THE MODERN-REALIST MOVEMENT IN ENGLISH-CANADIAN FICTION , 1919-1950

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for Olivier

"It has always been the criterion of true greatness that it is not overscrupulous about being original. Goethe said, 'I take what is mine wherever I find it'"

– Frederick Philip Grove

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Abstract

This dissertation offers the first comprehensive examination of realism in English-Canadian fiction of the early twentieth century. It argues for the existence of a "modern-realist" movement that is Canada's unique and unacknowledged contribution to the collection of international movements that makes up literary modernism. This argument involves a detailed analysis of the aesthetics, aims, preoccupations, and techniques of the modern realists, a reexamination of the *oeuvres* of the movement's most prominent writers, and a critical reevaluation of the "modernity" of Canada's three most significant realist sub-genres—prairie realism, urban realism, and social realism. This study also provides a literary-historical overview of the movement as a whole, which begins with the inauguration of the Canadian Bookman in 1919, and concludes with the emergence of a contemporary Canadian fiction in the 1950s. The conclusions arrived at in this work are based upon a reading of dozens of novels and works of short fiction, many of them unpublished and/or critically neglected and forgotten. The findings in this study are also based on original research into archival materials from seven institutions across Canada.

Chapter One explores the emergence of modern realism in the manifestos published by the Canadian Bookman and The Canadian Forum during the 1920s. Chapter Two investigates Raymond Knister's pioneering modern realism, and the experimental impulse that informs the movement as a whole. Chapter Three offers a reevaluation of prairie realism by emphasizing its modern subjects, and refuting critical myths about its regionalism and geographical emphasis. Chapter Four explores a conservative form of modern realism in the eclectic work of Frederick Philip Grove. Chapter Five draws attention to Canada's neglected urban and social realists by discussing their modern preoccupations and techniques in the context of literary culture

of the 1930s, and the socialist realism of Masses and New Frontier. Chapter Six examines the relation of modern realism to international modernism through the writing of Morley Callaghan. Chapter Seven contrasts modern realism to nineteenth-century realism, and, through a reevaluation of the realism of Hugh MacLennan, uncovers reasons for its critical neglect. A brief conclusion offers some speculation about the significance of these findings for Canadian criticism in general.

RÉSUMÉ

La présente constitue la première étude d'ensemble dévouée aux oeuvres réalistes canadiennes-anglaises de la première moitié du 20ème siècle. L'auteur y démontre l'existence d'un mouvement "réaliste moderne," contribution canadienne à la fois unique et inédite aux mouvements internationaux qu'englobe le modernisme littéraire. Est incluse à cette démonstration une analyse détaillée de l'esthétique, des buts, des préoccupations et des techniques du réalisme moderne, un nouvel examen des oeuvres de ses auteurs les plus en vue et une réévaluation critique de la "modernité" des trois sous-genres les plus importants du mouvement : le réalisme des prairies, le réalisme urbain, et le réalisme social. L'étude offre également un résumé historico-littéraire du mouvement, lequel débute par le lancement de Canadian Bookman en 1919 et prend fin dans les années 1950 avec l'avènement d'une prose canadienne contemporaine. Les conclusions de cette étude sont ancrées dans l'analyse de plusieurs douzaines de romans et nouvelles, nombres d'entre eux inédits et/ou négligés de la critique, ainsi que sur une recherche originale conduite au sein de sept archives canadiennes.

Le premier chapitre traite de l'émergence du réalisme moderne dans les manifestes publiés par les Canadian Bookman et The Canadian Forum des années 1920. Le second chapitre sonde le réalisme pionnier de Raymond Knister et l'élan expérimental qui anime le mouvement. Le troisième offre une révision du réalisme des prairies de par l'étude de ses questions modernes et la réfutation de mythes critiques relatifs à son régionalisme et à ses caractéristiques géographiques. Le quatrième présente l'oeuvre éclectique de Frederick Philip Grove en tant que forme conservatrice du réalisme moderne. Le cinquième est dévoué à un réalisme urbain et social plutôt négligé au Canada. Il en explore les préoccupations modernes et techniques ancrées

dans la culture littéraire des années 1930 et traite également du réalisme social de Masses et de New Frontier. Le sixième chapitre examine la relation du réalisme moderne au modernisme international à travers l'écriture de Morley Callaghan. Enfin, le septième chapitre établit un contraste entre réalisme du 19ème siècle et réalisme moderne puis révèle les raisons de l'oubli critique de ce dernier par le biais d'une réévaluation du réalisme de Hugh McLennan. Lors d'une brève conclusion l'auteur traite de l'importance de cette étude pour la critique littéraire canadienne dans son ensemble.

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I am appreciative, too, of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada for publishing, in Working Papers from the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, 2001, portions of my "Introduction" and first two chapters as "The Beginnings of Modernist Fiction in Canada: Magazines, Manifestos, and Canada's First Modern Realists."

Most of all, my thanks to Olivier for sustaining me with his love, patience, faith, and sacrifice.

NOTE ON UNPUBLISHED ARCHIVAL SOURCES

This dissertation draws abundantly upon original research into unpublished and critically disregarded materials: letters, critical articles, short stories, novels, sketches, lecture notes, and other miscellaneous materials. This research was carried out intermittently over a three-year period in seven archival collections across Canada: The Raymond Knister Papers (Queen's University, Kingston), The Raymond Knister Collection (McMaster University, Hamilton), The Raymond Knister Collection (Victoria College, University of Toronto), The Frederick Philip Grove Collection (University of Manitoba, Winnipeg), The Morley Callaghan Fonds (National Library of Canada, Ottawa), The Hugh MacLennan Fonds (University of Calgary), and The Hugh MacLennan Papers (McGill University, Montreal). These collections employ divergent cataloguing methods that make it impossible for me to apply a uniform and traditional method of citing them in my in-text references. Therefore I have dispensed with the popular method of providing box, container, file, and folder numbers. Instead, my in-text references indicate page numbers and/or titles for these unpublished materials. When necessary, I have also provided short endnotes for clarification. Full bibliographical information for all of these archival sources, including box, container, file, and folder numbers when relevant, is provided in my "Works Consulted" section. A degree of concision and clarity is thereby achieved at the cost of de-emphasizing the considerable amount of archival research that went into this project.

Introduction

The Modern-Realist Movement: Contexts, Aesthetics, Origins[1]

Critics of Canadian fiction have often lamented the apparent underachievement of its early twentieth-century writers. Almost without exception, Canada's literary histories describe the fiction of the period in unflattering terms: derivative, imitative, conservative, outmoded. In much of our criticism, Canada's modern prose writers are, at best, given muted praise for their half-hearted reproduction of foreign literary modes and methods; at worst, they are critiqued for having avoided the great experiments and subjects of modern fiction altogether. Accordingly, critics rarely consider early twentieth-century Canadian fiction in the context of the much-celebrated Anglo-American modernism, or even approach it with the assumption that its writers have a coherent aesthetic and competent style. Instead, they offer easy generalizations about the naive critical dispositions of these writers, the substandard quality of modern Canadian fiction relative to American and European achievements, and its near irrelevance in Canada's literary development. As Desmond Pacey writes in Literary History of Canada,

> [a]ll that the best novelists of this period were able to do was to begin the process of turning the eyes of readers and fellow-writers from a fabled past or romanticized present toward the actual conditions of Canadian life. If this period deserves remembering at all, it is as the time when a few novelists first seriously tried to come to terms with their Canadian environment, and to find a suitable style. ("Fiction 1920-1940" 168)

After decades of intermittent denigration and neglect, early twentieth-century Canadian fiction seems to belong almost to our literary prehistory. There are currently fewer works from this period in print than at any time since shortly after McClelland and

Stewart's New Canadian Library was begun in 1957.[2] In one respect, the purgation of this fiction from our literary consciousness may not be a bad thing: a reexamination of this body of writing, comprising more than two thousand volumes,[3] does not yield an abundance of lost masterpieces. It reveals, instead, no shortage of romanticized and interchangeable stories of the settler experience, implausible and over-written historical romances, various forms of action and adventure narrative, juvenile fiction, dated topical works with a satirical thrust, and relatively inconsequential "local colour" stories.[4]

This mountain of unremarkable writing has all but buried the most dynamic and experimental pre-contemporary movement in Canadian fiction—a movement I will call "modern-realist"—with modern aims and subjects, polemical and combative manifestos, articulate and committed creative advocates, and clearly defined aesthetic principles. This study is the first to identify this modern-realist movement, and the first comprehensive critical examination of realism in modern Canadian fiction. Canada's modern-realist movement was driven by three dozen writers who produced, between 1919 and 1950, about one hundred novels, and scattered works of short fiction. Some of these writers and their works are the best-known of the period. Other writers have been forgotten entirely, if they were ever known at all, and many of the best modern-realist works are obscure, unpublished, and discussed here for the first time.[5] In the broadest sense, this study articulates the aesthetic principles and temporal and generic boundaries of the modern-realist movement in early twentieth-century English-Canadian fiction. This entails a comprehensive reevaluation of Canadian realism of the period. Such an undertaking is possible because I have looked at dozens of realist novels that are outside the boundaries of our existing canon, and carried out a substantial amount of original research into disregarded fiction and critical sources: my findings draw liberally upon unpublished and previously unacknowledged archival

materials from seven special collections across Canada. These materials, considered alongside well-known works of fiction and criticism, permit me to challenge many prevailing critical assumptions about Canadian literary realism, and to make sense of the problematic styles and aesthetics of some of Canada's most important realists: Raymond Knister, Frederick Philip Grove, Morley Callaghan, and Hugh MacLennan.

Although I treat dozens of works in this study that have been avoided by critics almost entirely, it is not my intention to act as a "booster" of lost, forgotten, or disregarded Canadian fiction. Neither is it my intention, in reevaluating the *oeuvres* of writers such as Grove, Callaghan, and MacLennan, to reinvigorate literary reputations that have, deservedly perhaps, fallen into serious decline. My reexamination does, however, insist upon a belated acknowledgement of the "modernity" of the best of Canada's early twentieth-century realists, and a recognition of their coherent, hard-won, and experimental aesthetic. The movement I define and explore comprises most of the modern, sophisticated, artful, and innovative Canadian fiction of the pre-contemporary period. My reevaluation reveals that the modern-realist movement is Canada's unique and unacknowledged contribution to the international collection of movements and aesthetics that constitutes literary modernism.[6]

Although other Canadian writers of the period produced accomplished and distinctive modern works—Howard O'Hagan's Tay John, Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano, Ethel Wilson's Hetty Dorval—most of the "serious" fiction written in Canada between 1919 and 1950 was modern-realist. While modern realism can be divided into several overlapping sub-genres—most prominently prairie realism, urban realism, and social realism—such subdivisions are largely arbitrary, and key aesthetic aims and ideals were shared by all of the modern realists, regardless of their geographical origins, ideological dispositions, or chosen subject matter. In general terms, the

modern realists sought a direct, immediate, contemporary, idiomatically correct language, and a narrative objectivism and impersonality. They demonstrated a sustained and experimental interest in psychological writing and the epistemological representation of human consciousness. They directed the technical innovations they undertook in these respects toward a mimetic representation of a contemporary world, usually Canadian, and, much as the European and American modernists did, explored the cultural conditions and great "themes" of "modernity": moral relativism, modern technology, the forces of urbanization and industrialization, modern social and political ideals, moral and religious change and decline, human sexuality, evolving gender roles, and modern historical events, including the Great Depression and two world wars. Contrary to common critical misrepresentations, the modern realists were neither belatedly imitating an antiquated nineteenth-century realism in their work, nor clumsily duplicating comparatively sophisticated modernist techniques. They were aware of both of these foreign modes, to be sure, but they arrived at their own modern-realist aesthetic through persistent, thoughtful, self-reflexive, and often idiosyncratic experiment. While the modern realists shared many assumptions about writing with their boldest modernist counterparts—a belief in art for art's sake, a desire to extricate the author from the text, a fundamental conviction that the great "truths" about humankind (or the truth that there are none) could be found through a probing of human consciousness—they ultimately stopped short of endorsing some of the boldest technical experiments of the high modernists: extreme fragmentation, dissonant multivocality, highly subjectivist renderings of human consciousness, overt impressionism, surrealism, and expressionism.[7] This study explores the experimental aesthetic of the modern realists and highlights points of convergence and divergence, both among writers of the various modern-realist sub-genres, and among the modern

realists and their foreign modernist contemporaries.

Critics to date have, of course, produced a substantial body of writing on early twentieth-century Canadian fiction, although relatively little of this criticism is interested in Canadian realism. Generally speaking, there is disagreement about how to define this realism, and about how it ought to be situated relative to other foreign and indigenous literary forms. Few terms have been used by critics with less precision, and, from the very start, "realism" has been vaguely defined in Canada, much as in other literary traditions.[8] The term, of course, immediately evokes the nineteenth-century realism that preceded modernist innovation in the European context, and many of the documents my research has unearthed show Canada's modern realists drawing important distinctions between themselves and writers such as Tolstoy, Balzac, Dickens, Hardy, and George Eliot. To the modern realists and early twentieth-century Canadian critics, however, the term "realism" was *not* synonymous with nineteenth-century fiction: it signified numerous, and often competing or contradictory, concepts and aesthetics. Most often, when the term "realism" appeared in the literary magazines of the 1920s, especially Canadian Bookman and The Canadian Forum, it was aligned, explicitly or otherwise, with the "modern": as Adrian MacDonald writes in the Bookman in 1922, "[t]he unique claim of realism as a school of fiction is its appeal to the scientific spirit. That impulse which sent the modern world into the laboratory, is the one upon which the realist strives to found his popularity" (235). In these same magazines, "realism" is often positioned opposite another prevalent mode of Canadian fiction of the period: romanticism. As Sandra Djwa argues in "*The Canadian Forum*: Literary Catalyst," critics of the period "wished to counter an old romanticism with a new realism" (21). For many of the same writers and critics, "realism" was an antidote to the "idealism" that stifled critical thought in Canada; fiction that embodied the worst kinds of

this idealism was opposed by the Canadian Bookman in its manifestos, including its opening prospectus, which positioned the new magazine opposite "the merely sentimental, narcotic, idea-less books, miscalled books of the imagination, which have formed the literary food of too many of us who did not wish to be bothered with ideas" ("Introducing the Canadian Bookman's Bookmen" 1). Other early critics saw realism to be precisely what was needed to further the causes of idealism in Canada's most nationalistic decade. This attitude is especially prevalent in the 1920s rhetoric of the Canadian Authors Association, whose leaders, as Mary Vipond points out, believed that "the real roots of the English-Canadian identity lay in its rural and small town past," and encouraged tales of local colour that offered "real" portraits of regional settings cast in an idyllic light ("Canadian Authors" 73). Realism of the period has also been linked both to a documentary, journalistic style of writing—as in Pacey's assertion that "realism" reflects the "actual conditions of Canadian life" ("Fiction" 168)—and to a more imaginative literary possibility, loosely defined in Lionel Stevenson's 1924 "Manifesto for a National Literature," as "acknowledging the so-called 'realities' of life's pantheistic" (207-08). And, while "realism" was often associated, as I have suggested, with older and more conservative forms of foreign fiction, it was an indisputably contemporary form, both to the modern realists, and to conservative segments of the literary world who used "realism" as a euphemism for "sexually explicit": in a 1924 article by Hilda Glynn-Ward, "A Plea for Purity," readers were informed that "[t]here has come over the literature of the day the foetid breath of decadence. They call it realism," when it is in fact, Glynn-Ward warns, "the dopish ravings of the modern sex-writers . . ." (64).

Criticism since the 1920s has used the term "realism" less frequently and often with less precision. Although there have been scattered discussions of the realist aspects of works by a few individual writers, and a few discussions of some of the

"types" of realism found in Canadian writing,[9] there have been very few sustained critical discussions of Canadian realism, and even fewer that consider realism a modern literary form. If our major literary histories are to be believed, realism is scarcely worth noticing in early twentieth-century Canadian fiction. The most substantial literary-historical reading of Canada's realism appears in Literary History of Canada (1965-90). Building upon his conclusions in Creative Writing in Canada (1952), Pacey devotes several pages of "Fiction 1920-1940" to a survey of realist fiction of the period, with special attention to Grove and Callaghan. Yet he asserts that "[r]ealism, and especially urban realism, was a very unusual commodity in Canadian fiction between the wars. Such realism as there was developed almost exclusively on the prairies, where there was a distinctive pattern of life . . ." (186). While Pacey's survey of Canadian realism remained, until now, the most comprehensive we had, it nevertheless fails to identify either the modern affinities of the best realists of the period, or a coherent realist movement in Canadian writing. It emphasizes, instead, the supposedly regional concerns of Canada's realists, their rural subject matter, intellectual and creative isolation, lack of innovation, and stylistic shortcomings.

Although Pacey's characterization of the realism of the period is inaccurate, he at least recognizes it as a particular branch of Canadian fiction with its own attributes and aims. Most of our other literary histories fail to do even this. In the most recent edition of The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature (1997), Donald Stephens's substantial section, "Novels in English, 1920-1940," identifies "a period in Canadian fiction when the realistic novel emerges" before it surveys various types of fiction of the same period while avoiding realism almost entirely (817). In Canadian Literature in English (1985), W. J. Keith provides a chapter that discusses, in some depth, the contributions of the four major modern realists I discuss in this study; yet his literary

history does not identify any kind of realist movement in Canadian fiction as a whole, and his discussions of Knister, Grove, Callaghan, and MacLennan make almost no mention of their realism beyond his opening assertion that "[t]he popularity of most of these writers can be explained by their shrewd but often crude blend of romance and realism" (121). Elizabeth Waterston's Survey: A Short History of Canadian Literature (1973), manages, rather incredibly, to discuss Canadian fiction of the period while avoiding a discussion of realism entirely. In their anthology of historically significant critical articles, Canadian Novelists and the Novel (1981), Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman offer an initially promising section entitled "The Rise of Realism"; but, while this section comprises articles by five significant figures in the modern-realist movement—Grove, Callaghan, Bertram Brooker, Philip Child, W. A. Deacon—most of the selections discuss realism only indirectly, and the modern-realist manifestos of the Canadian Bookman are not represented. And, while George Woodcock's Introduction to Canadian Fiction (1993) at first seems to provide a promising modern reading of realism—it identifies "a tradition founded in realism but ready to learn from modernist and post-modernist innovatory techniques"—it nevertheless does not acknowledge a coherent realist movement in Canadian fiction, preferring instead to segregate the dominant "Rural Realists" from other writers (49).

Other literary histories have represented Canadian realism more accurately. While E. L. Bobak's "Seeking 'Direct, Honest Realism': The Canadian Novel of the 1920s" (1981) directly acknowledges neither the modern subject matter of the 1920s Canadian realists, nor their experimental techniques, it nevertheless captures the sense in which realism emerged during the period as a coherent and, to a degree, rebellious movement by suggesting that it met with considerable resistance from a conservative literary culture: "[o]pposition to realism was often extreme" (86). Bobak

does not define this movement, but does offer a useful cursory survey of a few of the realist manifestos published in journals of the 1920s. Bobak also draws some much-needed critical attention to neglected realist novels of the period, including Sime's Our Little Life and Durkin's The Magpie. Ultimately, however, Bobak fails to define the emerging modern realism, suggesting instead that "[r]ealism is a slippery concept at best" (95). And, despite its important acknowledgement of this movement in Canadian writing, this article considers it fundamentally derivative, and proposes that it was transplanted belatedly from abroad: "Realism, an ideal medium for the objective reporting of social phenomena, had still not made its way into Canadian fiction in the early decades of the twentieth century . . . . Even today in Canada, the nineteenth-century realists are exerting fresh influences" (85-86).

