The Use of Violence and Language in the Works of Timothy Findley

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This thesis deals with violence in the language of Timothy Findley's work: both the language of narration and the language of dialogue between the characters. In the thesis, I will examine the way language is violated for the purpose of re-assembling it into a more competent vehicle for communication. Bakhtin's theory of dialogics and Robert Kroetsch's theory of *violent silence* will be examined with regard to Findley's consistent focus on the way language must be violated to render it useful, and why any character of Findley's who refuses to violate language and chooses instead to submit to silence, is destroyed. According to Findley, the only means of validating existence and literature is to dispel silence with dialogue. I will prove that Timothy Findley treats violence as a positive and necessary precursor to any sort of creativity, asserting again and again through his texts that nothing can be constructed until something is first torn down.

Cette thèse traite de la violence du langage dans l'oeuvre de Timothy Findley: c'est-à-dire le langage de narration et le langage du dialogue entre les personnages. Dans cette thèse, j'examinerai la façon dont le langage est violé et ré-assemblé dans un véhicule plus compétent pour la communication. La théorie de Bakhtin *dialogics* et la theorie de Robert Kroetsch *violent silence* seront aussi examinés avec considération par Findley sur la façon dont le langage doit être violé pour le rendre utile, et pourquoi les personnages de Findley qui refusent de violer le langage et qui choisissent de se soumettre au silence se voient détruits. D'après Findley, la seule manière de vérifier l'existence et la littérature c'est de faire disparaître le silence avec le dialogue. Je prouverai que Timothy Findley voit la violence comme un précurseur positif nécessaire pour la créativité, et qu'il affirme encore et encore par ses romans que rien ne peut être construit avant que quelque chose ne soit détruit préalablement.

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Introduction

In a 1982 interview with David MacFarlane, Timothy Findley shared his "vision . . . of a cow and a calf standing in a white-washed room. One of the four enclosing walls is splashed with blood. In its eyes, the calf asks a question that Findley understands: 'Mother, why are we here?'" ("The Perfect Gesture" 6b). Findley admits that this strikingly violent vision is "the overriding image of [his] life, that we are here for the slaughter" (6b). This morbid and disturbing image that Findley adopts as his philosophy of life is vividly evidenced in his writing. For Findley, violence is not only an integral and inescapable part of life and therefore literature, it is an intrinsic and necessary character of the language that composes literature. "We" are not the only ones "here for the slaughter"; language is also slaughtered for the sake of communication, and Timothy Findley illustrates the violence with which literature is constructed in all of his works.

In this thesis, I will explore and define the mutual relationship between violence and language which Timothy Findley creates in his work. In his work, Findley illustrates not only how language can be violent, but also why language must be violated in order to genuinely create. His expression of creativity in a framework of violence reflects Mikhail Bakhtin's theory that language that cannot be made to communicate (and cannot, therefore, constitute "dialogue"), is often destructive, and ultimately worthless Similarly, Robert Kroetsch addresses the notion that language must be torn apart in order to be reconstructed in a manner that will more competently serve the writer. While several critics have explored various facets of the violence in Findley's works, most have been more concerned with the obvious expressions of physical violence.[1] No one, to my knowledge, has yet

discussed the violence of Findley's work in terms of Bakhtin's theory of dialogics.

Findley establishes an intimate connection between language and violence. Whether the violence in question is immediately apparent in a physical form or is subtly manifested in a psychological form, the language of the work is its vehicle and so the language necessarily participates directly in the violence. The language assumes the violence of the text and expresses it through sentence fragments, and paragraphs that consist of only one sentence.[2] The most profound expression of violence through language in Findley's work is located in the dialogue of the characters, and, at its extreme, in the silence imposed on dialogue. Consequently, the most potent violence in Findley's works is not that which is expressed through physical form, but that which exists within the language of the text: both the language of narrative, and the language of character dialogue.

This connection between violence and character is not limited to the dialogue assigned to the characters. Findley envelops his characters in settings of a violence that is both physically overt and psychologically obscure. This violence informs Findley's portrayal of characters and the characters in turn perpetuate and intensify the violence that surrounds them. Though Findley admits that he is "a very violent person . . . inside" (Cameron 61), he nonetheless locates the origin of the violence in which his characters and novels are enveloped in something outside of himself. Rather than concede that he inflicts violence on his characters, Findley insists that he, as author, is violated first by images of the characters and their plight to be communicated.

Findley often refers to the inspirations for his novels as entities that impose themselves on him and oblige him to write. In Inside Memory, Findley dubs "burglars," these characters who appear, unsolicited, in his imagination (174), and claims that one character, whom he was obliged to edit

from Famous Last Words, "haunts" him still with her presence (193). In an interview with Peter Buitenhuis, Findley claims each character who appears in his work is like "someone who has placed himself in my path up here . It's like meeting someone who won't go away" (19a). For example, Robert Ross, of The Wars, was "An image that had just come into his mind from where, exactly, he was not sure" (MacFarlane 6), and Bragg and Minna, from the short story Stones, were not just fictional characters, but "people"; as Findley explains, "I walked around with those people for a very long time before I dared come to grips with them on paper. There they were, Bragg and Minna. Who the hell were they?" (Buitenhuis 20a) Hence, Findley's characters are "vivid" entities who seem to exist independently of the author, and who merely use him for their purposes. Bakhtin recognizes the imposing presence characters have on the author when he refers to characters as "living beings who are independent of" the author (Problems 284). Such independence does not suggest autonomy as much as it does the author's inability to control completely the circumstances and behaviours of these entities.

"All authors are whispered to by their characters," Findley explains in an interview with Donald Cameron, "The characters want life and you have to give it to them" (52) The violence with which these characters impose themselves on Findley is made explicit when Findley likens such inspiration to "rape, with no recourse to abortion They take your body and you have to give them birth" (52). He refers to his characters as "maniacs screaming: 'Let me out of your mind!'" (Gibson 127). Findley's anxiety stems primarily from the fact that these *maniacs* present themselves without a story, and so are *born* into a void that Findley is obliged to fill. The void is violent for both author and character because the character is without means to communicate its story to the author, and the author is, therefore, forced to grapple with fabricating a story that is not pre-existent like the

character to which it belongs. As Findley asserts, this situation necessitates that he, "go with [his] characters into the void--and help them find their way home" (Inside 177). The *home* that author and character seek together is the story If it were not for the violence of the void, neither would seek this *home*, and a story would not be created. Violence is, therefore, necessary and essential to the initiation of the creative process.

But violence does not simply instigate creativity; its layers become an integral part of the creative process. The character does violence to the mind of the writer by imposing itself on that mind, and the writer violates the character by subjecting it to a storyline that may include physical or psychological violence. Thus the author gives the character life and, at the same time, puts that life in danger of extinction, since life carries with it the implicit suggestion of mortality Through the writer's violence to the character, the writer is himself violated, since he must witness the violence as he translates it to paper; and, in the very act of putting the violence onto paper, the author violates his own text by manipulating its form.

Form, like each character, bears the brunt of the violence the author wreaks upon it, expresses the violence, and then perpetuates it in an on-going process. In her foreword to Bakhtin's Rabelais and His World, Krystyna Pomorska explains that "'form' is active in any structure as a specific aspect of a 'message'" (viii). Consequently, where the message is one of violence, the form must assume that violence; to this end, form must, itself, be violated. Robert Kroetsch reinforces this notion of violated form when he asserts that "In our most ambitious writing, we do violence to form" (108). Violent messages yield violent forms, and Kroetsch examines how Findley's violence on the form of his works allows his fragmented stories to "speak their incompleteness" (24).

Kroetsch's ideas regarding violence and Canadian literature are pertinent to my thesis since he is able to elucidate Bakhtin's notion of constructive violence in the context of the creative process. Furthermore, Kroetsch examines Bakhtin's theories within a Canadian context and, consequently, posits a violence that is peculiarly Canadian. Kroetsch addresses the problem for Canadian writers of finding a specifically "Canadian" language with which to interpret their particularly Canadian experience. Any failure to locate an appropriate language interrupts communication, an interruption which Kroetsch calls "violent silence" (85). Such a silence is direct evidence of a failure to communicate, and is therefore destructive according to Bakhtin's theory of dialogics. Findley illustrates the destructive nature of silence and the problem of locating a suitable language in *every one* of his works.

Kroetsch's "violent silence" is often manifested in the dialogue of Findley's characters. Findley describes his pre-developed characters as "lost animals" and explains that "the first thing you have to do with a lost animal is discover a mutual language" (Inside 177). This language can be discovered only by disassembling the original, inappropriate language. Violence, in effect, must be done to language in order to rework and reintegrate it into a new language which is decipherable by the characters. Bakhtin addresses the importance of discovering a language that is mutually useful in his assertion that we can validate our existence only through our communication with others. Without a functional language with which we can communicate our selves, our existence as a single consciousness is worthless. "To be means to communicate" (Problems 287-88). Failure to communicate, then, means failure to exist, and any characters who find themselves outside of language in Findley's novels are, consequently, destroyed in some manner.

My thesis will take the idea of violence to language as

a focal point from which to examine how Timothy Findley uses violence, both explicitly and implicitly, to create his *oeuvre*. I will draw upon the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and Robert Kroetsch, primarily but not exclusively, to support and solidify the concept of the creative process operating within a framework of violence. The main thrust of my thesis is focused on the novels The Wars, Famous Last Words, and The Last of the Crazy People.[3] Findley's autobiographical work, Inside Memory, is used to elucidate aspects of these former works which are not self-evident.

The first chapter of my thesis ("Dialogism and the Carnival in Findley") addresses Bakhtin's theory of dialogics and examines the question of why it is crucial for the author to use a language of dialogue with the reader in order to validate his message. The issue of violence is examined in terms of why it is necessary to violate language in order to communicate. From this focal point, other issues are examined: primarily, that experience is validated only through dialogue, and that violence is necessary to make it possible for literature to communicate the dialogue of a story, and thereby validate the lives and experiences of the characters in that story. The premises developed in the first chapter are drawn upon in the chapters which follow it and are discussed expressly in terms of Findley's works.

The second and third chapters ("Communicating the Self into Existence," and "Self-Portraiture as Failure"), closely examine two of Findley's more popular works, The Wars and Famous Last Words, with respect to Bakhtin's theory of dialogics. Both novels are set in the midst of a world war (the first and second, respectively) and both attempt to communicate the life of the main character in the midst of various physical brutalities which take place around him. The reasons why Robert Ross, of The Wars, successfully communicates are delineated in order to show why Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, of Famous Last Words, fails to communicate. The

consequences of their respective success and failure to communicate are examined in terms of the validity of each character's existence.

The fourth chapter ("Violent Silences") examines Findley's first novel, The Last of the Crazy People, in terms of Kroetsch's concept of violating language in literature in order to reconstruct a more efficient means of communication Kroetsch's ideas concerning a violent silence are applied directly to Findley's work to illustrate why only two characters of the novel, since they ultimately are able to reconstruct communication, are the only ones to survive, whereas the other characters fail to recognize the destructive character of silence, and inevitably fall prey to its violence. The brutal murdering of the Winslow family is defended as a positive and necessary event in order to establish Hooker Winslow, their murderer, as a hero, even a "saviour." Findley's ability to portray a mass murderer as a hero demonstrates his use of violence as a necessary precursor to any creation.

Chapter One

Dialogism and the Carnival in Findley

Bakhtin asserts that "To be means to communicate" (Problems 287). He regards being as an "event," and posits that being is something one does and is not just a passive state of existence. The "event of being," Bakhtin asserts, is necessarily integrated with communication because of "Nonself-sufficiency, the impossibility of the existence of a single consciousness" (287). This is not merely an acknowledgement of Donne's "No man is an island," for Bakhtin believed that, whether or not it is possible for one to live without regard to others, one cannot be **conscious** of one's existence by oneself:

> I am conscious of myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another. The most important acts constituting self-consciousness are determined by a relationship toward another consciousness (toward a thou). (287)

For Bakhtin, it is the consciousness of a person that constitutes a *self*, and he regards "Separation, dissociation, and enclosure within the self as a main reason for the loss of one's self" (287). Simply, what is not communicated between two consciousnesses *is* not, since:

> everything gravitates not toward itself but is turned to the outside and dialogized, every internal experience ends up on the boundary, encounters another, and in this tension-filled encounter lies its entire essence. . . . The very being of man (both external and internal) is the deepest communication. (287)

There is no evidence that Timothy Findley has ever studied the works of Mikhail Bakhtin, nor that he is familiar with the literary criticism now known as dialogism.

Nonetheless, throughout Findley's works, the characters' desire to communicate effectively, and thereby validate their "being" is potently evident. Certainly, it is possible to study Findley's works without ever involving the theories of criticism originated by Bakhtin, but close study of Findley's work by one who is familiar with Bakhtin's theories of violence and diologics reveals patterns in the themes and structures of his work that reflect Bakhtin's ideas, and thus enrich one's reading and understanding of Findley's works

A Bakhtinian study of Findley's work allows for the union or meshing of two of Bakhtin's most important concepts: dialogics and the carnival. Bakhtin perceives the carnival of the Medieval era (as very much opposed to the carnival of the Romantic age) as a celebration of violence, where destruction became an opportunity for regeneration, and mutilation became a disassembling, evolutionary process (Rabelais and His World 21-26). For Bakhtin, that which is violated is degraded--brought down to earth where it is swallowed up by her and given birth once more. Destruction and regeneration become a cyclical process: "to bury, to sow, to kill simultaneously in order to bring forth something more and better" (21). Though our contemporary understanding obliges us to regard destruction and degradation as negative issues, Bakhtin explains:

> Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth, it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place. (21)

Bakhtin terms that which encapsulates, at once, both the violence of degradation and the renewal of regeneration the "grotesque," and asserts that it is solely the grotesque image

that "reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming" (24). That which is grotesque defies the finite boundaries of completion: "Life is shown in a two-fold contradictory process; it is the epitome of incompleteness" (26). Bakhtin's favourite image to illustrate the carnival is the pregnant hag: an entity who is regenerating herself even as she degenerates, who symbolizes *new life* as potently as *old death* (25).

In Findley, one recognizes an amalgamation of dialogics and carnival violence. Though the most obvious violence depicted in Findley's works is physical, it could be argued that the most potent and resonating violence is that which takes place in the language of his works. By language I refer not only to the words that constitute the dialogue between author and reader, but those that constitute the dialogue between characters as well. In an interview with Graeme Gibson, Findley likens the act of writing a novel to giving birth and to defecating; thus he expresses a theory of creativity in terms of Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque (132-33).

Violence and dialogue come together when either the author or a character discovers that language is inadequate and fails to communicate. Without communication, dialogue fails and silence ensues. In this instance, violence is involved in one of two ways: either violence is done to language in order to render it communicable and, thereby, competent for dialogue, or a failure to communicate results in silence and the silence generates violence. Characters who resort to silence, instead of doing violence to the language, find that violence is done to them, and they are destroyed in some manner because, like the language they refused to rework, they become useless, even detrimental to the other characters and so need to be *reworked* themselves. In Bakhtin, as in Findley, change can only come about through destruction, and

so, on many levels, violence becomes a necessary precursor to creativity.

Despite Findley's remarkable talent to develop very different characters from one novel to the next, every one of his very diverse characters inevitably faces the same predicament: how to communicate effectively such that one's existence is validated. Communication, in the form of dialogue, is the only medium through which existence may be rendered valid according to Bakhtin. This premise elicits a twofold dilemma for each character in Findley's works: the character must recognize that communication is imperative, and, once the character has resigned himself to the task of communicating, he must overcome the obstacle of language.

Language, as it has evolved, has become impotent--has, indeed, **de**volved. It is as though, in our attempt to reap the maximum from our words, we have stretched their seams to tearing, and the meaning, the genuine essence of what we need to communicate, has seeped out. What we are left with is the shell of the word, its letters and pronunciation, without its meaning (this is what Bakhtin terms the "naked corpse of the word" [Dialogic 292]). We make various noises that we hope will mean what we intend them to mean to our listeners who will construe an entirely unique meaning from them. Findley hits precisely upon this problem when, in conversation with Graeme Gibson, he explains that "It's all an attempt not to say what you don't want to say. You've achieved art when you cannot be misconstrued" (130). In another interview with David Cameron he claims that his "biggest problem as a writer is the fear of not having made a thing clear" (54). Bakhtin addresses the dilemma, faced by the author, of being misconstrued when he asserts,

> Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated--overpopulated--with the intentions of others.

> Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (Dialogic 294)

The problem of being misinterpreted would be considerably less complicated if we needed to communicate only with ourselves. However, our survival as social creatures necessitates interaction with others, since, "There is no human being outside society" (qtd. in Todorov 30). While communication may be effected in a variety of manners, the most common and expected medium is language.

Literature is a form of dialogue that requires language, and therefore, is vulnerable to the problem of meaning that plagues any communication that depends on language as a vehicle.[1] Literature, like the language of which it consists, does not exist in a vacuum. When an author writes, every experience of that author necessarily, if not intentionally, informs every word that is written. Thus Bakhtin asserts that "True understanding in literature and in literary studies is always historical and personal" (23). The personal and social experiences and situations of both the writer and the reader will be what endow any literature with meaning:

> "Meaning (communication) implies community. Concretely, one always addresses someone, and that someone does not assume a purely passive role (as the term "recipient" could lead one to infer). the interlocutor participates in the formation of the meaning of the utterance, just as the other elements--similarly social--of the context of uttering do" (30).

Meaning becomes something created by the author *and* the reader in those moments when the author attempts to make the text understood and the reader attempts to understand. In "Formalist Aggression and the Act of Reading," Linda Hutcheon addresses reader involvement when she quotes Aquin, " . . . la littérature existe pleinement non pas quand l'oeuvre est

écrite, mais quand un lecteur remonte le cours des phrases et des mots pour devenir, par ce moyen, cocréateur de l'oeuvre," and adds herself, "To co-create a work is to recognize, indeed to make sacred, its artificiality, its true literary identity so that literature becomes an exchange between writer and reader. But it is also a kind of act of aggression against the complacent reader who wants the comforts of traditional novelistic mimesis" (from Violence in the Canadian Novel 14).

Hutcheon's notion of literature as an "act of aggression" suggests a violence in the writing as well as the reading of literature. Literature, in order to be literature, must jolt the reader out of complacency into the co-creative process with the author; it must, in effect, violate the reader. The responsibility for this violation lies with the author, who must determine how to violate the reader, and whose failure to violate the reader will, by consequence, mean the failure of his/her text to become literature.

Hutcheon touches on the author's need to violate the reader when she quotes Aquin in a 1975 interview in which he admits "to [an] intentional, rather perverse, desire to disconcert the reader: 'En fait,' he claims, 'je me décharge, dans l'écriture ou dans mes livres, d'une certaine partie de mon agressivité; je deviens agressif contre le lecteur tout en me réjouissant qu'il soit éventuellement là en train de me lire et du coup, une fois que je l'ai bien attrapé dans la lecture, là je le piège, je lui rends la lecture quasiment impossible ou à tout le moins difficile'" (9). Thus, Aquin suggests that the author does violence to the reader simply by imparting images to the latter. Even willing readers are violated to a certain degree by writers since, as Aquin suggests, if the writing is successful, the reader becomes consumed by the writing until only the words on the page exist for that reader at that moment.

This is precisely why it requires so much concentration to study genuinely a piece of literature: one must, in effect,

give oneself over to the writer and allow the text to take over one's thoughts to a certain degree. The more involved one becomes with the work in question, the less conscious control one has over the images that appear in the mind's eye. This lack of conscious control leaves the reader free to respond imagistically to the written material. Since literature is a dialogue between writer and reader, it is precisely the images that are called to the mind of the reader that constitute the "response" of that reader. No two readers will call to mind the same images in response to the same piece of literature, since our individual life experiences provide us all with different schema. The diversity of reader responses allows literature to be a continual dialogue between author and each individual reader, and this dialogue is always in the process of creation since no two readers will carry on the exact same dialogue. Thus, "While a novel may be finally finished, it remains forever unfulfilled" (Patterson 87).

The vividness of these "responses" is directly proportional to the work's ability to violate the reader. The writer can provide only written material. If the work does not truly violate the psyche of the reader (whether it is because the reader is distracted or the work is simply not effective) that reader will not have an imagistic response, and the words that s/he reads will simply not interest him/her. Since, as both Bakhtin and Aquin suggest, literature is that which is co-created by author and reader and not just words written by the author and passively consumed by the reader, literature must violate the reader in order to **be** literature. Without this violation, there will be no response, and without the response, no co-creativity: "Each word contains a summons and calls for a response. Once uttered, a word becomes 'the dead flesh of meaning' as Bakhtin puts it, and must be resurrected in a new movement of response" (Patterson 87-88). Without this movement, the words lie flat, unviolated by the reader whose disinterest will not

permit him to continue reading. Bakhtin explains that,

> To some extent, primacy belongs to the response, as the activating principle: it creates the ground for understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other. (Dialogic 282)

Thus, without eliciting a response, the work will not evoke dialogue and so will not be considered literature.

Whenever Findley writes, he faces a challenge: how to enter the mind of the reader such that a response is provoked and, thereby, literature created. As long as the mind of the reader is not violated, the lives of the characters will go uncommunicated. It is precisely with this concern that Findley grapples in the novels The Wars and Famous Last Words. In both novels, the characters are challenged to communicate their lives. If they succeed, their existence will be validated by the other characters as well as the reader. Their failure, however, will culminate in the demise of their existence into obscurity.

Chapter Two
Communicating the Self into Existence

Timothy Findley's fiction expresses the author's mischievous curiosity about the limits of truth as he consistently balances his fiction on the periphery of historically documented fact. Most of his novels are concerned with, to varying degrees, the idea of truth, and the ease with which truth can be both elucidated and concealed. In The Wars and Famous Last Words, the concern for truth assumes a certain gravity as the characters in both novels try to decipher what the "truth" really is concerning two fugitives of war. Inevitably, the reader becomes engaged in the same effort, and begins piecing together various clues and examining witnesses in order to clarify who these fugitives were, and whether they were not, in fact, actually heroes.

Both novels set off in the same direction: the legend of a good man gone astray in the midst of a world war, who finally meets his graphically violent demise. Their lives clouded in a haze of rumour and shame, the main characters, Robert Ross (Wars) and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley (Famous), must somehow dispel the popular belief that they are criminals and prove that everything of which they have been accused is a misconception or a lie. The problem with which they are faced is that they are no longer alive to defend themselves. The manner in which each novel confronts this problem, and the method each uses to communicate the life of the main character determines why the existence of one character is successfully validated, and the other is not.

Because "Existence . . . is an utterance" (Holquist 27), essentially, what both characters need to do is communicate their lives in order to truly exist. Since, according to Bakhtin, the only genuine venue of communication is dialogue, the characters must engage their lives in dialogue in order to validate their existence and the "truth" they are anxious to

assert. "Truth," Bakhtin explains, "is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (qtd. in Patterson 86). Unfortunately, every time we engage in anything that requires language, as does dialogue, we are confronted by its inaccuracy, and so the struggle to define the truth of anything begins with reworking language.

Existence, according to Bakhtin, is not a static state, but "the unique and unified *event* of being" (qtd. in Holquist 24, emphasis added). In The Wars and Famous Last Words, the narrators and the characters join the author in his struggle to communicate the lives of Robert Ross and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley (respectively) into existence (an existence of literary validity rather than physical life). In their attempt to dialogize the lives of Ross and Mauberley, the characters confront and are confronted with the obstacle of language. All parties involved, including the reader, recognize the necessity to violate language in order to create the dialogue that will validate the lives of the characters. Language is not the only thing violated, however; the concept of destruction for purposes of regeneration influences every character, and every setting and situation in which the characters find themselves.

Language is saturated by the interpretations each of us brings to it by our own social understandings of every word.

> any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist--or, on the contrary, by the "light" of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents. (Dialogic 276)

Bakhtin asserts that each time dialogue takes place, the speaker must take into account the reader's differing interpretations of language in order to facilitate communication. Bakhtin's concept of *otherness*, maintains that the speaker (and it is understood that the writer is a speaker, since all literature is dialogue) must take into account not only his/her own preconceptions of language but also the saturation of meanings every listener (reader) brings with him/her to the understanding of the text: "language . . lies on the borderline between oneself and the other" (293) Inevitably, the speaker must learn to look "into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another" because "I cannot manage without another, I cannot become myself without another; I must find myself in another by finding another in myself (in mutual reflection and mutual acceptance)" (Problems 287). Furthermore, the speaker's utterance is inescapably changed by the anticipated response of the interlocutor: "The work in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction" (Dialogic 280).

The speaker's anticipation of the *other* and the transcendence of the differences between the speaker and the other by working with the meaning that both afford language is what Bakhtin terms *Overcoming Otherness*: "In the human sciences, accuracy consists in overcoming the other's strangeness without assimilating it wholly to oneself" (Todorov 24). Overcoming the reader's otherness is therefore fundamental to the success of any dialogue, and, inevitably, to the communication of a self, since "it is only the other's categories that will let me be an object for my own perception. I see my self as I conceive others might see it. In order to forge a self, I must do so from *outside*" (Holquist 28).

In The Wars, the reader's otherness is overcome by unfolding the entire story before the reader through the

revelations of an archivist, who is never characterized. This lack of characterization of the archivist in addition to the narrator's habit of addressing "you"--implying both "you" the archivist and "you" the reader--effects a blurring of identity between the archivist and reader such that it is impossible to distinguish who precisely is being addressed if the two are not one and the same. The reader becomes, for all intents and purposes, the archivist, and, in this way, the narrator overcomes the reader's otherness by amalgamating him/her with the very character that unravels the story. Developing the reader into a character reinforces the co-creativity of the work between author and reader, and thereby adds to the validity of Robert Ross's "being," since being is "not just an event, but an event that is shared. Being is simultaneity, it is always *co*-being" (25).

But there is a problem with the materials with which the reader/archivist must work; s/he is supplied only photographs and transcripts of interviews with various witnesses. The lack of direct dialogue between the reader/archivist and any other character threatens the true understanding of what has taken place, since "*All understanding is dialogical*" (qtd. in Todorov 22). This problem exactly mirrors the predicament **any** observer--reader or character--faces in the novel: there is no direct contact with first-hand information. Only history is supplied, and history itself is not far removed from simple story.

The author seeks to rectify this problem by supplying the reader/archivist with photographs and tape recordings through a limited narrator. Thus, the author offers the reader the thread of a story and invites him/her to assist in its fabrication instead of simply providing a pre-fabricated story, the unfolding of which the reader may witness only. It becomes as much the responsibility of the reader/archivist to **understand** the material with which s/he is presented as it is the responsibility of the author to supply the material

through the narrator, which again stresses the process of co-creation of novel and characters: "Existence, like language [and literature], is a shared event" (Holquist 28). The narrator is never identified with the author, and his estimation of the situation is understood to be based upon the same fragmented bits of information available to the reader. What is not clear to the narrator is not clear to the reader/archivist, and what is not offered to the reader/archivist is not provided to the narrator.

Even to have made the character searching through the information an archivist rather than a curious layman suggests a great deal about what Findley hopes the reader will do with the information provided. An archivist's job, of course, is to gather historical data and organize it in a manner that will reflect the unfolding of past events as accurately as possible. The reader/archivist in The Wars is given a hefty supply of historical data and expected to find within it the truth about Robert Ross. To do so, s/he will need to penetrate history--to violate history in order to discover what truth may lie within it. In effect, violence must be done to what we consider to be "historical truth" in order to arrive at the *real* truth.

Perhaps the most important character introduced in Findley's novel is the collection of photographs given the archivist and verbally depicted to the reader by the narrator. In The Other Side of Dailiness, Lorraine York addresses the problematic use of photographs in Findley's oeuvre and explains that, in his earlier wor' , Findley clearly emphasized "the darker elements associated with the camera image: artificiality, lies, stifling fixity, and even fascism" (51). The photographs offered to the reader in The Wars are meant to help validate Ross's being, but as long as photographs induce a "stifling fixity" on the subject, it is impossible to develop the self of the subject. According to Bakhtin, anything that is fixed cannot *be*, since, "as the primal

activity that marks being as an *ongoing* event, the self 'itself' cannot abide even the most minimal degree of fixity," "the self must never stop in time or be fixed in space" (Holquist 27,35). Thus by photographing his characters, Findley kills them. York concurs with this opinion in her observation that "in Findley photography itself is seen as an aggressive act analogous to murder" (Dailiness 68).

Despite the negative effect the photographs have on the characters in terms of their fixity, they are still a necessary evil because they function as memory aids. York admits that, despite their negative implications, photographs in Findley's work function "as a metaphor for the processes of memory and writing" (57). The relationship of the photograph to memory becomes very important in terms of the violence of the novel, because the photographs come to symbolize "an unforgettable past" (61), and the characters' powerlessness in the face of memory emphasizes the violence with which this "past" must have been riveted in the mind.

However, having established the link between photographs and fixity, it is difficult to simply dismiss the point. As useful as the photographs are in terms of memory aids, they **do** fixate the characters, particularly Ross, in a manner detrimental to establishing a self. In order to liberate the subjects of the photographs, the reader must violate the fixity of the photographs through his/her examination of them, and allow them to become animated beings of his/her imagination. The author kills his characters so that they may be regenerated in the mind of the reader. The author must first, however, violate the reader's mind with vivid images that invite a suspension of disbelief.

The photographs given to the reader for perusal are essentially silenced characters. York examines at length the way in which Findley equates the camera with a gun, explaining that both leave their victims fixed and still (16, 67-69). By photographing his subjects, Findley "kills" them, and by

killing them they are silenced. Like the photographer, the reader is "in the position of intruder and exploiter" (16) because s/he is expected to examine these silenced subjects. The reader, also a silenced character because s/he is given no voice, is, nonetheless, a viable character since s/he plays the role of the archivist and is expected to interpret and organize the information supplied.

The silence of both the reader/archivist and the photographed subjects, in what would be a dialogue regarding truth, suggests a destruction of dialogue, but since **both** parties are not given a voice the silence also serves as a dialogue. If Findley had provided characters that spoke directly to the reader/archivist, the dialogue would have been unbalanced due to the reader's inability to speak with the archivist's mouth. The only way to balance the dialogue, therefore, is to silence the characters in photographs and transcripts (which are, in effect, silenced tape-recordings). With overt dialogue impossible, neither the reader/archivist nor the characters are permitted to out-speak the other, and therefore the dialogue is never able to disintegrate into monologue. Hence, by destroying dialogue, Findley has encouraged co-creation of the text through the unspoken interpretations of the silence.

The history which has condemned Robert Ross is primarily made up of appearances, and so the main function of the reader/archivist is to shuffle through appearances in order to uncover reality. The outset of the novel emphasizes the seductive quality of appearance: "Robert *appeared* to be the sole survivor," "They *appeared* to be cattle cars," "It was *as if* both dog and horse . . . " (9), "someone had *obviously* ridden her . . .," "The dog *apparently* was used to her company . . .," "giving the *appearance* of a jaunty cap" (10) (emphases added). The narrator seems to acknowledge the reader's initial reflex simply to sit back and let the story be told, but points out immediately, "It could not be told" (9). Thus

the narrator warns the reader not only to be wary about what the narrator will tell, but also to be cautious about the information s/he gathers from the transcripts and photographs. York observes that, "Photography is conceived to be a purveyor of lies--not because it reveals what is not present, but because it only reveals what is physically apparent" (Dailiness 70). Nothing is valid simply because it is told, only that which is formed into dialogue can be truth "No human events are developed or resolved within the bounds of a single consciousness" (Problems 288).

It is immediately clear that even though a narrator is required to direct the reader/archivist and provide materials for the research, the narrator is no more privy to the truth than the reader or any other character. Despite his ability to identify objects, the narrator cannot verify them without the reader; such is the case when the narrator describes a photograph on which someone has drawn an arrow: "Just above the arrow, written in bold black ink is the question: 'WHAT IS THIS?' All too clearly, the small white dot is an iceberg. Why whoever took the picture failed to verify this fact remains a mystery" (*TW* 15). Whether or not the identity of the "small white dot" is "clear," it cannot be verified as long as it is not incorporated into dialogue. The author, however, corrects this problem. Findley instigates a dialogue with his own narrator by posing a question within the material he provides the narrator and reader/archivist, and so the narrator feels obliged to respond that it is "clearly . . . an iceberg" (15). The author's utterance calls forth the narrator's response, and through this concise dialogue, the subject is given meaning and validity.

