now completely separated — he said casually, "Well, I'll stick it out for one more year. If there's no crop next fall, I'll pull out."

"Where to?"

"Manitoba, I guess. They say you're sure of rain there."

John Elliot senior had great faith in the country; he shook his head. "A rolling stone gathers no moss."<sup>29</sup>

John Elliot is a regional hero who, through privation and struggle, has come to feel a sense of identity with the land and the region. Even his sense of nature's justice, however, has about it nothing of the evangelical idea of divine immanence; rather it is based on his hard-gained, practical knowledge of the land and its principles. In contrast, his children represent a more modern, less rooted view which regards the earth as a mere means to be overcome and employed; they are insensitive to the interdependence between man and the land. From these two opposing viewpoints arises the central tension of Our Daily Bread, another variation of the basic pastoral contrast.

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

Martha Ostenso's representation of the relationship between man and nature in Wild Geese (1925) is full of ambiguities and the suggestion of various potentials.<sup>30</sup> Wild Geese is the story of the Gares, a farming family on the prairies. The central figure is the father, Caleb Gare, who keeps his wife and four children bound to the drudgery of the farm through a secret hold on the wife, Amelia. Caleb threatens to reveal to her unsuspecting illegitimate son, given years before to a monastery and now an architect, the circumstances of his birth. Dreading to hurt her child by a dead lover, Amelia submits to Caleb. In Wild Geese, regional nature is a mysterious and elusive force that varies in aspect with the viewer. To Lind Archer, the pretty schoolteacher who comes to room with the Gares, it is both uplifting and frightening; she feels inspired by the sunrise and experiences deep-rooted terror when caught in a storm. To Judith, Caleb's beautiful daughter, the region is a trap and the soil a curse. Though she seems to embody, physically and spiritually, the power and energy of the regional elements (she is the regional heroine), her chief ambition is to be free of them. To Caleb Gare, the regional land and its crops are magnificent obsessions to which all other considerations — compassion, honour, and love — are sacrificed: "Caleb would stand for long moments outside the fence beside the flax. Then he would turn quickly to see that no one was looking. He would creep between the wire and run his hand across the flowering gentle tops of the growth — a stealthy caress — more intimate than any he had ever given to woman."<sup>31</sup> There is the suggestion that Caleb

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<sup>30</sup> Martha Ostenso, Wild Geese, intro. by Carlyle King (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

violates the spirit of the land with his greed. The novel ends with his flax burning up, and Caleb, having made a mad attempt to reach and save it, sinks to his death in muskeg. Such an ending, of course, is very much in the tradition of the romantic view of nature — nature displays a moral response to man's doings and destroys its enemy. However, though Ostenso's view of man's relation to nature is sentimental and full of the pathetic fallacy, and though she tends to use many of the literary clichés about nature that characterize her period, she does not belong to the group of novelists whose work was so much a product of the union between romanticism and evangelicalism. As in Grove's novels, any sympathy that Ostenso depicts between man and nature is secular. Her representation of nature is more demoniac than divine, more akin to Scandinavian myth than Christian thought. The implication in some passages of Wild Geese is that regional nature is unfeeling and amoral in character, a blank, systemless face in which each man reads his own mind. This view of nature is found side by side with another, that of the mysterious, powerful force that can effect its own revenge, and no thought is given to the reconciliation of the two. Always there is the acknowledgement that life on the land, though it may have ennobling facets, is hard; if a man does well or poorly seems often to rest with luck. In the end, Wild Geese leaves the reader with a many-sided impression of nature that has about it more of mystery than of sympathy with mankind.

Even when a Western novel takes an almost entirely sympathetic view of nature, one that suggests a divine design in the land and the working of the elements, even in such a novel there is an awareness of seasons and weather that is not nearly so pronounced in the novels of the Maritimes or

of Quebec and Ontario. Neighbours by Robert Stead is such a novel. In this very conventional work, the narrator is also the central character, another immigrant farmer from the East who, with time, hard work, and exposure to the land, becomes the regional hero. In the description of his first prairie winter, there is a sense of novelty and impact:

After the snow came we seemed to cling to each other's company even more than before. It's a solemn thing to be alone in a world of snow. Perhaps its coldness, its stark whiteness, its vast silence suggest that which makes the heart reach out for some warm pulse of friendship. Perhaps its peace and beauty stir something in our nature that insists on being shared.<sup>32</sup>

There is in this passage a faint echo of the ambiguity of Wild Geese. Two views of nature are suggested — a more orthodox view that suggests a certain kinship between man and nature and another view, more akin to modern thought, that perceives in nature nothing sympathetic to man, but rather a combination of amoral, capricious, and therefore fearsome, elements.

It is worth repeating that it would be distorting to make this point into a sweeping generalization. The popular sentimental, evangelical romanticism of the day and its associated view of nature as sympathetic to the affairs of man are still present in the novels of several Western

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<sup>32</sup>Stead, Neighbours, p. 172. Only rarely does Stead include in his descriptions of the Western landscape any suggestion of divine immanence, as in this moment in The Homesteaders: "...in the west the great mountains, clad in their eternal robe of white, loomed silent and impressive in their majesty. Even Riles stopped to look at them, and they stirred in him an emotion that was not altogether profane — a faint, undefined consciousness of the puniness of man and the might of his Creator." (p. 198) Such suggestions are so few and undefined, and the bulk of Stead's descriptions are so simply concrete and objective in tone (though he does use the pathetic fallacy occasionally) that he seems much closer to Grove in this matter than to someone such as Connor. There is no apparent reason in the details of Stead's upbringing or life to account for this relatively secular emphasis. His family had attended the Presbyterian Church.

regionalists. As one would expect, the assumption of divine immanence in nature is a prominent element of Ralph Connor's Western novels, most of which are concerned with missionary work in the young region. All are infused with an ardently romantic evangelicalism that believes in sudden conversions, the power of Christ's "good news", and the basic nobility of every human soul. The concept of nature as the medium of God's loving power follows almost automatically. Connor seldom hesitates to make the most of this interpretation of regional beauty, a tendency which sometimes leads him into excessive sentimentality, as in the passage from Black Rock that describes Mrs. Mavor's separation from the man she loves:

The wood and the mountains and the river were her best, her wisest friends during those days. How sweet the ministry of the woods to her! The trees were in their new summer leaves... and their rustling soothed and comforted like the voice and touch of mother. And the mountains too, in all the glory of their varying roles of blues and purples, stood calmly, solemnly about us, uplifting our souls into regions of rest. The changing lights and shadows flitted swiftly over their rugged fronts, but left them ever as before in their steadfast majesty. "God's in his heaven." What would you have? And ever the little river sang its cheerful courage....<sup>33</sup>

In this passage, Connor's statement of divine immanence is explicit; his Western novels contain many such examples, and, even when the view of nature as the manifestation of God's love is not so forthrightly asserted, its assumption underlies all Connor's landscape description.

Lily Dougall, author of The Mermaid and What Necessity Knows, wrote a novel set in the West, The Madonna of a Day. Basically it is the story of Mary Howard, a young Englishwoman and liberated journalist, who sleep-walks off a night-train and finds herself at the mercy of an isolated camp

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<sup>33</sup> Connor, Black Rock, pp. 247-248.

of lawless loggers. Assuming the role of a maiden meek and mild, Mary plays on the sympathy of the men and, in particular, a dwarf named Handsome who saves her from the completely evil boss of the gang. Handsome is uplifted and inspired by the pure ideal of the fine woman that Mary seems to represent, only to be disillusioned when he returns her to her friends and sees her assume her old, slightly racy and saucy ways. Mary is left with the guilty knowledge that, through her failure to live up to the ideal, she has contributed to his downfall. The Madonna of a Day provides easy reading, but does not equal the depth or subtlety of The Mermaid or What Necessity Knows. The picture of the West in this novel is a simplistic one of awe-inspiring mountain ranges and camps full of renegade, but basically good, men. Though Dougall is never as heavy-handed as Connor in his descriptions of landscape, she gives several descriptions of this wild region that are full of a sense of spiritual inspiration; mountains are particularly suitable as symbols of her interest in an ideal truth and goodness: "The meaning came to her now — a flash of thought that seemed like a sunrise in her soul. The mountain sang of an inspiration toward an impossible perfection, the struggle for which was the joy, the only joy, of the universe."<sup>34</sup> Contemplating the mountain, Mary momentarily achieves an almost mystical, though never precisely defined, insight into the meaning of life. Dougall tells us merely that Mary feels penitent about past inadequacies and resolves to do better. Though the idea of divine immanence is never explicit in The Madonna of a Day, Mary's whole experience is interpreted for her in a religious light, by a character who is obviously

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<sup>34</sup>Lily Dougall, The Madonna of a Day (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), p. 59.

Dougall's spokesman in the novel, a Christian missionary whom Mary meets on the train. He speaks to Mary of the Christian ideal of womanhood, which he says embodies the highest moral development of society. The whole novel develops around the idea that, had Mary been the true Christian woman she pretended to be, Handsome might have been saved. It is interesting to add that the vision Mary derives from her contemplation of the mountain is part of the pattern of Christian pastoral. Transported from her sophisticated urban context to Dougall's representative landscape, Mary also achieves a new, clearer view of herself and her life, one that calls for remorse and repentance.

As Nellie McClung's autobiography reveals, her thought had been formed largely by the popular romantic evangelicalism of her day, and this influence is reflected in her representations of regional nature. On the whole, the character of Manitoba nature is in total sympathy with the doings of men, and storms and other unpleasant natural phenomena are simple reflections of upheavals in the affairs of McClung's characters. In Sowing Seeds in Danny a hail storm breaks the very window that Pearl wanted broken (after she has asked God to do something about her stuffy room) and spares the very flowers she wanted spared. On the day that their original mistress dies, the flowers are affected: "It was not until Pearl came out and picked a handful of them for her dingy little room that they held up their heads once more and waved and nodded, red and handsome."<sup>35</sup>

Thomas Perkins is a miserly, spiritually pinched farmer in The Second Chance, but "even to him the quiet glory of the autumn evening came

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<sup>35</sup> Nellie McClung, Sowing Seeds in Danny (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913), pp. 180-181.

with a sense of beauty and of God's overwhelming care."<sup>36</sup> And the idea of divine immanence is put into words by Pearl herself in Purple Springs:

She threw back her head and looked with rapture into the limitless blue above her, with something of the vision which came to Elisha's servant at Dothan when he saw the mountains were filled with the horses and chariots of the Lord!