Concision is of fundamental importance in most literary histories and surveys, and it is probably unfair to expect their authors to come fully to terms with Canada's complex and multi-generic realism in a few short pages. Unfortunately, however, the refusal of our literary histories to do just this has helped to establish some critical fallacies about realism that appear across the full spectrum of Canadian criticism. The failure of our earliest literary historians to acknowledge that a uniquely Canadian modern realism was brought into being deliberately and consciously by our writers has typecast them, by default, in passive and imitative roles. Sometimes this passivity is described in terms of literary influence, and critics call our realists derivative imitators of the outmoded realisms of other countries. T. D. MacLulich's Between Europe and America: The Canadian Tradition in Fiction (1988) has observed, and partly subscribed to, the tendency in Canadian criticism to misrepresent the realists in this way: "not until well into the present century do the best Canadian novelists begin, as Hugo McPherson puts it, 'to create Canada in the way that Hawthorne, a century earlier, helped to create

New England'" (9). Elsewhere, and more frequently, realism is seen as the product of a regional and geographical influence. Alison Calder has drawn attention to this problem in criticism of prairie realism: "Criticism of prairie realism is predicated on a belief in the primacy of the land. Geographic determinism is evident even in the critical label: *prairie* realism" (56). That critics, without careful assessment, sometimes accept *both* of these contradictory theses—how can a Canadian realism be both an imitation of foreign modes and the product of geographical determinism?—is made evident in Pacey's Creative Writing in Canada, where he offers them almost side by side: "at every stage of its progress [Canadian culture] has been strongly influenced by English, American, and . . . European models . . . . Canadian literature thus far has been almost wholly an inevitable response to a geographical and climactic situation, and this it should and must remain" (1-3). The prevalence of these two myths about the origins of realism in Canadian writing may explain why the many documents considered in this study that show our writers self-consciously and deliberately experimenting with their own form of realism, while paying little attention either to foreign realisms or to Canadian geography, have gone almost unnoticed to date.

Another common misconception of realism is reflected in the compartmentalized discussions offered by many critics. Rarely is realism considered a cohesive mode of Canadian fiction. Instead, individual treatments tend to fragment it into a set of often competing sub-generic forms. More often than not, such discussions divide realism into opposed "rural" and "urban" types. The two most sustained critical examinations of Canadian realism to date are dissertations that divide up the literature in this conventional fashion. Although both David Arnason in The Development of Prairie Realism: Robert J. C. Stead, Douglas Durkin, Martha Ostenso and Frederick Philip Grove (1980), and Zhongming Chen in The Politics of Fiction: Social Realism in

English-Canadian Novels (1920-55) (1989), make some effort to highlight the modern issues explored by their writers, their compartmentalized discussions do relatively little to establish a cohesive realist genre in Canadian writing. The rural / urban opposition has proven so persistent that it can be found even in the work of some critics who often strive to break down traditional dichotomies in our criticism. One of the most insightful discussions of Canadian realism appears in Donna Bennett's "Conflicted Vision: A Consideration of Canon and Genre in English-Canadian Literature" (1991):

> early critics . . . wanted Canadian fiction to be "realistic." While "realism" and "realistic" are terms that convey a variety of meanings relative to place and period, what these early critics desired was a set of characteristics arising out of Canadian experience and moral ideals. Unlike the twentieth-century realism we see later . . . the "realism" called for by nineteenth-century critics had more to do with content than technique . . . . By the 1920s Canadian publishers . . . began to print a more literary form of the realistic novel. Unlike idealized realism, in which technique was governed not by an aesthetic but by an ethic, this writing sublimated its ethics and began to create an aesthetic consistent with . . . its vision. (143)

Bennett's brief discussion of realism in this article does much to distinguish the emerging realism of the 1920s from older forms: she even suggests that the realism of the 1920s "can be seen as a move towards modernism," something that I discuss much more fully, in a variety of contexts. Ultimately, however, she rejects this interpretation, and falls back upon the old distinctions between rural and urban writing. Instead of viewing the emergence of a modern realism as a national movement comprising various interrelated types—prairie realism, urban realism, social realism—she associates it with the rise of a rural, regional fiction in Canada, although her

characterizations of this fiction are less reductive than those of some critics: "this change is also an indication of the emergence of a rural tradition of storytelling" (144).

Rather remarkably, given the proliferation of modern-realist fiction between 1919 and 1950, and the ubiquitous assertions of the modern realists about the experimental nature of their project, few critics have, like Bennett, hinted at the need to reexamine realistic fiction of the period as a modern form. Graham Carr's dissertation, English-Canadian Literary Culture in the Modernist Milieu, 1920-1940 (1983), explores literary culture of the period, including many of the little magazines, but does not include realism among the important aspects of modernist Canadian writing. Carr is able to do this partly because he avoids discussion of the Canadian Bookman, instead focussing his attention on numerous other little magazines that hold the promise of providing evidence of a Canadian modernist literature that closely resembles those of foreign countries:

> Despite a prodigious number of indications that Canadian intellectuals . . . were conscious of, and often attracted by, foreign and pan-national concerns, scholars have turned away from those elements of the historical record, and turned in upon the national experience in isolation . . . . by offering a heightened awareness of comparative circumstances in other English-language cultures, I intend to offer some difference perspectives on the local situation. (18-19)

Presumably, it is Carr's desire to establish lines of influence with other modernisms that leads him away from a discussion of realism, which is usually positioned opposite modernism in European and American models. But it is only by avoiding extreme interpretations of critics such as Carr, eager for modern Canadian writing to resemble foreign patterns, and of nationalist and thematic critics, who see realism as a relatively

simplistic form of expression useful for the faithful and regional transcription of the Canadian nation, that modern realism can be fully understood. This study denies neither the influence of Anglo-American modernist literature on Canadian writers (all four of the major authors I discuss demonstrate a keen awareness of modernism) nor the mimetic and referential aspects of all realist forms. I do suggest, however, that coming to terms with modern realism requires a movement beyond some of the established critical definitions and dichotomies imposed on Canadian fiction by both other traditions, and, to a degree, the now substantial body of criticism on Canadian poetry, which follows a different literary development.[10]

At the same time as I propose the adjustment of some critical terms and paradigms to account for the peculiar and multi-generic aesthetic of modern realism (this includes a rethinking of the stark oppositional relationship between modernism and realism), I do not suggest abandoning such critical distinctions altogether. Perhaps the greatest injustice to the modern realists has been done by critics who deny them a precise and coherent aesthetic at all, insisting that their work is merely an accidental hodgepodge of random and often incompatible influences. In his introduction to Modern Times: A Critical Anthology (1982), the third volume of a series called The Canadian Novel, John Moss hopelessly conflates and confuses realism, modernism, and a host of other aesthetics that he finds in the Canadian novel of the period:

> Modernism in the novel has become virtually synonymous with realism. But realism, ironically, has come to mean romance . . . In Canadian fiction, romantic-realism begins with the novels of Frederick Philip Grove and remains the dominant mode to the present day. There have been a few outstanding exceptions, but not until the super-realism of Munro . . . did the modernist conventions in Canada begin to crumble.

> Certainly the conventions of modernism are devoutly upheld by the fictions of Callaghan, MacLennan, and Wilson . . . Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* and Ostenso's *Wild Geese* . . . blend romance with realism as early example of Canadian modernist fiction. (10)

And if this orgy of terms is not confusing enough, Moss goes on to argue that Elizabeth Smart's By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept, one of the few indisputably modernist novels produced in Canada, is an *exception* to his definition of modernism: it "def[ies] such conventions," but is nevertheless "thoroughly modern, philosophically (and possibly postmodern as well)" (10). Yet for all of his confusion of terms, Moss ironically comes closer to defining modern-realist fiction than most other critics. He is stating what so many others have sensed all along: the usual dichotomy between realism and modernism does not work in the Canadian context. At the same time, Moss's critique offers a clear example of why this study is necessary: modern Canadian fiction needs an exacting and exhaustive reevaluation. It is not enough to move beyond old patterns and dichotomies by simply denying that they exist. As we shall see, the modern-realist form does contain elements of various other recognizable forms and aesthetics. But its borrowing and reinventing was neither wholesale nor accidental: modern realism came into being as a result of tireless experiment with both new and established literary models and forms from both Canada and abroad.

Another critic, Dennis Duffy, has put the question implied in Moss's creative re-invention into words. Writing in "Losing the Line: The Field of Our Modernism" (1989), Duffy states that "something is obviously missing from our culture, something that ought to have reposed between barbarism and decadence, between late romanticism and postmodernism. What is missing?" (165). Duffy's answer to this question is a good one, but unfortunately quite vague. This "missing" part of our literary

development is, in Duffy's view, a Canadian modernism, but one that is impossible to pin down either temporally or generically: "literary modernism . . . was not a pure, univocal phenomenon . . . . linear, processional models of our national literary development are as problematic as they are seductive" (166). The assertion that a Canadian modernism will not look like those of other countries is refreshing, and Duffy's acknowledgement that it will happen on its own time-line is useful. Still, Duffy perhaps opens the door to such a Canadian modernism too widely, and denies the presence of a "processional model of our national literary development" altogether. This model makes sense if we are talking about Canada's indisputably "modernist" texts. Such works are indeed few and far between in Canadian fiction, and do seem to appear sporadically and independently, with little connection to a larger national or international movement: Smart's By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept (1945), Sheila Watson's Deep Hollow Creek (c. 1933), MacLennan's So All Their Praises (1933) and Man Should Rejoice (1937), A. M. Klein's The Second Scroll (1951), to name just some of those that appear long before Watson's The Double Hook (1959), "the first truly modern Canadian novel" according to Frank Davey ("Sheila Watson" 822). But Duffy's denial of a clear "processional model" in Canadian fiction effectively disowns the modern-realist movement, which, as we shall see, *does* have a clear emergence, evolution, and exhaustion. And, while his open-ended reading does make room for new concepts of a Canadian modernism, his argument ultimately closes out a realist interpretation on any terms: "Canadian critics fail to find and then lament the absence of . . . a succession of fully jacketed modernist works within our literary arsenal. What we find here instead . . . recalls nothing so much as a protracted dialogue with romanticism" (167).

Without a doubt, the most ambitious rereading of modern Canadian fiction is

Glenn Willmott's very recent Unreal Country: Modernity in the Canadian Novel in English (2002). Like some of the other critics who have been perplexed by the unwillingness of early twentieth-century Canadian fiction to fit established patterns and models, Willmott proposes a kind of multi-generic "modernity at large" which is for the most part unbounded by established generic and temporal markers (5). Borrowing the phrase "modernity at large" from Arjun Appadurai, Willmott suggests that "the old antinomy that had loomed above the work of fiction for modern Canadian writers—the titanic contest of realism and romance—is not an antinomy at all" (5). In place of this generic dichotomy, he proposes a new, modern, Canadian super-genre that, while more sophisticated than that proposed by Moss, is not markedly dissimilar. He argues that his application of the concept of "modernity at large," derived as it is from postmodern criticism, "provides a coherent frame of reference for modern Canadian fiction in English" (6):

> the new romance will register the primacy of the (contingent) event over the (cosmogenetic) world, rather than the other way around. By the same proposition, realism too is turned inside out. The conventional function of realism, to register the interrelations and values of a given, secular world, or "what is," is eroded by the uneven and unstable, slash-and-burn transvaluations of a material life subject to the unpredictable synapses of global economy, media, and mobility. A self-ironicizing realism is now required in order to register these unevenly signifying events, which mark the shifting social limits and vectors of global flows themselves; it is required, however ephemerally and paradoxically self-consciously, as a provisional ground for the imagination "at large." The third formal term, which . . . lies behind these inverted shells of romance and realism alike,

belongs to modernism. (5)

Willmott's argument for the presence of these contingent and degraded forms of modernism, romanticism, and realism in some well-known Canadian texts is convincing, and offers some of the best evidence that the restrictive oppositions critics have found useful in the past are in need of reevaluation. But Willmott's model, even if it does provide the "coherent frame of reference" he promises, does not ultimately prove very liberating to the critical imagination. Instead, it substitutes old critical readings with a new schema that, although highly intuitive and complex, seems the product of a personal and eclectic reading of the fiction of the period, and its conclusions are not supported by many of the documents I have located for this study.

T. D. MacLulich has looked more closely than any other critic to date at many of the primary sources on realism that have gone unnoticed. In Between Europe and America: The Canadian Tradition in Fiction (1988), he argues that "[t]here are several reasons why modernism took a long time to make its influence felt on Canadian fiction" (88). In the course of outlining these reasons, MacLulich anticipates several of the strands of my argument. He argues for the significant place of the Canadian Bookman in 1920s literary culture, but stops short of identifying its central role in initiating a modern-realist movement; instead he claims that the Bookman "defended the milder forms of realistic fiction" (91). MacLulich also notes the modern realist's reluctance to take up experimental forms of modernism, but his argument again places these writers in a passive mode and casts them as failed modernists: "it may be useful to remind ourselves just how gingerly our authors took up the innovative techniques used by the leading European and American writers of modernist prose" (100). While he does draw an important link between "the movement towards realism" and "the arrival of modernism in Canadian fiction," he still positions these forces in adversarial roles, and

suggests that Canadian "realism" impeded the arrival of foreign "modernism" to Canada:

> Our first generation of modernist writers did not venture very far into the more experimental regions of modernist technique. Instead, the task was to define the principal features of the Canadian social world and to articulate the typical ways in which Canadians were responding to that world . . . . modernism came into Canadian fiction in such a tentative and unspectacular fashion. (88-89)

The presupposition that modernism "came into" Canadian writing from outside denies the experimental and innovative literary impulse that I prove again and again in this study. It also suggests that the more "documentary" impulse of realism was irreconcilably at odds with the aims of modernist fiction, an idea I oppose outright: as we shall see, the unique techniques of the modern realists grow out of their largely successful experiments to balance the objectivist stance of the traditional realist with the subjective perspectivism of the high-modernist form.

My seven-chapter examination of Canada's modern realism builds upon the work of the best of these critics and has three general aims. The first of these, as my title implies, is to offer a literary-historical overview of the movement as a whole, and to trace its development and proliferation, in several subgeneric modes, over three decades. Generic and temporal boundaries are, of course, difficult to establish in any literary tradition, and well-known discussions of Canada's cultural and geographical heterogeneity suggest that such tasks may be especially difficult in the Canadian context.[11] Furthermore, in a literary tradition that tends to emphasize, even celebrate, the "isolation" of its writers and a corresponding lack of coherent schools—as T. D. MacLulich writes, "Canadian modernist writers had isolated and difficult literary careers"

(Between Europe and America 114)—I refer to a modern-realist "movement" cautiously, but deliberately. I do not mean to suggest that the modern realists were a close-knit group of writers colluding on a common endeavour. Yet neither am I suggesting that they merely shared in some vague way a few loosely defined beliefs about writing. The sheer number of documents in which the various modern realists articulate similar convictions about "realism" and "modernity" in Canadian fiction, often referring to their compatriots and modernist contemporaries from other countries, indicates an unmistakable and coherent pattern of thought. Even more convincing evidence is found in the fiction itself: as we shall see, several dozen seemingly disparate writers executed surprisingly similar strategies in their modern-realist works. Perhaps the most immediate evidence of a coherent modern-realist movement comparable to other modernist movements is found in the manifestos published in Canada's little magazines of the 1920s. My first chapter offers a detailed reading of these manifestos, and demonstrates that the modern realists participated in the same "international revolutionary climate," replete with "self-conscious formations, declarations and manifestos . . . and self-conscious, militant and collective positioning," that gave rise to the other modernist "isms"[12] (Kolocotroni xix). Canada's manifestos initiated, described, and directed an emerging and rebellious modern-realist movement in fiction. This study provides a literary-historical overview of modern realism by tracing its development from these 1920s manifestos, through its proliferation in the 1930s and 40s, to its diffusion in the 1950s. In my final chapter, I examine the work of the last modern realist, Hugh MacLennan, and reveal how his problematic emergence as the first "contemporary" Canadian writer is partly responsible for the critical neglect of the movement as a whole.

The emphasis of this study is not, however, primarily literary-historical, and its

structure is designed to reflect the range of forms and aesthetics that make up modern realism, not to present a rigid, chronological time-line. My second, and most important, aim is a definitive reading of the modern-realist aesthetic, and an articulation of its modern techniques, concerns, subject matter, and writerly assumptions. To this end, I provide two broad chapters that reconsider and reconstitute the most significant forms of modern-realist fiction. Chapter Three offers a reevaluation of prairie realism through an emphasis on its under-acknowledged modern concerns and experimental techniques, and a refutation of critical myths about its regional relevance and geographical determinism. Chapter Five explores Canada's all-but-ignored urban and social realism, foregrounding their modern subjects, innovative forms of reportage, and opposition to the socialist realism for which they are sometimes mistaken. I recognize that this study, by subdividing modern realism along these lines, perpetuates the myth that these two forms of realism are in conflict, and, to be sure, I draw some distinctions between the modern-realist sub-genres I discuss in these chapters. My intention, however, is to bridge, to a great extent, the rural / urban divide in concepts of Canadian realism. Many of the works I discuss appear in both chapters: Douglas Durkin's The Magpie, for example, is a social-realist novel set in Winnipeg in the 1920s that crosses the boundaries that supposedly divide various types of realistic writing in Canada. To a degree, also, my decision to divide my discussion of the main types of realism has been predetermined by accepted critical definitions that I wish to challenge: for example, only by taking on the critical myths about the atypicality and regional relevance of prairie realism in a focussed chapter am I able to argue that such labels are misleading. These two chapters are grounded by four others that provide incisive readings of the *oeuvres* of the four most important modern realists. Chapter Two explores Raymond Knister's pioneering modern realism, and shows how his career,

which emerged almost contingently with the movement as a whole, defined realism in unmistakeably experimental terms. Chapter Four investigates the most eclectic of the modern realists, Frederick Philip Grove, and reveals that his realism reflects a struggle to balance a competing modernity and traditionalism, something that is true of much modern realism. Chapter Six approaches the realism of Morley Callaghan, the period's most cosmopolitan and internationally recognized Canadian writer of fiction, and articulates the distinction between modern realism and high modernism through a consideration of his misunderstood techniques and writerly assumptions. In Chapter Seven, I reevaluate the career of Canada's most famous realist, Hugh MacLennan, and draw distinctions between modern realism and older forms of realism from Europe and America. By approaching the modern-realist movement from this range of perspectives, this study offers both an overview of its boundaries, concerns, and preoccupations, and a detailed reading of its precise and specific applications in the work of its most significant proponents.

As I began reading through works of modern realism, I discovered that they were far more numerous than I had imagined and literary histories have indicated, and that some of the most remarkable works of Canadian fiction of the period have been forgotten, or neglected right from the start. A third aim of this study has emerged, quite by accident, in the process of pursuing my first two. My research brings to light numerous works that have been all but lost to Canadian literature, and constitutes a kind of "recovery project" that invites a reevaluation of the Canadian canon of the period. Alongside some of the most canonical works of modern realism—Grove's Settlers of the Marsh, Ostenso's Wild Geese, MacLennan's Barometer Rising, Callaghan's Such Is My Beloved—I consider a great many lesser-known works. Some of these are by writers whose reputations have never been firmly established—Irene

Baird, Edward McCourt, Arthur Stringer, J. G. Sime, Christine Van Der Mark, Bertram Brooker, Douglas Durkin, Wilfrid Eggleston, Philip Child, A. M. Stephen, Len Peterson, and Gwethalyn Graham, to name just some. Lost works by these writers are in many cases of equal or superior "quality" to the better-known works of canonical authors. Even the worst of these forgotten works are worth reconsidering, if for no other reason than to reveal the surprising diversity of modern realism, and the fact that our canonical authors were writing, not in literary isolation, but in the context of a movement that, like any literary movement, has both its central and peripheral figures. And my recovery project has another component: my reevaluations of the *oeuvres* of canonical authors consider several remarkable and critically ignored unpublished works of fiction. These include some of the most experimental short stories written in Canada during the period, Knister's critically disregarded multivocal novel of the 1920s, Group Portrait, Grove's unfinished *magnum opus*, The Seasons, and MacLennan's two unpublished high-modernist novels of the 1930s: So All Their Praises and Man Should Rejoice. These works not only demonstrate the experimental impulse that informs the modern realism of their authors, but demand a reevaluation of the *oeuvres* of these established writers, and the place of the entire period in our literary history. In addition, this study draws upon numerous neglected critical sources: in many cases, the most revealing statements on the aesthetic of the modern realists are found in documents that have never been published, or in the pages of forgotten journals and literary magazines. This study offers the first critical evaluation of many such works by Knister, Grove, Callaghan, and MacLennan culled from archival sources—including letters, unpublished articles, public addresses, lecture notes, and various other miscellaneous sources.