Findley's novel thus evolves through a process of utterance/response. The author provides scattered pictures of various subjects and the narrator and reader/archivist are asked "What is this?" The reader's response validates the entire narrative of the book, and the narrative itself becomes

as personal as the reader's response. Although it may be true that the reader provides a response for every piece of literature s/he reads, that response does not necessarily have any bearing on the narrative itself. As readers, we are always free to form an opinion, but our conclusions will not usually determine the conclusions of the novel. In the case of The Wars, Findley provides questions to the reader through a narrator who is not permitted to voice his own conclusions. The reader's responses are, therefore, the sole means of narrative conclusion. The narrator has no more access to an objective conclusion than the reader, and, consequently, is obliged to question and interpret along with the reader the photographs provided by the author. York aptly regards the reader's struggle to interpret the work as an "heroic battle," asserting that, "There is another war lurking behind the battlefield scenes in this novel, it seems: the heroic battle of the reader forming an interpretation" (Intro 27).

As the narrator and reader examine the photographs together, the photographs become the subject of a dialogue between the two parties. Photographs alone only exacerbate the problem of appearance versus reality; the validation of their meaning requires interpretation and dialogue. An omniscient narrator would suggest that there already exists a truth, and the reader need only discover it. But when the narrator is forced to question along with the reader, the idea is reinforced that truth only exists in the search for understanding.

The reader becomes the archivist in the first section of the first chapter where the narrator addresses the reader directly in the second person. The reader/archivist violates history and the memories of those who witnessed it by delving into the photographs and the tape recorded accounts; thus the reader is the first to commit an act of violence simply by forcing the characters to remember. The narrator explains that a common obstacle the reader/archivist will encounter is

the statement "'I don't remember'" which is used as a defense against anyone who would violate memory, since "The occupants of memory have to be protected from strangers" (*TW* 10) The photographs in the archives are likened to characters who, like the person that "will forget himself and say too much," will unwittingly provide what the reader seeks when "the corner of a picture will reveal the whole" (10-11).

Every time something is violated, it is changed in some way. The narrator warns the reader, "As the past moves under your fingertips, part of it crumbles" (11). The more we investigate the past, the more we bring to it our own terms of language, which results in our reinterpreting that past, challenging it. The past is recreated for us by the author so that we may violate it. By uncovering new concepts, we do violence to old concepts. This idea of destroying for the purpose of creation mirrors Kroetsch's assertion that we kill every time we write (111). In effect, Findley does just that: he kills historical conceptions by writing them down, and allows us to violate them through our co-creation of the story.

The creative function of violence in this novel is established when, before we are even told of Robert Ross's life, we are told he died "obscured by violence" (*TW* 11). It is only **because** his death is violent, however, that we may come to know of him. Just as his being "consumed by fire" destroyed his life, it illuminated his life not only literally but figuratively because, as the narrator points out, such violent ends as these are "like statements: 'pay attention!'" (11). Without his violent death, it is difficult to say if we would ever have been given the opportunity to know about his life. This assumption is reinforced by the narrator's assertion that "Euripides was killed by dogs--and this is all we know" (11). Sometimes it takes such violent ends to illuminate a life: "One way in which the uniqueness of my place in life may be judged is the uniqueness of the death

that will be mine" (Holquist 24). Truth is like Robert Ross in this respect: it is "obscured by violence," and so must be uncovered through violent means. These means cannot be achieved by the author alone. It is finally the violent act of reading--interpreting, translating--performed by the reader that violates the obscurity of language and uncovers truth.

As the archivist, we find "a whole age lies in fragments underneath the lamps" (*TW* 11) for our inspection. Similarly, as the reader, we find the whole novel is a collection of various fragments that we are meant to piece together. Chapter-segments fragment chapters into sections that may be pages long or only a small paragraph, and sentences may consist of only one word. As the year 1915 is depicted, the full sentences and completed paragraphs are interrupted by, "Then something happens. April. Ypres" (12). The depiction of the year is halted abruptly, just as it must have seemed the popular image of war was demolished by the "something" that was the carnage of Ypres.

By chopping up the paragraph with various incomplete sentences, the author allows the reader to experience (however minimally) the shock and destruction that was felt by those who endured Ypres. York recognizes Findley's violent form as a method of immediately including the reader in the violent message when she notes that the "short, jabbing sentences capture the frozen panic of these moments when human lives waver in the balance" (Intro 15), and asserts that Findley's "fragmentary or 'dismembered' style force[s] us to slow our reading, to share in the emotional trauma" (51). Kroetsch's observation of Ondaatje's work is relevant to Findley: "His refusal of form releases the experience of violence into the reader's experience of reading" (114). In this manner, the violence that somehow coerced Timothy Findley into writing this novel is translated into words, and the violent form that Findley employs to arrange the words violates the complacency of the reader. In turn, the reader violates the words by

translating and interpreting them according to his/her own social experiences: "The turning of a page, in the reading of a novel, is a kind of violation of narrative" (113).

Segments 5 and 6 of the second chapter brilliantly exemplify this technique of using very short sentences to reflect the violence experienced by the characters. Chapter-segment 5 begins with "She fell. It was Sunday" (*TW* 21), followed by two carriage returns, indicating a new paragraph, then a short paragraph with three full sentences and a sentence fragment ("Making love to his pillows"). The rest of the segment is made up of a pyramid of short sentences.

> Jesus.
>
> She fell.
>
> It was Sunday.
>
> Robert wasn't there. (21)

None of these telescopic sentences (I'm tempted to call them fragments but technically they are complete), are terribly illuminating on their own. In fact the scarce information provided tends to provoke more questions than it answers. But more important than being informative, the short, isolated sentences violate the reader by forcing themselves into the text without introduction or explanation, thereby mirroring the way in which Rowena died without warning or justification. In effect, the author forces the reader through the same violence the character Ross is forced to endure by inflicting such scarce and harsh information in a telescoped manner.

One also might wonder exactly who it is that exclaims, "Jesus." It would be simplest to assume that the narrator quotes Ross, but there are no punctuation marks around the exclamation, and Ross is referred to in the third person. If one concludes that it is the narrator who calls this out in surprise, there is further evidence that the narrator, far from being omniscient, is forced through the same violation as the reader and the other characters. The narrator himself,

violated by the author's decision to have Rowena killed, is jolted out of his own indifference. Having been no more forewarned of this event than Robert or the reader, he openly shares in the suddenness and immediacy of the tragedy.

Chapter-segment 6 seems to be, at first, an attempt to clarify the questions raised by the panic of chapter-segment 5:

> Why had she fallen?
> I don't know, said Stuart [Ross's brother].
> Why weren't you watching her?
> I was playing with Meggy. (Teasing her--making her ears lie flat by whirling the baseball bat above her head.)
> Didn't Rowena call you for help?
> Nope.
> Et cetera. (21)

It becomes clear, however, that the lines of questions and answers more accurately reflect a desire not to validate, but to alter what has happened--the narrator admits, "Nothing would be had from this line of questioning. Nothing would be had from any line of questioning. The thing was she was dead" (21). Yet, the same "line of questioning" is reopened on the next page (22). This may be a reflection of Robert Ross's own refusal to accept the death of his sister--perhaps if the questioning is never completed, the response is never acknowledged, the "thing" is never validated, and her death is not truth.

Perhaps conscious of the same principle (that which is not said is not validated and can be ignored), "Mister and Mrs. Ross fell silent" (21) after the death of their daughter. Silence becomes a resort for those who cannot accept truth and who thus seek to invalidate it somehow by refusing to commit it to dialogue, as the following examples illustrate: "Now his mother would be drinking in her bedroom. But no one would mention it" (24); Juliet d'Orsey reluctantly admits to Ross's

sexual relationship with her sister, although she claims, "Many times, I have wanted to destroy this portion of my diaries" (154); after Ross's rape, "His brain went silent" (169). However, the reader/archivist understands what the characters refuse to mention as truth because it is validated through the narrator/reader dialogue. Our ability to validate as truth that which the characters refuse to recognize encourages the reader to trust the narrator/reader dialogue above any other dialogue, and this is necessary if we hope to be at all fair in our conclusions.

Another example of how Findley violently arranges the text to jolt the reader is his sudden introduction on page 12 of an italicized paragraph describing the horrific immolation of Robert Ross, an event that would take its place, in a more traditional format, at the end of the novel, and not before we have been told any details of the man's existence. The celebration of parting soldiers is interrupted by the "fiery image" (13) to produce the effect of having found the disturbing photograph unwittingly slipped in amongst otherwise benign snapshots. There is no preparation for this image, no traditional progress of plot that might soften the blow Assaulting the unprepared reader with the horrific photograph serves two purposes: The nightmare photograph introduces the truth of the horror of war amidst misconceptions of glory and honour, and the italicized paragraph inserted suddenly and incongruously into the text duplicates the way memory works, with its unsolicited images that violate our train of thought. The photographic image is directly paralleled with the mental image when the photograph of Robert Ross "leaps through memory" (13). In fact, when writing the novel, Findley noted in his memoirs, "the pictures in my mind are much more like photographs than remembered images from life" (Inside 137).

We violate memory by recalling it to mind, just as memory violates us by its uninvited appearances. The narrator warns us that the photographs that violate us will become remembered

images that "obtrude again and again until you find [their] meaning--here" (*TW* 13). The concept of an obtrusive image that seeks to be understood is taken from Findley's own theory of writing. Findley was inspired to write The Wars when he was suddenly struck with the image of the main character, "a soldier named Robert Ross, and had seen him, a young man in a uniform, walking away from a military encampment, past a tent" (MacFarlane 6b). Findley claims that the inspiration "was like an explosion" (6b), and, as is the case with most of his novels, the inspiration became an obsession that could only be exorcised through the writing of the novel. The violation, then, begins not with the author, but with the character who impresses her/himself upon the author and demands to be written. The author then violates the reader by relaying these images, and the only way the reader can be liberated from them is by finding "[their] meaning--here" (*TW* 13): thus, "the interlocutor participates in the formation of the meaning of the utterance" (Todorov 30). (It is interesting to note that, in the same manner Robert Ross came uninvited to Findley's mind, Findley has Ross save his life and the lives of his men from a chlorine gas attack by heeding "an image that had come unbidden into Robert's mind from a dull winter classroom long ago" [*TW* 126].)

Without realizing it, Robert Ross recognizes the importance of dialogue and the destructiveness of dialogue-breakdown very early in the novel. The reader/archivist is shown a picture of Robert Ross as a child watching soldiers being sent off to war, and we are told that Ross "doubts the validity in all this martialling of men but the doubt is inarticulate. It stammers in his brain" (13). Ross's failure to articulate his doubt through dialogue leaves the doubt invalidated, and consequently dismissed. Later, when Ross becomes an officer in the army and is expected to give orders, this "doubt" resurfaces as a recognition of how ridiculous orders are: "Telling other people what to do made him laugh.

Just as being told what to do made him angry" (29). The hierarchical ranking of men that justifies the giving of orders, and therefore the "martialling of men," is indeed very destructive because it is *authoritative discourse* that relies on the strict monologue of someone considered "superior"; such monologue suffocates response, and annihilates dialogue (Dialogic 342-45).

Ross's inability to respect the very premise upon which an army is based--that a group of men obey without question the will of an officer--is, inevitably, what kills him since he not only questions, but disobeys explicit orders. The disintegration of dialogue through orders destroys Ross, but, at the same time, his violent end testifies to his desire to violate the process of order-giving and, thereby, to restore dialogue. Furthermore, by defying authority, Ross preserves his individual self because "Consciousness under the influence of [authority] loses its authentic freedom, and personality is destroyed" (Problems 297).

Military orders are not the sole elements of language questioned in the novel. There is an insidious element in the novel that challenges language, and seeks to define and redefine words. Ross had promised Rowena that he would stay with her "forever" and that the rabbits would also stay "forever" (*TW* 22). After her death, his promise to her is challenged. He cannot stay with her, since she is dead and he is not, and the rabbits "had to be killed" (22). Instead of admitting that Ross has gone back on his word, and thereby placing the responsibility for deceit with the character, the narrator illustrates the deceptive nature of language by redefining the word "forever": "**This** was forever" (22, emphasis added). Likewise, a simple re-naming removes guilt even from killing when the killers of the innocent rabbits are dismissed as "actors . . . obeying some kind of fate we call 'revenge'" (25). To re-define words according to the context in which they are uttered is to respect the *heteroglossia* of

language. Heteroglossia, as defined by Bakhtin, is that which endows words with meanings directly relative to their context, and thus necessarily obliges words to assume different meanings in different contexts.

Ross's confrontation with a Belgian man also emphasizes the difficulty of communicating through language, or, as the narrator terms it, "the language problem" (73). The peasant speaks to Ross in Flemish, which Ross understands as "gibberish" (73). Seeing that Ross does not understand him, the man repeats himself in French. Still unable to understand him, Ross responds to the peasant in English, and the peasant shouts at Ross in French. Anxious to make himself understood, Ross shouts back, "'Je ne parle pas français! Je suis canadien!'" (rather a poignant comment on our *bilingual* country), but:

> The words rang out through the fog.
> They did not seem to help. (73)

Consistently assaulted with the imprecision of language and its failure to "help," Robert eventually feels "constrained to silence" (116).

Silence becomes a devastating choice that characters make when faced with the impotency of language. The blatant refusal of dialogue, even when the consequences are known to be destructive, mimics the phenomenon of war. In the war of silence, as in the World War, "Dots were anonymous. Don't ask questions. Distance was safety. Space was asylum" (*TW* 35). Dialogue invites confrontation and violence on several levels, so the characters put distance between themselves and the nearest other and never attempt to overcome otherness; thus they are consumed by the isolation that develops from never having brought down the barriers between themselves and another character. This deterioration through silence is best exemplified by Mrs. Ross, who, throughout the novel, consistently ostracizes herself from the nearest other, forces characters around her to become nothing more than "a portion

of her silence" (138), and sums up her philosophy of human relations with the claim that "We're all cut off at birth with a knife and left at the mercy of strangers" (28). Her refusal to acknowledge others and participate in dialogue with them is manifested physically by her eventual blindness (179).

Ross comes dangerously close to following his mother's deterioration when he chooses Longboat as his hero. Ostensibly, Ross admires the Indian for his ability to run great distances: "He ran the marathon. He won things. Then he smiled and was silent. Robert smiled and was silent, too" (48). However, what Longboat "wins" in his silence is distance; running becomes associated with running **away** from other people--running away from dialogue, and from the otherness that no one wants to confront and destroy. Hence, when Robert chooses Longboat as his hero, he unwittingly aspires to silence.

It becomes clear that the more Robert pursues his love of running, the more overwhelming the otherness of the people around him becomes and the further isolated and out of touch he becomes from the rest of the world: "He kept his eyes cast down. He never watched the sky. He lost all sense of time. There was nothing to be won but distance" (29). In running, as in war, the eyes are always cast downward, no dialogue is attempted, and all one can really "win" is the safety of distance. But the safety is deceptive, and the distance is an entity to be conquered, not won, if the silence is ever to be broken. Silence is, in effect, the enemy, and if it is not destroyed, it will destroy: "Many people die without a sound because their brains are shouting and it seems they've called for help and they haven't" (80).

Unlike running, sex is an attempt to communicate, to have dialogue, on a very basic level. When Ross is brought to the brothel, his inability to talk is paralleled with his inability to "perform" (39-45); he is impotent on two levels. The narrator explains that Ross "had a sort of problem he

couldn't discuss" (42), but his inability to "discuss" is what creates a problem. In fact, it is not only with others that Ross cannot communicate; there is a striking disunity between his own body and mind that creates disequilibrium, the least consequence of which is premature ejaculation: "His body hadn't waited for his mind. It did things on its own" (42).

Sex, like dialogue, is violent and seeks to overcome otherness, and, like dialogue, sexual pleasure is only possible when the barriers that separate one from the other are surmounted. But, with both, there is a fine line between violating otherness in order to communicate sincerely, and being merely violent. In dialogue, Mrs. Ross exemplifies pointless violence in her wish to have "an empty cathedral in which to rail at God" (54). The futility of attempting to have a dialogue with God is emphasized by Mrs. Ross's desire not to talk or communicate or have dialogue with God, but to "rail ***at*** God," suggesting a one-way verbal purging rather than a sincere attempt to communicate. Any one-way monologue is unacceptable, according to Bakhtin, because it "is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge it in any decisive force. . . . The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue" (Problems 293).

In sex, this same sort of worthless violence is exemplified by Ross's rape (*TW* 168-69). Once more, Ross's inability to speak is linked with the harm done to him as, "His mind went stumbling over a beach of words and picked them up like stones and threw them around inside his head but none of them fell in his mouth" (168). Silence, which is always negative, is doubly so when inflicted upon someone, and so when Ross's "brain went silent" (169), the brutality of the rape is emphasized to a new degree. As with the chapter segments 5 and 6 of the first chapter, the fragmentation of the chapter-segment (5) following the rape reflects the violence done to Ross by beginning with twenty-one short

sentences and sentence fragments, each isolated by at least two carriage returns (169-170). Afterward, Ross finds himself unable to carry on anything more than a stilted, short conversation with Poole (170-71).