"It is a good world," she whispered, "God made it, Christ lived in it — and when he went away, He left His Spirit. It can't go wrong and stay wrong. The only thing that is wrong with it is in people's hearts, and hearts can be changed by the Grace of God."<sup>37</sup>

In McClung's vision of the West, nature and its beauties are in close communion with man and God.

Mainly between 1900 and 1925, the Western regionalists were writing in the mainstream of literary tradition. To varying degrees some of them accepted, and incorporated into their writing, the view of nature that was upheld by this tradition: nature, perceived aright by a receptive person, contains the signs of a benevolent design; thoughtful communion with nature elevates and ennobles a man; nature and the regional hero who has been reared close to it share a sympathetic interaction in which nature often reflects the actions and emotions of the hero. The novels of Frederick Philip Grove contain the most complete break with the older sentimental tradition. However, the significance of the work of Ostenso and of elements of the work of other figures such as Sinclair and Stead cannot be ignored. Their work contains the beginnings, and in Grove's novels it was a developed expression, of a new tradition, a tradition which views nature from an entirely secular standpoint; if romanticism remained, as in the novels of

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<sup>36</sup> Nellie L. McClung, The Second Chance (Toronto: William Briggs, 1910), p. 226.

<sup>37</sup> Nellie L. McClung, Purple Springs (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1921), p. 74.

Ostenso, it was not the romanticism of evangelicalism, but of human passion and a new sexuality. The Western regionalists who most reflect the evangelical trends of the day were no doubt influenced by their personal experiences and backgrounds; Connor, the most explicitly evangelical of the Western writers, was a Presbyterian minister. This explanation may also apply in part to the new secular strain in the West. Certainly Grove's life in Europe is an explanation of his secular viewpoint, though there is little indication of such a marked contact with modern thought in the lives of Sinclair, Stead, and Ostenso. However, another reason, probably quite as important as personal background, suggests itself in explanation of the new view of nature found in the West. In the West, men were coming face to face with an almost entirely untamed nature. They could not ignore the fact that it was often unsympathetic, not always uplifting. Western settlers found that nature could be uninspiring, even hostile.<sup>38</sup> Something

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<sup>38</sup>Though Susanna Moodie was very much part of the genteel romantic tradition and though her writing always displays the philosophical and religious idealism of Eastern writers in pioneer days, it is interesting that her sketches of her experiences as a settler in Ontario (written approximately between 1847 and 1852) do acknowledge the hardships of a life lived so close to nature even while appreciating its beauties. See Roughing It in the Bush, with an introduction by Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962). However, by the period treated in this study, the pioneering phase was over in central Canada, and its associated view of nature as a formidable obstacle to be overcome had largely passed from the literary regional consciousness. It is interesting also that Mrs. Moodie's strong sense of uprootedness and cultural deprivation is not a noticeable element in the late regional novels of the West. One explanation may be that many of the English-speaking settlers in the West had already lived in the New World, either in the older regions of Canada or in the United States. For them, the move to the West would not have been quite the separation from old ties that it was for Mrs. Moodie and other immigrants from the Old World. Nor would the need for readjustment have been so great.

of the reality of this experience combined with traces of new trends in world thought was reflected in the popular image of the region. In the regional novels, its effect is seen in an increased awareness of the seasons and elements, a greater objectivity in recording the land and its moods, and a new sense of ambiguity and mystery attached to man's relationship with regional nature.

The newness of the West is an emphatic feature of its representation in the regional novels. The large number of capsular, defining statements that attempt to catch the distinct and special character of the region indicates that the regionalists felt that people were still curious about interpretations of the West; the image of the region was still being formed. The following statements are just a few samples of the kind of definitions that appear throughout these novels: "No men are so truly gentle as are Westerners in the presence of good women";<sup>39</sup> "The West discovered and revealed the man in them, sometimes to their honour, often to their shame";<sup>40</sup> "The Western school of ethics had fashioned his mind to the dogma that death was but fair justice for one who had attempted a cowardly murder";<sup>41</sup> "In the careless West, where, outside the towns and settled districts, the change for a quarter is a thing few men are conscious of, no one would care were the saloon men to charge a little less for drinks...";<sup>42</sup> "Gifts like

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<sup>39</sup> Connor, Black Rock, p. 103.

<sup>40</sup> Connor, Sky Pilot, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> W.A. Fraser, The Blood Lilies (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> Grainger, Woodsmen of the West, p. 52.

these [a hen and her chicks] often accompany first calls in the agricultural districts of the West. They serve the purpose of, and indeed have some advantage over, the engraved card with lower left-hand corner turned down, in expressing friendly greetings to all members of the family."<sup>43</sup> At the beginning of W.A. Fraser's Bulldog Carney, a cynical newcomer surveys the muddy street of a small prairie town and pronounces the West "a land of bums!"<sup>44</sup> The West was a region in the process of developing a personality.

The newness of the West, the recent arrival of its inhabitants, and the feeling that the character of the region was still in the making account for another distinct feature of the regional representation in Western novels. A prominent characteristic of the representation of the Maritimes and of Quebec and Ontario in the novels of the period was an atmosphere of nostalgia. Ralph Connor and Marian Keith, in their novels of the Ontario Scots, may stand out as the writers who made the most use of this element to tinge their characterizations and scenic descriptions, indeed their whole vision, with a haze of mellow time, but hardly a novelist mentioned in the two preceding chapters does not make some use of this popular trend. They see the region, even as it produces its best flower, the regional hero, changing with the passage of the years. The hero himself speeds the change, thereby modifying or eliminating the very conditions that have produced him. Consequently, a consciousness of time and a touch of sadness are characteristic features of the regional archetype of the Maritimes and of Quebec and Ontario.

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<sup>43</sup> McClung, The Second Chance, p. 160.

<sup>44</sup> W.A. Fraser, Bulldog Carney (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1919), p. 10.

This touch of sadness is almost completely missing from the regional novels of the West; there are human tragedies and the sorrows attached to the life of a particular character, but the overall tinge of nostalgia that, in the novels of the other regions, could colour a novelist's whole language and vision, is absent. The novels of Frederick Philip Grove, for instance, are concerned with personal tragedy. The passage from Settlers of the Marsh that describes Niels's return from prison to find his region changed contains all the elements that would have been the cue for nostalgia in the novels of the older regions. The regional hero has been away, grown older, and returns to find his home region changed by time and the advance of civilization. There is a sadness about Grove's image of the hero returned to the region, but it arises solely from the character and the situation. With skilful simplicity, Grove does not seek to add to the emotion of the passage through tone or style. Rather, he keeps his language pared to objectivity, a clean directness of description. His care to avoid introducing any clichéd melancholy or sadness into the situation is apparent in the carefully weighed clause, "The change was not entirely welcome." The qualified sense of this statement and Grove's pains to keep his writing free of exaggeration and emotional overflow are striking in the context of his period.

The same quality of restraint and objectivity characterize Grove's writing to an even greater extent in Our Daily Bread. This novel is about a regional hero, now grown old, and his quest for meaning and purpose in a world to which he no longer seems to belong. It contains abundant material around which to build a sense of nostalgia and regret for times past. Yet, as in Settlers of the Marsh, in Our Daily Bread Grove excludes such emotion

from his language and authorial viewpoint. The tragedy lies in the facts of the situation and John Elliot's personality if a reader has the perception to see and the feeling with which to respond.

Though a simplicity of expression and an objectivity of viewpoint that were slightly ahead of their time in Canada are features of Grove's writing, an absence of nostalgia from the depiction of the West is not peculiar to his novels. A short description of a Sunday drive in The Ball Jumper by Stead reveals the same lack of a nostalgic tinge when the subject matter might well have provided a cue for it:

The road from Grant's to the crossing lay through a well-settled farming district where almost every acre except the road allowances had come under the plough. At one time the country had been partly covered with shrub, and willows and poplars still grew along the road, affording cover for prairie chickens and resting roosts for their relentless enemy, the hawk. The air was laden with the smell of wild flowers, of bursting buds, of fragrant red willows and balm-of-Gileads.<sup>45</sup>

Here is a pleasant natural scene peculiar to the region and a reference to the past. In the regional works of the East, this combination is almost automatically paired with a mellowness of tone that immediately evokes images of ivied eaves, little churchyards — a general emotional softening. There is none of this about Stead's passage. The tone is light and observant; the view of time is not mellow, merely matter-of-fact.

The West between 1880 and 1925 had had little opportunity to cultivate ivy or to populate antique churchyards, and the charm of years gone by did not hover about regional scenes. The reality of these circumstances found expression in the atmosphere and tone of the novels of the region. The Western regional hero is often a pioneer whose essential goal is

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<sup>45</sup> Stead, The Ball Jumper, p. 73.

dedicated to change and civilization. In a country where nature could be terrible, the land an opponent, and isolation one of woman's greatest burdens, change was a welcome factor with very little sadness about it. The Homesteaders, another novel by Stead, contains a brief description of the old self-binder used by the first prairie farmers to harvest their wheat: "It was a cumbersome, wooden-frame contrivance, guiltless of the roller bearings, floating aprons, open elevators and sheaf carriers of a later day, but it served the purpose, and with its aid the harvest of the little settlement was safely placed in sheaf."<sup>46</sup> One has only to compare this description of an old regional implement to a parallel one from another region, the address to the canoe in Bertal Heeney's Pickanock, to form a vivid idea of the difference between East and West.<sup>47</sup> The passage from Pickanock is a deliberate invocation of nostalgia for the passage of time, and Heeney draws as much emotion from the vanished canoe as it will yield — indeed more. Stead, on the other hand, communicates a few, vivid, objective details about the appearance of the self-binder. He speaks of it in the past tense, but attaches little emotional emphasis to the implication of days-gone-by. There is perhaps a touch of softness in his use of the adjective "little", but it is merely a touch, and there is certainly no impression of the writer having made the most of the potential for sentiment and nostalgia in the outmoded regional machine.