My reevaluation of early twentieth-century Canadian realism aims for a breadth uncharacteristic of earlier efforts. But such breadth of scope has inevitably meant that

some things have been left out. I might have as easily included, for example, individual author chapters on several other modern realists with a significant body of work: Robert J. C. Stead, Sinclair Ross, Hugh Garner, Irene Baird, J. G. Sime, Edward McCourt. While all of these writers *are* treated in my broad chapters on the proliferation of modern realism, I have limited my in-depth readings to a group of four writers who represent a fair cross-section of the approaches to modern realism taken by writers of the period. Conveniently, these writers also produced a large body of fiction between 1919 and 1950, were articulate literary critics, left behind substantial archival materials, and have been the subject of significant critical attention. While I am able to treat dozens of other modern realists less exactingly, I must admit a certain frustration at not having the space to offer closer readings of many of the works I explore. In some cases, this does not prove problematic: novels such as As For Me and My House, Fruits of the Earth, and More Joy In Heaven have been the subject of much critical scrutiny, and will not suffer from my relatively quick treatment here. In other cases, brief discussions of lesser-known but highly significant works of the period—Baird's Waste Heritage, McCourt's Music at the Close, A. M. Stephen's The Gleaming Archway—may leave the reader vaguely unsatisfied. This is an inevitable result of my determination to keep the modern-realist movement as a whole near the centre of my discussion. While I have dispensed with much of the close reading I might otherwise have provided, I have still endeavoured to give the reader a general sense of the lesser-known works I explore. And if this recovery project has some value, perhaps future critics will bring more attention to bear upon some of the little-known works I discuss here briefly, sometimes for the first time.

Before proceeding to a specific discussion of the modern-realist movement and its emergence in the 1920s in Chapter One, it might be useful to offer some distinctions

between modern realism and the Canadian literature that preceded it. Much as the modernist movements in Europe that blossomed in the early twentieth century have their origins in dynamic social and intellectual changes that occurred in the previous century, the realist impulse in Canadian fiction that crystalizes into a movement in the 1920s can be traced all the way back to the years preceding Confederation. Robert Lecker writes that "ever since the nineteenth century, canonical activity in Canada has been driven by different applications of the national-referential ideal, and by the assumption that a country without a national literature is no country at all" (Making It Real 4). This assertion is undoubtedly true. It is not my intention to offer a detailed reexamination of the nineteenth-century "national-referential ideal" already amply explored by Lecker and others.[13] It is important, however, to distinguish between the largely romantic "national-referential ideal" of Canada's nineteenth-century writers, and the far more contemporary, realistic, and mimetic "ideal" that is part of the modern-realist aesthetic. Three years before Confederation, the first major Canadian literary anthology, E. H. Dewart's Selections from Canadian Poets (1864),[14] complained about the lack of recognition accorded Canadian writing that sought to present a "faithful" representation of Canada:

> let any Canadian bard presume to think that the wild-flowers which formed the garlands of his sunny childhood, the sweet song-birds that sang him to sleep in infancy, or the magnificent lakes, forests, and rivers of his native land, are as worthy of being enshrined in lyric numbers, and capable of awakening memories of days as bright, associations as tender, and scenery as beautiful, as ever was sung by hoary harper of the olden time, and he is more likely to secure contempt than sympathy or admiration. (55)

A similar attitude is expressed by William Douw Lighthall in the preface to Songs from

the Great Dominion (1889):

> The poets whose songs fill this book are voices cheerful with the consciousness of youth, might, public wealth, and heroism. Through them, taken all together, you may catch something of the great Niagara falling, of brown rivers rushing with foam, of the crack of the rifle in the haunts of the moose and the caribou, the lament of vanishing races singing their death-song as they are swept on to the cataract of oblivion . . . . Now, who are those who are drinking these inspirations and breathing them into song? In communing with them, we shall try to transport you to the Canadian clime itself. (5)

Of course, these writers are talking about poetry, not fiction, but their evocations of a "national-referential ideal" are unmistakable. While the modern realists would also place much emphasis on representing Canada in their work, it is easy to distinguish between the idealistic and romantic aims of these early anthologists and the attention to the "actual conditions of Canadian life" that Pacey identifies as one of the key defining features of early twentieth-century realism ("Fiction 1920-1940" 168). Indeed, part of the reason for the persistence of the "national-referential ideal" in Canadian fiction has been its propensity to become manifest in numerous genres and modes. Lecker's identification of this ideal in early, pre-realist Canadian writing is crucial because it suggests that, contrary to what many critics have asserted, realism is not merely a pre-determined form that develops by default when the nation becomes the subject of literary attention. The modern realists, of course, had a referential ideal in mind—the mimetic representation of a modern, contemporary Canada. But this was far from being their sole interest, and their modern realism developed as a complex and experimental form, growing both out of a particular application of the "national-

referential ideal," and a range of other concerns having nothing to do with nationalism or geography: psychology, large socio-political forces, and the general cultural conditions of the twentieth-century.

Generally speaking, the idealistic tone of Dewart and Lighthall persisted almost unchallenged in Canadian writing until about 1920. Only a few Canadian writers of the first two decades of the century carried out literary projects that can be more than loosely defined as "realist." Even in these few cases, Canadian writers generally approached realism as a vague technique to communicate larger idealistic values, and no overarching realist aesthetic appears to have guided their efforts. As Cal Smiley argues,

> [t]he idealism of these authors was inextricably linked to the conventions of the literary romance. Larger-than-life characters, exaggerated emotions, episodic plots, a central love story, and the neat resolution of all story elements were the basic ingredients of most novels. Still, the inspiration for many works changed as writers shifted towards characters and incidents based on their own observations . . . . Writers increasingly insisted on the 'reality' of their stories. They did so, however, while staying within the limitations of the romantic conventions that supported their idealism and generated sales. (570-71)

Scott's In the Village of Viger (1896) and Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist (1904), both reminiscent of the work of earlier English writers, offer the most clear-cut examples of traditional realism in Canada fiction. Also noteworthy in this regard are the early novels of Nellie McClung, including Sowing Seeds in Danny (1908) and The Second Chance (1910), the latter being an early social-realist work that examines the situation of women in the period. Lucy Maud Montgomery's well-known Anne of Green

Gables (1908) was among the best of the many realistic local-colour works produced at the time, and its vivid portrait of Prince Edward Island endures to the present day. Ralph Connor [Rev. Charles William Gordon], the high-profile and best-selling Canadian author of the period, produced numerous moralistic works—including his best-known work Glengarry School Days (1902)—that were uncommonly attentive to the specific details of their settings, and are still considered to be among the pioneering realist fictions in Canada. But whatever the significance of these early attempts at realistic writing, they have much more in common with European and American nineteenth-century realism than with Canadian modern realism. And unlike both the modern and nineteenth-century realists, these early Canadian realists neither wrote as part of a larger realist movement, nor undertook a serious and sustained writerly contemplation of the realist form.

The general realist *impulse* in Canadian writing required a modern and energetic literary movement for it to complete its transformation into a full-fledged realist *aesthetic*. For this movement to begin required that two key, mutually-dependent factors be present: a group of writers and critics, however loosely bound together, had to propose a set of formal aims and principles that would define their modern realism, and a public forum had to be made available wherein these writers could debate and exchange their ideas. The realist impulse present in the minds of Canada's writers and critics before 1920 crystallized into the modern-realist movement with the appearance of the Canadian Bookman and The Canadian Forum in 1919 and 1920. These magazines, with their interests in contemporary subjects, combative dispositions, nationalistic fervour, and notions of self-importance, provided an ideal space for a heated debate about the new writing in Canada. Over the next decade and a half, these magazines, and especially the Bookman, would print most of the

manifestos of the modern-realist movement, and would give a voice, in one form or another, to most of the important writers of the period. Like many of the other literary movements that communally define "modernism," the Canadian modern-realist movement had a heightened sense of its significance, and positioned itself somewhat contradictorily as both a revolutionary departure from literary tradition, and the natural culmination of a literary past. To understand the precise nature of modern realism, and exactly how it came into being in the 1920s, we must now turn our attention specifically to the little magazines and their manifestos.

Chapter One

MANIFESTOS FOR A MODERN REALISM:

THE CANADIAN BOOKMAN AND THE CANADIAN FORUM OF THE 1920S

Canadian fiction was transformed with the emergence of the dynamic, experimental, and polemical modern-realist movement in the 1920s. Authors, critics, readers, and publishers of the period greeted this movement with marked enthusiasm, heralding it as the indisputable and long-sought revolutionary break with outmoded aesthetics, including both romanticism, still the dominant mode of Canadian fiction in 1920, and the European nineteenth-century realism that had been exerting inconstant influence in Canada since about 1850. While the emergence of modern realism is the most significant event in the development of Canadian fiction before the contemporary period, this movement has never been granted more than passing critical attention, and our literary historians generally consider it a belated, derivative, inconsistent, and largely insignificant response to nineteenth-century European and American movements. This chapter argues for the significance of the 1920s in Canadian literary development by examining the forgotten debates about modern writing that occurred in the two most important Canadian literary magazines of the decade: Canadian Bookman and The Canadian Forum. These debates demonstrate that Canada's modern realism was neither derived from foreign models nor geographically predetermined: it was brought to life through the deliberate and painstaking efforts of writers and critics who were responding to the general cultural conditions of the twentieth-century world in their groundbreaking stories, manifestos, book reviews, letters, critical articles, and public statements. These same individuals were utterly convinced that twentieth-century Canada required a new, serious form of writing up to the task of exploring both the contemporary world, and the modern human condition in

its broadest sense.

Significantly, the same cataclysmic event that ended and inaugurated so many modernist movements was an impetus for a modern fiction in Canada.[1] As Graham Carr writes,

> [p]roperly, any analysis of the 1920s should begin by reflecting on the impact of the First World War. In the Canadian situation this requirement is especially apt, but in an ironic way. For one of the comparatively peculiar things about the English Canadian historiography of the war is its romantically optimistic and celebratory tone . . . . The war is seen as both the wellspring of national self-identity and the capstone of national constitutional achievement. (3)

The Canadian experience of the Great War fuelled nationalism to an unprecedented degree and led writers and critics to believe that the national literature was coming of age. This new-found sense of importance led to demands for a new, modern form of Canadian writing. As an unsigned editorial published in the Canadian Bookman in January 1919 entitled "Among the Booksellers" insists,

> [i]t is impossible to converse for five minutes with any of the leading booksellers of Canada without perceiving how greatly enhanced a sense of the importance and public serviceability of the book business has been developed as a result of conditions during the world war. (83)

Desmond Pacey, in "The Writer and His Public, 1920-1960," arrives at a similar conclusion, and makes the connection between the war and the Canadian literary imagination even more explicit:

> The First World War effectually obliterated in Canada whatever traces of 'high-colonialism' had survived the boom of the first decade of the twentieth

> century . . . . Just as in the decades immediately following Confederation there had been a conscious effort to create a literature worthy of the new confederacy, so now there was a conscious, at times a self-conscious, determination to create a literature commensurate with Canada's new status as an independent nation. (3-4)

It is no coincidence that Canadians established two major literary magazines dedicated to the proliferation of modern writing in the two years following the Great War: Canadian Bookman in 1919, and The Canadian Forum in 1920.

In their inaugural issues, both magazines forcefully, polemically, and repeatedly declare that their aims are largely nationalistic, and both self-confidently position themselves at the vanguard of a new and defining era in Canadian cultural life. But despite these similarities, critical examinations of these two magazines have held them in unequal regard, and literary histories have tended to cast them unproblematically as arch-rivals: while The Canadian Forum is often praised for its intellectual and cosmopolitan contributions to Canadian literature, Canadian Bookman is almost always dismissed as uncritical and backward-looking. By most critical estimations, the Forum, unlike the Bookman, is at least worthy of dubious praise on the grounds that it introduced some of the foreign forms of modernist poetry to a Canadian audience that was infrequently willing or able to understand literary experiment and innovation. Sandra Djwa argues, for example, that the Forum "provided the only forum for critical discussion of modernism in general," and "became the first modern Canadian magazine," regardless of the fact that it began publication a year after the Bookman ("*Canadian Forum*" 7, 9).

Djwa's argument exemplifies the general exclusion of the Bookman, which some critics chastise for its supposed ignorance of modernism, from the significant

literary debates and developments of the 1920s.[2] Mary Vipond's "Canadian Nationalism and the Plight of Canadian Magazines in the 1920s" sums up the popular view of the relationship between these two journals, arguing that "the *Forum*, although committed to fostering Canadian culture, always insisted as well that they sponsored objective criticism" (74). She goes on to contrast the important contribution of the Forum to the "boosterism" of the C. A. A. and its house organs, including the Bookman (74). Such conventional appraisals of the 1920s magazines need to be reconsidered because the easy generalizations that they perpetuate are partly responsible for obscuring the modern realism that *both* journals advocated. Contributing to this problem is the fact that critics have tended to overemphasize the rather superficial quarrel between contributors to these two magazines in the 1920s: the Bookman, in its early years, was forced to defend itself against frequent, scathing, and unprovoked, but often justified, attacks from the Forum which expressed outrage at its supposedly low critical standards. While it is true that these two magazines often perceived themselves to be adversaries on the national stage because of this debate about literary standards, the conflict between them was not the result of a fundamental philosophical or aesthetic disagreement about Canadian fiction. Throughout the 1920s and beyond, the creation and advocacy of a Canadian modern realism was a constant if peripheral concern of both the Bookman and the Forum. Articles, reviews, literary manifestos, and mission statements in both magazines would, whatever their competing aims in other areas, argue unmistakably for the new, modern-realist aesthetic. While their conceptions of what this modern realism ought to look like were often vague and sometimes in conflict, both the Bookman and Forum nevertheless offered coherent and passionate statements in support of the new form. More significantly, both magazines characterize Canada's emerging realism in palpably

modern terms, and equate many of the subjects and techniques of the modern realists with those of the European and American modernists. And both of these journals, but especially the Bookman, are revealing literary artifacts themselves: their pages provide direct and compelling intimations of the spirit of modern realism and the dynamic culture of the "contemporary" world that preoccupied so many modern-realist authors.[3]

Canadian Bookman published its first issue in January 1919 under the general editorship of B. K. Sandwell, and appeared regularly until 1939—with the exception of a few issues that did not appear in 1937—when it merged with the official organ of the Canadian Authors Association, The Canadian Author, to form The Canadian Author and Bookman.[4] Desmond Pacey's description in "The Writer and His Public, 1920-1960" sums up the popular evaluation of this magazine: "The Canadian Bookman became an organ of the new spirit of uncritical self-confidence and 'boosterism.' To the editors of this magazine, a Canadian book was *ipso facto* a good book. The extremes to which it carried literary nationalism were almost incredible" (5). While Pacey is overstating the case, the Bookman is undeniably nationalistic and self-celebratory, and it frequently exhibits an irritating and self-congratulatory boosterism. Even the very few contemporary critics who offer a defence of aspects of the magazine arrive at a predominantly negative evaluation of its significance. T. D. MacLulich's Between Europe and America: The Canadian Tradition in Fiction briefly considers a few of the Bookman pieces of the 1920s, and suggests that "*Canadian Bookman* published quite a few thoughtful and interesting articles," though it was essentially "the voice of the Canadian Authors' Association and a semi-official public flyer for the publishing industry . . . *Canadian Bookman* was largely a vehicle for Canadian literary gossip . . ." (93). James Mulvihill also offers some rare praise of the Bookman, but insists that it is nevertheless "a particularly aberrant example of

Canadian nationalism between the wars . . ." (48). Mulvihill does not identify the important commentary on modern realism found in the Bookman, but he deserves credit for highlighting the superficiality of the debate that has led to much of the neglect of the magazine over the years:

> So convenient have commentators found the booster / knocker dichotomy in characterizing Canadian literary journalism between the wars that they have overlooked the healthy interchange of ideas and contributors which went on among journals presumably poles apart in their editorial styles. (54)

One reason that Canadian realism has scarcely been recognized by critics as a modern form of writing arising out of a distinct literary movement in the 1920s is this: critics have so persistently celebrated the Forum and denigrated the Bookman that it now appears almost ludicrous to suggest that there are significant similarities between the two. Tellingly, there has been no sustained critical study of major ideas common to both journals. But if we acknowledge, from the outset, that the Forum triumphed in the debate about literary standards then we can begin to explore these journals' surprising mutual advocacy of modern realism in Canadian fiction.

My purpose here is not to argue systematically against the criticisms levelled at the literary standards of the Bookman: the charge that it offered excessive praise of mediocre writing is incontestable. But a brief exploration of the criticism that has dominated the very limited discussion of the Bookman uncovers some of the reasons that the modern-realist movement remains unacknowledged by critics and literary historians to the present day. The persistent reprobation of the Bookman seems to derive primarily from the fact that it was, for a very brief period from 1921-22, an official publication of the much-maligned Canadian Authors Association. This role, as

Wynne Francis argues,

> meant that the policy of the magazine was adapted to the needs of that essentially conservative and professional oriented organization, resorting in the twenties to a noisy boosterism that favoured quantity over quality and patriotism over literary worth. Deservedly or not, the reputation of both the Association and its house organs has suffered from this stigma ever since. ("Expanding Spectrum" 458)

In "The Canadian Authors Association in the 1920s: A Case Study in Cultural Nationalism," Mary Vipond lists a number of reasons why the C. A. A. has been "open to a certain amount of ridicule" (69). Among these, she includes the rapid expansion in membership that came to include "'practically anyone who professed an interest in literature,' as Madge Macbeth puts it, 'and whose cheques would be honoured by a bank'" (66). While the Bookman, as we shall see, included some of the most important critical articles and literary contributions of the period—including those of Frederick Philip Grove, Raymond Knister, Robert J. C. Stead, Lorne Pierce, Lawren Harris, Georges Bugnet, Beaumont S. Cornell, Marcus Adeney, and Lionel Stevenson, to name a few—the majority of its pages were filled with book reviews and "articles" by the sorts of people Vipond identifies, and it is the worst of these pieces that give the magazine the bad reputation that has overshadowed its important contribution.

One revealing example, "Standards of Criticism," an early unsigned manifesto published in the second issue of the Bookman in 1919, inadvertently opened the floodgates to writers of bad fiction and criticism. This article was written largely in defence of the realist aesthetic that was emerging in Canadian writing and the value of the regional fiction favoured by the C. A. A.: "[w]hen a Canadian writer endeavours to express something of what he has honestly seen and diligently studied in the social or

psychological or natural phenomenon of Canada, we propose to extend to him all of the encouragement that we can" (7). But in its quest to find new Canadian writing that met its criteria, this article was overzealous, and spelled out the loose, or at least different, standards by which Canadian work ought to be evaluated: "we are indeed going to have various standards of criticism, and . . . we can imagine no utility or vitality or reasonableness in criticism which has only one standard and seeks to apply it indiscriminately to all artistic works" (7). This manifesto effectively validated the boosterish impulse evident in most Canadian criticism of the period and set the tone for many articles that would be published in the Bookman during its early years. These articles are, as one would expect, celebratory, nationalistic, and uninterested in the question of artistic merit: as W. Garland Foster wrote in the December 1924 issue, Canadian writers should "reflect the life of the country at its best and reflecting, beautify it . . ." (249). A similarly uncritical attitude is expressed in a book review signed "A. E. S. S.," which appeared in the May 1924 number: "The publication of local literature is to be commended and encouraged, whatever the quality" (111). These pedestrian articles and opinions provided easy fodder for critics of Canadian boosterism, no matter how much backtracking Sandwell did in response to the snickers and denunciations that came from many sides, and especially from the young writers and critics among the more cosmopolitan of The Canadian Forum contributors, including Douglas Bush and A. J. M. Smith. As Smith wrote in a letter to Raymond Knister in 1927,

> it seems to me that before Canada can have a modern and individual literature our critical standards must be thoroughly overhauled and some counter irritant provided to offset the traditional gentility of journals like The Canadian Bookman [sic]. . . which [is] vitiating public taste and distorting

literary values. (Burke, "Some Annotated Letters" 122)

It is remarkable that Smith, at the forefront of the movement for a modern poetry in Canada, was so caught up in the debates about literary value that he neglected to acknowledge the loud calls for a modern fiction that were made by some of his most loyal sympathizers, including Raymond Knister, also a leading Canadian modernist poet, in the very same issues of the Bookman that printed the boosterish pieces.