The needless and terrible violence of Ross's rape is set off against the violence of an earlier episode involving gay sex between Taffler and the Swede. Taffler's sex with the Swede is inarguably violent, but it is also, irrefutably, a violence that both parties accept and enjoy.[5] Taffler and the Swede, "breathing in tandem" (44), are likened to the mare and the dog (who appear in the prologue and again at the end of the novel) who "moved in tandem" (10 and 182). Likening anyone or anything to an animal is invariably a positive metaphor in Findley's oeuvre.[6] Their mutual consent to the act is reinforced by such observations as their "breathing in tandem," "like two people running side by side," "staring into one another's eyes" (45).

What is discomforting about Taffler's sex with the Swede is Ross's witnessing the act, which violates his preconception of Taffler and his notion of acceptable sexuality. At the same time, however, Ross's disillusionment must be regarded in a positive way, since his beliefs are violated for the sake of truth. The truth is, Taffler likes having sex with the Swede. If that truth violates Ross's middle-class Protestant sensibilities, then so be it.

The violation of Ross's perception of Taffler is exactly like the violation of Juliet d'Orsey's perception of Ross when she witnesses the violence of his sex with her sister, Barbara (156). Both Ross and Juliet are tempted to reconsider their estimation as "hero" of the character they witness in the sex act. Findley challenges our ideas of what a hero is, and challenges us not to condemn because of his/her sexuality someone we would otherwise admire. Perhaps, like Ross, we are violated by the idea of homosexuality, but this is a positive

violence and should succeed in tearing down the destructive limitations we impose through our repressive sense of morality. If we can appreciate Taffler's heroism in spite of his humanness (and Findley makes no apology for his humanness), then perhaps we will be less likely to judge Ross negatively for his refusal to obey blindly what is incongruous with **his** principles.

Loving or touching a man, and being brutalized by one is, unfortunately, not a distinction Ross is capable of making. After Ross is raped, he is incapable of making physical contact with another man even when sex is not involved. When Poole delivers Ross's kit bag to him, it is obvious that Ross is very fond of the young man. But Ross succumbs to the violence done to him in the rape, and is unable to express his feelings physically: "Robert wished with all his heart that men could embrace. But he knew now they couldn't. Musn't" (171). After Poole leaves, Ross burns his picture of Rowena, and the narrator is quick to point out, "This was not an act of anger--but an act of charity" (172). In this instance, violence is charity and preservation. That which is destroyed is protected from further violence.

It is not an oversight that no attention has been paid in this thesis to the physical violences of the war of which Findley writes. Certainly the descriptions of mud, contaminated by "Dung and debris and decaying bodies" (72), in which the soldiers are forced to fight, and where Ross nearly drowns (80-81), are repugnant. More unnerving are the gory details of the flame-thrower invented by the Germans: "Men exploded where they stood. . . . Horses fell with their bones on fire. Men went blind in the heat. Blood ran out of noses, ears and mouths. Wells and springs of water were plugged and stopped by the bodies of men and mules and dogs who had gone there for safety" (132). But these physical violences of war are understood as secondary to the "Private violence," endured

by the characters, that "serves to enlarge in our minds the overwhelming horror of the 1914-18 carnage" (Dailiness 81).

Several indicators support the argument that the physical wars of this novel were meant to be understood as secondary to the "Private violence" endured by the characters. When writing the second manuscript of the novel that was to become The Wars (the first manuscript was burned by Findley [Inside 146]), Findley admits that Stanley Colbert, who was instrumental in the creative advising of the project, had to remind Findley to include details about *the wars* because Findley entitled the manuscript *The Wars* and completely neglected to mention anything about any physical wars (147). Findley had to pin up a reminder to himself in front of the typewriter to write about *the wars* (148).

Even without leaving the text, one can find ample evidence that physical violence was not Findley's primary concern in the novel. The violation of form that occurs every time something is being narrated that is devastating to the characters (for example, Rowena's death [*TW* 21-22], Robert's killing of a lamed horse [65], Robert's perception and unnecessary killing of the German soldier [128-31], Robert's rape [169-70]), does not occur in the graphic descriptions about the war (for example, descriptions of the mud [71-72], and the German flame-thrower [131-32]). The most important evidence comes when the narrator reminds the reader.

> So far, you have read of the deaths of 557,017 people--one of whom was killed by a streetcar, one of whom died of bronchitis and one of whom died in a barn with her rabbits. (158)

Of all the deaths of which the narrator could have reminded us, those that did **not** take place in the war are highlighted and given privileged attention over those that did, by grouping the war deaths together in an anonymous number, and lending detail to the three deaths that did not take place in battle. Thus Findley emphasizes the gravity of other, more

subtle, violences that might otherwise be easy to overlook in the context of a war.

The most important thing that Ross must learn in the war is not how to survive physically (since physical survival is easily accomplished by distancing oneself from the enemy), but how to violate and destroy that which needs to be overcome: the distancing silence of others. Perhaps conscious of his need to relinquish his childhood desire for distance for a more mature and more grave accomplishment, Ross reconsiders his choice of heroes and seeks out "a model. Someone who could teach him, by example, how to kill" (28). Although Ross is not aware of it when he enters the army, possibly the most important thing that he needs to kill is the silence that has enveloped his family, and that threatens to envelop him.

It is interesting to note how animals communicate in this novel, primarily because language is never an alternative for them, and also because there is a very strong relationship between Ross and animals (developed throughout the novel, but solidified by Rodwell's sketchbook in which Ross finds drawings of animals, as well as a "Modified and mutated" sketch of himself as an animal [138]). The very first being to communicate in the novel is the horse that Ross discovers who, "greeted him with a snuffling noise" (9). When Ross mounts her and attempts to lead her away from the cattle cars, "She threw her head up and whinnied. Other horses answered from inside the car" (10). Her communication with Ross and with the other horses may be the most important dialogue in the novel since it establishes a bond between her and Ross, and because her call to the other horses prompts Ross to include all of them in his escape. Had Ross only stolen the mare, he probably would have survived the whole incident, but the "theft" (as it is later regarded) of all the horses draws attention to his escape, and consequently obliges him to kill Private Cassles (183), barricade himself in a barn and become mortally wounded in the process of resisting arrest (185-86).

Despite his increasing difficulty with the language of people, Ross seems to understand animals and their communications. There is no doubt or confusion for Ross when the wolf with whom he goes running on the army base "looked directly at him . . . with its tail slightly lowered--and barked," that "it was telling Robert the valley was vacant: safe--and that Robert could proceed to the water's edge to drink" (32). So true and accurate is Ross's understanding of the wolf's non-verbal communication that he finds himself "wishing that someone would howl" (32) so that he might understand them just as well. Less comforting but equally clear in meaning is the song of the bird that Ross hears after he mistakenly kills the German soldier who posed no threat to him nor his men:

> The bird sang.
>
> One long note descending: three that wavered on the brink of sadness.
>
> That was why.
>
> It sang and sang and sang, till Robert rose and walked away. The sound of it would haunt him to the day he died. (131)

Ross never does learn the animals' unlanguaged methods of communication. When he finds the mare and the dog near the cattle cars, he says to them "'let's go,'" and, in answer to the horses who whinny inside the car, he says, "'Alright. . . . Then we shall go together'" (10). By responding to the animals with language, Ross still expresses a need to verify through dialogue. For him, what is perceived is not truly understood until it can be translated into words: "Understanding is in search of a counter-discourse to the discourse of the utterer" (Todorov 22). The pathetic irony is that his choice to adhere to language seals the fate for all of them: when he is told to surrender the horses from the barn in which he has barricaded himself with the dog and all the horses, he cries out "'We shall not be taken,'" and the

narrator asserts, "It was the 'we' that doomed him" (*TW* 185). Ross is misunderstood to have accomplices, and this misunderstanding prompts the officer in charge of apprehending Ross, Major Mickle, to give the order to set the barn on fire. What happens afterward is very significant, because Mickle hears the dog "giving the alarm" (185) but does not understand Ross when he shouts, "'I can't! I can't! I can't!'" (186). Mickle's inability to understand, in time, that Ross means "I can't open the doors," destroys the horses, the dog, and, ultimately, Robert Ross (he dies later of burns sustained in the fire). In effect, Ross is killed because language fails to communicate.

The irony concerning the animals in the novel is that they are destroyed despite their ability to communicate accurately. Almost all the animals in the novel meet some brutal end: Rowena's rabbits are bludgeoned to death (25); the rabbit, hedgehog and bird kept by Rodwell are asphyxiated in a gas attack (133); rats, mice and a cat are senselessly slaughtered by shell-shocked soldiers (135); a barnyard of horses and mules is bombarded by shelling (178); and, of course, the horses and dog with whom Ross tries to escape are burned alive (186). Animals are destroyed because they are yet unable to communicate using language, rendering their otherwise competent efforts at communication futile. Their failure to produce dialogue, through no fault of their own, is contrasted to people who have the ability to speak, but refuse to do so because the language is too difficult to make comprehensible.

The chapter segment that follows the destruction of the horses and Robert's burning contains the third transcript of Marian Turner, in which she begins, "Language is a strange thing, isn't it" (186); significantly, there is no question mark after this statement. All the characters in the novel struggle with language and silence: they consider them alternatives; they grapple with one after the other has

failed; they seek to determine which of them will leave their argument the least misunderstood. What saves the entire story from both the complications of language and annihilation through silence is dialogue. Only through dialogue, which is in itself a refutation of silence, can the problems of language be clarified and overcome. Only the characters who seek to employ dialogue are preserved (the only thing that saves Mrs. Ross from the "strange and terrible silence" in which she has enveloped herself, is her final plea for "'Help,'" that violates the silence and reopens dialogue with her family [179]). The problem remains, however, that Robert Ross, having been killed, **cannot** break the bonds of silence in order to communicate his life, and thereby validate his existence and justify his actions. It is, finally, left to the reader to save Ross from obscurity by violating the pages of the text and engaging in the dialogue initiated by the narrator.

Dialogue is a necessary violence that we do to a thing to validate it--it is the shout that overcomes the otherness of what is perceived and kills the language of ambiguity so that it might be regenerated into understanding. Thus, the narrator reminds us of:

> something written long after Robert Ross was dead. It was written during another war--in 1943--by the Irish essayist and critic Nicholas Fagan. This is what he wrote: '*the spaces between the perceiver and the thing perceived can . . . be closed with a shout of recognition. One form of a shout is a shot.* ***Nothing so completely verifies our perception of a thing as our killing of it.***' (191, italics Findley's, emphasis added)

The final photograph shown to the reader/archivist is one of "*Robert and Rowena with Meg*" on the back of which is written, "'Look! you can see our breath!'" (191). Breath is, of course, important because it evidences our living. When we

are able to *see* our breath we are also able to photograph it. The photograph of Robert and Rowena becomes a part of the dialogue of the novel. The author thereby enables the reader to validate the existence of Ross by offering a photograph of Ross's breath; he seeks, to the very end of the novel, the reader's cooperation in the creation of the work, and thus the recognition of Ross's *self*. The narrator's final words, "And you can" (191), reaffirm the reader's primary position in the novel as a viable character, and his/her ability and responsibility to assist in its creation.

Bakhtin insists that for the self to have any validity, it must consist of "a center, a not-center, and the relation between them" (Holquist 29). In The Wars, Robert Ross is the "center," the reader is the "not-center," and the silenced characters provided in photographs and transcripts are "the relation between them." Robert Ross authors himself by allowing others to author him, since self-recognition is worthless without the validation of the other (Problems 287-88), and in so doing, he validates his existence as a self through the dialogue that develops between the silenced characters of the novel and the silent reader.

Chapter Three
Self-Portraiture as Failure

Unlike Robert Ross, whose fragmented story is told by several witnesses and completed by the reader, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley of Famous Last Words seeks to defend *himself* against accusations of treason, and thus gives the reader a first-person *apologia*. The words of Mauberley, scratched into the walls of an abandoned hotel where he hid from his executioners, are disclosed to the reader as they are read by Lieutenant Quinn, who has discovered Mauberley's mangled cadaver, as well as the two rooms whose walls are covered with Mauberley's testimony. The differences between Robert Ross and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, despite their similar situations, are manifold, and these differences stem mostly from the position both characters take in terms of the narrative.

The function of the reader in Famous Last Words is far more traditional than in The Wars, where s/he was given an opportunity to directly participate in the narrative. Instead of being expected to piece together various fragments into a story, the story is presented to the reader already *completed*. Ostensibly, the function of the reader in both novels is the same: peruse provided data regarding the life and behaviour of the accused character and draw conclusions regarding their guilt or innocence. But, whereas in The Wars we are anxious to determine what sort of violence surrounded the life of Robert Ross and compelled him to seek out a violent end, in Famous Last Words we are more concerned with the violent end of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. The essential difference is that Mauberley is murdered, and so his death is shrouded in mystery. The reader gets wrapped up in the "whodunit" issue, and neglects, for the most part, the question of guilt or innocence.

Details of the narrative that cannot be imparted by Mauberley, since he is found dead very early in the novel, are

provided by a third-person narrator, who, unlike Mauberley, is very much omniscient (in his article, "Mauberley's Lies," E. F. Shields refers to this narrator as the "outer narrator" [44], and so, hereafter, will I). The narration is shared between two narrators: Mauberley, as a "compulsive witness" (*FLW* 21), gives an account of everything he has discovered, and the outer narrator fleshes out the details of Mauberley's testimony, adding an account of various incidents and conversations to which Mauberley was not privy, and including the historical background needed to grasp fully the significance of Mauberley's account.

The two narrators use different narrative techniques. The outer narrator follows the tradition of the Modernists like Pound and Eliot, with whom Mauberley was apparently contemporary; he borrows excerpts from other writers to build context and elucidate themes. In borrowing from previous writers, the narrator expresses a recognition that "all discourse is in dialogue with prior discourses on the same subject, as well as with discourses yet to come, whose reactions it foresees and anticipates. A single voice can make itself heard only by blending into the complex choir of other voices already in place" (Todorov x). Mauberley relies entirely on "his notebooks, his years and years of jotting and annotations" (*FLW* 21), in which he has included observations, dates and details about the people he has known.

It is Mauberley's unexpressed hope that this very personal approach to narration will lend his story believability. Indeed, he emphasizes this personal approach by admitting that there was a great deal of information he was not party to, and a great many lies he was told. Thus he warns the reader, "All I have written here . . . is true; except the lies" (59). Findley illustrates the importance this line bears on the rest of the novel when he explains, "I can remember being very glad when that line came. At first I thought it was just a clever line and then it became more and

more profound. It sets the whole thing up--what is true and what is a lie? Which of these is this?" (Meyer and Riordan 49). The problem with Mauberley's epigraph, a problem that has repercussions on his testimony and inevitably one that the reader is forced to struggle with, is that it is double-edged. Though Mauberley refers primarily to the lies told to him and the lies he overheard that he is repeating (i.e., *All I have written here is true except the lies that I was told*), the structure of his warning invites suspicion of everything that follows (i.e., *All I have written here is true except where I lie*). The reader is therefore led to wonder where the lies end and the truth begins before ever embarking on Mauberley's narrative. Ironically, where Mauberley meant to secure the faith of the reader by warning him/her not to fall for the deceit of which **he** was a victim, he succeeds in evoking the suspicion of the reader.

The outer narrator does not offer any such problematic warning. The only epigraph he includes is an excerpt from Pound's poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, "The age demanded an image/ Of its accelerated grimace. . ." (*FLW* 3, ellipsis Findley's). Contrary to drawing suspicion of his own narrative, the outer narrator subtly reminds us that Mauberley is a fictitious character of a poem. Determined that the reader not dismiss easily Mauberley's fictitious nature, excerpts from Pound's poem are included several more times (59, 66, 293, 323). By drawing our attention to Pound's poem, we are also reminded that the character of the poem is a third-rate, outdated and out-of-touch poet who suffers from delusions of his own import (Selected Poems of Ezra Pound 61-64, 70-77). Thus the reader embarks on the narrative already sceptical of one of the two narrators.

Evoking a bias for one narrator may seem at first to be a service the author provides for the reader, but it proves to be part of a greater violence as the two narratives mingle and the reader loses track of who to trust and who to doubt. In

Famous Last Words, the narrative is not violated, as it is in The Wars, by fragmented sentences and isolated paragraphs. Rather, the narrative expresses violence through the introduction of two narrators that vie for the faith of the reader. This effect alone is disconcerting, but the demand to side with one of two narrators is further complicated by the persistent and unannounced exchange of one narrative for the other. There are no clear guidelines as to where Mauberley's narrative ends and that of the outer narrator takes over, and the reader becomes unavoidably confused trying to determine who is speaking.