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<sup>46</sup>Stead, The Homesteaders, p. 74. Machinery plays a more prominent role in the novels of the West than in those of the East. Machines had helped settle the region, and several Western regional heroes are distinguished for their knack with machines, and their sense of identity with them, though one finds again the ambiguity of the pastoral contrast. For, even as machines are admired and sought after, they are resented. Greve in particular disliked the whole aura of materialism that he felt was attached to machines.

<sup>47</sup>See Chapter IV, p. 162.

Even the novels of Ralph Connor that are set in the West are affected by the Western unconcern with the passing of the years. Connor is always the complete sentimentalist, and his Western, like his Eastern, novels are full of descriptions of inspiring scenery, emotional conversions, and bathetic deathbeds. However, even Connor, who imbued his vision of the Glengarry country with such a mellow wistfulness, is unable to make the most of nostalgia in connection with the West. Here, change was too desirable for the passage of time to be much resented. Out of his several novels with Western settings, the last paragraph of Black Rock is the most direct appeal to a sense of regret for the past:

Those old wild days are long since gone into the dim distance of the past. They will not come again for we have fallen into quiet times; but often in my quietest hours I feel my heart pause in its beat to hear again that strong, clear voice, like the sound of a trumpet, bidding us to be men; and I think of them all --... and then I think of Billy asleep under the pines, and of old man Nelson with the long grass waving over him in the quiet churchyard, and all my nonsense leaves me, and I bless the Lord for all his benefits, but chiefly for the day I met the missionary of Black Rock in the lumber-camp among the Selkirks.<sup>48</sup>

There is no denying that this passage evokes a feeling of nostalgia for the passing of the early region and its people, but it is also clear that the final note is one of thanks that counteracts the nostalgia to a certain extent. Given that this is the most directly nostalgic passage in Connor's Western novels, it is apparent that even here is a change from the overall mellow wistfulness of Connor's representation of the Glengarry region in Glengarry Schooldays and The Man from Glengarry.

Of all the regional novelists of the West, however, Connor has the

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<sup>48</sup> Connor, Black Rock, pp. 321-322.

closest links with the consciousness of the older Canadian regions, as the popularity of his Glengarry books attest. This may be the reason why, among the novels of the West, his works display least clearly the modifications to the regional pattern that distinguish the body of regional novels of Western Canada. On the whole, the attitude to change in the novels of the West is best exemplified and summarized by Chaddie McKail's view of the region in The Prairie Mother:

The open range, let it be remembered, is gone, and the cowboy is going after it. Even the broncho, they tell me, is destined to disappear.... For we, the newcomers, mesh the open range with our barbwire, and bring in what Mrs. Eagle-Moccasin called our "stink-wagon" to turn the grass upside down and grow wheat-berries where the buffalo once wallowed. But sometimes, even in this newfangled work-a-day world, I find a fresh spirit of romance, quite as glamorous, if one has only the eyes to see it, as the romance of the past. In one generation, almost, we are making a home-land out of a wilderness.... On these clear and opaline mornings when I see the prairie-floor waving with its harvest to be, and hear the clack and stutter of the tractor... I feel there is something primal and poetic in the picture, something mysteriously moving and epic....<sup>49</sup>

In this passage Chaddie exhibits a preference for a forward-looking, as opposed to a backward-looking, viewpoint, and this preference characterizes the Western regionalists' representation of their region.

To this point, several peculiarly Western modifications to the basic regional motifs have been observed in the novels of the West: most of the heroes are naturalized rather than natives of the region; nature is regarded with new objectivity; there is a strong sense of beginnings and youth associated with the West; there is an absence of the nostalgia that is connected with the older regions in the novels of the Maritimes and of Quebec and Ontario. All these modifications are associated with another individual

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<sup>49</sup> Arthur Stringer, The Prairie Mother (New York: A.L. Burt Company, 1920), pp. 172-173.

motif, one closely related to the pastoral impulse at the centre of most of these novels. A surprising number share a common concern, a fear lest the demands of life in the new region for work and equipment and wheat and livestock, in short the material needs of Western life, should dull the regional man's sensitivity to ideal, intangible things and deaden his higher sensibilities — in other words, that the pastoral view of life will be replaced by a more sophisticated and less proportioned outlook. In some of these novels this concern is a minor motif, in many a central theme; some sign of it, however, is present in almost every novel of the West that has been mentioned in this chapter.

To the regional heroes of Grove's novels, Settlers of the Marsh and Our Daily Bread, the recognition of the futility of land and crops and buildings and machines without human bonds and affection is of central importance. Even as Niels Lindstedt rejoices in the power of honest labour on the prairies, he fully realizes that a man needs more than the life of the body to satisfy him:

Yet, material success was not enough. What did it matter whether a person had a little more or less wealth?

But the accessories of life were really the essentials; they were what made the living worth while....

... if he had children, they would be rooted here.... He might become rooted himself, through them....<sup>50</sup>

Like Niels, John Elliot in Our Daily Bread has a vision of a large family settled in, and tying him closer to, the region through the bonds of kinship and love. However, John Elliot is misled by his worship of the material goods of the region:

John Elliot had come to view all occupations except that of the farmer with suspicion. A granary full of grain; a barn full of stock, with

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<sup>50</sup> Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, p. 55.

a loft lined with fodder, sheaves or hay: such was his idea of wealth.... a mere money income seemed very insecure to John Elliot; and he respected only one thing on earth: security; for he had only one ideal; and that ideal was a large family.<sup>51</sup>

John Elliot is inflexible in his adherence to his personal ideas of wealth and security; the grim irony of the novel lies in the revelation that his idols are false. Indeed, his passion for material security, won in his own way, is the very thing that has made him a stranger to the family that is his ideal.

Nellie McClung, in her novels about the Watsons of Manitoba, includes several families who have allowed themselves to become the servants of their property. In Sowing Seeds in Danny, Pearl Watson goes to work with the Motherwells, a family of honest but pinched souls who have forgotten the beauty of their region while accumulating its wealth:

The golden flowers, the golden fields, the warm golden sunshine intoxicated Pearl with their luxurious beauty, and in that hour of delight she realized more pleasure from them than Sam Motherwell and his wife had in all their long lives of barren selfishness. Their souls were a dull drab dryness, in which no flower took root....<sup>52</sup>

The circular trap of never-ending chores could be especially deadening to the prairie woman who worked alone in the house and yard day after day.

Mrs. McClung recognizes what the grind of a life dedicated to material success can do to the feminine nature when she describes the guests at a prairie party:

Soon, the company began to arrive. Bashful, self-conscious girls; some of them were, old before their time with the marks of toil, heavy and unremitting, upon them, hard-handed, stoop-shouldered, dull-eyed

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<sup>51</sup>Groves, Our Daily Bread, p. 78.

<sup>52</sup>McClung, Sowing Seeds in Danny, pp. 127-128.

and awkward. These were the daughters of rich farmers. Good girls they were, too, conscientious, careful, unselfish, thinking it a virtue to stifle every ambition, smother every craving for pleasure.<sup>53</sup>

She includes the character of the work-worn, spiritually deprived woman in her novels a number of times. In The Second Chance, poor, plain Martha Perkins has embroidered on one pillow, "I slept and dreamed that Life was Beauty," and on its mate, "I woke and knew that Life was Duty." The author adds, "Martha had not chosen the words, for she had never dreamed that life was beauty."<sup>54</sup>

In Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese, Caleb Gare is obsessed with forcing wealth from the land and is ready to sacrifice his wife and children to drab slavery to achieve his goals. In the end, he is destroyed by his obsession and dies. Similarly, in Ostenso's later novel, The Dark Dawn (1926),<sup>55</sup> Hattie Murker, the sinister wife of the regional hero, Lucian Dorrit, is unable to rest in her quest for property, respectability, and power. All the finer human emotions are lost in her fixation. At the close of the novel, Hattie dies, and Lucian, like Caleb Gare's family, is released from the imposed drudgery of a life without soul.

The deficiencies that the materially-oriented life of the Western settler and farmer could foster in men and women are central interests in Robert Stead's novels of the West. Raymond Burton, the regional hero in The Bail Jumper, disgusted by the little dishonesties attached to his work

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>54</sup>McClung, The Second Chance, pp. 6-7.

<sup>55</sup>Martha Ostenso, The Dark Dawn (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1926).

in the general store, recalls some lines of poetry spoken to him by the fine woman of the novel, the girl he loves: "Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul, / As the swift seasons roll —." <sup>56</sup>

In The Homesteaders, this interest in the growth of the soul is further developed. The novel is broken into two sections. The first tells of the Harrises, a young couple who come from the East, settle in Manitoba, and build a prairie farm. This section emphasizes the idealism and sensitivity of the young pioneers. The second section of the novel is concerned with the same family and their fellow settlers twenty years later:

In some way the old sense of oneness, the old community interest which had held the little band of pioneers together amid their privations and their poverty, began to weaken and dissolve, and in its place came an individualism and a materialism that measured progress only in dollars and cents. Harris did not know that his gods had fallen, that his ideals had been swept away; even as he sat at supper this summer evening... he felt that he was still bravely, persistently, pressing on toward the goal, all unaware that years ago he had left that goal... and was now sweeping along with the turbulent tide of Mammonism. <sup>57</sup>

In part, what Stead is describing in this passage is the changing and passing of a young region because of time and modernization. As is so common in these novels, the modernization is associated with materialism,

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<sup>56</sup> Stead, The Bail Jumper, p. 47. Education, in these novels of the West, is, on the whole, more important as a refining influence than religion. However, as in the novels of the older regions, it tends to be very vaguely represented and most often takes the form of reading great (and usually unnamed) books. These lines from "The Chambered Nautilus" by Oliver Wendell Holmes in The Bail Jumper are typical of the fruits of education in the regional novel. In North of Fifty-Three, Sinclair attributes a keen love of books to Roaring Bill Wagstaff, thereby assuring the reader of his hero's basic good quality. Sinclair tells us that Bill argues from Nietzsche, has a volume of Haeckel and another of Burns, books on evolution, revolution, and so on. Though he is never more specific, and though no sign of such modern thinking tinges Sinclair's plot or characterization, even these few details are unusual in the regional novelists' depiction of education.