What the opponents of the Bookman found most distasteful, however, was the commercial aspect of the magazine, and its complicity in the constant efforts of Canadian publishers to sell more books. Even before its official affiliation with the C. A. A., the magazine unambiguously allied itself with the material promotion of Canadian writing. As it stated in "Bookishness in Canada," an unsigned article that appeared in the inaugural issue in January 1919,

> [t]he Book is a singularly composite product. To place the completed article in the hands of the consumer requires the services of the author, for the making of it; the publisher, for the physical production of it; the bookseller and the library for the distribution of it . . . . It is these common interests, the interests of the Book itself, which the *Canadian Bookman* is designed and pledged to serve. (11)

This attitude is reflected in numerous other articles in the magazine, including the revealingly titled "Canadian Book Trade's Golden Era: 'Just Around the Corner, if Booksellers do their Part,'" published in April 1922. Such fervently naive pieces, and the Bookman's almost unequivocal support for Canadian Book Week—an annual C. A. A.-supported event geared toward the sale of Canadian books—provoked negative responses ranging from the cautiously critical to the vitriolic. In May 1921, an editorial written by Barker Fairley was published in the Forum, and it pointed out a key

contradiction in the position of the C. A. A., and by extension the Bookman: "Its first object is 'To act for the mutual benefit and protection of the interests of Canadian Authors and for the maintenance of high ideals and practice in the literary profession.' But there are two objects here, not one, and they very often conflict with one another" ("Artists and Authors" 230). Less generously, Douglas Bush remarked in the Forum in December 1926 that,

> [a]s each Canadian Book Week or gathering of the Authors' Association recedes into the past and the echoes of mutual adulation roll comfortably from soul to soul, there rises insistently in one's bosom the impolite query: 'Do Canadian authors ever read anything?' It would seem incredible that intelligent persons who were abreast of the contemporary movement could hold the opinions which most of our *literati* exuberantly express about their own works and their friends' . . . . The salvation of Canadian literature would be a nation-wide attack of writer's cramp, lasting at least a decade. (72-73)

The Canadian Authors Association, of course, did not develop as an organization devoted to high critical standards, but rather as "a trades guild for Canadian writers, to protect them *vis-à-vis* the other interests involved in the publishing business . . . . Beginning as a professional pressure group, it became more and more an association for a wide variety of individuals interested in vaguely cultural activities" (Vipond, "Canadian Authors" 69-70). Its transformation from this sort of trade organization into chief advocate of Canadian Book Week is neither difficult to imagine nor particularly surprising. But the dual role of the C. A. A. meant that critics who took aim at the uncritical tendency in Canadian writing were also targeting those who wished to sell Canadian books. Canadian Bookman, a loud, prolific, and visible supporter of

Canadian publishers, became synonymous with the C. A. A. and was an easy mark for critics and writers with all sorts of peeves: low critical standards, nationalism, social conservatism, the commercialization of Canadian literature, the proliferation of regionalism, fiction by women, and the ignorance of foreign writing. But, while the Bookman is "guilty" of all of these "affronts" to some degree, as Mulvihill suggests, "[b]oth Smith and Bush had as their immediate target the Canadian Authors Association and to some extent the Bookman was simply caught in the crossfire" (51).

I have spent some time looking at these criticisms of the Bookman because my assertion that it played a crucial and formative role in the development of Canadian fiction contradicts almost everything written on the subject. Our literary histories have so persistently placed The Canadian Forum at the centre of Canadian literary culture of the 1920s that its particular notions of Canadian fiction of the period have come to represent those of the entire decade. This is almost scandalous given that the Forum of the 1920s said almost *nothing* about *Canadian* fiction, and published only a very limited range of short stories by a select group of individuals, most of whom were somehow connected with the editors of the journal, who were themselves generally far more interested in public affairs and politics than in literature. The ill-informed and dismissive attitudes of the Forum editors to Canadian fiction of the period have been echoed again and again by critics for close to a century, and many of the misunderstandings and misrepresentations of early twentieth-century Canadian fiction can be traced back to the "cosmopolitan" literary circles of the 1920s. I do not mean to suggest that later critics have deliberately overlooked the Bookman's contribution to the development of Canadian modern realism. Rather, our critics have been captivated by numerous other important literary debates of the period, all of which see the Bookman taking naive, conservative, and nationalistic positions: the magazine

often implies that a Canadian subject is more important than literary skill, that regionalism is more important than cosmopolitanism, that literature ought to have an engaged social role by upholding high moral standards. Not surprisingly, most have assumed that a magazine striking such postures could have little to contribute to our understanding of serious writing in Canada. And if such dubious contributions to Canadian culture were the entire "legacy" of the Canadian Bookman, it would be justly forgotten.

But critics have not yet acknowledged that the Bookman's most serious and thoughtful contributors directed the nationalistic impulse in a more profitable direction, changing the course of Canadian literary development profoundly. These contributors advanced a new modern-realist fiction that was unlike, in just about every way imaginable, the romantic, conservative, and uncritical forms of fiction that the magazine is infamous for endorsing. This writing is fully engaged in the contemporary moment, socially conscious and often progressive, frequently anti-nationalistic and critical of accepted "values," technically radical by Canadian standards of the period, profoundly concerned with human psychology, and as thematically modern as any but the most radical modern works of early twentieth-century literature. A series of manifestos and articles published in the Bookman in the 1920s established a sense of urgency about Canada's need for modern writing and offered initial definitions of the new modern realism and its characteristics. This effort was reflected in many of the book reviews that the Bookman printed from the early 1920s through to its amalgamation with The Canadian Author in 1939. And, although the essential works of modern realism discussed elsewhere in this study would not be published in the Bookman (which published very little creative work), the magazine's series of manifestos for a modern realism would have a wide-ranging and formative impact on

Canadian literature for decades to come.

Despite its association with many of the individuals who would later be members of the conservative C. A. A., the Bookman's unsigned prospectus, which appeared near the beginning of the inaugural January 1919 issue, revealed that the magazine considered itself a revolutionary player in Canadian literature, and sought to oppose status-quo literary values with a new, modern form of realistic writing. Like other innovative modes of expression, including most of the movements that collectively make up literary modernism, modern realism began with a manifesto. In Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern, Janet Lyon calls the modernist manifesto a

> testimony of a historical present tense spoken in the impassioned voice of its participants. The manifesto declares a position; the manifesto refuses dialogue or discussion; the manifesto fosters antagonism and scorns conciliation. It is univocal, unilateral, single-minded. (9)

The Bookman's first manifesto, "The New Era," firmly establishes the magazine in the "historical present" and declares boisterously that "[t]he first issue of the new Canadian Bookman appears at a moment which happens also to mark the beginning of a new era in the history of mankind, and, very particularly, in the history of Canada" (1). It demonstrates the "antagonism" of the modernist manifesto, clearly refusing any "conciliation" between the obsolete past and the new era it is initiating: "we stand today, along with the other great nations of a purified world, at the beginning of a new era which will certainly be vastly different from both the era of force and the era of materialism which preceded it" (1). While the prospectus is certainly making reference to the sense of a new national era dawning in the wake of the Great War, it defines this era specifically in cultural and literary terms, and places the Bookman by implication at the centre of a Canadian literary coming-of-age that will contrast

favourably with a materialistic era that culminated in war:

> it will be in one respect an era of ideas, an era of profound and general thought . . .[I]f this era is to be an era of ideas, it follows that it is also to be an era of books, since books are the one great medium through which ideas of [sic] communicated and perpetuated . . . . The Canadian Bookman itself is one of the phenomena of the new era. (1)

This sense of the arrival of a "new era" is found everywhere in the pages of the magazine: it is the only magazine of the 1920s regularly to publish reviews of new works of Canadian fiction, it speaks out on most of the pressing cultural issues of the day, and it shows a strong interest in the social and political development of Canada.

The Bookman's prospectus also "declares a position" in support of a new form of modern writing worthy of this "new era," and, in enumerating its literary standards, ironically foreshadows the rhetoric that critics of the magazine would use against it in years to come: the new books will not be "the merely sentimental, narcotic, idea-less books, miscalled books of the imagination, which have formed the literary food of too many of us who did not wish to be bothered with ideas" (1). While this first manifesto would not define the new writing specifically in terms of the modern realism it would shortly advocate, it hinted at the nature of this new fiction and called for

> real books, containing real ideas about the important things of life, whether expressed in the form of fiction, or of religion, or of philosophy, or of poetry, or of history, or of science in the broader and deeper sense of the word. It was this conviction, of the coming of an era of ideas and of books, which was strong in the minds of the founders of the new *Canadian Bookman* and which led them to select the present as an appropriate time. (1)

The leap from a call for "real books" and "real ideas about the important things of life"

to demanding a realism up to the task of exploring the modern world was subsequently made in short order, and over the next few months and years numerous authors and critics weighed in on the subject, defining and refining the modern-realist form.

Although the Bookman's 1919 prospectus is a manifesto for a new and distinct literature, the magazine is best read as a series of small manifestos that, in their totality, offer a passionate and persistent call for a Canadian modern realism, enumerate its characteristics, and offer critical commentary on the first exemplary creative works as they emerged across Canada in the 1920s. The enthusiastic and urgent spirit of the prospectus would carry on unabated in virtually every aspect of the Bookman until the arrival of the 1930s and the scaling back, both of nationalistic pride in Canada in general, and in the size and format of the magazine itself. While this enthusiasm would often translate into the boosterish attitudes and expressions mentioned earlier, it would also lead a number of individuals, in numerous articles published in the magazine, to turn their attention seriously to the task of determining exactly what was wrong with Canadian literature, and what writers and critics needed to do to bring it into the modern era. Their solution, in short, was for writers to engage the contemporary world with their fiction, and for critics to advocate a new realist aesthetic against what would prove to be considerable odds. After the first manifestos appeared in the Bookman, it would be more than a decade before the small-minded criticisms of this new form's supposed vulgarity, explicitness, and lack of moral conscience subsided, and enduring works of modern realism were numerous enough to constitute a major literary movement and Canadian genre.

The first significant Bookman article to follow the prospectus and call for a modern realism was J. M. Gibbon's "The Coming Canadian Novel," published in July 1919.[5] Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman rightly credit Gibbon with being one of

the regular Bookman contributors who sought "to bridge traditional values and radical literary innovation," though they point out, reinforcing the traditional characterization of the Bookman, that "despite the attempt . . . the journal was often seen as an uncritical 'booster' of Canadian literature" (173). For his part, Gibbon, after praising both English and American literature for veracious "observation of contemporary or recent life," laments the lack of a similar quality in Canadian fiction, revealing that, from the start, there were important Bookman critics interested in looking judiciously at the national literature and directing it toward realism:

> the novel should realistically reflect contemporary life . . . . There has been no memorable picture in fiction of either Montreal or Toronto, for instance, although Montreal has a population almost as large as Boston, and Toronto is no mean city. (13-14)

The premise of Gibbon's article is relatively straightforward, and he states concretely what many of the anticipators of Canadian modern realism had been saying in approximate terms all along. But the shifting of focus to the "contemporary" setting distinguishes this new attitude from that of many earlier writers who believed, as I have argued, that while Canadian writing ought to be about Canada, this writing could as easily be romantic as realist. Gibbon also suggests that the new realism will render the contemporary Canadian subject matter in a style of writing that is both creative and documentary: "wherever in the modern world there is activity, there is the creative and imaginative reporter" (14-15). And Gibbon even anticipates the proliferation of Canadian social realism in the 1930s, discussed in Chapter Five, when he argues that the new realism ought to reflect a contemporary environment because of its social importance: "the host of English realists from Dickens to the present day are such creative reporters, voicing the problems and the spirit of a century of social turmoil and

upheaval" (15).

It is important to emphasize that Gibbon is *not* acting as a "booster" of the Canadian fiction that already exists: he advocates a new, modern fiction that he hopes will emerge. His discussion, in fact, laments the absence of a flourishing modern realism in Canadian literature: "the Englishman who looked for a representative picture of Canadian life in the Canadian novel would be disappointed" (14). Gibbon echoes the revolutionary tone of the Bookman's prospectus, and frames his own article as a manifesto, by closing with a prophetic summons for modern realists to appear on the Canadian literary scene and describe the contemporary Canadian "spirit" as Gorki and Balzac did for Russia and France in their own periods: "Canada is still waiting—but will not have to wait long—for her prophet—or more likely her group of prophets who shall interpret her many-sided, but always vigorous, life to her own people and to the Nations who have accepted her as Come of Age" (15). Gibbon's article, though still cloaked in the rhetoric of romantic nationalism and celebration of the Canadian spirit, takes the important step of redirecting the boosterish impulse away from an uncritical celebration of Canadian literature as it is, toward a confident and enthusiastic advocacy of what it might be, should the modern-realist moment come to pass. Interestingly, Gibbon's article also makes a point about the promotion of Canadian books that refutes many of the Forum's criticisms of the Bookman that would follow in the early 1920s. He argues that "there are good reasons for this dearth of Canadian life in Canadian fiction, which like most good reasons are economic . . . . the realistic novel had no place—what was wanted was the goody-goody love story with a happy ending" (14). Rather than suggesting either that Canadian books ought to be celebrated, whatever their quality, or that Canadian books had already achieved a level of quality that ought to be celebrated, Gibbon argues that the promotion of Canadian

books, and the economic benefit for Canadian publishers, will lead to a higher quality of "realistic" literature.

While Gibbon defines Canadian modern realism largely in terms of its documentary properties, other 1920s contributors to the Bookman would define this aesthetic in more complex and exacting terms. One of the first Canadian critics to argue that the new writing in Canada ought to do more than simply and accurately reflect a Canadian environment or society was Beaumont S. Cornell, writing in "The Essential Training of the Novelist," which appeared in the Bookman in June 1921. Cornell, himself the author of two novels of the period—Renaissance (1922) and a realist novel set in Ontario, Lantern Marsh (1923)—vigorously argues that the new writing in Canada must supplement its documentary impulse with philosophical and psychological interpretation. Cornell argues that literature ought "to be an exponent of life's meaning," and that this requires a movement beyond "the boring, even distressing, facts of actual existence" (46). Cornell concedes that the novel is essentially a realistic form of expression—"[t]he novel is tied up inseparably with actuality. It is the next thing to reality because it is always an estimate of human life"—but adds that higher forms of literature require a "subjective" interpretation of the world to supplement an "objective" rendering of reality:

> The noblest intention of fiction, then, is to interpret life; and since this requires much more than a skilful pen, the essential training of the novelist begins when he commences to observe life reflectively . . . . He must appraise, compare, judge, select, emphasize—in short interpret . . . for he is dealing with the great objective reality . . . . It is not sufficient that he should be a reporter, standing aloof, coldly observing the pageant of existence . . . (46)

While Cornell's argument that literature ought to strive to be "subjective" appears unnecessary, even foolish, by contemporary critical standards, his suggestion that "objective" writing is already, in 1921, becoming the default style for modern Canadian writing—the Bookman had already praised the realism of novels by Robert J. C. Stead, Douglas Durkin, and Arthur Stringer—gives a clear indication of the quick pace of change in Canadian literary circles of the period. More importantly, Cornell is beginning to define the "modern" component of Canadian realism. Contrary to a popular interpretation, Canadian writers of the 1920s were not engaged in the unproblematic transplantation of a nineteenth-century realist aesthetic into a Canadian milieu. While more precise definitions of the modern and interpretive component of realism would be articulated by later critics, Cornell is, however dimly, highlighting a problem with nineteenth-century realism that led to some of the more experimental high-modernist techniques. While neither Cornell's article nor his own novels explicitly advocate or exhibit the subjective techniques of modernist innovation—which include multiple and unreliable narration, stream of consciousness, and psychological emphasis—his argument problematizes realism in the Canadian context, demanding that it do more than document and reflect. And the discomfort that Cornell expresses with writing that is "engaged simply in 'holding up the mirror to nature'" is loudly echoed in the writings of the important modern realists who would follow and explore this problem much more rigorously and exhaustively.

A more precise definition of the new modern realism and its characteristics would begin to take shape with the publication of Adrian MacDonald's article, "English Realism to a Canadian," in September 1922. MacDonald draws some important contrasts between Canadian realism, and the form and spirit of realism in the European, or essentially English, traditions. While the tone of his article is somewhat

pedestrian—"To a somewhat romantic Canadian . . . the contemporary English novel is at first somewhat disconcerting"—MacDonald's musings on the English novel, perhaps unwittingly, touch upon a number of concepts of relevance to the development of modern realism in Canada. The most crucial of these observations is that, on some level at least, the new modern realism is essentially incompatible with an idealistic nationalism. In reviewing his selection of European high-realist fictions, MacDonald remarks that these novels "recount not the vain successes of men, but their failures," and that "[a]ll this dismal sense of failure is quite foreign to the optimistic spirit of our dominion. We Canadians are born with the conviction that . . . there are no limits to what we may accomplish" (234). Building upon Gibbon's assertion that the new modern realism ought to explore primarily the contemporary world, MacDonald suggests that to do just this will mean extending the scope of the Canadian novel beyond those areas of life, contemporary or otherwise, that can be easily idealized, idyllized, and celebrated. This, of course, would be the realization behind an essential shift in the mind-set of Canadian writers as modern realism began to proliferate in the later 1920s and 1930s. One need only compare romantic prairie novels written in the teens and early twenties—Stead's The Homesteaders (1916) or Ethel Chapman's God's Green Country (1922), for example—to their bleaker, more famous, "prairie-realist" counterparts, published in the years that would follow, to find evidence of a shift in writerly disposition.

MacDonald's 1922 article would also enumerate some of the characteristics of modern realism, or, as he called it, "the method of the new school" (235). Not surprisingly, a prominent feature of this "method" would be the high-realist's assertion that a writer ought "to be exact in detail . . ." (235). MacDonald also identifies the fictional representation of a "deep sense of the ineffectiveness of man" (234), again

emphasizing the need for fiction to cast off its romantic and idealistic sensibilities in a manner reminiscent of European and American Naturalists—Zola, Ibsen, Strindberg, Hardy, Dreiser, Norris, and Crane. On the subject of style, MacDonald advocates a "simple, idiomatic, carefully wrought English" (234), which is the one feature that perhaps most immediately distinguishes Canadian modern-realist fiction, both from its European high-realist counterparts, and from most of the very few pre-1920s fictions written in Canada that gesture toward a realist aesthetic, most notably Duncan Campbell Scott's In the Village of Viger (1896), Ralph Connor's The Man From Glengarry (1901), Sara Jeannette Duncan's The Imperialist (1904), and Frederick Niven's pre-1920s novels, including A Wilderness of Monkeys (1911). A related aspect of style advocated by MacDonald, and one that would become an almost ubiquitous feature of modern-realist fiction, is a form of narrative objectivity, at least insofar as this concept is synonymous with an author's attempt to "avoid the appearance of over-conscious artistry" (234), and to support an "appeal to the scientific spirit" (235). MacDonald also defined the new modern realism as having an instructive purpose—"The novel is no longer to be looked upon as the mere amusement of an idle hour, but its covers are to be opened with minds alert for revelations of new truths," and it ought to be actively involved in "criticizing our existing institutions" (235). Such an impulse underlies the didacticism that is evident in many social-realist novels in Canada. The most enigmatic characteristic identified by MacDonald was "psychological realism," though this feature would also rise to prominence in the modern-realist novel, and would be one of the chief characteristics distinguishing the early modern-realist fictions of Knister, from the more romantic works that preceded them (235). Finally, MacDonald left no doubt that he believed this new realism ought to be pursued by the Canadian literary community, and he recalls

the earlier manifestos published in the Bookman with his assertion that "[a]ny Canadian with a taste for letters will soon find himself reacting favourably to the art of these stories . . . his staple food in the way of fiction will henceforth be novels flavoured with the spirit of realism" (235).