The violence effected by a narrative juggled between two narrators is best exemplified in chapter 6, where the fictional burning of the Duke of Windsor's Nassau residence is depicted (*FLW* 265-292). One might assume initially that Mauberley is narrating, since the chapter begins with personal details regarding Wallis Simpson's taste in decor and her choice in menu for the buffet (265-67), and, as a personal friend to Wallis, Mauberley would be privy to such details. But a new character, Nelson Kelly, is introduced as he tries to make his way into the estate to see the Duke in order to sell him some information contained in a sealed envelope (271). Minor details are included about "Little Nell," as he is called, including his train of thought as he tries to make his way through the crowds (270), his attitude towards selling people information (269), his concept of God (275), his adoration of Lana Turner (278), and his last thoughts before he is crushed to death (287). Such details of a character's innermost thoughts are more likely to come from an omniscient narrator than a limited character-narrator whose presence at the scene is questionable (Mauberley is not indicated to have even attended the party at Nassau), and so the reader is inclined to conclude that the scene is not being narrated by Mauberley after all. This suspicion is further supported by the narrator's consistent referral to Wallis Simpson as the

Duchess of Windsor (when Mauberley is clearly narrating he generally refers to the Duchess as Wallis), and his referral to Mauberley in the third person (Mauberley always refers to himself in the first person). Yet, directly following the narration of the Nassau fire, Quinn is said to "read again" a line from the narration the reader would have surmised was not coming from Mauberley *verbatim* (289) The reader is thus violated by the narrative as s/he tries to identify the narrator. If the narrator is **not** Mauberley, Quinn could not be reading the story from the wall of the hotel right along with the reader. If the narrator **is** Mauberley, the small details must have been fabricated out of his imagination and, if this is the case, the reader is left to wonder exactly how much is fabricated and how much is fact--not only in this chapter, but in the entire novel. Stephen Scobie concedes that, "some sections of [Mauberley's] testimony are admittedly speculative fiction, right from the start, with Mauberley going far beyond the accepted licence of the observer-hero in the conventional historical novel" (214). In her article "Murder & Lies," Linda Hutcheon explores the relationship between "fictionalizing" and deceit:

> To lie, then, is to fictionalize. . . . the debate between Quinn and Freiberg [sic] in *Famous Last Words* over the truth-status of Mauberley's writing on the wall is carried out in these same terms that equate the act of narration or writing with that of telling falsehoods as easily as truths. (226)

Even if we dismiss Quinn's simultaneous reading of the text and conclude that the narrator is **not** Mauberley, our faith in the accuracy of the narration is diminished because there was no such fire at the Windsor's residence in Nassau (Shields 48). Indeed, despite its pretence to historical documentation, a great many incidents in the novel have absolutely no historical basis. Yet more unnerving, many incidents take a thread of historical fact, and completely

envelop it in fiction. The Nassau fire scene is based loosely upon the exploit of Lauro de Bosis, "Italian poet, scholar and the founder of the "*Alleanza Nazionale*, [who] died on October 3rd 1931 after a flight over the city of Rome during which he dropped anti-fascist pamphlets" (taken from *Acknowledgements*). In the novel, de Bosis' name is changed to de Broca, the city is changed from Rome to Nassau, the date is moved from October 3rd, 1931 to July 4th, 1941, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor are the target of the pilot's antics, and a fictitious fire is set. Despite these significant changes, the reader is encouraged to identify de Broca with de Bosis since the narrator prefaces the chapter with a quote from de Bosis' posthumous publication, "Story of my Death." As Scobie explains, "Findley pushes the paradoxes of truth in historical fiction uncomfortably close to legal questions of libel. . . . The whole format of the novel thus forces onto the reader a continuous awareness of the dialectic between historical and fictional truth" (213), where "historical" truth is understood to be documented fact, and "fictional truth," as Linda Hutcheon puts it, is a "lie" (226). Thus, the reader's suspicions are heightened as s/he becomes increasingly unable to differentiate one narrator from the other, fact from fiction, and is forced to question the validity of the entire novel.

The author, who is entirely separate from the narrator, intentionally violates the reader's faith in the narrative. What is offered, after all, is the "image" of the age's "accelerated grimace." Findley makes no pretence about the validity of the narration. In fact, he systematically discredits it with two suspicious narrators who move in and out of documented truth with disconcerting ease (which is precisely why the objections made to this novel, and its consequent censoring in England for charges of libel, are completely ludicrous). Despite the fact that he has "researched his subject extensively" (Shields 57), Findley

never claims to have any inside information regarding the lives of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. His concern is with those who claim to have some sort of fascist monopoly on "truth," as if truth is a thing that can be determined by one person, controlled by and for the purposes of an elite few, and then bought and sold at a price.

Findley clearly illustrates his objection to the concept of absolute truth through his allusion to the Book of Daniel, made when Quinn discovers Mauberley's epigraph, "'**IN THE SAME HOUR CAME FORTH FINGERS OF A MAN'S HAND, AND WROTE OVER AGAINST THE CANDLESTICK UPON THE PLAISTER [sic] OF THE WALL OF THE KING'S PALACE. . .**'" (52, emphasis and ellipsis Findley's). It is evident that Findley is eager for us to notice this allusion and draw upon its meaning since it is the only text in the novel that is capitalized *and* boldfaced. The excerpt is taken from the Book of Daniel 5:5, where a disembodied hand appears before King Belshazzar and scribbles, on the wall of the palace, a message that can neither be read nor understood by the king and all his sages. The king then sends out a proclamation stating, "Anyone who can read this writing and tell me what it means shall be dressed in purple, and have a chain of gold put around his neck, and be third in rank in the kingdom" (Dan 5:7). It is the prophet Daniel who explains, "The writing reads: *Mene, Mene, Tekel* and *Parsin*. The meaning of the words is this: *Mene*· God has measured your sovereignty and put an end to it; *Tekel*· you have been weighed in the balance and found wanting; *Parsin*: your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians" (Dan 5:25-28). In this allusion, Mauberley plays the part of the disembodied hand as he writes upon the walls of the hotel, Freyberg plays the part of King Belshazzar who instructs Quinn to read the walls and tell him the meaning (*FLW* 56), and Quinn plays the part of Daniel, who believes the "truth" written on the walls will "exonerate Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," and that he

alone can interpret the words accurately, since "this was Quinn's forte" (58).

The fundamental question provoked by the allusion to Daniel, as well as Mauberley's implication that he can tell the truth and Quinn's belief that he can interpret it, is where the absolute truth can be found. Patterson explains that, "Truth, as Bakhtin conceives of it, lies more in process rather than in outcome, more in seeking than in finding" (87). Mauberley's first lie, therefore, is his very assertion that he is the bearer of truth, which he deems to be an absolute and concrete *thing* he keeps in his valise. He is like Little Nell, whose motto was: "There was nothing about these people he did not know and nothing he would not sell" (*FLW* 269). Truth is a commodity that Mauberley hopes will buy him absolution; it is something that can be composed and committed to words like the "pieces of paper" people sought to "absolv[e] them of conspiracy" after Mussolini went into retreat (9). But it is clear that the outer narrator echoes the sentiments of Findley by not forgiving Mauberley any more than he does Mussolini--a man who was himself "drafting rebuttals: '. . .I did not mean. . .I did not want. . .I did not intend. . .it was not my ultimate goal. . .' Just as later at Nuremburg so many others would say; '*I did not know*. . .'" (9, ellipses Findley's). By associating Mauberley, Mussolini, and the "others" at Nuremburg together in one breath, the narrator plainly accuses and condemns them all and renders Mauberley's *apologia* no more credible than any Mussolini or the "others" (i.e., the Nazis) would compose.

Mauberley's use of the Book of Daniel as an epigraph to his testament, likening himself to a messenger of God and the words he inscribes to the Word of God, is a testament to his tendency toward self-aggrandizement. He similarly asserts his inflated self-importance when, at the very beginning of his narration, he decides to attend an "incognito rendezvous" dressed like Cadmus, "a sort of lizard-Lazarus, rising from

the flames of some forgotten human rebellion; an assurance that, in spite of fire, the word would be preserved" (62) When Mauberley asserts to the reader that he "should play the serpent's part," it should warn us (in addition to all the other indications given) that he is *playing* some kind of *part* all the way through the novel, succumbing to some sort of delusion that makes him believe he ***can*** explain everything. After all, Mauberley himself admits in his epigraph that some of what he documents is a lie. As well, Mauberley has already proven to be deviously deceitful with words, as when he attempts to lie to Harry Oakes and remarks, "I knew exactly what to say" (369). He inadvertently admits to having a talent for camouflaging falsehoods as truth when he asserts that he and his contemporaries had adopted the motto, "*the truth is in our hands now*" (177). E F. Shields examines the implications of Mauberley's assertion and remarks, "truth is seen as something that can be created, altered, revised. Rather than being dependent on a correspondence between the event and the account, truth is seen as residing in the account independent of the event" (48).

The lie that Quinn tells himself is that he will *interpret* Mauberley's words and not just accept them blindly. Quinn is an invalid interlocutor because, before even beginning to read, "He was absolutely certain he would exonerate Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (*FLW* 58). He expects to be told the truth, as though truth were an object he could be given, and, thus, he can be certain what his response will be before an utterance is made. Just as Mauberley asserts that he carries the truth around in his valise, Quinn implies that he knows already what the truth is when he states, "'from what I've read so far, he hasn't lied'" (149). To know whether or not Mauberley has lied assumes a solid knowledge of the truth. By asserting that he is in the privileged position of being able to distinguish truth from falsehood, Quinn also partakes in Mauberley's tendency toward self-aggrandizement as he casts

himself in the role of "super-addressee," whom Holquist defines as "God, as the future triumph of [the utterer's] version of the state, as a future reader" (38). While Quinn **is** in fact ***a*** *future reader* to Mauberley's testimony, he deems himself ***the*** *future reader*, a point that will be further elaborated later in this thesis (page 60).

Findley makes clear connections between Mauberley and Quinn. Both men are unusually concerned with their appearance. Mauberley is said to have been "a fastidious dresser, famous for his suits of Venetian white and his muted English ties," and is nearly driven "mad" when he goes into exile without a tie (*FLW* 4). Even in an empty hotel, expecting no one but his murderer, Mauberley "straightened the line of his pinned-up coat and even went so far as to match the ends of his scarf and push them neatly back inside against his chest" (386). Stephen Scobie asserts that "Mauberley is a sucker for glamour, and Findley's readers have to be on the alert to guard against that failing in themselves" (211).

Quinn is, likewise, depicted as having an excessive concern for his personal appearance: "His hair was always combed; his breath was always peppermint fresh and the moons always showed on his fingernails. Even when he had dysentery, his underwear was always clean" (*FLW* 39). Their unwarranted preoccupation with appearances suggests that the two characters are attempting to hide some facet of themselves. There is a subtle connection between the masking effect this preoccupation serves Mauberley and Quinn, and the masks worn by almost every lead character who is a fascist or fascist sympathizer. Wallis Simpson is said to have "never lived without the application of a mask" (73). The Duke admits to himself "that for months he had worn his face like a garment. A woollen mask in which he had begun to suffocate" (212), and, after his disfiguring accident, he is obliged to wear a "'mask'. . . of bandages" (237) and "spend two hours at the make-up tables every time he made a public appearance" (245).

Likewise, "von Ribbentrop had his own mask to wear" (228), and Walter Schellenberg "was a master of deceit" who was able to mask his identity so completely that "[h]e never relied on physical disguise" (222).

Like Mauberley, Quinn is concerned with the way others perceive him, and so "His hands were not allowed to shake: not ever" (45). His desire to have someone witness the "Perfect" way in which he lights his cigarette parallels the way Mauberley leaves his testimony on the walls not to secure his physical well-being, but to salvage his image in the eyes of his fellow man. The concern both men share for their outward appearance reveals a deeper desire for each man to "fix" himself, both mistaken in the belief that this will somehow improve their estimation in the eyes of others. As in The Wars, Findley invites the reader to question appearances, and hold suspect any character who is preoccupied with appearances--especially when he claims to be the bearer of truth.

Another quality that Mauberley and Quinn have in common is their complacency toward language and, tied in with this, their reluctance to move out of the past. Like Mauberley, who "would not take part in this dismantling of the past," (6) Quinn is uncomfortable with any kind of change that involves destruction and feels it is his responsibility to keep everything intact: "Nothing must ever be dropped, nothing knocked over. Nothing must fall. It was a rule" (45).

Mauberley's attitudes about literature and the past are very much at odds with those of Ezra Pound. Pound is imparted a certain amount of respect in the novel simply because he is quoted in part throughout the work. It is significant that, in contrast, we are never allowed to read even a small piece of Mauberley's work. We are informed, however, in no uncertain terms that he is "OUT OF KEY WITH HIS TIME" (128) (This line, as well as the comment that he is "unaffected by the march of events" [128], is taken directly from Pound's

poem [Selected Poems 61]). The fundamental difference between Pound and Mauberley is that which makes one writer respected and the other obsolete--their regard for the past.

Dorothy Pound suggests that it was the "many wars" that finally changed the face of literature: "with them down went all the old necessities for literature; all the old prescriptions for use of the written word; all the old traditions of order and articulation fading under the roar of bombast and rhetoric" (*FLW* 5). Ezra Pound is said, by Dorothy, to have "ador[ed]" the upheaval, and attempted to seek that which language had lost in the past and rework it so that it might be reincorporated into the *now* and the future (5). In effect, Pound violates language in order to render it more useful; destroys it so that it might be regenerated. Pound is depicted as someone who not only welcomes the violence needed to produce good literature, but revels in it, and rises to the occasion "Sometimes with dynamite" (6). He is the sort of artist to whom Bakhtin refers when he asserts, "For the poet, language is actually totally saturated with living intonations; it is completely contaminated by rudimentary social evaluations and orientations, and it is precisely with them that the creative process must struggle" (qtd. in Todorov 48). Pound's eagerness to violate language expresses itself in the violent language he uses, which renders his discourse with others *antagonistic* and *venomous* (*FLW* 8): "Ezra never speaks but that he spits a bullet from a dove's mouth" (80).

In contrast to Pound and contradictory to Pound's advice to "be less afraid of movement than of standing still" (79), "Mauberley would not take part in this dismantling of the past. The past was where he lived; or wanted to" (6). Despite the fact that Pound "had predicted Hugh Selwyn Mauberley would become the greatest writer of his time," he is forced to admit, "There's no place left for a man who writes like Mauberley. Mauberley's whole and only ambition is to

describe the beautiful. And who the hell has time for *that*, any more?" (5). Mauberley lived in "a world transformed by violence" (9), and instead of harnessing that violence for his own literary purposes, he chose to run away from it Pound, on the other hand, "was determined he would brave the ending out," in the belief that confronting the violence was the only way to communicate the self: "That oughta tell 'em who I am" (6).

When Mauberley attempts to communicate his self on the walls of the hotel, he adheres to the past, using old words and refusing to renovate language, refusing to violate the old for the new. His strategy for justifying himself, and thereby *communicating* his self, is to go back into the past and dredge up all the old stories. Bakhtin makes it clear how detrimental it is to deny the future when he states, "Everything that belongs only to the present dies along with the present" (Speech 4). It is Mauberley's reluctance to relinquish the past and to violate language that leads him to construct "careful books" that "even offended the Germans" (*FLW* 7). In fact, when Mauberley's writing on the walls of the hotel is discovered, the first observation that Freyberg makes is that it is "all very. . .careful" (53, ellipsis Findley's).

The *carefulness* of Mauberley's narration stands in direct contrast to the narrative strategy in The Wars. Dennis Duffy discusses the difference between Mauberley's ordered narration and the comparatively disordered, fragmented narration of The Wars:

> The effect of this [fragmented narration] is to encourage the reader to construct his own arrangement of events. . . . Stories do not tell themselves. They do not come to us with beginnings, middles, and ends waiting to be bevelled neatly against each other. They come from scraps and tags, and we order them according to our

> notions of meaning rather than out of a certainty that it had to have been this way. . . . The only *planned* narrative within the novel [Famous Last Words] is that which Mauberley wrote on the walls. All else is the seeming happenstance of the invisible author. . . . the narrative form calls attention to itself, to the fact that it is made-up, planned, imposed upon a wealth of events. (190-91)

The fragmentary narrative of The Wars violates the reader out of complacency, and forces him/her to become a co-creator, but in so doing, it affords the narrative a sense of "honesty" since it resembles the sort of fragmented fashion in which we live our lives--with no *ordered* beginning, middle and end. Order is more immediately comfortable to the reader, but is far less trustworthy because it ostracizes the reader from the creative process by suggesting a pre-determined beginning, middle and end in which the reader is not welcome to participate. Thus, the ordered narrative provided by Mauberley loses the trust of the reader through its failure to violate the reader.