<sup>57</sup> Stead, The Homesteaders, pp. 96-97.

a quality depicted hand-in-hand with insensitivity and coarseness. The rest of the novel is given up to the tale of how the Harrises regain the life of mind and spirit.

In both Neighbours and Grain (1926), two more novels by Stead, the author is chiefly concerned with the regional heroes' lack of higher sensibilities. One scene from Grain, which portrays the Stake family at dinner, is loaded with evidence that life on the Stake farm has lost all hint of beauty or higher purpose:

With the passage of years and the increasing pressure of farm activities Jackson Stake's grace before meat had become more and more hurried and confidential, until now it was employed only upon those rare occasions when they had visitors. The men slumped into their chairs and helped themselves from well-laden platters. They rushed on with their meal, as though it were something to be disposed of with the least possible delay, and at the first sign of a pause Mrs. Stake dumped great helpings of rice-and-raisin pudding into plates just cleared of meat and potatoes.<sup>58</sup>

In Neighbours and Grain, dulled aspirations and a deficient perception of beauty are represented as the characteristic regional weaknesses, the flaws that, along with his strengths and virtues, the regional hero has derived from his unique regional environment.

Arthur Stringer, too, is concerned with this peculiarly Western theme. The three novels that trace the fortunes of Chaddie McKail also trace the growth of materialism in her once idealistic husband until, in The Prairie Child, Chaddie gives Duncan a divorce and returns to her region, land of proportion and self-knowledge, alone. Chaddie herself fights a successful battle against the dulling drudgery of prairie routine because she has an unflagging courage and an ever-keen appreciation of the beautiful.

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<sup>58</sup> Robert Stead, Grain, with intro. by Thomas Saunders, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), pp. 143-144.

In the novels of the West, therefore, the pastoral ideal is most usually represented by the pioneer and his heroically simple view of life, one that involves inspiration, faith, and courage. The sophisticated counterforce is represented by the older societies from which the pioneers are in retreat and also by the same pioneers years later, as the pioneer situation disappears before the advance of settlement and civilization. Unlike the novels of the rest of Canada, here the pastoral contrast lies not so clearly between city and country as between one period of time and another. The anxieties, however, are the same. Almost without exception the Western regionalists are concerned with the degenerating effects of materialism on the simple values and intuitively harmonious view of life associated with man's first relationship to the land. It is in keeping with the new secular view of nature that was finding expression in these Western novels that their heroes rediscover this lost harmony through great literature and contact with other characters (ironically some of these characters are from the city) as often as through communion with Nature. The paradox that lies in the crowning of heroes with worldly success in reward for simple regional virtues in the novels of the East is present in a slightly different form in the Western novels. The lack of nostalgia in these novels has already been mentioned as well as the point that this characteristic seems to arise from a belief in the desirability of regional change. There is no doubt that the spirit of progress was a vital element in the settlement of the West. The irony of the pastoral contrast arises from this belief in, and desire for, progress side by side with the regionalists' dislike of the very effects of such progress, increasing technology and materialism.

A comparison of several Western regional novels to the novels of regions considered in the two preceding chapters reveals that they share the same regional motifs, while a further analysis reveals other recurring motifs or themes that are peculiar to them and bespeak a distinct regional consciousness. As with the novels of the other regions, so also among the novels of the West, several works are distinguished by elements of characterization, technique, or overall viewpoint. These novels rise somewhat above the bulk of their kind and deserve individual notice.

William A. Fraser wrote two quite dissimilar novels about the West. Bulldog Carney (1919) is a third-rate adventure novel which deserves attention only because it is the most "wild western" representation of the region among the novels discussed in this chapter. It contains outlaws, Mounties, a train robbery, renegade Indians, crooked card games, and cold lead; in short, it is full of traditional wild westernism.

It is difficult to imagine that The Blood Lilies (1903) is by the same writer. Striking evidence of the quiet subordination of the Indian in the West is the almost total absence of Indian characters in these late-Victorian novels of the region. Only The Blood Lilies by Fraser has an Indian for a central character and regional hero. In many respects, The Blood Lilies is a typical novel of its day, too sentimental and idealized for contemporary taste, but it stands apart because of its representation of Indian thought and customs. The regional hero is a small Cree boy named Mas-ki-sis, the Lamé One. He is the best representative of his region and race, courageous, resourceful, loving, sensitive to beauty, and possessed of an instinctive dignity. When Mas-ki-sis is kidnapped by horse-thieves and then freed to return home alone, Fraser enters the boy's mind to create

a sense of poetry and unselfconscious kinship to nature:

As the animals [horses] moved in their feeding, he [the boy] moved too. He had the Indian's full dread of the dark. Mah-chee Manitous, or Wie-sah-ke-chach, with his evil habit of changing into an animal, would most assuredly find him — perhaps he himself would be turned into a prairie-chicken or gopher before morning. The hobbled beasts were friends; he clung to them as brothers. With their stomachs rounded and taut as tom-toms from the lentil grass, they stretched themselves wearily on the earth and slept with asthmatic gasps.<sup>59</sup>

Fraser's novel attempts to give the Indians credit for a unique culture and a special kind of dignity; he is also concerned with the real plight of the Indian when faced with the white man's civilization. Here again is the basic pastoral tension arising from the contrast between a sophisticated way of life and a simple one. Mas-ki-sis is sent to a mission boarding-school by a well-meaning but condescending and uninformed official; at the school the boy contracts tuberculosis, and, at the end of the novel, he dies. His parents and their fellows are suspicious of the white men and befuddled by their whiskey. The Canadian West from the point of view of the Indian would have seemed quite a different region than the West of the white pioneer; its vision, one supposes, would have been of tragedy and endings rather than of beginnings and optimistic epic-building. Among the Western regionalists, W.A. Fraser stands apart for his treatment of the Indian as a significant element of the region.

M. Allerdale Grainger is the author of a remarkable novel, Woodsmen of the West (1908). Unlike The Blood Lilies and many of the other novels discussed here, Woodsmen of the West seems neither naive nor sentimental to a contemporary reader. It is an account of the British Columbia logging camps and the men who worked in them. The narrator adopts the persona of

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<sup>59</sup> Fraser, The Blood Lilies, pp. 156-157.

a logger and, in the first chapter, assumes that the reader is another. Grainger's style is bright and eminently readable, and he shows an unmistakable ability to convey general truths through sharp concrete details and vivid anecdotes. At one point in the novel, rumour of a depression takes the camp boss to Vancouver, and the narrator, operator of the camp steamer, awaits his return at the nearest point of contact in logging country:

Money, as yet, was plentiful enough at Port Browning Hotel; men were still spending their recent wages. Of an evening when darkness had driven me from my work of cutting steamer fuel, I used to row across to the hotel, or to the store, watching and talking to the boys. I never had a cent myself to spend; yet visiting the hotel meant accepting drinks every few minutes. I would figure in introductions, "Captain of the Sonora"; my new friend would say, "Pleased to make your acquaintance, boy; come aboard and drink!" I would watch the card game; Bob Doherty perhaps on the win. Bob would be setting up the drinks, paying for meals for anyone around who was short of money, supplying one or two special friends with counters for the game. "Had your dinner in the restaurant?" he would ask hospitably.<sup>60</sup>

This passage exemplifies Grainger's evocation of the atmosphere of the early, Western logging country, brotherly and prodigal, with very little to amuse a man but food, cards, and whiskey. Unlike much of the work of the regional novelists of this period, Grainger's writing is not uneven in quality; brief, buoyant sentence structure, a choice of simple, concrete diction, a consistent tone that conveys a strong sense of "from one good fellow and man-of-the-world to another", and an ability to communicate delicate and imaginative perceptions of life and men without sentimentalizing, all are apparent in this passage and are consistent features of Grainger's novel.

Woodsmen of the West is rich in anecdote and varied detail, but the

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<sup>60</sup> Grainger, Woodsmen of the West, p. 133.

whole unites around the story of one Carter, owner and boss of a camp where the narrator spends a season. Carter is a ruthless, egotistical, obsessed slave-driver in whom the narrator nonetheless perceives a monumental and epic figure. Carter is the regional hero or anti-hero, a reflection of the uncivilized forces of the region, forces which Grainger never dilutes in a haze of romanticism. Rather, the filter through which we see Grainger's events and characters is his keen sense of the humorous that colours the narrator's perception of himself and every aspect of the region, even the old camp engine:

Carter's old donkey-engine was a mechanical chimera, and yet perhaps no worse than many others in the Western woods. The work it had to do was, of course, severe. The hauling of a blundering, lumbering log of huge size and enormous weight through all the obstacles and pitfalls of the woods; the sudden shivering shocks to the machine when the log jams behind a solid stump or rock and the hauling cable tautens with a vicious jolt.... The strain of such work upon Carter's enfeebled rattle-trap was appalling. The whole mechanism would rock and quiver upon its heavy sleigh; its different parts would seem to sway and slew, each after their own manner; steam would squirt from every joint. The struggling monster within seemed always upon the very point of bursting from his fragile metal covering.<sup>61</sup>

In this passage, the donkey-engine seems to personify the indefatigable spirit of the West and the individual character of the idiosyncratic and ferociously determined Carter. Woodsmen of the West by Grainger belongs among that small group of novels such as The Imperialist, The Curé of St. Philippe, What Necessity Knows, and The Harbour Master that are distinguished by an excellence above that of their peers and an imaginative insight slightly in advance of their period.

Wild Geese and The Dark Dawn by Martha Ostenso also stand out among

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

the novels of the period. Ostenso's novels are highly dramatic, full of the conflicts of passion, juxtaposed characters who personify conflicting forces, and observations of nature that are extremely vivid and, at times, sinister. Ostenso's flair for the dramatic is evident in the way she monumentalizes her characters; they are larger than life, the personifications of elements and passions. In Wild Geese, Fusi Aronson, one of Caleb's neighbours, is called "the great Icelfander", and is described as a "giant figure", "grand in his demeanour and somehow lonely, as a towering mountain is lonely, or a solitary oak on the prairie."<sup>62</sup> Judith is "vivid and terrible", "the embryonic ecstasy of all life",<sup>63</sup> and Caleb is called "a spiritual counterpart of the land, as hard, as demanding, as tyrannical as the very soil from which he drew his existence."<sup>64</sup> Mathias Bjarnason, another of Caleb's neighbours, is "eternal in endurance, eternal in warmth and hospitality of nature."<sup>65</sup> In The Dark Dawn, Hattie Murker seems to be the embodiment of lust after possession, power, and vengeance.