Lorne Pierce would champion the emerging realism from the conservative angle in "Canadian Literature and the National Ideal," which appeared in the Bookman in September 1925. Pierce's celebratory tone in praise of the new trend in Canadian literature is easily detectable, and he reveals that in a few short years modern realism has moved beyond its initial phase:

> We have happily left behind the times when Canadian literature was supposed to ape the themes and methods of England, and also those hectic days when the proper attitude towards our new school of native letters was one of sheer rhapsody, as noisy as it was uncritical. (143)

Among the features of the new writing that elicit Pierce's approval, and, in his view, follow naturally from our "National Ideal," is "Realism," which among other things is defined as follows: "everything crystal clear, and 'facts-is-facts'" (144). Pierce's conservative credentials in both the social and literary realm are evident: he was a Methodist and later United Church minister, and his landmark anthology, Our Canadian Literature: Representative Prose and Verse (1922), co-edited with Albert Durrant Watson, had only recently revealed in its preface an "insistence upon the physical and ethical quality of men and women" (xiv), and offered a view of literature in which "[t]he actual poet is he who presents reality in the beautiful garments of revealing art" (xvii). Displaying his conservative biases in his Bookman article, Pierce praises Canadian realism for the fact that, despite its proliferation as a literary form, "we have escaped sex, psycho-analysis, and morbid ventures into the dim unknown"

(144). And, like many of the other critics who openly advocated a new realism in the pages of the Bookman, Pierce would phrase his call for this new literature in the language of the manifesto: "We are at the very beginning of things—not the end. For the rest we need . . . Utter fidelity to the truth . . . A determination to be ourselves . . ." (144). Of course, Pierce's most conservative comments reveal that he was not advocating the same kind of realism as were most other critics of the day. But they are testimony that the new realism was being noticed by all segments of the Canadian literary world by the mid-1920s. Certainly, modern realism owes some of its success and proliferation as a form to the fact that it appealed both to the more radical, innovative segments of the Canadian literary community, who saw it as a modern form that reflected and commented upon a contemporary society in transition, and to a conservative segment of the literary world, that included Lorne Pierce and most of the membership of the Canadian Authors Association, which, except in the very few cases in which "realist" and "sexually explicit" could be conceived as synonymous, felt that realism was an unthreatening form. The conservatives also were attracted to the new realism because it had the potential to offer morally inoffensive sketches of small, local environments: as Vipond writes, "[f]or them, the real roots of the English-Canadian identity lay in its rural and small town past" ("Canadian Authors" 73).[6] Furthermore, with its purported fidelity to facts, truth, and scientific principles, realism could be made to seem an antidote to the amoral, relativistic, experimental high-modernist fiction that was making its presence felt through reviews of foreign works in both the Bookman and The Canadian Forum in the 1920s.

A more moderate critic, Francis Dickie, applauded the frankness of the new realism in his October 1925 Bookman article, "Realism in Canadian Fiction." Rather than expressing pride in the fact that Canadian writers tended to avoid more sordid

matters in their fiction, Dickie would remark, speaking of the European novelists, that "[a]ll take account and deal frankly with life as a whole as no Canadian writer has yet done in the novel" (165). In the Canadian situation, Dickie can only offer a limited form of praise, identifying a "second type" of "kindlier realism; novels in which sex, for one fundamental, appears clad more conventionally . . . In Canada there has been something of an approach toward realism of this second type, at least" (165). A number of insights into the phenomenon of Canadian modern realism emerge from Dickie's discussion. On the simplest level, Dickie demonstrates that realism is a modern literary form acceptable to at least some of those writers and critics who seek to move beyond the more traditional and conservative types of Canadian writing. Dickie's advocacy of a modern realism, however, does not derive solely from his approval of its potential subject matter. Rather, Dickie argues that the incorporation of all aspects of life into Canadian fiction, including a discussion of sexuality—"accurateness and vividness" requires that "sex . . . tak[e] its proper place" in the novel—will ameliorate the style of Canadian writers: "Canadian fiction as yet has not enough artistic balance without which no great literature is possible. That artistic balance will come with the advent of realism" (165). Realism, then, is not just a nationalistic tool for celebrating Canada, or a vehicle for social change, or a new and unexamined form. Realism, in Dickie's estimation, is remarkable for its modern style, or its aesthetic, without which no literary movement can exist.

Most of these initial Bookman articles discuss modern realism in passionate but relatively general terms. They communicate why a new Canadian fiction is needed, and offer an overview of the immediate characteristics of the new realism they advocate. While these articles obviously consider the new realism to be "modern," not all of them discuss it in a manner that immediately or obviously suggests its affinities

with other forms of modernist literature. Of course, exact boundaries between realism and modernism are difficult to draw in any literary tradition, and the Canadian tradition provides no exception. "What makes Canadian realism 'modern'?" is a question that most Canadian critics of the early twentieth century rarely asked and almost never answered directly. Probably, the new modern realism was so unlike the Canadian fiction that preceded it that critics and writers felt no need to question its essential modernity. From a contemporary perspective, however, it appears problematic that Canadians were writing modern realism while dissimilar forms of modernism were being written in other countries. Were Canadians ignorant of modernism? Did they see their modern realism as a national branch or regional application of international modernism? Were such issues of any interest to writers of the period? Certainly, modern realism in Canada is to a degree a hybrid genre that incorporates techniques commonly associated with both high realism and high modernism, while remaining distinct from both. The literary-historical time line further complicates distinctions—modern realism's rise to preeminence in Canadian prose fiction in the 1920s occurs at a time when the European and American realist traditions had been all but eclipsed by a new generation of innovative high-modernist authors. And a majority of Canadian critics and writers appears not to have perceived that a shift to modernism, in radical terms, was taking place in any literary tradition, Canadian or foreign.

A reading of the letters and book reviews published in Canadian journals of the 1920s makes it clear that the average reader, and even the average critic, had very little awareness, much less understanding, of the movement and range of aesthetics critics have retrospectively termed "modernism." Rather, these individuals tended to view contemporary works, by Joyce and Woolf for example, as experiments which differed from accepted works of realism only in the degree to which they were willing to

experiment with literary technique to express an essential "realism" or "reality." A review of Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse, published in the Bookman in September 1927, calls "Woolf the chief exponent of the modern novel," yet offers no more sophisticated technical analysis of the book than to remark that it is an "ably-drawn . . . character study . . . . [c]ontaining touches of beautiful prose" (A. H. B. 277). Such banal reviews were not the sole property of the Bookman. In 1926, The Canadian Forum would summarize Joyce's short story, "The Dead," as "simply a representation of the fine and complex sensations of a man during a single evening" (Creighton 309). While neither reviewer is essentially incorrect in his analysis, their understatements of the technical achievements of these two modernist classics are as blatant as they are typical of conceptions of modern fiction in 1920s journals. An especially conspicuous example of Canadian critical ignorance of modernist innovation and experiment is a review of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land (1922), by John Hurley, which appeared in the Bookman in May 1923. Not only is the title of the poem misspelled in the title of the review, but it is mistakenly attributed to T. G. Elliott, the author and editors perhaps half-confusing the most important American poet with T. R. Elliott, a writer of dismal Canadian historical-romance novels, and, most infamously, Hugh Layal: A Romance of the Up-Country (1927). Nevertheless, the poem is judged unremarkable: "One reads his poem with . . . a deep sense of disappointment at his [Elliott's] deliberately wrought incoherence . . . . 'The Waste Land' is really a very small plateau, confined within the limits of Mr. Elliott's . . . cool brain" (126).

Other articles printed in the 1920s magazines would do a much better job of articulating what made the new realism "modern," and how it was related to the literatures of other nations. The most articulate and incisive, and certainly one of the most prolific, critics of the new modern realism was Lionel Stevenson, and his work

does much to clarify the relation of realism to modernism in Canadian prose. Best known for his critical work Appraisals of Canadian Literature (1926), Stevenson was a frequent contributor to the Bookman in the mid-1920s, and his articles enumerate many of the key characteristics of modern realism. For the most part, Stevenson's early articles offer relatively modest contributions to the criticism of the new writing in Canada. In "The Fatal Gift," published in the Bookman in 1923, Stevenson would echo many of his contemporaries with a call for a more refined and immediate use of language in literature:

> The man who undertakes to write to-day has too many words at his command. Impressive words and whole glib phrases are stored profusely in his memory and transfer themselves thence on to paper with scarcely an effort of the intellect . . . . If our language is to be vitalized, it must first be condensed. (236)

Here, Stevenson draws an important contrast between the modern-realist novel and both the European novel of the nineteenth century, and the early twentieth-century Canadian novel. The form of writing that Stevenson favours contrasts with the verbose, philosophical, expansive novels of George Eliot, Dickens, Thackeray, or Duncan in the Canadian context. Stevenson argues for a language that exhibits "extreme simplicity. Every word is brief and entirely familiar; not a phrase is distorted or far-fetched" (235). The sort of unencumbered, direct writing that Stevenson advocates here is not unlike the less-experimental strain of modernist prose—perhaps best exemplified by writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Jean Rhys, Robert McAlmon, and Sherwood Anderson—that would have an important impact on so many Canadian writers, including Knister, Callaghan, and to a lesser extent MacLennan.

Stevenson believed this new style, and the realism that it both reflected and

facilitated, to be inarguably modern. In "The Outlook for Canadian Fiction," which was published in the Bookman in July 1924, Stevenson concedes "the most beautiful prose written in Canada" to the romantic novelists writing around the turn of the century (158). The modern writing, or "new impulse," he celebrates involves a rejection of "beautiful" words in favour of a "harshness that is loosely termed realism" (158). The new, and even revolutionary, direct style Stevenson endorses involves more than a refinement of language; it involves an exacting and realistic treatment of its subject matter: "the tradition is no longer satisfactory. Almost without exception, the note-worthy new novels show a determined effort toward more serious treatment of life" (158). The realist aesthetic, then, is both new and experimental, but Stevenson is hardly celebrating experiment for its own sake. To him, and to so many Canadian writers and critics of the period who expressed similarly views less articulately, realism was both new and very familiar, and as such it embodied a complex but workable contradiction. Modern realism represented an unmistakable break from the literary style that preceded it; yet it did so by offering a representation, not of the new and uncharted high-modernist terrain of the unconscious, or of the obscure and *outré*, or of the spiritual and symbolic, but rather of something that was very well known, albeit under-represented to Canadian writers: the familiar, actual conditions of Canadian life.

In his enigmatic 1927 article, "Is Canadian Poetry Modern?," Stevenson takes his call for a national literature to a new level, and in the process offers a view of what makes Canadian realism modern that is broadly in line with the working definitions of other critics and writers. Stevenson begins by showing contempt for the most experimental high-modernist writings: speaking of Gertrude Stein's work, he remarks, "In such cases 'modernity' consists in a startling extreme of a current fashion, sweeping into temporary notoriety by ostentatious novelty, making an almost physical

assault on the sensibilities of the reader" (195). Modernity, to Stevenson, is not located in the experimental, or technical features of a literary work. Yet modernity is an essential and desirable feature of literature: "modernity is the essential characteristic which distinguishes true and permanent literature from mere word-spinning" (195). Where, then, can the essence of a text's modernity be located if not in its technical aspects? Stevenson offers his answer in terms that provide the central tenet of a definition of Canadian modern realism: he insists upon drawing a distinction between "genuine modernity and revolutionary innovation" (196). He argues that modern writers are involved with

> fully interpreting the actual vital spirit of their times, free of outworn conventions and yet avoiding all self-conscious affectation of revolt; their eyes turned neither toward the past nor toward the future, but . . . absorbed in the entertaining spectacle of life around them, and their transference of that life into art was immortal because the spark of actual life was in it . . . . there is nothing apologetic or experimental or defiant in the attitude of the true modernists . . . the satisfying effect of utter reality . . . results from the author's complete identification with the immediate subject matter. (196)

Realism, in Stevenson's view, is modern when it is engaged in capturing its contemporary spirit to the fullest degree possible, and this is a revolutionary act: "[d]irect identification with the spirit of any age means necessarily a severance from moribund traditions, even though they are still observed by the majority" (196). Yet literary experiment, and technical innovation, are neither characteristic nor atypical of the modern; a modern literature is involved in a representation of its contemporary environment, by whatever technical means necessary. This view, although rarely articulated by the earliest critics of modern realism, would appear to have been very

widely held in Stevenson's day, judging by the number of modern-realist authors that do exactly as Stevenson advocates, and the number of later critics and writers who say more or less the same thing. This begins to explain why Canadian realists believed they were creating a modern literature in the 1920s at the same time that high-modernist experiments in the literary magazines seemed, from a contemporary perspective, to be contradicting them. It also begins to explain why so many of the experimental techniques that Canadian writers attempt—Grove's temporal shifts in The Master of the Mill, Knister's handling of multiple points of view in his unpublished novel, Group Portrait, Callaghan's "reportage," and MacLennan's "kaleidoscopic" technique from his unpublished first novel, all discussed later—do not closely resemble related techniques in high-modernist fictions. The Canadian modern realists are not being self-consciously experimental; they are being modern in the sense that they are attempting to represent their contemporary environment, and for the most ambitious of these writers, this activity leads them to employ new forms that might best be viewed as complementing this realism, rather than dimly reflecting high-modernist methods. The legacy of the Canadian Bookman of the 1920s comprises mainly these and other articles that boisterously advocate and define the new modern realism. The Bookman's role in our literary history is crucial: it provided a vital forum where writers and critics could articulate the purposes and techniques of their new aesthetic. Without such a forum, it is difficult to imagine how so many literary figures of the day might have reached (or discovered) a near consensus about new writing in Canada, and there might not have been a coherent modern-realist movement at all.

By the mid 1920s, discussions of realism were commonplace in the Bookman, and evidence that it was on the minds of the broad reading public can be found in many of the minor, and otherwise unremarkable, items published in the magazine:

advertisements, announcements, gossip columns.[7] But the best proof that the movement was gaining ground is the appearance of increasing amounts of modern-realist fiction itself. Such works began to surface with regularity as the early manifestos were being published in the Bookman: Stead's essentially romantic novels of the late teens were beginning to exhibit some characteristics of modern realism by the publication of Dennison Grant in 1920, Knister's modern-realist short stories appeared in print as early as 1922, and, by 1925, Grove and Ostenso had published the first famous modern-realist novels, Settlers of the Marsh and Wild Geese. The sheer number of book reviews published during the period that noticed and praised realist tendencies in new Canadian works confirms this. An unsigned review of Stead's new novel, The Cow Puncher, appeared in the Bookman in January 1919, and directed one of Canada's early realists toward the aesthetic he would develop in his next few novels:

> it will certainly be of value when Mr. Stead takes to the portrayal of more normal and more accurately observed Canadian life [including] . . . . a life-like and sincere picture of the normal, every-day, routine events which make up most of the life even of a Westerner at this advanced date in 'Canada's Century.' ("The Cow Puncher" 69)

Similarly, the unnamed reviewer of Luke Allan's sensationalistic adventure novel, Blue Pete: Half-Breed (1921), remarked that "Canadians with a real knowledge of their West will note in it some signs of an ability to do something more than describe gun-fights, suggesting that Mr. Allan may eventually turn to a much more artistic and serious portrayal of Western life" (59). In 1923, a notice of Ethel Chapman's God's Green Country (1922) described the novel in a single line, choosing to emphasize its documentary and didactic qualities: "An all-Canadian novel showing how conditions in

rural life may be improved by the application of modern methods" (43). A review of Grove's Settlers of the Marsh by Georges Bugnet, himself the author of a realistic novel written in French about the life of a part-native woman, entitled Nipsya (1924), appeared in December 1925 and equated Grove's abilities as a writer with his realist aesthetic: "Grove has certainly the marks of a gifted writer who knows how to curb his imagination to let facts, real facts, predominate" (203). And by October 1926, as evidence that realism was being accepted as the new modern form by critics, if not yet by the majority of Canadian authors, T. D. Rimmer remarked, in a short article entitled "Recent Canadian Novels," that "It is rather peculiar that the majority of Canadian authors still evince a warm partiality towards adventure and story-telling instead of devoting their talent to the interpretation of contemporary life and the processes that govern individual reactions" (307).

Such positive reviews of modern-realist works are not found only in the Bookman. Despite its comparative critical neglect of prose, The Canadian Forum published occasional reviews of Canadian books in the 1920s. These reviews reveal that the Forum endorsed the modern-realist writing of the Bookman, irrespective of the superficial debates that divided these magazines on other issues. An unsigned 1923 review of Grove's first book of sketches, Over Prairie Trails (1922), offered praise for its accurate, unsensational depiction of life on the Manitoba prairie: "There is incident, but, thank Heaven, no plot. I do not know of a more vivid or authentic description of inland Canadian weather. There is combined the naturalist's scientific accuracy and attention to detail with the poet's interpretive affection" ("Land and Weather" 248). A review of Pierce and Watson's A Book of Canadian Prose and Verse (1922), also appearing unsigned in the Forum in 1923, was critical of the verse, but claimed, "[i]t is a different matter with the prose . . . . even when, occasionally, the style is inferior, the

material is vivid and authentic and deals with the actual life of the people" ("A New Anthology" 58). Even Frederick Niven, a writer of historical romances and some of the dullest realist novels of the period, was praised for his technique in a review in May 1927: "Niven, in his descriptions, has an uncanny knack of selecting the essential details, and illuminating them with his own emotional colouring" (W. S. M. 252). The Forum's praise of these works proves that the modern-realist movement was not contained in the pages of a single magazine with a supposedly regionalist, boosterish, and commercial agenda. The Forum's endorsement of the Bookman's new realism is, in fact, rather remarkable when one considers how irreconcilably opposed these two magazines are in most literary histories. But why would Canada's most sophisticated, cosmopolitan, and modernist magazine of the period offer support for the realist aesthetic of its rival? As we shall see, the answers to this question reveal fallacies in critical conceptions of 1920s literary culture, and offer more evidence that modern realism has important affinities with the kinds of modernist writing usually associated with the Forum.

The Canadian Forum began publishing in October 1920 under the watchful eyes of four members of the faculty of the University of Toronto: Barker Fairley, S. H. Hooke, Gilbert Jackson, and C. B. Sissons. It was a direct descendant of The Rebel (1917-20), a noisy University College magazine that was abandoned when its founders turned their attention to the creation of their new and more ambitious journal. The Forum has long been considered to mark a crucial turning point in Canadian literary history, and credited with playing a decisive role in the introduction of literary modernism to Canada. It has certainly received far more credit for its impact on Canadian literature than has the Canadian Bookman. In contrast to his critical and dismissive appraisal of the Bookman, for example, Pacey describes the Forum in

glowing terms, praising its "truly high standard," "responsive[ness] to new ideas," and "enlightened and critical discussion of Canadian writing" ("The Writer and His Public" 5-6). Even in its most recent edition, The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature does not even provide an entry for the Bookman, but its entry on the Forum remarks that "it has always been faithful to its title by allowing discussions of issues from all sides" (Stevens 101). No less admiring, but perhaps more telling, is Sandra Djwa's characterization of the Forum: "it provided a critical discussion of modernism in general . . . during the vital period when Canada first emerged as a modern nation, we find in its pages the intellectual context for much of our present poetry and criticism" ("*Canadian Forum*" 7). Few would dispute the Forum's key function in the development, dissemination, and critical discussion of Canadian poetry: nearly all of Canada's important modern poets published in the Forum in the 1920s, and the magazine published numerous landmark critical pieces on the subject. But Djwa's omission of prose from her list of subjects that generated ample literary discussion in the Forum accurately reflects the magazine's content in the 1920s. The critical discussion of prose made up a far larger proportion of the Bookman's literary pages than the Forum's, and the latter was not entirely, or even predominantly, devoted to the discussion of literature, allotting far fewer pages to literary topics than the Bookman in an average issue.