Essentially, Freyberg's objection to Mauberley and his mistrust of the latter's writing is the very reason why Quinn appreciates it: "He was an artist" (*FLW* 53). Quinn, who himself has a "skill . . . with words and ideas" (54), appreciates Mauberley's art for being "neat" and "ordered" (53), which echoes Mauberley's "ambition . . . to describe the beautiful" (5) Freyberg unwittingly sides with Pound, believing that "Words have more important work to do" (5). Orderliness and neatness are, to Freyberg, only evidence of a coercive effort to mask the chaotic and unpleasant truth. After all, the truth, as far as Freyberg is concerned, is Dachau, and his witnessing of Dachau and his traumatization by it informs everything he believes (47). While Findley would not advocate a mind entirely informed by Dachau, at least

Freyberg appreciates, as Pound does, the heteroglossia of language which requires a violation of past concepts and a need to redefine everything in terms of a new context: "Every word smells of the context and contexts in which it has lived its intense social life" (Todorov 56).

Bakhtin explains that to dismiss or try to efface the natural, heteroglot characteristic of language is to attempt to impose a *unitary language* which "makes its real presence felt as a force for overcoming . . . heteroglossia, imposing specific limits to it, guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding" (Dialogic 270); such a process primarily seeks to suppress the assertion that "language is heteroglot from top to bottom," and is contrary to the notion that language derives its meaning directly from the specific dialogue in which it is uttered (291). A word that has been stripped of its context is *reified*, and is no longer functional in dialogue. A reified word has lost its place in the living utterance, and its carcass is put on display as a mere "thing" (432).

Bakhtin contrasts the writer of poetry to the writer of prose, and accuses poets of seeking to define language into narrow parameters, and intentionally suffocating its dialogic nature: "The language in a poetic work realizes itself as something about which there can be no doubt, something that cannot be disputed, something all-encompassing" (286). He defines the poet as one who "accepts the idea of a unitary and singular language and a unitary, monologically sealed-off utterance" (296). Bakhtin asserts that, through the poet's zealous efforts to conform language to his\her needs, "the internal dialogization of discourse is not put to artistic use, . . . and is artificially extinguished" (284); as a result, "the language of poetic genres . . . often becomes authoritarian, dogmatic and conservative," and "in the finished work language is [nothing more than] an obedient organ" (287,286). Poetry is contrasted to prose as a process

that does not appreciate or utilize otherness or an alien language, and, thus, does not take into account in its creation the anticipated response of the reader (282-88).[7]

Quinn condones the poet's use--or misuse--of language through his efforts to absolve Mauberley of any blame. For Quinn, who clings to the past as Mauberley did and despairs to see it violated, vocabulary is absolute, regardless of context: "surely this was sad--unjust--no matter what he'd done" (*FLW* 47). But Freyberg, like Pound, needs to contextualize language, and so "Freyberg never spoke of justice. *Justice* was civilized, so how could you speak of justice in the context of Dachau?" (47). Freyberg also shares Pound's recognition of how violent words can be, and so likens Mauberley's written testimony to a bomb that is "whirring and ticking" (56).

By warning Quinn that Mauberley's words may be wired, Freyberg directly associates the writer with his words, since Mauberley's cadaver had also been checked for "ticking" and "whirring" (42). The idea that we are what we write is supported by Dorothy Pound, who refers to Mauberley's books as his "children" (8). The relationship between words and author is defined even more clearly when Mauberley attempts to set fire to his journals, and ends up setting fire to his hair as well: "His mind was burning: twenty-five years--a quarter century of private thought" (24). The image of Mauberley's mind burning at the same time his journals are alight solidifies the integral relationship of the two, and in the end, "both he and the books--some part of each--had survived" (24). Similarly, when Estrade seeks out Mauberley, it is clear that "[she] wanted not only to kill him: she wanted to kill his words as well" (21).

Findley very deliberately creates a parallel between the words that an author writes and the author himself, so that the two are inseparably associated. Several characters die for their words: Mauberley's father takes his own life after

being fired from Harvard for having "too much to say they didn't want to hear" (2); Barone Masimo Loverso is killed along with his children for having "put some words on paper" (166) (after which his widow spent the next two weeks "destroying every word her husband had ever written" [160]), and, of course, Mauberley is brutally murdered and his journals and notebooks destroyed (388). The message is simple: not only are words violent in the sense that they violate our minds, their incautious use may endanger our physical well-being. This is true not only of the words we write, but also of those we read and hear, as exemplified by Mauberley, who is murdered more for what he has witnessed than for what he has written.

The author suffers the violence of his words, and, due to the inseparable relationship of an author and his words, the violence is reciprocated. Just as words endanger and may kill us, we subject words to the danger of misunderstanding (Findley), and we kill them every time we write (Kroetsch). When Mauberley writes down his observations, the words and lives of those around him are killed into his notebooks. But it is only through killing these words that they might be preserved, and so their death ensures their life. Eventually the words are killed again when the "shorthand scrawl" of "signs and symbols" (23) Mauberley has devised is translated into longhand, and regenerated onto the walls of the hotel.

Findley takes pains to develop the inseparable and reciprocally violent relationship between the author and the author's words in order to establish the consequence that the two invariably share the same credibility. In The Wars, the narrator made no pretence to omniscience--he was kept as much in the dark as the reader, and the two were provided material and invited to make a story from it. In Famous Last Words, most of the information is provided by Mauberley. By the time we are given the opportunity to read Mauberley's words, the information has already been subjected to interpretation three

times: twice by Mauberley (once in his notebooks, and again on the walls), and once by Quinn, since what we are reading is essentially what he is reading. In fact, the reader is made dependent upon Quinn for the relaying of Mauberley's testimony, since "Mauberley himself could tell [his story]--[*only*] so long as Quinn went on with his reading" (65). The more we suspect Mauberley (and Quinn, for that matter, since he does not interpret sincerely), the more we suspect his words. We are more inclined to have faith in the narration of the unnamed narrator, if only because, unlike Mauberley, no one overtly undermines his integrity. However his refusal to define clearly his segments of narration from those of the incredible Mauberley renders his narration as suspect as that of Mauberley, and exposes the author's design to undermine his own narrator.

Harry Reinhard destroys Mauberley's journals, after killing him, in an effort to *completely* destroy him, which expresses an appreciation of the relationship between the author and his words. However, his failure to discover the walls upon which Mauberley has transcribed the journals permits Mauberley to continue to *exist*. When Quinn reads Mauberley's words, he validates Mauberley's *existence*. But the existence, and any validity afforded it, is ephemeral; it is clear by the end of the novel that the walls will be torn down, taking with them "the people on those walls" and the life they were given through Mauberley's words (392).

The last gesture of the entire novel is Quinn's dating of Mauberley's words, "May, 1945" (396). This seemingly insignificant act is crucial to our understanding of Findley's novel. By dating Mauberley's work, Quinn states, *I am the reader of this co-creation*. More importantly, his dating of the work professes his exclusivity as reader: *I am the **only** reader*. In effect, he finishes the work--finalizes it, defines it, sets it in time and place--and, therefore, prevents the reader from participating in its co-creation.

Establishing himself as the sole co-creator, Quinn precludes the fulfilment of Mauberley's exigency to overcome the otherness of the genuine reader. Scobie observes that the primary failure of the fascists in Findley's novel is that "their moral imaginations do not extend beyond themselves" (212). Such an inability to envision anything extrinsic to one's self utterly inhibits the consciousness of that self, since "the very capacity to have consciousness is based on *otherness*" (Holquist 18). Mauberley aptly observes and records the lives of the characters around him, but is unable to develop an assessment of himself from outside, and so fails to develop a self, because, "In order to forge a self, I must do so from *outside*" (28). Mauberley is invalidated as a self and so his testimony regarding others follows suit.

Simply by having Quinn write the date, Findley violates the reader's expectation to validate Mauberley's assertions. The reader finally co-creates the larger narrative, and thereby validates Quinn's experience but not Mauberley's narrative. After all, Findley never claims that Mauberley **was** a valid person, and he does not bring Mauberley's word any credibility; instead, he validates what effect these words have on Quinn. To validate Mauberley's words would mean to condone fascism, for which Findley clearly states he has an "abhorrence" (Gibson 142). Findley also describes fascism as "a neurotic refusal to face reality" (Blackadar F1); thus anyone who advocates fascist ideals is necessarily understood to be enveloped in falsehood. Findley validates the dangers of accepting deceit as truth and of forgiving the guilty according to the eloquence of their excuses.

It is crucial to note that Findley **does** invalidate Mauberley's testimony, lest we make the erroneous conclusion, asserted by Stephen Scobie, that, "By casting so much of the novel in the form of first-person narrative, Findley throws his own lot in with his character's. Our judgement of the acuteness of Mauberley's moral perceptions . . . is also a

judgement of Findley's" (225). To conclude that Findley himself accepts the story he has his character, Mauberley, narrate is a simplistic identification of narrator with author, and it is unfortunately inaccurate. Bakhtin asserts:

> Behind the narrator's story we read a second story, the author's story; he is the one who tells us how the narrator tells stories, and also tells us about the narrator himself. We acutely sense two levels at each moment in the story; one, the level of the narrator, a belief system filled with his objects, meanings and emotional expression, and the other, the level of the author, who speaks (albeit in a refracted way) by means of this story and through this story. . . . If one fails to sense this second level, the intentions and the accents of the author himself, then one has failed to understand the work. (Dialogic 314)

As E.F. Shields explains, "Findley . . . asks for a different response from his audience. Rather than indiscriminate acceptance, he wants active questioning" (45). Mauberley is a fascist, and by violating his narrative, Findley does violence to the very ideology that seeks to undermine dialogism. The function of the reader is to recognize Findley's careful violation, and participate in it by responding to the clues the author has left to indicate that Mauberley is, at the very least, an unreliable source.

Mauberley's words are not the only ones found on a wall in this novel. The allusion to Daniel 5:5, introduced with Mauberley's epigraph (52), is reintroduced later in the novel when Lorenzo de Broca sets fire to the Nassau estate. Before dropping the leaflets that read "DEATH TO FASCISTS EVERYWHERE!" (*FLW* 285), de Broca spells out in smoke a message for the crowd attending the Nassau reception. Little Nell, who makes his living collecting graffiti and believes that "you could sum up the age you lived in by reading its walls"

(275), finally recognizes the completed message "*mene mene tekel upharsin*" (287). It is God's wall that Little Nell reads last, "the final scrawl, the ultimate graffiti" (287). While it is tempting to conclude that Findley includes this scene to warn us that we will always have to answer to a higher power, it is more likely that Findley continually alludes to Daniel to illustrate that having the last word is a luxury of the powerful ("it's the winners who write the history books" [Scobie 214]), and that what we believe to be absolute truth sent by the hand of God may only be the frantic scrawl of a radical, desperate man. Furthermore, the very inclination to have the last word is fascistic because response to the utterance is neither sought nor desired. Holquist explains that fascism violates the very premises of dialogism because a "Totalitarian government always seeks out the (utopian) condition of absolute monologue" (34).

Findley leaves us with no firm idea of what is true and what is lie. Historical fact and fiction are so tightly intertwined that they are difficult to unravel. Nonetheless, "while Findley uses his fiction to emphasize that the difference between fact and fiction is not always clear or even possible to determine, he does not reject the idea that there is a difference" (Shields 56). His advice to us, finally, is *be wary*: "although the difference between fact and fiction is often blurred, we must recognize that there is a difference and continue to attempt to discern one from the other" (57).

Perhaps the most potent writing on a wall is done by someone who is not even a character in the novel, and whose message rings clearer than words could render. In a scene where one could argue the author projects himself through Mauberley, Mauberley discovers on the wall of a cave "the imprint of a human hand" (*FLW* 172):

> *This is my mark;* it said. *My mark that I was here. All I can tell you of my self and of my time and of*

> *the world in which I lived is in this signature: this hand print; mine. . . . I leave you this: my hand as signature beside these images of what I knew. Look how my fingers spread to tell my name.* (173, emphasis Findley's)

Invulnerable to the misinterpretation to which verbal messages are susceptible, this handprint so aptly communicates the existence of its author that the author becomes one of "Some . . . who never disappear" (173). This is precisely the effect that both Robert Ross and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley attempt to initiate in order to validate their existence "at the heart of the human race--which is its will to say *I am*" (173). Robert Ross succeeds in validating his existence because he allows others to portray him, and he includes the reader immediately in this portraiture: "I receive my name from others, and it exists for others" (Problems 288). Mauberley fails despite the fact that he leaves his own handprint (*FLW* 76)--a forged signature in its mimicry of the found handprint--for two reasons: because he rejects the co-creative process with the reader and attempts to portray himself *by* himself, and because he depends on the old words of an exhausted, obsolete language to do so.

Bakhtin illustrates the difference between portraiture and self-portraiture in his statement, "it is always possible to tell a self-portrait from a portrait, by the somewhat *ghostly* character taken on by the face in the first; the self-portrait, in a way, does not encompass the complete man, not wholly and absolutely" (qtd. in Todorov 95). The problem with Mauberley's self-portrait, as with any self-portrait, lies in his neglect of the other. In his desire to justify his life, Mauberley excludes the *other*, and so fails to create a self, since "Justification cannot be self justification, recognition cannot be self recognition" (Problems 288-89). His fascist sympathies are, thus, illuminated by his inability to recognize and overcome otherness. To disregard and disrespect

otherness was a trait espoused by the Nazi movement, which, as Holquist explains, "had as its aim the suppression of all otherness in a state so that its creator alone might flourish" (34). In the end, "[Mauberley] does not so much die as cease to exist" (Scobie 209). In fact, one could argue that Mauberley **never** existed, since he is established immediately as a character who is obsolete. To be obsolete is to "cease to respond [to the dialogue of existence]," and the consequence of this is death (Holquist 49).

Chapter Four

Violent Silences

If "to live means to participate in dialogue" (Problems 293), it is not a far leap to recognize silence as death. "Absolute death (nonbeing)," Bakhtin explains, "is the state of being unheard, unrecognized, unremembered . . . " (287); in effect, *to die, or cease to exist, means to fail to communicate.* In The Lovely Treachery of Words, Robert Kroetsch asserts "The ultimate violence that might be done to story is silence" (109), and so offers the reader the concept of "violent silence" (85). Just as, in previous chapters, we have discussed the need of characters who are threatened by some sort of violence (ie., fascism threatens dialogue) to destroy that threat by violating the violence (ie., Findley violates fascism by writing about it and thereby committing it to dialogue), so also must those characters who are confronted with violent silence violate that silence.

The most effective way to violate silence is with dialogue. That which is committed to dialogue is liberated from silence and given life. Conversely, the breakdown of dialogue subjects everything to silence and therefore death. Accordingly, anyone who is intentionally silent, or worse yet, who intentionally silences another, commits the greatest act of violence. To lash out against, or *violate*, such a one who would silence others is to be regarded as the greatest of heroes. It is upon this premise that Findley develops the unlikely hero of The Last of the Crazy People.

Hooker Winslow, in The Last of the Crazy People, is a twelve year old child subjected to a house of silence. Devastated by the stillbirth of the youngest child, the Winslow family expresses an ultimate empathy with the dead baby that renders them "*dead* quiet" (*LCP* 12, emphasis added). Iris Browne, the maid, aptly observes, "'These people are all asleep. . . . They make their whole life round things that are

dead'" (92). The dead baby becomes like the missing father in Surfacing whom Kroetsch identifies as "the central metaphor" for the novel: "all is periphery and margin, against the hole in the middle. We are held together by that absence. There is no centre. This disunity is our unity" (31). At the same time, the baby is, like that of Audrey Thomas's protagonist Blown Figures, "a child who did not ever escape from silence, into speech" (112).

The *middle* or centre that unites the Winslow family is, therefore, a silenced entity. Since the child is never allowed a voice, even its death is invalid because, where there is no existence made valid through dialogue, there can be no valid death. The child hovers in an inescapable state of non-existence. The child's non-existence is further reinforced by the other characters who neither name the child, nor refer to the child with any other pronoun than the neuter pronoun: "it." Thus, the baby, simply by having been silenced, is denied life, deprived of a valid existence, excluded from death, and divested of its very humanness through the other characters' refusal to recognize it in name or gender.