Ostenso's writing is also characterized by a sensuality and a sexual awareness that adds to the dramatic quality of her novels and was relatively new to the readers of fiction in the 1920's:

The shabby house, graying through its ancient coat of white; the shabbier barns, the sagging picket fence that leaned against a briar patch on one side of the yard, the vegetable garden stripped now if its harvest save for the golden globes of pumpkins lighting the brown earth, bore the sorrowful, black and lonely colour of death as it comes to the northern

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<sup>62</sup>Ostenso, Wild Geese, p. 32.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 35-36.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp. 35-36.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

prairie...., Death here is like a withered stalk in the midst of desolation that still stands and takes the sun.<sup>66</sup>

All the details of this passage contribute to the effectiveness of the final comparison of death on the prairie to a withered stalk. All the words that begin with "s" imitate the sound of a wind through straw and create an emphatic pattern: "shabby", "shabbier", "sagging", "stripped", "sorrowful", "stalk", "still stands", and "sun". The repetition of consonants in the phrases "golden globes" and "death ... in the midst of desolation" is another emphatic auditory device. The image of the pumpkins set against the drabness of all the other visual effects is central and striking, and the total effect of the passage is one of almost sensual decay. The scene in Wild Geese in which Judith wrestles with her lover, Sven, is the most explicit expression of the dramatic sexuality that one senses behind much of Ostenso's artistic vision:

Sven crushed the girl's limbs between his own, bruised her throat, pulled her arms relentlessly together behind her until the skin over the curve of her shoulders was white and taut, her clothing torn away. Her panting body heaved against his as they lay full length on the ground locked in furious embrace. Judith buried her nails in the flesh over his breast, beat her knees into his loins, set her teeth in the more tender skin over the veins at his wrists. She fought with insane abandon to any hurt he might inflict, or he would have mastered her at once. The faces, throats and chests of both were shining with sweat. Sven's breath fell in hot gusts on Judith's face. Suddenly her hand, that was fastened like steel on his throat, relaxed and fell away. Her eyelids quivered and a tear trickled down and mingled with the beads of perspiration on her temple. Sven released the arm that he had bent to breaking point. He was trembling.<sup>67</sup>

Though some of Ostenso's situations and characterizations are overdrawn, her talent for heightened effects, her vivid and original observations of nature, and the atmosphere of sensuality that pervades her work continue to make her novels readable today.

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<sup>66</sup>Ostenso, The Dark Dawn, p. 47.

<sup>67</sup>Ostenso, Wild Geese, p. 86.

Among the works of the Western regionalists, one novel has qualities that make it particularly endearing. This is Grain by Robert Stead. It contains a loving and sometimes ironic representation of the region that admits all the drawbacks of life on the prairie even while paying tribute to its honest simplicity and the civilization-building qualities of its people. There is an everyday quality about Grain that is rare in these novels of sentiment and that identifies it as much with contemporary regionalists as with the late-Victorian period. The regional hero, Gander Stake, is a homely, gawky boy, the true product of his region:

Strawberries, raspberries, saskatoons, currants, chokeberries, rose-haws, "buffalo beans" — not commonly regarded as edible — found their way into his [Gander's] capacious little-maw.... He ate the leaves of every flower of the prairie, but was particularly partial to rose leaves and the purple blooms of the so-called prairie crocus. He gnawed the bark from the toothsome red willow, and he dug up "snake" root and ate it moist and earthy as it came from its natural element. He chewed the rank weeds and cattails that grew in the marsh at the head of the lake, and, under cover of the deepest secrecy, he smoked sections of porous cane which he cut from the shanks of discarded buggy whips.<sup>68</sup>

If we really do become what we eat, Gander is indeed the product of his region. In this passage, Stead has turned the device of the regional catalogue (a device often used to illustrate the variety of regional life and the hero's lessons from it) to humorous effect and established a strong element of the anti-romantic that attaches to Gander and his doings throughout the novel. Yet Grain falls clearly into the basic regional pattern and displays the modifications to the pattern that are peculiar to the West. Gander is the representative of his region's inherent weaknesses as well as its best virtues. Hard-working, enduring, and completely upright, he lacks a higher awareness; appreciation of beauty and the development of the mind

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<sup>68</sup> Stead, Grain, pp. 23-24.

for its own sake are alien ideas to Gander. This is, of course, the Western pastoral concern with the mind and spirit of men who are wholly dedicated to the soil and materialism. Fully developed as it is in Grain, it is possible to see this concern as parallel to the motif of the gossiping and small-minded village of the Maritime novels; both mark the beginnings of the love-hate relationship to the region that is found in contemporary fiction. Ultimately, however, Gander displays the fortitude of a true hero when he leaves the region and the wrong girl (now married to another man) and, inspired by the right girl, goes questing for wider horizons. Grain represents the Canadian West with an insight, humour, and touch of compassion that place it among the best regional novels considered in this discussion.

The regional novels that were being written about the West from about 1900 to 1925 bear a close family resemblance to the novels of the other Canadian regions. In all of them there is the central figure of the regional hero, the ultimate product of his distinct regional environment. As well as virtues the hero also displays regional flaws; these weaknesses are refined by learning, religious faith, and the influence of a fine woman. Inevitable change is a strong motif in the conception of the isolated region; a consciousness of the simplicity and innocence of the early way of life in itself implies a growing sophistication.

However, between 1880 and 1925, the Canadian West was a region developing its own quite distinct personality under unique conditions, a personality which did not find its full expression in the regional novel until several years after the main bulk of novels from the Maritimes and

Quebec and Ontario had appeared. Strong optimism and a sense of history-in-the-making were associated with life in the West. An emphatic consciousness of the youth of the region appears again and again in the novels. While regionalists of the older centres viewed the passing of time and regional change with nostalgia, in the West change was a desired object; the region was still new enough to look gladly ahead before turning to gaze wistfully into the past. On the other hand, newcomers to the region faced hardships and discouragements already in the pasts of their eastern relatives. In the novels of the West, nature is occasionally the idyllic scenic backdrop of romantic evangelicalism, but more often the indifferent, even hostile, force it seems in reality. Hand in hand with a fast-spreading disillusionment with the old creeds and faiths,<sup>69</sup> the unsettled Western environment produced a secular literature that is sharply distinguished from the more romantic evangelical products of the older regions. Yet, the same Western environment fostered a theme that is simply a variation of the impulse common to all the Canadian regional novels of the period — an awareness of the pastoral contrast. A majority of the novels of the West are concerned with the effect that endless hard work and a never-varying routine could have on a man or woman's imagination and higher sensibilities. Whereas the regional heroes of the Maritimes and of Quebec and Ontario suffer from sullen or ferocious moods, it is as common for a Western hero to suffer from a dull spirit as a bad temper. This deadening of the sensibilities, arising from a growing concern with the material demands of the land and its

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<sup>69</sup>The time lag between the novels of the other regions and those of the West may have been a significant one in that the forces of cynicism and disbelief had time to gain more ground in the new world.

care, is placed in emphatic contrast to the inspiring hopes and ideals of the earliest settlers, to human interaction and communication, and to aesthetic sensitivity. Yet, even as the life of the early pioneers is idealized, most of the Western writers look gladly forward to the future and its accompanying changes and "progress". Thus, true to their pastoral pattern, the Western regionalists, perhaps more completely than any of the other regionalists of the period, manage to undermine or bring into question the very values they uphold. Despite their differences, therefore, in their concern with the region and its heroes, in their awareness of time, and in their common basis in the pastoral, the Western regional novels and the regional novels of the rest of Canada share a common identity.

## CONCLUSION

It has been the concern of this study to present a view of that large group of regional novels written in Canada, in the period around the turn of the century. This study has tried to show that these novels were the product of a common sensibility and a widespread concern with the decay of rural life and the growth of materialism. At the same time, the writer has tried to note regional peculiarities that can be distinguished in the basic type and also to recognize unusual individual successes within the large overall group. It is hoped that the survey of this unruly and largely forgotten group of novels in the perspective of their time and its conditions and juxtaposed with one another may throw some light on the nature and development of contemporary Canadian fiction.

The writer is well aware that the novels treated in this study, though frequently interesting in themselves, are most significant as forerunners, as indeed the spiritual forerunners of many more modern Canadian novels. We find the same basic elements in both groups. Canadian writers frequently continue to employ regional settings and characters, and, at the centre of these modern works, the reader can still perceive the pastoral contrast supplying the work with much of its interest and energy. Yet, the work of Canadian novelists has been transformed since 1920. In the light of this study, it is possible to express the transformation chiefly in terms of the complexity and ambiguity of the pastoral contrast, of the tension between the pastoral ideal and its counterforce. More and more Canadian novelists have become writers of what Leo Marx calls the "complex

pastoral" as opposed to the "sentimental pastoral." More and more they cast doubt upon the very ideal which they seem to cherish and support. What was begun by writers such as Théodore Goodridge Roberts in The Harbor Master, Lily Dougall in What Necessity Knows, Sara Jeanette Duncan in The Imperialist, Francis W. Grey in The Curé of St. Philippe, Frederick Philip Grove in Settlers of the Marsh and Our Daily Bread, and Robert Stead in Grain, to name only some, has been nourished and seems full grown in the novels of Ernest Buckler, Margaret Laurence, Mordecai Richler, W.O. Mitchell, and others. This study could hardly close without a brief look at this relationship.