The Forum did, however, publish dozens of short stories by Canadian writers alongside many of the most significant modernist poems of the 1920s. This makes the Forum's support of the Bookman aesthetic especially surprising and revealing: it offered acclaim for modern-realist fiction at the same time as it was regularly publishing—and critically ignoring—its own brand of modern short stories. While the Forum obviously took its role of purveyor of Canadian poetry very seriously, it was not

nearly so discriminating in its choice of stories, and almost none of the fiction it published in the 1920s and 30s is still known today. In keeping with its general aesthetic tastes, the stories the Forum printed often bear a superficial resemblance to the high-modernist short story, often sharing with it an economy of style, unity of effect, structural irony, and impersonal narrative. At the same time, the majority of these stories share much more with the popular magazine fiction of the day, and they appear flashy, insincere, short-sighted, and ultimately disposable. Many of the pieces of Forum short fiction are little more than snide, humorous anecdotes, satirical pieces on current events, sensationalistic action or adventure stories, or moralistic and didactic sketches. The editors appear to have made little effort to seek out new Canadian writing, and many if not most of the stories that appeared in the Forum in the 1920s were written by the people who held editorial positions for the magazine—including J. D. Robins (by far the most frequent contributor of fiction), Richard de Brisay, and Gilbert Norwood. The result of this cliquish, narrow editorial approach is a body of monotonous fiction, characterized by in-joking, self-importance, snobbishness, and arrogant closed-mindedness. While the stories are nevertheless almost universally competent and remarkably concise, they are also largely academic and artless, and their concision appears to be less a deliberate aesthetic choice than a mere byproduct of the space constraints of the magazine.

The fiction of the Canadian Forum, however, cannot be dismissed outright. A few enduring pieces did appear in the 1920s and early 1930s, and some of the Forum stories exhibit stylistic techniques that are characteristic of the most innovative high-modernist writing. Perhaps the best-known piece to appear in the 1920s was Raymond Knister's groundbreaking modern-realist short story, "The Strawstack," published in October 1923. While the Forum did not publish fiction by as significant a

Canadian writer again until the early 1930s, more prominent names begin to appear with some frequency around the time of the journal's tenth anniversary: Leo Kennedy's "Portion of Your Breath" appeared in January 1930, and his "We All Got to Die" followed in December of the same year, as part of an issue that also included Leon Edel's "The Eternal Footman Snickers," with its obvious allusions to T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." A story by Dorothy Livesay entitled "Beach Sunday" appeared in January 1931, and L. A. MacKay's "Three Men" appeared in April 1931. But the most remarkable of the Forum short stories were by lesser-known individuals. Robert Beattie's "Island Night" (November 1920) pushed an objective, impersonal form of narration to an experimental extreme, and this technique, with variations, also appeared in Olaf Olafsen's "The Victim" (July 1924), and John T. Jones's "Wagon Wheels" (October 1926). J. D. Robins, in "The Walls of Jericho" (July 1921), used a pattern of allusion to structure his story, and a similar preoccupation with allusion, perhaps encouraged by the frequent use of this device by the Forum poets of the period, can be found in Richard de Keppel's "Utopia" (November 1924), Margaret Ray's "St. George and the Dragon" (December 1927), and in another Robins story, "David, Son of Thalia," which appeared in December 1928. A direct and ironic approach to dialogue and setting appears in Mary Q. Innis's "The Quarrel" (August 1922), and in Paul A. W. Wallace's "The Romance of the West" (March 1923). Perhaps most strikingly, some of the techniques associated with the representation of human consciousness also appear: J. Ansel Anderson employs a Jamesian centre-of-consciousness technique in "The Coward" (August 1925), J. H. Simpson creates an impressionistic narrative voice in "Orchard Way" (August 1931), and Eleanor McNaught's "September Sonata" (March 1932) offers a fragmented, stream-of-consciousness narrative.

At first, it is tempting to argue that these few Forum stories represent an important Canadian contribution to international modernist writing, or at very least a significant offshoot of foreign high modernism. Yet such an argument is difficult to sustain. For one thing, remarkable stories are a very small minority of those that appeared in the Forum in the 1920s and 30s. More significantly, the journal that printed these stories, the same journal that is so often praised for its modernist innovation, completely disregarded these stories critically; a glance through the Forum of the 1920s reveals that short fiction appears with regularity, yet the magazine appears almost unaware of its existence, interested instead—when it considers literature at all—in both Canadian poetry, and prose from Europe and the United States. And the major prose writers of the period, even those who contended that they were at the centre of the new movement in writing, were, at their most supportive, silent on the subject of the fiction of the Forum. Raymond Knister, Canada's first major modern realist and an author of short fiction published in the magazine, was dismissive of the Forum's over-all literary relevance in an essay entitled "Canadian Letter," which he wrote for This Quarter, a Parisian journal devoted to experimental writing that also published some of his poems and modern-realist stories:[8] "The *Canadian Forum,* perhaps the most important and intelligent magazine we have, calls itself 'A Journal of Literature and Politics,' cogently except that the literature is rather consistently omitted" (379). And Knister also specifically dismissed the Canadian short fiction of the period in another essay written around the same time, "The Canadian Short Story," first published in the Bookman in 1923:

> most people have . . . left [the Canadian short story] unregarded in the magazines . . . . the short story is preeminently a commercial article . . . . reduced to a formula so regular that . . . anyone can turn out a story to

> conform . . . . I have never yet seen a good story by a Canadian author in a Canadian magazine. (388-90)

That Knister's views on the Canadian short story were widely held by his contemporaries is suggested by their almost utter silence on the issue; Knister is one of the very few critics of the period to consider the subject of the Canadian short story worth any commentary at all.[9] But despite his negative valuation, Knister was optimistic, both in his own short fiction with its tireless experimentation and evolution, and in his article: "What, approximately is wrong with the Canadian short story? The question is not in itself encouraging, though a search for answers to it may reveal potentialities as well as pitfalls" (388). Knister's question brings another one to mind that is more difficult to answer: why did the Forum and the literary public of the 1920s ignore this magazine's high-modernist fiction just as literary nationalism was running high, and Canadian critics, especially those clustered around the Bookman and Forum, were seemingly desperate to find Canadian literature of value?

To understand why critics and writers of the period favoured a modern-realist style we need only look at their manifestos and creative work. But there is little direct evidence of why the modernist fiction published in the Forum categorically failed to provoke interest. However, a few indirect answers to this question arise out of a closer examination of the critical attitudes to fiction held by Canadian modernist *poets* of the period, and of practical problems associated with publishing magazine fiction in the 1920s. These answers are especially important as they help to define further the relation of modern realism to high modernism. The practical reasons for the neglect of these short stories as are not complicated. The best-known creative writers who published in the Forum were singularly or primarily poets—E. J. Pratt, A. J. M. Smith, Robert Finch, Dorothy Livesay, F. R. Scott, Leo Kennedy, and A. M. Klein—so the

magazine's relative disregard of prose is perhaps to be expected, especially as most of these poets were also among the literary critics of the time. Also, Canadian poetry was, in general, much more highly regarded than was Canadian fiction in the 1920s; it at least had an established tradition, represented by the Confederation poets, even if the young modernists who published in the Forum wrote largely against this tradition. So the stature gap between poetry and prose may partly explain the Forum's disregard of its own short fiction. And of course there are material and physical aspects of the magazine to consider: the brevity of the poem better suited the Forum's concise art-deco format than did the short story, and poetry certainly did appear with much greater frequency. Probably for similar reasons, most of the pieces of short fiction published in the Forum were so pared-down, very often to a single page in length, that they are difficult to equate with longer, more "serious" prose forms such as the novel: the Forum published reviews of novels (almost all of them foreign) during the period, and it treated the novel as *the* serious, socially-relevant prose genre. So the Forum seems to have had no pretensions about the significance of the fiction it published; it was treated without the seriousness reserved for poetry, regarded as entertainment, and included as a regular, predictable feature of the journal amounting to little more than, as Knister puts it in "The Canadian Short Story," "a pleasant, more or less innocuous way of passing a quarter of an hour" (388).

The Forum, obviously, did not publish articles justifying its critical disregard of its own modernist fiction, and there is little to be found in its statements that indirectly explains this peculiar neglect. A further explanation for this phenomenon, however, might be inferred from the aims and assumptions of some of Canada's modernist poets of the period. As I have suggested, modernist experimental techniques were highly valued in the Canadian poetry of the 1920s, especially by the writers and critics

grouped around the Forum, even if a very small proportion of Canadian poetry of the period is experimental. Yet similar experimental techniques, when they occurred in a contemporaneous body of fiction in the same journal, were totally disregarded. This is a contradiction, however, only when modernism is seen as an innovative and experimental mode in sharp contrast to a traditional and conservative realism. In fact, the Forum's modernist poets expressed ideas similar to those expressed in the modern-realist manifestos of the Bookman. In other words, the modernist poets of the Forum had more in common with modern-realist than high-modernist prose writers. As Sandra Djwa reveals,

> [t]he younger poets, led by Smith, believed they were totally rejecting the old romantic tradition: they decried the sentimental, nationalist verse of their immediate contemporaries and predecessors; they wished to counter an old romanticism with a new realism, rhetoric with imagism, conventional metrics with the subtlety of half-rhyme; above all, they wished to broaden the subject matter of poetry. ("*Canadian Forum*" 21)

Crucially, Djwa's argument recalls Stevenson's characterization of the relationship between high modernism and realism, published in the Bookman in 1927, and paraphrased earlier in this chapter: literary experiment and technical innovation are neither characteristic nor atypical of the modern; a modern literature is involved in the representation of its contemporary environment, by whatever technical means necessary.

Even the most sophisticated of Canada's modernist poets, A. J. M. Smith, would echo this reading of realism as experimental, modern, and new. In his "Introduction" to The Book of Canadian Poetry (1943), Smith argues that

> [t]he modern revival began in the twenties with a simplification of technique

> . . . Canadian poets turned against rhetoric, sought a sharper more objective imagery, and limited themselves as far as possible to the language of everyday and the rhythms of speech. These reforms were largely the work of younger poets whose outlook was native rather than cosmopolitan and whose aims were those of realism. These poets sought to render with a new faithfulness much that had been passed over as 'unpoetic' by previous generations. (338)

Smith posits modernist innovation, not as the polar opposite, but as the logical, experimental extension of the realistic impulse in poetry. Of course Djwa, Stevenson, and Smith are all talking about poetry—an indication of the marginal role prose played in Canadian literary circles in the 1920s—and the techniques of prose and poetry have important dissimilarities. In prose, to a greater extent than in poetry, the most experimental modernist literary techniques—extreme fragmentation, stream of consciousness, juxtaposition—are associated with the epistemological representation of individual consciousness. It is also difficult, if not impossible, for a poem to be "realist" in the same sense as a work of fiction, and it is no accident that all of the major schools of realism—prairie realism, social realism, urban realism, socialist realism—are almost exclusively concerned with fiction. And Canadian modern realism, with its quest for objectivity, its ubiquitous third-person narrators, and its fidelity to the "national-referential ideal" identified by Lecker, rarely requires such radical literary techniques for the communication of its modern version of reality (Making It Real 4). Modern fiction, for Canadian prose writers of the 1920s, involved reflecting the contemporary world accurately and directly, and this is not what the Forum short story writers generally achieve. The self-consciously experimental Forum stories, then, are at best seen as isolated experiments, conducted by individual writers (almost none of

whom built lasting literary reputations) interested in experimenting, in a largely virtuosic and self-referential manner, with the techniques they had become aware of through their reading of foreign writers.

That these stories went unregarded by the "cosmopolitan" literary world of the 1920s is significant because it reveals that while the supposedly all-important Forum was confident about the poetry it published, and considered itself at the forefront of the new movement in Canadian poetry, it enjoyed no such self-assurance when it came to fiction. Its poetry was the best in Canada, its poets were the leading poets of the age, and its aesthetic principles for poetry were well-defined, if often disputed, debated, and challenged. On the other hand, it did not even consider the fiction it published worthy of serious critical comment: few important Canadian fiction writers of the period published in the Forum (and not one did regularly), and it had no clearly-defined aesthetic principles about fiction. Ironically, the Forum story writers are the real "imitators," not the modern realists, who have sometimes been charged with stealing their forms from other literatures. And if the Forum's silence on the issue of its own fiction, or the anxiety that it apparently felt about the quality of the work it published, are not enough to suggest that the legitimate claim to modernity in Canadian prose belongs to the modern realists, then consider this: the few articles published in the Forum in the 1920s that *do* discuss fiction endorse, almost without exception, neither foreign high modernism nor the fiction published in its own pages, but the works of Canada's modern realists. The main contribution of the Forum to Canadian prose, then, was not the introduction of a modernist aesthetic comparable to that it brought to Canadian poetry. While explicit statements on Canadian fiction are relatively few in the Forum, the accumulation of its commentary in the area amounts to its advocacy, not of the majority of its own stories, with their slight, popular approach, or of the small

experimental strain of prose it published, but rather of the modern-realist movement championed in the Bookman.

The Forum's initial prospectus of October 1920, entitled "Three Years Have Passed," would see the magazine mark its territory every bit as polemically as the Bookman's had nearly two years before, though it would do so with only an implicit endorsement of literary realism. The magazine would, however, come out strongly in favour of new forms in literature, and the editors would cast themselves as important figures in the ongoing struggle to forge a new literature in Canada that, in their minds, had begun with the Forum's forerunner, The Rebel. Using a third-person, past tense to grant themselves mythical status, the Forum's founders wrote that, "Their [the founders'] rebellion—still in progress—was against the conventions, not against society. Their excursions into politics were neither numerous nor protracted. It was in the field of arts and letters, that they flaunted their banners as a rule" (3). While many critics apparently assume that the new form of literature advocated by the Forum was the literary modernism of Europe and America, the opening editorial expresses its nationalistic sentiments along lines similar to those of the Bookman, by demanding a distinctly Canadian literature:

> Too often our convictions are borrowed from London, Paris, or New York. Real independence is . . . a spiritual thing. No country has reached its full stature, which makes its goods at home, but not its faith and its philosophy. Such a magazine as the 'Canadian Nation', whatever has been said of its activities, is in itself a recognition of this truth. It is just as much a part of the 'Made In Canada' movement, as the Canadian Manufacturers Association. So too would 'The Canadian Forum' be considered. (3)

If the editors of the Forum are not subscribing to the belief held by so many Bookman

critics of the period—namely that Canada ought to represent itself in its literature along the lines proposed by the modern realists and their forerunners—they have nevertheless failed to offer an alternative. But regardless of whether writers and critics associated with the Forum arrived at their support of modern realism accidentally, or as a result of influence from the Bookman, or simply because —when they considered literature at all—they were too busy discussing poetry to hold strong modernist opinions on prose, supportive references to the emerging realism are relatively common in its pages.

Many of the positive reactions to the emerging realism expressed in the Forum may have their origin in Huntly K. Gordon's "Canadian Poetry," published in March 1921, the first article in the Forum to discuss realism in any protracted manner. In many ways, Gordon's sentiments sound as though they are extracted from the Bookman, and he comes out in favour of a body of national verse that strives toward the realistic depiction of Canada. In Gordon's words,

> English Canada fails to produce a distinctive verse of literary value . . . . and if we are to produce a poetry of any value, we must shun derivative expression and sentiment . . . We have our own expressions . . . [and] [w]e must learn to use and purify them, and develop a native tradition, or die to literature. (178-80)

Criticizing Lampman, whom he claims is too derivative of European poets, and allying himself with the modern movement in Canadian poetry, Gordon argues that "[o]nly by the reality of its impression can poetry succeed, and seldom does Canadian poetry achieve reality" (178). Gordon's expression of a realist aesthetic similar to that advocated by Bookman, then, is clear.[10] Despite the traditional conception of the Forum as a magazine devoted to fostering a Canadian literature that would be similar

in quality and subject matter to the modern literatures of Europe and America, statements in the magazine like Gordon's, emphasizing the "national-referential ideal" and the realist forms it usually privileges, are surprisingly common. An unsigned article, entitled "Artists and Authors," for instance, appeared in the Forum in December 1921, and also reflected the sentiments of the Bookman's modern-realist advocates, lashing out against "[t]he narcotic of cheap writing" (460), and lamenting the lack of a representative aesthetic in Canadian prose:

> We cannot yet say of any Canadian book that it expresses the strength and character of the Canadian people . . . We have hardly a book that remotely expresses us . . . . We have nothing in Canada which we can put in the hands of a visitor from Mars and say, 'Read that if you want to know what we are like.' (460)

In the very act of advocating a form of literary realism, this article vocally criticizes the C. A. A. and their "orgy of mutual congratulation" (460). The fact that this article, and others published in the Forum, position themselves simultaneously in favour of the realism advocated by the Bookman and against the C. A. A.—which Pacey and Francis have suggested is almost synonymous with that magazine—suggests that something is seriously amiss in our critical conceptions of the period, and that even in the 1920s critics were overlooking the Bookman's most significant contributions to Canadian literature.

Contemporaries of the Bookman, including the most vocal of the Forum critics, were opposed to what they perceived to be the boosterism of the C. A. A. and its house organs, and this opposition has been extended inaccurately by critics to include an over-all rejection of the Bookman and its support of realism in Canadian writing. But not a single significant article critical of modern realism appeared in the Forum in

the 1920s. There was, however, a peripheral concern among many of the Forum critics that more conventional notions of realism were somehow too limiting, and they pressed Canadian writers to move beyond the merely representational in their fiction. In a letter published in the Forum as an article entitled "The Canadian Novel" in June 1922, J. Addison Reid writes in response to a friend's request for a representative Canadian novel: "you wish to send someone . . . a Canadian novel which will be really representative of Canada . . . . The greatest novelists, I would say, are those who are masters in the interpretation of human emotions, which are not national but universal" (658). Reid cautions against the type of fiction that merely recreates a particular locale, setting, or nation in literature, demanding that a larger purpose be part of the new writing in Canada. Alfred Gordon makes this point more directly in a letter to the editor printed as an article entitled "Canadian Culture?" in March 1922. Implying his opposition to the boosterism and nationalism of the C. A. A. and the Bookman, Gordon concedes, nevertheless, that an essential realism should form the basis of modern writing:

> The artist of course deals with reality . . . but never as reality; and art thus not being of the practical world, it cannot be served by a practical conception, such as that of nationalism . . . . to presume there is such a thing as 'the national art' which the Canadian writer can achieve by 'trying,' or by using Canadian 'settings,' is to betray ignorance of the real nature of art. (558)

The key contribution of the Forum to the creation of Canadian modern realism is its few articles such as Gordon's. The Forum gave its tacit approval to the movement advocated by the Bookman but insisted that realism be more than a technique, or a naive philosophy. In other words, the complementary role the Forum played was to

direct Canadian writing toward a more serious aesthetic contemplation of realism.

These calls for a Canadian prose concerned with more than a simple reflection of life should not, however, be equated with calls for a consciously experimental Canadian prose. As I have suggested, the Forum did not advocate a high-modernist fiction in its critical articles, but rather tended to support Stevenson's claim that realism is a modern form of writing. John H. Creighton's "The Fiction of James Joyce," which appeared in the Forum in July 1926, was one of several critical articles in the magazine that offered an analysis of what would later become the high-modernist classics. These articles, without exception in the 1920s, do *not* praise innovative literary techniques or advocate experimentalism in Canadian prose. Rather, they ignore the modernist techniques in the works they consider, or they consider them un-Canadian, or they awkwardly dismiss them as incomprehensible and irritating.[11] Creighton's article is not significant for an outright rejection of literary modernism, but instead for a characterization of modernism as simply an inventive and highly successful form of realism. In his discussion of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1914), Creighton writes that

> A Portrait is realism of the spirit, springing from a conviction that life is not to be caught and held in the solid, material mould of the old realism of Bennett, Galsworthy, Dreiser, and Wells; it is a realism that places emphasis on the heterogeneous impressions, emotions, feelings, and thoughts of life rather than on its facts, whether people, houses, streets, clothes, food, furniture, or hotels. Despite its lack of balance it brings us close to life—as close as we have ever been in fiction . . . . (310)

The Forum, then, lends its important endorsement to the notion of modern realism put forth by the best of the Bookman critics; literary modernism is an extreme or

heightened form of realism; by the same token, realism is a subdued form of high modernism approaching the same subject matter as its more innovative counterpart with less experimental virtuosity. Even the most experimental Canadian journal of the period affirmed that modern fiction was realist at heart, and no one could deny that, by 1930, modern realism was far and away the dominant aesthetic in serious Canadian prose.