The family is continually reminded of the dead child, and therefore continually compelled to maintain the silence that followed its death, by the presence of the ever-mourning mother. Hooker's mother is initially characterized by her "weeping . . . crying . . . complaining" (*LCP* 11, ellipses Findley's). She is rarely seen by Hooker, and, even before the child's still-birth, he only ever hears her "making noises and saying words that he did not understand" (11). Jessica Winslow, her speech reduced to *noises* that cannot be understood, already teeters dangerously close to non-existence even before the silent child is made the center of their world. In fact, it may be argued that the baby is not able to exist because Jessica is barely able to sustain her own existence, much less that of another. Much later in the

novel, when she is confronted by a drunk Gilbert, her eldest son, she exclaims, "'I will not go . . . on . . . giving . . . birth . . to you . . . and to Hooker . . . and to that . . . god . . . damned . . . baby'" (155, ellipses Findley's). Her unwillingness to "go on giving birth" stems from her inability to give life, as she admits, "'I *can't* bear you'" (155, emphasis added).

When Jessica returns home from the hospital, the narrator observes that "She did not look real. She was dead" (13). Already committed to the contagious silence that will infect the rest of her family, Jessica forfeits a viable existence to become nothing more than a "parade of noise and pain" (13). Her *death* is emphasized by the narrator's use of the impersonal neuter pronoun when referring to her: "*It* mounted the steps" (13, emphasis added). Jessica's sharing of the impersonal neuter pronoun with her stillborn child illustrates her willingness to follow that child into non-existence.

Very little insight is given into Jessica's character before her "illness." But it is clear that Jessica once, if not still, adhered to some sort of ambiguous version of Catholicism: Nicholas notices that the books in Jessica's room are "mostly religious books" (40); Hooker is inclined to pray every time there is an uproar from Jessica's room because "his mother had taught him to rely on prayer in all instances of confusion" (49); and the narrator notes that "She was not a Catholic but had always owned a crucifix just the same" (83). However, the only religious sentiment that Jessica ever expresses is her damning of her children. With her crucifix in hand, Jessica curses at Hooker, "'God--damn--you--Hooker!'" (84). Her damning of Hooker is supported by Rosetta, who reiterates the curse directly afterward, "'Oh, damn you, Hooker. Damn you'" (84). Jessica similarly curses her stillborn child, referring to it as "'that . . . god . . . damned . . . baby'" (155), thus, indirectly identifying Hooker with the dead child, and wishing Hooker a similar fate.

Indeed, Hooker is sensitive to his mother's wish; the narrator notes, he "understood how difficult it was to be alone when people wanted to kill you" (135).

As if somehow aware that his mother's failure to recognize him may, indeed, *damn* him in terms of his existence, Hooker expresses a strong desire to have his mother speak to him, or at least say his name since, "He hadn't heard her speak it for months" (16). The giving and using of names becomes an essential precedence to existence: the stillborn child is not given a name, nor a sex, and so is made completely dead. Hooker and Iris argue about who has the right to use what name (19-21), and when Gilbert's name is mentioned, Gilbert himself enters the room. Iris remarks, "Speak of the devil an' you get him. . . . Sure as God" (22); thus the scene illuminates the manner in which the invocation of a person's name beckons his/her existence. By refusing to speak Hooker's name, Jessica threatens her son's existence. Jessica's silence is thus demonstrated to be detrimental not only to the viability of her own existence, but to that of Hooker's as well.

Very little genuine dialogue takes place between characters in the novel. (By *genuine* I refer to the sort of utterance-response experience wherein neither the utterance nor response are predetermined by social *mores* which could inflict a staged effect on the supposed *dialogue* and render it markedly disingenuous.) Proof that such disingenuous dialogue takes precedence over any other is evident in the narrator's comment regarding one of Nicholas' questions to Hooker about which it is noted, "It was an absolute question *for a change*" (265, emphasis added). Ironically, however, this novel appears to contain more dialogue than any other by Findley; it is difficult to find two sequential paragraphs which are not interrupted by quotation marks. This may, in part, be due to the fact that an inordinate number of "thoughts" are recorded in quotation marks but are never expressed verbally by the

characters: for example, "Hooker thought" (20, 22), "she [Rosetta] thought" (30, 33, 34), and "he" or "Nicholas thought" (35, 37, 40). These are certainly not the only instances where a character thinks, but does not speak, but even this many before the first fifty pages of the text is indicative of a convention in the novel of thinking rather than speaking.

The reasons why characters choose not to participate in dialogue are not absolutely clear, although it is suggested that Jessica's refusal to communicate was the contagion that pervaded the rest of the family. Lorraine York suggests that it is the Winslow's "inability to respond to each other" that has afflicted them with a "plague which has destroyed the family" (Dailiness 65). This *plague* has not only dissipated the family's inclination to communicate, but has divested them of the very substance for any dialogue; as Rosetta points out to Nicholas, "'. . . he can't have anything to say. How can he have? He can't. No one can. Not even you and I have anything to say--and Hooker hasn't, naturally . . .'" (*LCP* 60).

Rosetta, however, strongly misjudges Hooker when she includes him in the circle of those who "can't have anything to say." Despite the fact that "Always, it was assumed Hooker was blind and deaf" (49), Hooker still questions, and actively seeks answers. And when he finds response, as in the rare case when Alberta Perkins answers his questions about "Arm'geddon" and "perdition" (97-100), he is able to "underst[and] it all" (100). This is why Iris' stories and explanations become so important to the decisions Hooker makes at the end of the novel.

Hooker's greatest occupation is asking questions. He has a fervent and determined desire to *know*, to *understand*. As though he unconsciously comprehends the necessity of dialogue to achieve understanding, he delights in provoking Iris into "arguments" (20-21), if only to experience the sort of

utterance-response dialogue from which he is otherwise excluded. Iris is the only character who actively and consistently responds to Hooker's persistent questioning. She shares Hooker's recognition of silence as an unpeaceful, violent ignorance, and so exclaims to her friend, "'I want peace, and I want to *know*'" (93). Like Hooker, she seeks response, and despairs to realize "'There isn't any answer'" (94). Nonetheless, she does not discourage dialogue, and so is the only character who willingly discusses things with Hooker, such as childbirth (51-54), and Jessica's condition (174-76). Even though many of her responses are little more than fables (see 44-45), or outright lies ("'No,' said Iris, lying" [51]), her willingness to participate in dialogue sets her and Hooker apart from other members of the family: "It was always the same, every day, now, in the closed-up house. Two people talking, and the rest all silent" (26). The fragmented structure of the first sentence, chopped up with commas, illustrates the destructive nature of the silence that envelops the Winslow family, just as the gratuitous comma in the second sentence, placed between "Two people talking" (Hooker and Iris) and "the rest" (of the family), emphasizes the separation of the two parties.

Iris teaches Hooker the song "Frankie and Johnny," and, even more importantly, she interprets the story for him, and flatly refutes the assertion that the tale is a "'story of murder'" rather than "'a love story'" (42). The story, as Iris tells it, is of a woman who kills the man she loves when she discovers he is unfaithful to her (44-45). But the most important part of the story as far as Hooker is concerned is the conclusion, where Johnny forgives Frankie just before he dies: "'I know you loved me so it's okay. And he died forgiving her that way'" (45). According to Iris, even the court forgave Frankie for having "'killed him for love'" (45). In the ensuing debate between Iris and Gilbert it becomes clear where Hooker first associates murdering someone with

loving them. Though Gilbert objects, "'Nobody kills someone they love,'" Iris insists that "' . . . they will kill *because* of love. Perhaps they kill some people because they love them so bad that they can't stand to see them do wrong that way. Or because they can't stand the unhappiness anymore'" (45-46). Finally Gilbert is forced to yield to Iris, remembering a quote from Oscar Wilde: "'Yet each man kills the thing he loves . . .'" (46).

Bakhtin examines the process of introducing other genres, such as a song, into the novel: "All these genres [short stories, lyrical songs, poems, dramatic scenes], as they enter the novel, bring into it their own languages, and therefore stratify the linguistic unity of the novel and further intensify its speech diversity in fresh ways" (Dialogic 321). By acquainting Hooker with the song, Iris brings a new language to Hooker. Another language to which she exposes Hooker is "Negro" (20). Thus, Iris plays an instrumental role in protecting Hooker from the disease of silence by always responding to his utterances, and by enriching his language with diverse voices which he may assume or assimilate into his own voice.

The song "Frankie and Johnnie" becomes Hooker's leitmotif, and killing what one loves becomes the theme of the novel. In Gibson's interview, Findley admits he was inspired to write this first novel when he heard of a child who killed several members of his family: "I was thunderstruck by what I considered the beauty, in the sense of the simplicity, of his statement when someone . . . said to him: Can you tell me why you did it? He said: Because I loved them so. And for me, that's all he needed to say" (135-36). Killing what one loves is an experience every author must deal with when writing, since writing is itself an act of murder. Indeed, when Gibson asks Findley what an individual might do to break out of the nightmare that is non-existence, Findley likens himself to Hooker when he explains, "For me the doing is my

writing books. . . . For Hooker it is the killing, because that is the blessed relief of action. It's almost like an orgasm in a funny way. It's a terrible striving for a necessary climax without which we do go insane" (143-44). For Findley, as for Hooker, *doing* as opposed to *non-doing* parallels dialogue as opposed to silence. Hooker's killing of his family, brutal and sad as it seems, is positive in that it is a violation of their silence--it is a *doing* in direct violation of their *non-doing*.

Gilbert unwittingly fleshes out Hooker's ideas of killing when he tries to explain why people assassinate other people, and concludes that assassins are motivated by a need to "'make something happen'" and a desire for "'Happiness'" (*LCP* 69). He further helps to develop Hooker's as yet embryonic plans to kill his family by asserting that "'. . . if you're some people, it would make you happy, being dead. Especially if someone else killed you'" (70). Although at one time it may have "seemed so peculiar to destroy one perfectly good thing in place of another" (166), Hooker must inevitably come to terms with the realization that "There had to be death" (70) before there could be preservation; some things must be destroyed in order for others to survive.

Hooker must deal first with killing when one of his cats brings home a squirrel, still alive but badly maimed (78-80). It is sheer pity that carries Hooker through the traumatic act of killing the squirrel, which he is obliged to perform with a hatchet. Later, when Hooker discovers a gun while visiting Alberta Perkins, he is struck by the thought, "'If I had a gun, I could kill them without hurting them'" (97). When expressed, this idea is void of context, and violates the reader with its suddenness and obscure subject. The antecedent of the "them" in Hooker's exclamation is ambiguous, and this ambiguity in such a remark immediately puts the reader in distress.

The possible meaning of Hooker's remark effects a distress in the reader that simulates the shock that the initial idea had upon the author. In his memoirs, Findley describes the realization that Hooker was going to kill his family as an idea that "just swept over [him]" (Inside 70). His initial reaction to the idea illustrates with what violence it impressed itself upon the author's imagination: " . . .Dear God. I know what Hooker is going to do. He is going to kill his family. And I cannot bring myself to write it" (69, ellipsis Findley's). In an interview with David Cameron, Findley claims that "'. . . it's funny how Hooker winds up killing the family. It evolved completely against my will'" (51). Like the "explosion" that struck Findley when the image of Robert Ross impressed itself upon his imagination (Macfarlane 6b), Findley carries the violence of the inspiration to the very form of the narration, such that the reader is struck not only by the content of the violent narration, but by the very violence **of** the narration. Thus, Hooker's revelation is introduced into the narrative without warning, expressed in vague terms, and then immediately dislocated from the narrative, leaving the reader to wonder if the idea will resurface either in the narrative or in the mind of the character.

Hooker's tentative plans to kill his family out of their silence are resolved after he witnesses Gilbert's suicide (*LCP* 230). Gilbert could, himself, have been the *saviour* of his family, since, in many ways, his concern for their silence and his want to see it destroyed resemble the substance of what compels Hooker to perpetrate his ultimate violation. The narrator illustrates Gilbert's appreciation of the violence that is necessary to create dialogue and to discern truth, noting, "With his thoughts, Gilbert had moved around in such enormous sentences and active arguments that anyone who listened was terrified, because the thoughts were always angry and pointed and sometimes true" (258). In Front Lines, York

refers to Gilbert as "the main opponent to this regime of silence" (17), and suggests that he is a soldier at war with the silence his family perpetuates. Gilbert also expresses a rudimentary understanding of the necessity to destroy in order to preserve when, in a drunken state, he intentionally runs over Hooker's cat when he mistakes it for a red skunk, because he knows no one will believe him if he says he has seen a red skunk unless he can show them the carcass (*LCP* 159); in other words, the *red skunk* can only exist for others as long as it is dead.

Given Gilbert's sensitivity to the need for dialogue and his willingness to confront and violate various silences with words that are "somehow deadly" because they are "not at all disguised in . . . meaning" (225), it is difficult to determine precisely where Gilbert errs and confers to Hooker the responsibility of *saving* the family. It may be that, however fervent his desire to dissipate the silence that has enveloped his family, he suffers from a weakness in the face of that silence that renders him vulnerable to the very thing that he wants to destroy. This vulnerability may stem from an overwhelming empathy Gilbert bears for his mother, who was the first to fall victim to the silence, and who advocates the continual presence of that silence by her self-ostracism from her family. York likens Gilbert to Jessica's stillborn child, referring to him as an "intellectual stillbirth--the social equivalent of Jessica Winslow's stillborn child" (Front 17).

Gilbert's identification with his dead sibling, and his acute empathy for Jessica leave him susceptible to the illness of silence from which his mother suffers. In fact, Nicholas admits that he has always suspected the two are afflicted by the same illness (*LCP* 60). Hooker recognizes a similarity between the two when he decides that both Gilbert and Jessica share a want to be "good" (270). In a sense, the two characters are very much alike: both of them are driven to their deaths by their inability to cope with inflicted

silence. For Jessica, who commits a familial suicide by ostracizing herself from her family, the inflicted silence takes the form of her stillborn child, for whose ultimate silencing she assumes the guilt. For Gilbert, the inflicted silence stems from the fact that he "had to wonder" (198); he required active questioning, and, instead of responses, found discouragement. Gilbert's subsequent fear of utterance is illustrated when, indicating his maddened mother, he exclaims, "'That . . . is what happens when you explain yourself'" (111).

Gilbert turns, for the most part, from verbal utterance to behavioral utterance. He expresses to Hooker a want for his behaviour "'to be stopped'" (196). For Gilbert, "to be stopped" would qualify as a response to his behavioral utterance. Gilbert adds to this, "'I want to *be*'" (196, emphasis added) which indicates that such a response would validate his existence. Failing to evoke such a response, or, indeed, *any* response, to his aberrant behaviour, he resorts to suicide. Gilbert's suicide is a response to his own behavioral utterance, and more importantly, a response to everyone else's failure to respond.

By committing suicide, Gilbert hopes to be a martyr, "like Peter crucified" (230), and thus destroy the silence of the others. But, in the end, Gilbert is reduced to "a giant insect, pinned to the ground, its six legs sprawled about it in a chaos of futility" (231). Like his mother, Gilbert succumbs to the silence instead of violating it, and so is reduced to an impersonal neuter pronoun, his existence stripped of any viability it may once have had. Lorraine York observes that, "Gilbert never does sort out and communicate his vision and his pain" (Dailiness 64). Thus, the entire scene of Gilbert's suicide is enveloped in silence, "no one spoke or even cried out or whispered" (*LCP* 230); his act fails to incite dialogue. Even as Nicholas frantically poses questions, "No one spoke" (232), and the silence renders

Gilbert's otherwise purposeful gesture, "a chaos of futility" (231). Kroetsch asserts that "We must resist endings, violently" (108). By committing suicide Gilbert does not resist, but rather succumbs to endings since he *ends* himself. Bakhtin noted that, through suicide, "a man finalizes himself from within" (Problems 296), and by finalizing himself, Gilbert willingly joins the stillborn child in the center of silence around which the family revolves.

Though Gilbert's suicide ultimately fails *him*, it *is* useful if only because it teaches Hooker, by example, what not to do. Hooker wonders what it is like for Gilbert to be stuck in a coffin, and he symbolically beats against the coffin of silence that is his family's house (*LCP* 251). Gilbert, like Hooker, "was desperate for words--for a voice--to make noises" (258). But Hooker learns from Gilbert's futile attempt to violate silence with self-destruction. It is directly after Gilbert's suicide that Hooker experiences what York terms his "terrifying still moment of insanity" (65), that manifests itself in the form of "a fearful thought" (*LCP* 271).[8]

Mirroring the structure of The Wars, the reader finds Hooker, in the *Epilogue*, where he was left in the *Prologue*, "Waiting in the stable" (272). Hooker lures his family out of their coffin by his absence. One by one, each member leaves the house and calls for Hooker, and as each family member calls Hooker's name, each one recognizes Hooker's existence and shatters the deadly silence: thus "the boy and the cat at last were answered" (272). Even Jessica Winslow leaves her room and speaks her son's name "for the first time in months" (275).