The Mountain and the Valley (1952) by Ernest Buckler is a striking instance of this modern complexity and ambiguity. Set in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia, this novel has as its regional hero David Canaan, a brilliant and sensitive youth whose life the book traces from childhood to his death as a young man. The pastoral contrast in this novel achieves an intensity which is often painful. For, though The Mountain and the Valley is set almost entirely in the Annapolis Valley countryside, the city and all that it represents — money, travel, sophistication, self-confidence, education, — frequently intrudes. David's family reminds us of Niels Lindstedt in Settlers of the Marsh and his discomfort when faced with the smooth unconcern of the town. The Canaans also feel diffident and ill-at-ease in stores and among townspeople. When David's twin, Anna, goes to the city to live and marries a sailor, she can never return to the family as closely as before, and her family can never feel completely at ease with her husband. The chief area, however, of this tension between the country, its simple, honest, often crude ways, and the city and what

it represents is concentrated in David himself. He is a regional hero. Sensitive to every detail and nuance of regional life, he is the only one among the regional people who can express for them their thoughts, ideals, and humour. "He could put their thoughts into words; and hearing them spoken, they'd be as pleased as if they'd been able to find the words themselves."<sup>1</sup> Yet, his ability to represent them in this way is deceptive, almost a deliberate camouflage on David's part. Inwardly he is riddled by a sense of inadequacy — he wants an education, self-confidence, and achievements that are undreamed of by his rural neighbours. Though the love, honesty, and simplicity that his family offers bind him, yet their slowness, poverty, and crudeness hurt him. David's inner conflict reaches a climax one day when he has fought with his father and leaves home to go to Halifax. A car picks him up, and David, always aware of the pastoral contrast, immediately recognizes the sophisticated half of his dilemma:

He knew from the way she smiled and spoke that they were city people. She smiled as if it were an outside gesture; like a movement of hands and feet. This was a bigger car than any of the town cars. These were the people the town people tried to imitate. They had that immunity from surprise the town people could never quite catch. That automatic ease. These were city people. They looked as if they didn't know they were in a fine car, as if they didn't know they were dressed up. Their eyes were like a dog's eyes in the heat. They took little bites out of whatever they looked at, lazily, without tasting.<sup>2</sup>

Buckler's pastoral is indeed complex. There is nothing in this description

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Buckler, The Mountain and the Valley, intro. by Claude Bissell (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

to cause the reader to admire or respect the owners of the car. There is about them no suggestion of the warmth and sincerity that Buckler associates with David's family. Yet, their cachet is undeniable, and Buckler clearly communicates its authority and fascination. In this one incident David is faced by all the tension between the two sides of the pastoral conflict. As the car passes his own home and family, his desires struggle within him:

He thought of the woman's idling glance at his father sawing alone, and he thought of the time in town he'd wished his father would put on his coat so the sweat marks beneath his braces wouldn't show. He thought of the time the men had laughed when he crouched back from the ox and his father had said, "Dave ain't scared of him, are ya, Dave. Pat him"... taking his hand though, first. He thought of the woman's hands as she wrote out the address so smoothly, and he thought of his mother's hands calculating so clumsily the cost of linoleum for a room. He thought of her, tired, scrubbing the stair steps all over again. He thought of the woman cataloguing Anna as just anybody, and he thought of him and Anna going there sometime maybe, and Anna behaving almost the right way but not quite. He remembered thinking he wouldn't volunteer any information about his awkward brother, and he thought of the time someone had called Chris "stupid" and Chris had said, "Well, I bet I am right. You ask Dave ..."<sup>3</sup>

As this passage makes clear, David both desires and resents what the city represents to him, and, though he understands the depth and value of his family's virtues, he is always wounded by those he loves. Finally David says he has forgotten something, gives up his ride and walks back home, but his decision has in no way solved his conflict. "Suddenly he put his head into the only place left to hide: the crook of his elbow along the rail of the bridge. He began to sob. He sobbed because he could neither leave nor stay. He sobbed because he was neither one thing nor the other."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

Nor is this tension ever resolved for David until the final vision of purpose that comes with his death. If we recall again Leo Marx's criterion for the "complex" as opposed to "sentimental pastoral", that it exploit the ambiguities of the pastoral tension, Buckler surely fulfills this requirement. Though throughout The Mountain and the Valley the reader senses his deep affection for the rural people of his region and his admiration for their humanity, he never allows his hero or his reader to be completely comfortable in this affection. The opposite side of the pastoral contrast with its very real appeal always undermines "the illusion of peace and harmony in a green pasture" that might otherwise arise from Buckler's loving representation of the Annapolis countryside and its people. The result is a novel of brilliant subtlety.

Though Mordecai Richler's region in The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz (1959) is not rural, but Jewish Montreal, he employs the pastoral contrast and its ambiguity as a central motif. Duddy Kravitz is a poor Jewish kid caught between two ideals. One is summed up by his old grandfather's dictum, "A man without land is nobody." The other is epitomized by the stories Duddy's father tells of Jerry Dingleman, the Boy Wonder, a Jewish kid who made it from rags to riches. Both ideals are ultimately definitions of how to be a "somebody". That of the grandfather is closely connected with the pastoral ideal; for him land represents honest labour and real substance. On the other hand Max Kravitz's ideal is the pastoral counterforce at its most material:

Then one day, MacDonald, one fine day, back to town he [the Boy Wonder] comes, only not by foot and not by train and not by plane. He's driving a car a block long and sitting beside him is the greatest little piece you ever saw. Knockers? You've never seen such a pair. I mean just to look at that girl — And do you know what, MacDonald? He parks that

bus right outside here and steps inside to have a smoked meat with the boys. By this time he owns his own stable already. So help me, MacDonald, in Baltimore he has eight horses running. O.K.; today it would be peanuts for an operator his size, but at the time, MacDonald, at the time. And from what? Streetcar transfers at three cents a piece. Streetcar transfers, that's all. I mean can you beat that?<sup>5</sup>

The frightening irony of Duddy's story is that he never distinguishes between his grandfather's desire for land and his father's more material ideal. By the end of the novel he has stolen, lied, and destroyed people to acquire the land around a rural lake where he plans to build a resort. This wins the approval of his father, who begins to turn Duddy into a legendary hero to match the Boy Wonder. The grandfather, however, has discovered the moral corruption that was the price of the acquisition and rejects both Duddy and his land. Duddy's resort landscape is a corrupt pastoral symbol. Instead of simplicity and integrity, this land represents Duddy's immorality and materialism. Duddy is left bitter and defiant with only an imperfect perception of the discrepancy between his two goals. Richler has used this ironic confusion over the nature of the pastoral ideal throughout his work. The confusion is not peculiar to Duddy alone; it characterizes Richler's Jewish community:

Some sixty miles from Montreal, set high in the Laurentian hills on the shore of a splendid blue lake, Ste Agathe des Monts had been made the middle-class Jewish community's own resort town many years ago. Here, as they prospered, the Jews came from Outremont to build summer cottages and hotels and children's camps. Here, as in the winter in Montreal they lived largely with their neighbours. Friends and relatives bought plots of land and built their cottages and boat houses competitively, but side by side. There were still some pockets of Gentile resistance, it's true. Neither of the two hotels that were still in their hands admitted Jews but that, like the British raj who

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<sup>5</sup> Mordecai Richler, The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz, intro. by A.R. Bevan (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. 26.

still lingered on the Malabar coast, was not so discomfoting as it was touchingly defiant. For even as they played croquet and sipped their gin and tonics behind protecting pines they could not miss the loud, swarthy parade outside. The short husbands with their outrageously patterned sports shirts arm in arm with purring wives too obviously full for slacks, the bawling kids with triple-decker ice-cream cones, the squealing teenagers, and the trailing grandfather with his beard and black hat. They could not step out of their enclaves and avoid the speeding cars with wolfcall horns. The lake was out of the question. Sailboats and canoes had no chance against speedboats, spilling over with relatives and leaving behind a wash of empty Pepsi bottles. Even the most secluded part of the lake was not proof against the floating popsicle wrapper, and the moonlight canoe trip ran the risk of being run down by a Cuckoo Kaplan-led expedition to the island. Boatloads full of honeymooners and office girls and haberdashery salesmen singing, to the tune of Onward Christian Soldiers,

Onward, Rubin's boarders,  
Onward, to the shore,  
With sour cream and latkas,  
We're staying two weeks more.<sup>6</sup>

This pursuit of a hybrid and corrupt pastoral landscape by the very people who represent its counterforce is both humorous and tragic. Richler exposes the crassness of these people and laughs at their folly. Yet, he admires them. They have an honest humanity and a humorous perception of life that once no doubt truly belonged in the ideal pastoral world the image of which they now defile. On the other hand, the well-to-do Gentiles who seek to preserve the exclusive boundaries of their pastoral hideaways lack this humanity. Their landscape does not represent ideal virtues either; Richler exposes it as a mask for pride and rigidity. Duddy's grandfather, the character who seems to understand most clearly the true ideal, is old and has little ability to make his perceptions and values understood. Ultimately, the reader perceives that the old man, though honest and upright, is ineffectual; through this exposure of its chief

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-71.

defender the pastoral ideal is further undermined.

The Sacrifice (1956) by Adele Wiseman is another novel about Canadian Jews which, though not so ironic, is just as complex, perhaps more so, in its use of the pastoral contrast. The dimension in which this pastoral works, however, is time rather than space, and in this it resembles many of the regional novels considered in the previous chapters. Abraham is a middle-aged Jewish immigrant to Canada whose values are closely associated with Jewish orthodoxy as he knew it in the Old Country and with the happy family life he knew there. In Canada, not only is he surrounded by the materialism of the other younger and more successful Jews, but his family has been wounded and diminished. His two oldest sons have been killed in a pogrom before he came to Canada. Only Isaac, the youngest, remains. Abraham is a most sympathetic and courageous character. The concrete symbols of his landscape are his beard (worn long in the old orthodox fashion), the beliefs and customs of his faith, and his memories. Yet these only represent less apparent values — love, honour, simplicity, and joy in life. With these qualities he confronts the materialism and pettiness of his new life. If this were all, The Sacrifice might be classed as "sentimental pastoral" and be more closely akin to novels such as The Lone Furrow or Duncan Polite than The Mountain and the Valley or Duddy Kravitz. However, Wiseman does not permit the ideal to go unquestioned. Abraham's wife dies, and then his beloved Isaac. When his widowed daughter-in-law, in a fit of anger, accuses Abraham of having placed the burden of his own ideal on Isaac, thereby hastening his death, Abraham is thunderstruck and is forced to recognize some truth in what she says. Overcome by this perception of greed and selfishness in himself, he

loses his reason and, in search of some reassurance, desperately makes a human sacrifice of a woman who tries to seduce him. By this act, as Abraham realizes at the end of the novel, he himself becomes the pastoral counterforce, a denier of life whose celebration is the centre of the pastoral ideal. Just as Richler undermines the pastoral ideal by diminishing the authority of the old grandfather who upholds it, so Wiseman to an even greater extent casts doubt and uncertainty on the pastoral values by emphasizing the fallibility and subjectivity of their chief defender. Though Abraham has regained his sanity and a proportioned view of life by the end of the novel, Wiseman has employed ambiguity to good purpose, and The Sacrifice has a rich depth and complexity that offers no easy conclusions.