The originators and advocates of modern realism in the 1920s were a diverse group of writers and critics, from all parts of Canada, both formal conservatives and literary innovators, both celebrators of all things Canadian and imitators of foreign modes and models. The aims and techniques associated with Canadian modern realism are almost as many and diverse as their advocates who, writing in their prospectuses, editorials, articles, and manifestos, offered the first incisive critical comments on Canada's modern fiction. Unfortunately, a critical tradition that polarizes the Bookman and Forum in its discussions has obscured the dynamic emergence of modern realism in the 1920s, and the complexity and richness of the debate that supported it. A recognition of the modern-realist movement necessitates that we move beyond such artificial controversies and recognize that the Forum was not the only, or even the most important, advocate for modern Canadian fiction of the period. Still, however revealing and significant the critical discussions of modern realism in the Bookman and Forum, neither published a significant amount of this new fiction. The boldest and most important contribution to the modern-realist movement was made by the writers of this fiction themselves, not by the critics who evaluated it. And, of all the writers who experimented with realism in the 1920s, not one did so as imaginatively, exactingly, thoughtfully, and prolifically as Canada's first major modern realist, Raymond Knister.

Chapter Two

Raymond Knister: Revolutionary Modern Realist

Knister's work is crucial to a study of modern realism because he was the first Canadian writer to express and explore a modern-realist aesthetic, and his critical opinions on the subject, expressed in his articles, correspondence, and creative work, offer ambitious and probing definitions of the genre as a whole.[1] The fact that Knister's critics tend to consider him, somewhat contradictorily, both the preeminent Canadian prose realist and experimentalist of the 1920s, highlights his literary significance and draws attention to the interdependence of the realist and experimental impulses in the writing of the period. Still, his work has never received the attention that it merits, and his over-all literary reputation has yet to be firmly established. This lack of recognition probably stems from a prominent conception of Knister that has been criticised by his daughter, Imogen Givens: he was a "full-time professional writer," not a "farmer who did a little writing in his spare time" ("Raymond Knister" 5). The sheer quantity of work that Knister produced confirms Givens's assertion. Although his precarious reputation as a prose writer rests almost singularly upon his first published novel, White Narcissus (1929)—his only work in print today—he produced much significant work in his short career. His first short story appeared in January 1922, and he created prolifically until his untimely death in 1932. In one decade, Knister produced about one hundred poems, half as many short stories and sketches, four novels (two remain unpublished), and dozens of critical works, including essays, reviews, editorials, and a landmark anthology of Canadian short fiction. This impressive *oeuvre*, most of it almost entirely ignored and forgotten, constitutes the first sustained creative expressions of the modern-realist aesthetic in Canada. In contradiction to some erroneous conceptions of Knister's realism, he is not merely reflecting the literary culture of his day; with

persistent effort and experiment, he wrote deliberately as a modern realist from the very start of his career, at a time when works of realism, modern or otherwise, were almost non-existent in Canada, and the Bookman was only issuing its initial manifestos on the subject. Apart from his fiction, Knister was an incisive critic and an indefatigable letter writer, and a consideration of this largely unpublished portion of his work, together with his published writing, reveals that his thoughts on the emerging modern realism were frequent, probing, influential, and articulately expressed.

Knister's own literary production, however, accounts for only part of his significance in the early development of Canadian modern realism. His dual role as preeminent realist *and* experimentalist of the 1920s means that both he, as an individual, and his work embody a number of tensions and contradictions that reflect and magnify those inherent in the larger modern-realist movement. He was the earliest Canadian writer to couple the "national-referential ideal" with a wholly realistic aesthetic, and to be noticed in the modernist literary circles of Europe and America: in this sense, he reflects the multiple origins and influences of the larger movement of which he is a part, and personifies the term, "modern realist." He advocated an international standard in Canadian writing, and championed Canadian subjects and issues in fiction, thus arguing from both points of view in one of the key literary debates of his day. Exemplifying the relation of Canadian modern realism to other modernisms, he was at once devoted to experiment and innovation, yet critical of the avant-garde movements of the period. In many ways, Knister's short career was a largely successful struggle to negotiate these conflicting and competing impulses, ideas, and positions, and these struggles were the catalyst for much of his most ambitious work. They are also typical of many of those encountered by later Canadian modern realists, writing in other regions and contexts.

Knister is also important as he was an intensely individualistic yet well-connected writer, and his circle of influence and influences was wide. He was almost unique among his prose-writing contemporaries (Callaghan is the only other writer who can make this claim) in that he was associated with significant writers and critics in Canada, the United States, and Europe. In his own country, he corresponded with the most significant literary figures of the period, including Frederick Philip Grove, Morley Callaghan, Dorothy Livesay, Leo Kennedy, A. J. M. Smith, Mazo De la Roche, Duncan Campbell Scott, Lawrence Burpee, Sir John Willison, W. A. Deacon, Hugh Eayrs, Merill Denison, Pelham Edgar, and Lorne Pierce, among many others. He published some of his first works in The Midland,[2] an experimental American journal devoted to the publication of modern writing, and from 1923-24 Knister lived in Iowa in the role of associate editor for this journal. Perhaps most atypically for a Canadian writer of the 1920s, Knister published poetry and prose in This Quarter,[3] a Parisian journal that favoured experimental writing, and included works by such illustrious modernists as James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, Carl Sandburg, Djuna Barnes, and e. e. cummings. Yet despite his many connections to foreign writers and his awareness of their literary techniques, Knister remained committed to the modern realism that he maintained was synonymous with the new writing in Canada. Over time and in pursuit of his own ambitious literary goals, Knister would undertake numerous experiments with the realist form, and his views on the subject would evolve and expand, broadening, clarifying, and defining the genre of modern realism, both to himself, and in the larger Canadian context.

Knister's pioneering, even revolutionary role in Canadian literary history has occasionally been acknowledged by his critics. For example, in his "Preface" to the special Knister issue of the Journal of Canadian Fiction published in 1973, David

Arnason identifies Knister as the spokesman of the new literary movement of the 1920s, hinting simultaneously at the critical tendency to misunderstand Knister, even in his own period:

> Behind all the hoopla, the crazes that swept the country, the jazzy superficialities, a new sensibility was emerging, and in Canada during the nineteen-twenties its most articulate spokesman was an intense, desperately hard working youth . . . Raymond Knister. The form that the new sensibility took in literature was an increasing concern for psychological truth and realist techniques, and these elements are at the heart of Knister's work . . . . Knister was in perfect tune with the new, emerging sensibility, and it appalled him that he could not make others see it. (8)

The "emerging sensibility" identified by Arnason, which is essentially the general cultural counterpart of the modern-realist movement of the 1920s, would become Knister's literary cause, and his own sense that he and his work were at the forefront of a new era in Canadian writing is evident in many of his statements, often framed as manifestos in the style of the Bookman. Appropriately, Anne Burke compares Knister's formative role in prose to that of Smith in poetry: "Each was, essentially, a leader and, as such, felt a responsibility to produce critical manifestos in the spirit of his times . . . . Both Knister and Smith participated in the modernist revolution" ("Some Annotated Letters" 100).[4] While the immediate or direct influence of Knister's critical statements and manifestos is questionable—the majority of his most articulate statements on realism were unpublished in his lifetime and many of them are discussed here for the first time—they are nevertheless revealing of the opinions he held on the emerging movement in Canadian writing, and at times tellingly critical of his own fiction. His keen

awareness of the new realism is reflected in the quick pace of change evident in his own literary development, and his fiction both encourages and echoes the calls for a modern-realist fiction in the literary magazines of the period.

Similarly, much of Knister's own abundant criticism confirms, supports, and attempts to direct the dramatic changes taking place in Canadian writing in the 1920s. In an essay probably written in 1923, "Canadian Letter,"[5] Knister identifies the new realist movement and explicitly supports the Bookman's formative role: "It was not until our adoption of *Maria Chapdelaine* on its appearance in English, *circa* 1921, that these guesses, warnings, hopes, deprecations, and plaints [for a new literature] began to be heard generally, and now the *Canadian Bookman* lends an impartial ear to tens of these voices—which is a good augury . . ." (378).[6] In this same essay, drawing attention to the sense of promise and potentiality in the new Canadian literary scene, Knister remarks, reflecting his own dual attachment to literary models and individual experiment, "we have room for all schools, space to be free of all schools" (380). In "Canadian Literature: A General Impression," an originally unpublished essay probably written between 1920 and 1923,[7] Knister was already remarking upon "the presses" that "continue to pour forth an increasing number of volumes by Canadian authors until, not unnaturally we have begun to experience a desire to know our position," thereby highlighting both the material profusion of Canadian writing in the 1920s, and the fast-growing critical awareness of the same. In "Canadian Literati," also an originally unpublished essay written in the 1920s,[8] Knister reflects and affirms the optimistic and energetic literary spirit of the times in his discussion of "our noble determination to make an all-Canadian literature where none was" (160). In this piece, Knister draws attention to the significance of his own role in the new literary movement, presenting himself, with some modesty, as exemplary of Canada's new writers: "I may be

pardoned for offering myself as *corpus vila*" (161). And, by 1928, Knister was taking it upon himself to define the new canon of Canadian prose in his ground-breaking anthology, Canadian Short Stories. Although much of the material Knister included was not written in the 1920s—he includes stories by Leacock, Roberts, and Scott, for example—he nevertheless declares the anthology to be indicative of the revolution underway in Canadian, and even foreign, writing: "Literature as a whole is changing, new fields are being broken . . . and the changes in other countries show counterparts in our development . . . . [T]here has been a sudden growth of consciousness" (xi, xviii). Knister embraced his role as a harbinger of literary change in Canada, and wrote manifestos that judiciously avoid the excessive boosterism of the worst of the Bookman critics but are unmistakably optimistic and celebratory of the new realism.

For all his advocacy of the new writing, and in spite of positioning himself at the vanguard of a new era, Knister was one neither to abandon his influences nor to discount the values and standards of a literary tradition, indigenous or foreign. He was also reluctant to join with the most nationalistic Bookman voices and champion Canadian subjects and issues as the only suitable topics for Canadian fiction. Although the vast majority of his work is about Canada, and he has certainly been praised for his vivid depiction of Ontario farm life, throughout his career he remained deeply ambivalent about nationalistic literature. While steadfastly convinced that Canada ought to have a modern literature particular to its own circumstances, he disputed a popular claim of the period that a literature that did not reflect Canada was somehow "un-Canadian." Grove's reply to a letter from Knister shows that they were in fundamental agreement on this issue:

> What you say with regard to 'really indigenous work' is quite right. I don't care one particle about any indigenous setting. So long as the work turned

> out by any Canadian writer is worth its salt, it will be Canadian, no matter whether it deals with Canada or China. (Grove to Knister, 15 Nov. 1929)

Knister's argument against restricting the subject matter of the Canadian novel, reflected in Grove's letter, also implies opposition to Sandwell's advocacy of "various standards of criticism," discussed in the previous chapter. The Canadian writer who works with foreign modes, models, and subjects, will inevitably be judged in relation to those who have trodden this ground before, and Knister welcomes the comparison. While Knister enthusiastically endorses modern writing in Canada, he insists that a literary work, Canadian or otherwise, ought to be judged on its "literary" merits, not on the basis of its subject matter or nationalistic assertions. As Givens argues, "he insisted on international standards, while maintaining the validity of the Canadian experience" ("Raymond Knister" 5). Knister, then, comes out on the sides of both the Bookman and the Forum, the so-called "boosters" and the so-called "knockers" of nationalist literature, demonstrating that this polarizing debate was (and is) perhaps of more interest to critics and editors than to writers. Yet whether this double stance is the result of a deliberate aesthetic choice, or simply the inevitable conclusion of writing and reading widely, is not entirely clear: as he writes in "Canadian Literature: A General Impression," "Many critics have made outcry at the imitative and exotic nature of Canadian genius, without stopping to consider that even were the disregard of models desirable, it is not possible" (172).

By all estimations, Knister was remarkably well-read, and he tried to familiarize himself with as many different types of writing as he reasonably could. Among the most revealing of Knister's papers in the McMaster collection is a long "List of Books Read By J. Raymond Knister From September 1914 to Mid 1924," in which he records the hundreds of works he read in his formative years. His readings range from the

most traditional of the realists—Austen, Dickens, Turgenev, Thackeray, Howells, Balzac, George Eliot—to the modern writers of his period—Conrad, James, Anderson, Lawrence, Dos Passos, T. S. Eliot. His reading of Canadian authors was less extensive, but included many of the best-known writers of the time, including Grove, Stringer, Leacock, De la Roche, Pickthall, and Durkin. Knister had a deep sense of literary tradition—this is apparent in so many of his letters that compare and discuss other authors—and he believed that literary influence was both desirable and unavoidable: why else would he who declared himself an example of the new Canadian writer so carefully and proudly document his reading history, even placing his own literary works alongside those of other authors on his list?[9] The idea that a modern writing in Canada could appear suddenly and independently of other literary traditions was apparently unthinkable. As he wrote in a letter to Lorne Pierce in 1925,

> I have no objection to the idea of any Canadian using the forms which traditionally belong to other literatures . . . . Nor is it well that the writer should be ignorant of other literatures. But it is not likely that we will reach indigenous Canadian forms at the first try, so that experiment has always seemed perilous. (Knister to Pierce, 23 Nov. 1925)

Knister's disbelief in a literature that is entirely homegrown is a rejection of the nationalistic impulse in Canadian writing, and by implication a denial that the essential preoccupation of Canadian realists ought to be the "national-referential ideal." This stance frees Knister, and potentially his contemporaries and literary descendants, to develop the modern-realist aesthetic along lines that are not preeminently documentary. Knister is proposing a realist form of writing that has an individualistic artistic vision at its core. As Stevens argues, Knister "was . . . trying to assess his own ideas in light of those past writings, examining recent developments in Canada and

other literatures, testing personal ideas against those he was constantly encountering in his own wide reading" ("Introduction" xii). The logic of Knister's implicit argument is perhaps surprising, but sound: he counters the emerging, deterministic 1920s notion that a respect for traditional and foreign literary modes will lead to a literature that is derivative and imitative with a suggestion that an isolationist literature grounded solely in a Canadian context will, also deterministically, produce writing that is narrow and unimaginative. Both of these sets of circumstances, if unchallenged, limit individual expression and are therefore in Knister's view to be avoided. The alternative he proposed was to acknowledge all influences and to subscribe wholly to none; the "new era" of modern Canadian writing represented, not so much a break with the past, but the awakening of a critically creative spirit and the unique interpretation of both ancestral forms and contemporary, indigenous subjects by a new generation of experimental, individualistic writers. As early as 1932, Leo Kennedy, his first serious critic, identified this individualistic characteristic of Knister's writing: "he does not, consciously or unconsciously, emulate any school of writing . . . . His experiments with form and matter are not in any predefined direction; he is drawing on himself rather than his reading, and modelling his subject in a way native to himself" (461).

Despite his acknowledgement of various influences and aesthetics, both realist and modernist, both foreign and Canadian, Knister's critics often characterize him as an unproblematically realistic writer whose chief contribution to Canadian letters was the creation of its first truly representative stories. Norah Story writes, for example, that Knister's key subject matter and central concern is "the stuff of daily existence and scenes of farm life" (411). Philip Child, himself a significant modern realist discussed later in the context of social realism, echoes this common sentiment in his "Introduction" to the New Canadian Library edition of White Narcissus: "the depicting of

the Ontario country landscape and the life and manners and atmosphere of living in the farmland are the staples of his best writing" (7). These critical statements are accurate evaluations of many of Knister's sketches,[10] and to a degree of some of Knister's earliest fiction, which is experimental only insofar as it provides the first stylistically rigorous examples of the new modern realism outlined in the journals of the 1920s.[11] Were these early efforts Knister's sole contribution to Canadian prose, he would still more than merit discussion in the context of the emergence of modern realism in Canada: while even his first published work is predated by other works approaching the modern-realist form, including the early novels of Stead discussed in Chapter Three, Knister's early stories achieve an unprecedentedly concise, impersonal rendering of their subject matter, at least by Canadian standards. And Knister is not unlike Richard Milne, the central character of White Narcissus (also a writer), who muses upon an important step in the development of his writing as it moves from the old romanticism to the new realism: "he foresaw . . . a further development in his own art. An increasing surface hardness seemed to be an inevitable accompaniment to the progress of the significant novelists of his and an earlier day" (110). Yet the failures of Knister's early stories are as significant in understanding his development of a modern realism as are their successes. As we shall see, Knister's growing preoccupation with representing something beyond surface realism—human psychology—leads him to acknowledge, and to transcend, the limitations of the traditional realist form.

On the most obvious level, however, all of Knister's stories offer a purportedly accurate, recognizable, faithful reflection of "ordinary" life. With their Canadian settings—most of Knister's stories are set on farms in southwestern Ontario—they also reflect a predominant attitude expressed in the literary journals of the day: fiction ought to present a portrait of the distinctly Canadian locale. As Kennedy writes, "in the stories

of which 'The One Thing' is representative, we find, almost for the first time, Canadian farm life depicted with faithfulness and warmth, and a realism quite sufficiently literal" ("Raymond Knister" 459). Mimetic, idiomatically correct dialogue is one of the simplest modern-realist techniques used by Knister to create an illusion of reality. His stories do not describe rural speech patterns: they recreate them. Many of Knister's stories are, in fact, structured almost entirely around conversations—"Horace the Haymow"[12] being the best example—with very few interjections by an overarching narrative voice. The following exchange, from an initially unpublished story, "Peaches, Peaches" (1931), offers a good example, both of Knister's reproduction of dialect, and his minimal narrative intrusions:

> "All right, then. I wish Amos would get back with that truck. He's only gone to Wyndham too. Must have trouble selling them."
>
> "He better get home in time to take us to the station for the five car," sang one woman.
>
> "Won't have time for that," teased Ed, "Got to get another load out of here as soon as he gets back . . . ." (11)

This technique, although not particularly innovative or experimental, contributes to an over-all objective tone that prevails in most of the stories. Much as Hemingway does more famously in his short stories of the same period—including "Hills Like White Elephants," "A Clean Well-Lighted Place," and "The Killers" (1927)—Knister all but eliminates the subjective, evaluating narrator and permits the reader to read (or hear) a dialogue directly, as it is spoken. The modern-realist aesthetic is highly impersonal, and Knister's narrators, including the narrator of "Peaches, Peaches," are almost always reporters, not the interpreters, judges, and evaluators who often narrate more traditional realist fiction.