Having brought his family together and enticed them from their silence, Hooker replaces the missing baby and becomes the center that unifies them in their search for him. Once Hooker has supplanted the missing baby and established himself as the center, he must assert his existence in the place of

the dead child's non-existence. When the Winslows recognize Hooker as center, they are dislodged from their silences. Jessica is actually inspired to conversation, and discusses her exploits as a child, St. Theresa's confrontation with the devil, and the syringa bush planted for her wedding (276-277). Then, just as Kroetsch's porcupine "explodes," the center that is Hooker blows up in each person's face: Hooker shoots to death his aunt Rosetta, his mother Jessica, and his father Nicholas (278-79).

The violent act of murder is an act of preservation. Like the "careful photographs" that render their subjects "poised and dead" (253), Hooker seeks to forever prolong the dialogue of his family by destroying them before they are given the chance to crawl back into their silences. Lorraine York asserts that, "Photography and death are . . . traditional companions, but in Findley photography itself is seen as an aggressive act analogous to murder. . . . The camera and the gun are equally destructive weapons in *The Last of the Crazy People*" (Dailiness 68). By killing his family, Hooker succeeds in eternally sustaining the dialogue they had begun just moments before their death. Bakhtin explains that, with death, "The person has departed, having spoken his word, but the word itself remains in the open-ended dialogue" (Problems 300).

Iris seems to have possessed a prescience of Hooker's intent to destroy silence by destroying his family when she reaches for him, saying, "You're all right now. . . . You've done it. It's over" (*LCP* 280). Iris does not need to be destroyed, because, unlike the others, she had not succumbed to the silence, and had always been willing "to listen to him and talk to him" (12). Iris is able to "reach out with her voice" and so "It did not occur to her . . . that he might shoot her" (280). Her willingness to engage in dialogue saves her from the Winslow's fate of silence, and, consequently, their inability to exist as "real" characters. Gibson makes

reference to the character Dolly in Findley's The Butterfly Plague who said, "'You die when you can't be real'. . . . And that," Gibson concludes,"underlies the death of the Winslow family" (147).

What is silent is unreal, and what is unreal must be destroyed before it infects others with its contagion. York points out that, "Not only are the Winslows the victims of crippled vision, they also curb Hooker's vision. . . . Hooker's family is continually placing him on the periphery, shooing him out to play, hiding the facts of his mother's illness or of Gilbert's troubles from him--in short, impairing his vision" (Dailiness 64). Thus, Hooker discovers, after having killed his family, that "For the first time, ever, in the whole of his life, the questions were gone" (*LCP* 281).

In his interview with Donald Cameron, Findley explains, "I think Hooker has a lot to do with the Kennedy thing and also with the urgency with which we must wipe out the old order. We must destroy what is destroying us. We must kill what is killing us. **We must violate the violators** "(62, emphasis added). By killing his family, Hooker becomes the "storm" (*LCP* 278) that breaks apart the "absolute drought" (4) of his family's silence, and so their deaths become the response to all of his unanswered utterances. Through his act of violence, he violates their silence, and thereby establishes himself as "'a saviour figure'" (Findley, qtd. in Cameron 51) who has "'delivered them from their torment'" (Findley, qtd in Gibson 133).

Conclusion

Violence For the Sake of Creativity

Imagine a relay race upon which you have come after the starting gun. You witness a runner with a baton running the course and then passing the baton, in mid stride, to the next runner. The exchange takes place so smoothly that it is difficult to discern when the baton is released by the first runner and taken by the second. You assume that these are the first and second runners, but you quickly realize that, not having seen the starting gun, these could easily be the second and third runners, even the third and fourth. You cannot be sure.

The violence of Timothy Findley's literature is passed on as in a relay race. We witness Findley's violation of his characters, and his characters' subsequent violation of each other, and of themselves. Our witnessing of such violence violates us, and so we take that violence with us, and share it with others either because we relate the story line to them, or simply because, having ourselves been violated, we are unknowingly changed by the violence we have encountered. Nothing, once it is violated, can be *un*violated.

But we have not arrived at the race at the starting gun, and, unbeknownst to us, the baton did not start with Findley--it was given to him. It is he, after all, who was first violated by his characters, these "maniacs" who take up residence inside his mind and force him to write out their existence. And no one can say what violence it was that imbedded these characters so suddenly and unrelentingly into his mind: a past experience, perhaps, a memory that does not belong to him, maybe even another piece of literature. In his *Introduction* to his collection of short stories, Dinner Along the Amazon, Findley tries to locate the inspiration for his short story *Out of the Silence*, by explaining that, "something overheard or spotted from the corner of my eye, caught at my

attention and worried me until I had it on the page" (xii). But, in the final analysis, not even Timothy Findley can ascertain accurately where the race of violence began, or begins.

The entire time this race is taking place, another violence, upon which the very lives of the characters depend, manifests itself. In the author's attempt to exorcize the demanding characters from his mind, he is obliged to confront and violate the limits of language. If he is successful in violating language, he will create literature, if not, the words he writes will not penetrate the interest of the reader and will not violate him/her into co-creating what is being read by responding to its utterance. No literature is genuinely created if it is not co-created, just as no utterance is valuable without a response, and no violence is purposeful unless it seeks, as its end, to create. Mere violation is like an utterance that chooses to exclude response; it bears the trappings of meaningfulness, but rejects the substance.

At its most fundamental level, literature consists of the integral relationship between violence and dialogue, and the need to seek out and locate what is true, and therefore alive, in literature and in life. Dialogue may only exist once language has been violated, since language is inevitably inundated with the voices of every interlocutor who has ever engaged in that language, and who has, thereby, played some part in the meaning of each word used (Speech Genres 69) Each successive utterer is confronted with the task of communicating with words that are polluted with the meanings of every antecedent utterer;[9] clarity of meaning, and therefore communication, is contingent on the utterer's ability to violate the language with his/her own meaning. Once language has been violated, dialogue can be initiated.

Thus, violence is imperative to the development of dialogue. In turn, dialogue needs violence. Nothing can be communicated, especially truth, except through dialogue, since dialogue alone (the process of utterance and response) can validate existence. Dialogue, brought about by violence, in turn violates silence, and in violating silence violates, as well, *non*-truth and *non*-existence. Inversely, anyone who rejects dialogue succumbs to silence, and in so doing resigns him/her self to non-existence, and becomes shrouded in non-truth.

Language is violated so that communication can be created, and silence is violated so that dialogue can create. Everything, in its turn, is destroyed so that something more creative can be built upon its ruins. Most importantly, silence is destroyed so that dialogue can take place and validate existence. In The Wars, Ross is destroyed so that his life might be objectified (made an object of dialogue) for the narrator and reader who co-create his life by their unspoken responses to photographs. Through the process of this dialogue, the truth of his existence is elucidated. In Famous Last Words, Mauberley is destroyed because he never absolutely relinquishes his fascist ideology and the ego-centricity that is so much a part of fascism, despite his vehement rejection of certain fascists. Where there is fascism, or any exercise of the ego that excludes the recognition and appreciation of otherness, there can be no dialogue; and where dialogue is extinguished, silence ensues. Mauberley is destroyed in order to violate silence. In the same way, Hooker Winslow destroys his family out of his immense love for them and his desire to deliver them from their silence. The Winslow family's oppression of dialogue renders their existence disingenuous, and so, by killing them, Hooker offers them the only salvation available to them: a genuine death.

Timothy Findley's illustration and exploration of the reciprocal, on-going relationship between violence and language does not end with these three novels. One can easily find evidence of the interplay between violence and language in all of his works. For example, The Telling of Lies is an important work in terms of Findley's development of violence and language. In it, the heroine-narrator must weed through the thick façades donned by other characters in order to dispel the carefully constructed falsehoods that overshadow the circumstances of a murder. To expose the murderer and disclose the truth, the heroine is obliged to re-construct language in order to purge from it the lies with which it is saturated.

The issues addressed in this thesis are not, by far, the only instances when violence and language are forced to the forefront. Throughout his canon, Findley repeatedly deals with the question of insanity. Many of his characters are labelled *mad*, and Findley addresses both the need to violate our narrow vision of thought and behaviour that is accepted as *sane*, as well as the heroism of those who violate the boundary of what is considered sane in order to achieve something that cannot be accomplished within such restrictive confines (see *Notes*:9).

Another fascinating issue addressed by Findley in all of his works that cannot be tackled within the scope of this thesis, is sexual politics. It is difficult, if not impossible, to locate even one functioning heterosexual couple in all of Findley's canon. The brutality with which the sexes treat each other in his work is startling; it is easy to draw a direct parallel between the violence between the sexes and the violence necessary to destroy silence Given the obstacles to communication that all people are bound to face, such violence may be deemed vital to the well-being of every couple. Without the violence, and assuming that each couple *will* encounter communication problems, the couple will become

complacent in their silence, each resigned never to understand, and so never to try to have dialogue with, the other.

This is essentially the problem to which Mr. and Mrs. Ross and Mr and Mrs. Winslow have succumbed. Both of the wives guard themselves sequestered in their bedrooms, into which their husbands are no longer welcome to come. Their physical isolation is symbolic of their sexual isolation; both states suggest unproductiveness, impotency, sterility--terms that bear no more positive implications in Findley's canon than they would in any other. Such is the case for every couple in Findley's works: they are violated by circumstances and driven into separate corners of silence, and must violate that silence if they hope ever to become productive. Perhaps the most sensitive treatment of this issue of sexual silence is found in Findley's short story *Dinner Along The Amazon*, from the collection of the same name.

Religion, and the violence it inflicts on people, is yet another issue that Findley addresses in almost every one of his works. Religion violates people by forcing upon them unyielding restrictions (that are, most often, unreasonable), and by discouraging dialogue through its claim to have the ultimate word and a monopoly on truth. The issue of religious oppression is the main thrust of the novel Not Wanted on the Voyage, but can also be found to a lesser degree in The Wars and The Last of the Crazy People. As with every other violence/language struggle, the characters must violate the silence of their subservience and *duty*, and reinstate dialogue as the only genuine process for truth.

Certainly the most profound violence in Findley's canon is the one the author employs to jolt the reader into paying attention to the substance of his literature. With illustrations of graphic violence and with subtle metaphor, Findley seeks to impress his writing on the imagination of the reader in such a way that each reader is changed, however

slightly, for having read Findley. It is not a challenge that Findley takes lightly, and it is not one that every author espouses. But for every reader who has ever had to divert his/her eyes from a page in Findley's novels as if from a horrific photograph that appears suddenly within the range of vision, the violation is an unbidden force that will quietly inform how that reader will perceive many things for a very long time. If somehow Findley can violate part of us, he has created literature.

Notes

1. Of those who have recognized the more subtle (and frankly the more dangerous) expressions of psychological violence, few have located the source of violence in the language of the texts. Among those who *have* discussed the use of violence in the language of Timothy Findley are Kroetsch ("Exploding Porcupine"), E.F. Shields ("Mauberley's Lies"), and Hutcheon ("Murder & Lies"). York deals with both the physical and the non-physical violence of Findley's works in most of her works (listed in the Bibliography).

   The only other work that closely resembles the ideas to be discussed in this thesis is an essay written by Jack Warwick, "Two Joual Novels and a Dialectic of Violence," included in Violence in the Canadian Novel Since 1960. In the essay, Warwick asserts that:

   > Violence may be manifested in literature in two ways. It can be represented in the actions depicted in fiction [physical violence], or it can in some way be incorporated into the act of writing. . . . Writing, since it has to be a form of communication, implies the recognition of otherness. It sometimes takes the form of a veritable assault on the reader, but this is to be regarded as stratagem: the real aim is still communication, a reduction of otherness and a gesture of humanisation. (45)

   Warwick's essay does not, however, touch upon Findley, and so this is where the similarity ends.

2. Lorraine York asserts that "the use of short, powerful paragraphs contributes to the final effect," and adds that such use of one-sentence paragraphs that stand isolated from the rest of the text "emphasizes the

fragmentation of body and mind" (Intro 41,51).

3. The Last of the Crazy People will be treated last, despite the fact that it chronologically precedes The Wars and Famous Last Words, because the latter two novels better facilitate the introduction and development of Bakhtin's theory of dialogics. Examples of the use of violence through and on language are far more numerous in The Wars and Famous Last Words, perhaps only because there are many more characters and settings than in The Last of the Crazy People. The latter novel does powerfully embody Bakhtin's theory of dialogics, but its primary focus is limited to a single family, thereby limiting the opportunity to explicate these theories through illustrative examples.

4. My understanding of literature as dialogue is largely indebted to Bakhtin's The Dialogic Imagination, particularly the essay therein entitled "Discourse In the Novel" (359-422).

5. It is very disturbing to discover that York chooses to equate the sex between Taffler and the Swede with Robert's rape, claiming it to be "Sex not of a loving, but of a brutal, power-obsessed sort" (Intro 58). York equates the scene of gay sex with that of rape on the premise that both are violent acts, and yet she easily dismisses the equally violent sex of Ross and Barbara as "making love" (69). Both sex scenes are described in terms of violence, and yet one is equated with a horrific crime, and the other is given a romantic euphemism. I am inclined to conclude that York mistook Robert's unease at witnessing the gay sex for Findley's unease, claiming that Taffler seeks to be a "Goliath" through this sex act despite his very clearly passive position (he is lying down) and the fact that he is being ridden like a beast

of burden and whipped on the thighs, and ignoring the obvious association of Taffler and the Swede with animals despite the fact that she had just finished examining the positive nature of Findley's animal allusions (77).

6. Adrienne Clarkson presented an interview with Timothy Findley at Stone Orchard during which, while watching his cats play on the porch, Findley queries why it is that mankind has always considered animals to be of lesser import than man. Findley is quick to assert that he has always considered "these creatures" to be of equal, if not greater, stature than human beings. In countless interviews, and practically every one of his works, Findley expresses his admiration and envy of animals. In his writing, they are often the heroes, or, at least, in sympathy with the hero.

7. Pound would not be considered a "poet" in Bakhtin's strict sense of the word, because his entire *oeuvre* celebrates the heteroglossia of language; he borrows from other alien texts and invites the original sense of each borrowed text, preserved in its alien language, to enter his poetry and derive a new meaning in its resurrected state. In Pound's work, one has more of a sense that the author strives to be "obedient" to the word, rather than that the word is made subservient to the author.

8. Insanity, to Findley, does not bear the negative implications which are popularly associated with it. In an interview with Graeme Gibson, Findley asserts that we all have "a dependence on the insane people to do sane things," and goes on to say that, "The ultimate sanity comes from the insane, I believe. Now--be careful! What I mean is--we call the **sane** 'insane'" (122). For Findley, insanity becomes another necessary violence whose end is to disrupt and rework; one major concept

that needs to be reworked is that of *truth*. Thus Findley comments, " . . . one thing about the 'mad,' you see, is they don't like lies. So this is why I seize so often upon these people as the heroes of my work. It's only because they have this straight, flung-out connection through the mind to some kind of absolute clarity" (Inside 181). Findley challenges our idea of what is "sane" in yet another effort to have us re-think our use of language and re-assemble it accordingly.

9. Bakhtin explicates how each word carries a *pollution* of meaning with which the author must battle in many of his works, but particularly in his essay "Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff" (Speech Genres, pp.1-9), in the following passages:

> any speaker is himself a respondent to a greater or lesser degree. He is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe. And he presupposes not only the existence of the language system he is using, but also the existence of preceding utterances--his own and others'--with which his given utterance enters into one kind of relation or another (builds on them, polemicizes with them, or simply presumes that they are already known to the listener). Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of utterances. (69)
>
> These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework and re-accentuate. (89)
>
> Utterances are not indifferent to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another. . . . Each utterance

> refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them all into account. (91)

In Front Lines, York explains that Findley is not excluded from this struggle with a polluted language:

> As a writer--and as a reader, for we must never forget that the writer is also a reader--[Findley] participates in and creates anew that language. The writer should not be viewed, therefore, solely in a national or regional context, but as a citizen of language, adding with each text a letter to its alphabet--a letter which interlocks with the rest. (45)

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