One more novel must be considered in this brief discussion of the complexity of the pastoral contrast among contemporary Canadian novels. The Stone Angel (1964) by Margaret Laurence is another pastoral of time rather than space. Hagar Shipley is an old woman at the end of her life who feels an urgent need to review the years of her existence and discover some key or meaning in them. Her past is Hagar's pastoral landscape and represents all the things she no longer has while living with her dull son Marvin and his dowdy wife — youth, vitality, passion and compelling human bonds. Her old age is the counterforce, and Hagar is constantly faced with the reality of her own physical deterioration and the pettiness of her day-to-day concern with pills, doctors, food, and so on. Laurence has made the contrast all the stronger by interweaving Hagar's vivid recollection of her past life, her dead father, husband, and son, with her life in the present — clumsy, cranky, and helpless. Yet, the complexity of Laurence's

insight will not allow the two sides of the coin to remain so neatly divided. What the reader and Hagar discover as she travels back through her past is far from ideal — a girl and woman who always has been the prisoner of her own pride. Conversely, what Hagar achieves in terms of insight and self-development in the present of her unlovely old age has elements of the heroic. Laurence will not allow even this reversal to stand unquestioned, however, and at the end of the novel, on her death-bed Hagar is still a combination of true and false pride, a cranky old woman and a character of noble proportions. The Stone Angel, perhaps more than any other Canadian novel, has a scope and complexity large enough to encompass a positive view of humanity without ever offering easy answers or even a final resting point. It is possible to see at the heart of this achievement the ultimate development of the same pastoral complexity that distinguished The Imperialist and What Necessity Knows from other novels of their period.

The subject of this study is not the contemporary Canadian novel, and it is not the purpose of this conclusion to discuss the modern pastoral in Canada with any exhaustiveness. Many other novels might have been mentioned if that were the case — for example, The Double Hook by Sheila Watson, The Edible Woman by Margaret Atwood, Various People Named Kevin O'Brian by Alden Nowlan, Who Has Seen the Wind by W.O. Mitchell. It is the purpose of this conclusion, however, to illustrate again the adaptability of the pastoral contrast and to point out the relation between the regional novels written in Canada between 1880 and 1920 and modern Canadian fiction. Of course, much has changed. As the preceding brief discussion has shown, our present writers are no longer willing to assert the possibility, or

even desirability, of any one set of ideals. The clear sense of knowing what is best that is so prevalent in the earlier group has been replaced by a strong consciousness of the limits and illusions of subjectivity in novels of today. After all, Hagar Shipley is an old woman who cannot often remember what she herself has said two hours earlier. Or did she merely think it? How then can the reader confidently and without reservations accept her view of her own life let alone matters of wider significance? Our contemporary writers are less positive than the writers of the turn of the century — and more despairing. These qualities have added a darkness and ambiguity to their work that have needed the full scope of the pastoral impulse for their expression. Yet, the roots of contemporary and turn-of-the-century writing are not unlike. They lie in an exploration of human life and a quest for values.

Since the appearance of Northrop Frye's conclusion to Literary History of Canada<sup>7</sup> in 1965, there have been several attempts to define or formulate the Canadian quest, the peculiarly Canadian slant to our artists' imaginations. To bring this study to bear on the mainstream of Canadian criticism, something must be said about its place in the context of these thematic readings.

Concerned with the continuing colonialism of the Canadian mind, Frye theorized that the representative Canadian motif is the garrison, the closed, defensive culture turned inward on itself, terrified of the unknown beyond, that moral wilderness that threatens the garrison's values and modes, its very existence. Frye observed that this garrison mentality

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<sup>7</sup>Northrop Frye, "Conclusion", in Literary History of Canada, ed. C.F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 821-849.

has been manifested in Canadian poetry by a widespread "tone of deep terror in regard to nature."<sup>8</sup>

Margaret Atwood has also used this basic theory of the alienation of the Canadian from his environment, both physical and spiritual, for her jumping-off point. Atwood in Survival (1972) says that the central motif in Canadian literature, the motif that is for the Canadian what the Frontier is for the American or the Island for the Briton, is Survival.<sup>9</sup> Atwood's perception of the Canadian's terror of and alienation from the natural world (often a symbol for the universe and existence itself) is summed up by the title of her second chapter, "Nature the Monster."

In terms of this perception of the Canadian as terrified of the world in which he finds himself, where does one place the turn-of-the-century regional novel with its pastoral myth? It seems that the regional novels considered in this study lie outside, or prove a sustained exception to, this vision of alienation. The pastoral myth posits man in tune with his natural surroundings, reflecting the simplicity and harmony of the rural landscape's patterns. The pastoral hero is not man alienated or frightened, but man at home in a place of his own. The sense of anxiety that colours these novels is not a terror of nature but a fear that technology and growing cities will separate man from his roots in God's landscape and the sense of harmony and proportion that derives from it.

An example from the novels considered in the earlier chapters is useful here. In Dougall's The Mermaid, Calus Simpson's parents, though

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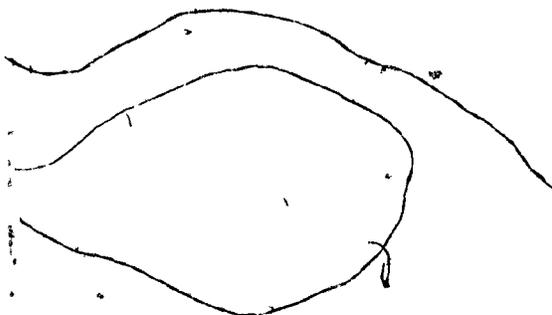
<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 830.

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Atwood, Survival: a Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1972).

simple honest folk, have lost any sense of the glory of their pastoral landscape and have shut themselves up in a drab farmhouse. They are not terrified of nature but simply indifferent to it. There is little doubt that Dougall finds them at fault in this. It is left to Caius, her hero who has been to the city and has learned there the urban man's sense of loss, to open the windows and go for long contemplative walks over the countryside. Eventually Caius, in order to find his dream woman who is associated with the sea, nature, and an elusive mysticism, must leave the home region where man no longer seems in touch with nature's spirit. Caius's final union with Madame Le Maître is an affirmation of a vital and benevolent nature in direct contrast to the "tone of deep terror in regard to nature" that Frye finds typical of Canadian literature.

The point made by this study in previous chapters is that The Mermaid and its values — a romantic simplicity, faith in the spirit of life be it an orthodox God or something less defined, and devotion to the land — are representative of the whole group of novels written between approximately 1880 and 1925, a significant part of Canadian literature that Frye's thesis of a tone of terror simply does not encompass. Nor are the modern novels briefly considered in this conclusion, despite their relative complexity and their adherence to a more realistic tradition, unrelated to the romantic pastoral values of these turn-of-the-century novels. Though alienation from the harmonizing natural world is a prominent element of The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz and The Mountain and the Valley, an equally important aspect of the dynamics of these novels is the powerful attraction of simplicity and harmony, values identified with the land and nature. Perhaps, in another study that considered the pastoral myth in

modern Canadian novels in more depth than this one does, it would be found that a "tone of deep terror in regard to nature" is merely an overly simplified half of the true complexity. That our present writers have the tools and experience with which to express their complex and subtle vision is due in part to those turn-of-the-century Canadians who wrote the large group of regional novels considered in this study.



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## APPENDIX

This appendix contains brief descriptions of some novels that were not mentioned in the body of this study. In most cases, reference to them as regional novels is to be found in Literary History of Canada.<sup>1</sup> Some are regional in no real sense; some are very like novels described in previous chapters; one or two deserve special attention.

Robert Barr, The Measure of the Rule (New York: Appleton and Company, 1908).

This novel is the story of a young man's career in a normal school in Toronto, though the city is never named. On the whole, Barr is chiefly concerned with its romantic plot, though he does make several observations on the character of Toronto. At one point, a hotel clerk confides to the hero, "We have more schools than taverns in this town, and I believe it's the only city in existence which totters under so unequal a balance of things." Though few details are given, Barr does create the impression of a prosperous and staidly respectable city.

Ralph Connor, The Arm of Gold (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1932).

Another novel by Ralph Connor, The Arm of Gold, set in Cape Breton, falls slightly outside the period of this study and would not be mentioned except that it shows the effect of the First World War on Connor's concerns. Basically the same as the Glengarry books and the prairie novels, The Arm

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<sup>1</sup>Carl F. Klinck, ed., Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965).

of Gold nevertheless shows a greater awareness of the threat to faith, and there is some discussion of Higher Criticism, though still in very vague terms. Connor has also attempted to introduce some Jazz-Age jargon which today sounds stiff and self-conscious. The pastoral impulse is strongly apparent in this novel which brings a spoiled, jaded city girl to the simple home of a Cape Breton minister where she rediscovers her true self and purer values.

H.A. Cody, The Touch of Abner (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1919).

Supposedly set in New Brunswick, this novel could take place in any simple rural spot and is never regional in any specific sense. Like so many of the novels of the period, however, it uses its rural setting to uphold simple, honest values.

Oliver Curwood, The Honor of the Big Snows (Toronto: McLeod and Allen, 1921).

This novel is a very clichéd love story set in the North-West. In this rather wooden work the familiar motif of the enshrined woman receives much emphasis, and nature is said to be both beautiful and savage, though it never becomes very distinct or plays any real part in the novel.

Frank Parker Day, Rockbound (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928).

Though Rockbound falls slightly outside the period of this study, it must be mentioned as both very like, and yet distinct from, the other novels examined. Set on Rockbound, an island off the southern coast of Nova Scotia, it is the story of an orphan boy, David Jung, his growing to manhood, and his competition with his uncle Uriah, the tyrant of Rockbound. Rockbound falls clearly into the common regional pattern. David must marry

the wrong woman before he is made a widower and left free to wed the girl he loves. Yet, Rockbound stands apart from the bulk of the novels of the period for much the same reasons as does Roberts's The Harbour Master.

Even more than Roberts's novel, Rockbound recognizes the crude and savage aspects of regional life. Day sympathetically describes Fanny, the potato-girl, whose reply to the reprimands of her more chaste neighbours is, "We was made for de good of mens, an' mens is going to have me." David is a very human hero who supports a love child though not completely sure of its paternity. Above all, Day employs terror and awe to bring his vision of his Nova Scotia island to life, as in this description of a man's death when his overloaded dory overturns: "He could not swim, as is the case with most of the islanders, and had clawed with numbed fingers at the smooth bottom of the upturned dory, till the icy water chilled him to the bone. He was lying stretched out on the sea floor, and curious fish were sniffing at him and peering into his staring eyes long before the boats that set out from the launch could reach him." This recognition of the terrible aspects of life is part of a full-fledged agnosticism softened only by a joy in vitality itself. As Allan Bevan points out in his introduction to the University of Toronto reprint of Rockbound, "Day, in his novels, is on the side of the natural man, his 'professional Christians' being hypocritical or fanatic or both."

Day also employs the pastoral impulse with a difference. His method of drawing a comparison between the simple and complex is not to introduce characters from one way of life into another; instead, he continuously relates his regional story to larger actions, as when he describes David's first approach to his uncle Uriah:

Though he looked it not, he was a man of destiny — in small things, it is true, yet in relation to the universe all things upon this earth are small — and this voyage in his yellow dory, a voyage of destiny, less spectacular than Jason's but requiring none the less courage and resolution. For Jason had with him forty heroes and had but to meet a dragon, while David was alone and had to meet Uriah.

In this passage we see a skilful use of the pastoral contrast both to ennoble the action of the novel and to undermine it. The comparison of David's feat to that of Jason is in part serious and serves to place greater significance on the actions of the regional hero. Yet the final belittling of a dragon in comparison to Uriah is ironic and undermines the heroic parallel that has just been suggested. Day achieves this effect throughout Rockbound by juxtaposing David's struggles and friendships with the humorous and startling crudities and violences of day-to-day life on Rockbound. His freely expressed agnosticism and its related secular view of nature was rare, and Rockbound stands distinctly apart from the bulk of novels considered here; it makes no concessions to the cliché romanticism of the late-Victorian regionalists and thereby represents a notable departure from their ranks.

Lily Dougall, The Zeit-Geist (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1895).

This novel by Lily Dougall falls far short of her achievement in The Mermaid, What Necessity Knows, and The Madonna of a Day. In fact, it is more a religious tract than a novel and purports to describe the conversion of a degenerate fellow to God. Scenery is general. Fentown, the place named, is barely described, nor are its people. The place could be any little town, anywhere in Canada or in the English-speaking world.

Norman Duncan, The Cruise of the Shining Light (Toronto: Henry Frowde, 1907).

This novel by Duncan is so like Dr. Luke of the Labrador in tone and content that to describe it would be redundant.

Alice Jones, Marcus Holbeach's Daughter (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1913).

Though undistinguished by plot or character from the other regional novels of the period, Marcus Holbeach's Daughter contains a fair amount of thoughtful, vivid description of French-speaking New Brunswick:

The March afternoon sun shone undimmed by cloud-drift above the dormant white North-land. On the rounded hills that sheltered the bay from the outer Gulf, the bronze-green primeval forest rose somberly, rank on rank against the crystal-clear sky, but over the fields fringing their base, the snow stretched unscarred by snake-fences, or clearing stumps. Winter was nearing its end, and such traces of man's handiwork had long since been covered by successive snowfalls. Below the bluff lay the Basin, a solid white plain, only marked by bleak lines of balises, rows of small white spruce trees set up at the beginning of every winter to trace the safest track for man and beast to cross the ice. The tides of the outer bay were also frostbound, and even from the heights of Cap Rosier, the steep headland fifteen miles out, nothing save solid ice could be seen along the Gaspé coast, and northward toward Anticosti, hidden in its wintry isolation.

Olin L. Lyman, The Trail of the Grand Seigneur (New York: New Amsterdam Book Company, 1903).

Hardly a Canadian Regional novel, this very romantic and sentimental story is about an American youth's view of the American Revolution as it manifested itself on the border between the United States and Ontario.

Isabel Paterson, The Shadow Riders (Toronto: S.B. Gundy, 1916).

Ostensibly set in Alberta, this novel pays some lip service to the free spirit of the West, but the town depicted might be any town, and the plot is comprised of typical dramatic ups and downs.

Laura Goodman Salverson, The Viking Heart (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1923).

The Viking Heart parallels the Acadian novels of Charles G.D. Roberts in its central purpose. Just as Roberts was concerned with encouraging a recognition of the French as a valuable and noble facet of Canadian life, so Salverson praises the contribution of the Icelanders in the West. The ultimate emphasis, as in Roberts's novels, is on national pride.

This novel, however, belongs to a transition in Canadian writing in a way that Roberts's novels do not. The story of four generations of Icelanders in Manitoba, The Viking Heart deals with their privations and pitfalls as well as their successes and joys, and a genuine attempt to depict their ethnicism is made. One daughter marries a rich man and, ashamed of her simple origins, never again sees her family. One son is killed in the War. His mother goes through an almost Job-like rebellion. The hero of the younger generation has a brute for a father, and his mother, a frail, sensitive woman, goes mad. Though the novel ends happily with the union of hero and heroine and on a note of hopeful nationalism, its realism has set it apart from the typical regional novel of its period.

Marshall Saunders, The House of Armour (Philadelphia: A.J. Rowland, 1897).

In this novel, the author of Rose à Charlitte remains in Nova Scotia, but shifts her setting from Acadia to Halifax. Regional details do not play a large part, but what there are are true to fact and interesting.

Edmund E. Sheppard, Widower Jones: a Realistic Story of Rural Life (Toronto: The Sheppard Publishing Company, 1888).

The title of this rather unusual novel truly bespeaks the writer's

interest and emphasis. The setting is the village of Applebury, which might be anywhere, though, as Sheppard was the founder and editor of Saturday Night, it seems probable that he writes of Ontario. His chief interest, however, is not regional but rural, and the distinction of his novel lies in his often anti-romantic and searing, sometimes sensitive portrayal of aspects of rural life — a rural life that is more general than characteristic of any one region:

The Applebury school-house, when erected, was painted white, but now the clap boards as high as the boys could reach were a register of two generations of scholars, smeared with dirt and covered with jackknife engravings illustrative of the slow rise and progress of good taste and education among the children of the village. A number of broken windows and a demoralized fence gave silent evidence that the Applebury school-board were neither of an orderly or aesthetic turn of mind. As Ben stood at the corner of the street on which the school-house stood he could hear the drowsy hum of the children's voices as they repeated the Lord's prayer, a service insisted upon night and morning by special order of the very pious trustees. Then the little bell in the cupola above the door gave vent to a noisy, tin-panny clamour, and in another moment three-score children rushed wildly forth, swinging their empty dinner pails, shouting, pushing, knocking and fighting one another with all the boisterous vigor of youth.

Frederick William Wallace, Captain Salvation (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1925).

This novel by Wallace is very unlike Blue Water and is interesting as the most explicit treatment of the crisis of faith among the novels mentioned in this study. The hero, Anson Campbell, is from Anchorville, Nova Scotia, but he rejects its narrow, hypocritical Christianity for intellectual atheism and an international life of the high seas. After a sophisticated dalliance with a woman whom he thinks of as "the priestess of Eros", Anson meets Mary, his old Anchorville love, and, after failing in an attempt to rape her, lets her convert him back to faith. By the end of the book, Mary and Anson have outgrown both jaded sophistication and the

limitations of Anchorville. The book is set only briefly in Nova Scotia, and its interest lies in Anson's struggle between doubt and faith rather than in its regionalism. In defence of his atheism, Anson quotes from Nietzsche and Wallace mentions Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley as names associated with doubt. Though Wallace is more specific in his treatment of this subject than any other writer we have discussed, even he is not very detailed. The most convincing element of his treatment is his description of Anson's philosophical egotism:

His mental base was a tremendous belief in self. His world was limited to the capacity of his own mind; his enjoyment of life to physical and intellectual matters which conjured pleasurable sensations.... He brooked no opposition to his desires, believing that respect for the feelings and wishes of others was not only futile and a sign of weakness, but a thing to be suppressed unless some end was to be gained thereby. Courtesy and politeness, he allowed, were the concomitants of culture, and culture along aesthetic lines was greatly to be desired....

Given the strength of this conception, Anson's final conversion to evangelical Christianity, which is described as an emotional rather than intellectual process, is weak and difficult to accept.

Frederick William Wallace, The Viking Blood (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1920).

Unlike Captain Salvation, The Viking Blood is very similar to Blue Water, full of sailing jargon and details of the sailing life. Several times in the body of this study the contradiction whereby a regional hero is rewarded with sophistication and money for his possession of qualities antithetical to culture and wealth has been mentioned. In The Viking Blood, this contradiction reaches a peak when Donald McKenzie ultimately inherits a Scottish Baronetcy as fitting reward for years of simple virtue and hard work in Nova Scotia.

Joanna E. Wood, The Untempered Wind (New York: J. Selwin Tait and Sons, 1894).

This very moralistic and melodramatic novel is the story of another 'unwed' mother, Myron Holder. As in Sheppard's Widower Jones, the setting (the place is named Jamestown) suggests general rural life rather than any specific region, though its ties with the novels of the Maritimes and Quebec and Ontario are clearly reflected in its depiction of the small-minded and severely pious village folk.