The near elimination of a subjective, contextualizing narrative voice contributes to a larger, more immediately apparent aspect of the modern realism that informs Knister's stories: a remarkable precision of language and concision of expression. Usually, Knister's fiction strives to present the "thing itself," becoming almost the prose equivalent of the imagist poem. Child identifies both this poetic property of Knister's stories, and its relation to the realist aesthetic:

> In his writing, whether in verse or prose, Knister's originality lies in bringing to life in his pages an atmosphere in which realism, that paints sharply and clearly the Ontario landscape or the subjects of farm life, is combined with realism's own kind of poetry. It is a new note in Canadian fiction and almost new in Canadian poetry and it is Knister's greatest gift and the source of his best writing. The object or experience is placed before the eyes of the reader for what it is in itself, as simply as possible. ("Introduction" 14)

Knister's writing is compact, and his sentences are generally short and to the point. While his vocabulary is large, his diction is direct and unambiguous, as this short passage from "The One Thing" reveals: "It was January. The night was already quite dark. A thaw had broken up the road, which was now a mass of hummocked and holey clay, with a pair of deep narrow channels jaggedly traversing it longitudinally" (158). Knister does not reject longer, unusual words ("hummocked," "longitudinally") but he only employs diction that is incisive and descriptive, almost always avoiding words that are in any way vague or allusive. As he wrote in a letter to W. A. Deacon, "I am for a Spartan plainness of diction in whatever kind" (Knister to Deacon, 11 Oct. 1923). This economy of style is also evident in the emplotment of his stories. His paragraphs are unusually short, focussed, and typically limited to the expression of small, closely related ideas that move the narrative forward directly, as this paragraph from "The

Loading" (1924) demonstrates:

> Jesse and his son entered the stable in silence. The boy was making for the box containing the curry-combs and brushes, when he saw that his father took down a collar from the peg. He also lifted down a collar and began to unbuckle its top. Jesse went over to a stall. (79)

And this paragraph also provides a typical example of Knister's descriptive style. His stories aim to create a believable and realistic setting by offering specific, recognizable details, in this case those pertaining to everyday Ontario farm life. Yet the descriptions characteristic of Knister's modern realism differ from those found in more traditional realist fiction: his settings, and the objects that help to evoke them, are presented "as is"; they are rarely symbolic, and rarely serve to connect the action or concerns of a given story to a larger social context. While Knister's emphasis in his stories is upon the routine lives of his characters, they are not presented as typical, or as somehow representative of general experiences, or indicative of the lives of a larger segment of society.

Direct, purportedly objective, unmediated, impersonal expression, then, is the most fundamental tenet of Knister's modern realism. In contrast to the ever-present, congenial, admittedly subjective narrators of much traditional realist fiction, Knister's narrators are all but transparent, and scarcely distinguishable from the abstracted author himself. Indeed, his own aesthetic aims and writerly intentions are far more visible and detectable in most of these stories than any narrative persona; while no "personality" tells most of these stories, the presentation of directly observable facts apparently unmediated by a consciousness highlights the author's aesthetic achievement of a refinement of expression and unity of effect. Knister's stories are almost journalistic in style—more so, even, than many of his sketches—and their

subjects are presented as though the reader is observing directly, as this passage from "Indian Summer," probably written in 1921,[13] reveals: "As she replaced the switch and turned again to her visitor there was a little flush about the rather thin brown face, with its slight hollow back of and below the mouth. Momentarily silence came" (90). Impersonality, in this instance, is detectable, not just in the matter-of-fact description, but also in the dehumanized objectification of the subject's face, treating it as a simple object under observation. Whatever emotion or significance is attributed to the face must be projected onto it from a reader's standpoint. And this is the case in so many of Knister's stories in which the objective renderings of subject matter provide little indication of what a typical or appropriate psychological response to the subject matter might be. In one respect, Knister is undertaking a relatively straightforward, realist project, and attempting to present a clearly identifiable locale with objectivity, disinterestedness, and an emphasis upon surface appearances. At the same time, and to a remarkable extent, Knister's impersonal stories are autotelic, or aesthetically self-contained, much as imagist poems are, and they make little or no attempt to refer to an extra-textual world. Knister's realism contrasts sharply, in this latter respect, with most nineteenth-century realist fiction that is deliberately and referentially situated in a larger socio-cultural milieu. The impersonality and autotelism of Knister's stories, even when they are set in a rural environment that Canadian critics so often associate with a referential realism, demonstrate his important modern-realist affinity with the high modernists.

Despite the pared-down, direct, almost documentary approach to writing evident in these stories, the exploration of human psychology and consciousness is equally, if not more, characteristic of Knister's fiction. Even the stories I have mentioned so far, with their cold rendering of facts, are largely structured around psychological states or

developments in the minds of their central characters. Knister's most straightforward stories, including "The One Thing" with its portrait of what Gnarowski calls the "alienation" of "a dwarfish, lonely man" characterized by his "emotional barrenness" (13), offer descriptions and observations that cumulatively evoke a reflective psychological impression. His more complex works are less static, and emplotted over a psychological process, such as the form of spiritual transformation that takes place in "The Strawstack" (1923). Denham remarks that, for Knister, "Realism is a notoriously tricky term, implying both a concern for accurate representation of the surface textures of ordinary life and the necessity of getting below the surface to an interpretation of the underlying social and psychological forces that are not easily accessible to ordinary observation" ("Beyond Realism" 71). To this end, many of Knister's stories—including "Mist Green Oats" (1922), "The Loading" (1924), and "The Strawstack"—build toward a grand revelation, or psychological realization, following an almost Joycean progression from ignorance or naivety to epiphany. One effect of this emphasis upon psychological development is that the action of many of the stories initially occurs internally, rather than in the external, physical world. In "Mist Green Oats," for example, changes in consciousness direct the action of the story, even when such actions are banal. As we follow the growth of the central figure, an adolescent boy, events follow his shifting states of mind, including, in this case, the sudden emergence of a memory: "The victuals were cold, but his dinner was awaiting him on the table in the kitchen. When a few minutes later he began to take the dishes away he left off abruptly, remembering that he should have time for such tasks in the evening, when the work outside was done" (58).

Knister's stories, with their various approaches to exploring psychology, face their greatest challenges when they must reconcile an apparent incompatibility between

an inner, subjective, psychological subject matter, and the cold, objective modern-realist style. As I have argued, his aesthetic is largely born out of a referential ideal, even if he is ambivalent about the importance of a Canadian subject matter and frequently willing to create works that are autotelic. When he attempts to represent human consciousness in his stories, however, he finds that a simple realist aesthetic, with its emphasis upon external, observable facts, is technically inadequate. In Knister's best stories, the points at which a straightforward realist aesthetic fails to offer a convincing representation of human consciousness mark the points of departure for his boldest technical experiments. His less successful works, on the other hand, embody unresolved struggles to achieve the same effect, but in failure are usually highly revealing of his literary aims and intentions. In "The Loading," for example, Knister creates an entirely omniscient third-person narrator who attempts to offer insight into the subjective thoughts and emotions of various characters from an impersonal perspective. The result of this approach is psychological description that is often banal, melodramatic, heavy-handed, and at times even unintentionally almost humorous: "Unaccountable pity for everyone and everything enwrapped him" (83). In "Indian Summer," these psychological descriptions are perhaps more skilfully handled, yet they remain rendered entirely from an outside perspective, and the genuineness of the thoughts and emotions is lost amid the excessively precise diction: "she followed the old course of invidiously admiring content unthinkingly, as if uncertain how to bring out what was on her mind" (86-87). In "Mist Green Oats," similar passages are still narrated from a third-person perspective, yet Knister makes a primitive attempt to generate a mimetic impression of consciousness through the employment of a tone and rhythm that sympathetically mimics the characters' thoughts. In this passage, written in the past tense, he strives to give it an immediacy through the use of vigorous,

active diction, and the awkward insertion of the word "now": "As he moved about he was not oppressed now by a sense of haste, by a fear, almost, of something unknown threatening their determination which yet chivied and lured the men of farms through those ontreading days of late spring" (59). In the final analysis, most of these attempts to present a realistic rendering of psychological states are clumsy, amateurish, and ultimately unconvincing. Many of Knister's experiments with the same aim in mind, however, prove more successful, largely because his persistence leads him eventually to define realism more broadly than many of his earliest stories would suggest was possible.

A dissatisfaction with traditional realism was brewing in Knister's mind from early on in his career, and his early experiments with impersonality reflect this anxiety in an early form. As he wrote in "Canadian Literature: A General Impression" (c. 1923), "Realism is not . . . to be accepted as an end in itself, nor, at its best as an unmixed good, but as bringing up a depth of knowledge and conviction and authenticity of feeling together with a more revealing portrayal of our inner life" (171). Knister would identify this problem with realism again in a revealing letter to his friend, Elizabeth Frankfurth, written on Midland letterhead in 1924: "How to impart a hint of the wonder and mystery behind the circumstances, yet remain true to these latter?" (Knister to Frankfurth, 11 Apr. 1924). Suggesting that this problem was becoming a career-long preoccupation for him, and for writers of modern-realist fiction in general, he acknowledged the importance of resolving it in his "Introduction" to his anthology, Canadian Short Stories, in 1928: "What is known as realism is only a means to an end, the end being a personal projection of the world. In passing beyond realism, even while they employ it, the significant writers of our time are achieving a portion of evolution" (xiii-xiv). And, towards the end of his career, in a 1930 manifesto defending

realism published in Saturday Night entitled "Dissecting the 'T. B. M.,'"[14] Knister argues that realism does more than document and reflect; it names and emphasizes the significant, hidden aspects of life: "realism has a function as criticism . . . of life . . . [its purpose is to] heighten life . . . . we must be true to life—writers and readers both. Because if we don't come to grips with it we shall miss the real thing underneath" (5).[15] Knister's dissatisfaction with traditional realism periodically led him to experiment with the realist form in ways that approximate, but never duplicate, the most experimental techniques of high modernism, including stream of consciousness, extreme fragmentation, multivocality, interior monologue, and impressionistic writing. Yet somewhat curiously, Knister's struggle to stretch the boundaries of realism to include representations of consciousness does not progress uniformly or undistractedly from failure to achievement. Written around the same time as many of his early "failures" are some of Knister's most experimental fictions—one of his most experimental stories, "Eric Mirth or the Larger I," for example, was written before "The Loading," and many of his last works, including the novella "Innocent Man," and the short story "Hackman's Night," are technically very similar to Knister's most conservative realist fictions.[16] As Child writes, "Knister continued the struggle courageously, never compromising the integrity of his vision for a commercial success, learning and experimenting as he went, making mistakes sometimes to be sure . . ." ("Introduction" 8). Nevertheless, Knister's experiments with the realist form, however inconstant and varied, are among the most ambitious and successful of any Canadian modern realist, writing in any decade.

An immediately obvious narrative strategy for the writer who wishes to explore human psychology in fiction is the employment of a first-person narrative voice. A few of Knister's stories do deviate from the standard third-person, omniscient narrative model, and his work provides a number of experiments with subjective narration.[17] In

one respect, the use of a first-person narrative voice hardly seems experimental or innovative. While it is true that first-person narratives had occasionally appeared before in Canada—Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague (1796), Susanna Moodie's Roughing It In the Bush (1852), and Stringer's prairie trilogy (1915-22) come to mind—all but a tiny handful of the hundreds of Canadian novels written before 1920 are narrated in the third person, and Knister was certainly breaking with the norm in his first-person stories. In addition, the modern-realist ideal, with its emphasis upon real events, real people, and real settings, almost seems to demand the purportedly objective, omniscient perspective. Knister's most straightforward first-person narrative appears in "Grapes," an initially unpublished short story probably written in 1922.[18] Strangely, in this story, as in the similarly narrated story entitled "The First Day of Spring" (1924-25),[19] Knister does not fully realize the creative possibilities of the first-person form, and his narrator functions almost as his third-person counterparts do. While these two first-person narratives are, of course, rendered from a particular character's perspective, they offer very little insight into the minds of the characters discussed, or even into the minds of the narrators themselves. For example, while recounting a series of memories, the narrator of "Grapes" remarks that "Those were busy days though I do not seem to have been impressed by the fact" (98), revealing, by describing his thoughts as an outsider would, that he is even less omniscient and knowing about his own consciousness than a third-person narrator would be. In these straightforward first-person stories, Knister's narrators do not speak their own thoughts aloud or provide substantial insight into their own mental states, deliberately or otherwise; in fact, they are, if anything, more coldly analytical than their third-person counterparts, standing aloof and analysing their own emotions and actions: "Possibly the grown-ups influenced my half-conscious reflections, or my uneasiness required

romantic invention" ("Grapes" 106).

A more complex and innovative employment of first-person narration can be found in another unpublished Knister short story entitled "Banking Hours" (c. 1923).[20] In this story, Knister probes the psychology of his narrator both directly, by having the main character analyse his own psychological processes as the narrators of "Grapes" and "Spring" do, and indirectly, creating an unreliable narration in which the speaker undermines his own interpretation of events unwittingly. Unlike the first-person narrators of the stories mentioned previously, this narrator, although unnamed, is highly personal, characterized, and emotionally involved. As the young man relates the story of having his honesty secretly tested by the manager of the bank at which he works through the use of a clever ploy, his voice is highly revealing of his personality and thought processes: "I wanted the job all right, let me tell you, because I always have liked the idea of it . . . . I thought that any day when I could call myself a banker would be – well, anyone knows what I mean if they've wanted something terribly bad, without thinking it could be possible" (2). On the simplest level, Knister avoids describing the detailed psychology of his character directly in this story, instead allowing thoughts and emotions to be either readily apparent in the narrator's words, or easily inferred by the reader. While "Banking Hours" does not offer the almost scientific study of life evident in so many of Knister's fictions, it is, on one level perhaps, more objective, in that the character's thought processes are presented "as is," often without any comment or analysis. In fact, the fullest psychological portrait of the narrator in this story emerges when the reader pieces together the story that is unintentionally revealed: the unreliable narrator depicts himself as the wronged party, unjustly tested, unerring and in control, yet his own statements suggest otherwise: "I couldn't just fly off the handle like I wanted"; "I would have been the maddest I've been in my life"; "If I could do anything

that would make those kind of people pay, I would do it"; "I know I'll never trust myself to be civil to that old hick if he comes in again"; "I was nearly boiling all the way to her door" (3-7). In "Banking Hours," then, Knister uses his narrator to do more than objectively describe; he highlights subjectivity and foregrounds unreliability to present both a story firmly grounded in recognizable details—the story abounds with factual descriptions of banking business—and a highly convincing psychological portrait. Yet Knister does not carry this experiment to its boldest conclusion, instead stopping far short of the bald, epistemological presentation of consciousness, and he even apparently feels the need to justify the first-person perspective by framing the story as a possible letter: "As it is I think I may just send some of this to old George to let him see what's on my mind. Or perhaps I'll be satisfied just getting it off my chest, and burn the whole business" (1). Knister's decision to account for the story in this manner suggests that he is aware of the unconventionality of his work, and perhaps wary of the possibility that highly subjective narration will compromise the objective aesthetic that he persistently and forcefully advocates.

Another first-person narrative written around the same time would see Knister come far closer to the mimetic representation of consciousness. In his most enigmatic story, "Eric Mirth or the Larger I" (c. 1920-23), the narrator attempts to communicate an epiphanic spiritual awakening that he characterizes as a "perception of the infinitude of the Allness" (98), not unlike the state of being (or non-being) that Virginia Woolf would later explore from numerous perspectives in The Waves (1931). Knister invents his own diction ("periodicy" "unrageneracy") suggesting that the state he represents is not easily described in conventional terms. In attempting to express the boundlessness of this experience, the narrative voice speaks predominantly in the present tense, yet shifts in and out of the past tense. At the same time, the over-all flow of the narrative is

essentially epistemological:

> As I sit here and the waves of memory flood my soul, they float back to me first recollections, initial surgings of the valid I . . . [Knister's ellipsis] My mother, for I was but three years old, was spanking me, expurgating the unrageneracy of the under-soul. Suddenly it seemed, I was seized by an awareness of the veracity of periodicy. This was but a dawning. As I sat — stood, afterwards, unfolded to me by way of specific experimental documentation, realization of the philosophy of punishment, the oneness of obliquity and castigation. (97)

While Knister generally allows the narrative to follow the speaker's shifting thought processes, analytical, contextualizing passages are offered to ground the narrative within a stable temporal framework: "Intertwined, inextricably with this come my first memories of my grandfather . . ." (97). And Knister's unconventional style in this story means that it is not always clear whether many of the passages are to be read as interior monologues, or merely poetic musings of a narrator being consciously rhetorical:

> I was to turn to real-estate. I should always turn to real-estate, manifesting itself in and manifesting one thing or another . . . . [Knister's ellipsis] Power, of change, Change, Overturn and turnover. The world needed the vibration of it — the golden real of it . . . [Knister's ellipsis] (100)

As experimental as this story is in comparison to Knister's more traditional efforts, its success at communicating the precise nature of "the infinitude of the Allness" is questionable, and he would never use these same techniques in the same manner again in another story. Nevertheless, these same techniques are representative of Knister's desire to explore human thought processes in fiction, and of his willingness to

experiment boldly with the realist form, rather than simply abandoning it, towards the achievement of this end.

In "The Strawstack," a story published in the Forum in 1923, Knister would offer another experiment aimed at heightening the psychological realism of his fiction, this time employing a third-person narrative. While Knister would later question the success of this particular story, his comments in this regard also reveal that he was well aware that his work was treading on new territory: "I had a story in the Oct. Can. Forum which was written about two and one half years ago which strikes me at once as so immaturely melodramatic and yet in some ways worthwhile that I don't know what to think of it" (Knister to Deacon, n.d.). In this story, the narrative voice, which is highly impersonal and omniscient, makes no attempt to mimic the flow of consciousness of the central character, although some attempt is made to offer commentary on the unnamed character's thoughts: "It occurred to him that it was wrong, that he should be ashamed and repentant" (192). Yet this story differs from Knister's other early "objectivist" fictions in that the third-person narrative voice—its language, tone, pacing, and style—is cleverly manipulated to reflect the nature of the central character's psychological states: "The place was the same, with the sorrowful sameness he found in the chances of life, in its monotonous recurrence, unescapable; the horrible rise and sinking of the sun, moons" (186-87). In addition, Knister occasionally circumvents the impersonal and objective tone of the narrator, adding a crucial subjective element to the story, by providing symbolic descriptive passages that mirror the inner contents of the central character's mind: "The trees were shrunken, grizzled, and unkempt, stood vagabonds, in an air of desperately-attempted sturdy carelessness" (187). The evocation of a mood through the highly stylized, even symbolic, use of language, first attempted by Knister in "The Strawstack," would prove to be one of the most successful

and recurring methods he found to convey the subjective contents of consciousness within the larger objective framework of the typical modern-realist story.

"The Fate of Mrs. Lucier," which appeared in This Quarter in 1925, offers another of Knister's most successful and enduring narrative techniques employed to achieve psychological realism. Gnarowski places "Mrs. Lucier," along with "Elaine" (also published in This Quarter in 1925), in the category of Knister's "state of mind" stories on the grounds that these works are "pitched on a more abstract and psychological level" (15-16). For the most part, "Mrs. Lucier" differs minimally from most of Knister's straightforward third-person narratives, and it employs a narrative voice that is, again, highly impersonal, omniscient, and purportedly objective. Nevertheless, both "Elaine" and "Mrs. Lucier" represent a refinement, or perhaps a perfection, of the style and techniques that Knister developed in earlier stories, including "The Loading," "The One Thing," and "Mist Green Oats." The most remarkable difference between "Mrs. Lucier" and these earlier works derives from Knister's employment of a centre-of-consciousness[21] technique:

> How long before the street car would come? She had forgotten whether it was due at seventeen minutes after seven or seventeen minutes to eight. At least the wait was always endless, each time she had to remind herself that it would really come to an end. What if the car should be late reaching the city — a night like this? Lyniol would be worried. . . . [Knister's ellipsis] Perhaps he would go away and leave her to get home alone. The streets were so misleading at night, and where could she inquire the way? (180-81)

Through the use of a transparent, uncharacterized third-person voice that speaks from the point of view of Mrs. Lucier, a technique used to great effect by Joyce in several stories in Dubliners (1914) including "The Dead," the story retains its pretense to

objectivity and conveys the thought processes of a character from an internal point of view. In passages such as the one cited above, Knister achieves a kind of aesthetic reconciliation between the objective thrust of his realist project, and his desire to depict subjective psychological states: while "Mrs. Lucier" still does not abandon the somewhat clumsy psychological analysis from an external perspective—"Her heart leaped. With trepidation and quivering foretaste of triumph Mrs Lucier marched to her suitcase" (184)—the centre-of-consciousness technique allows Knister to keep both an internal and external perspective simultaneously and interactively at the forefront of his narrative.

White Narcissus (written 1925-27; published 1929) is undoubtedly Knister's most famous work, and almost all of the sparse criticism on Knister's prose focusses upon this novel. Part of the reason that Knister's significance as an experimentalist has usually been understated by critics is that White Narcissus is generally characterized as a relatively straightforward work of realism, significant insofar as it paves the way for many of the more successful realist works that other writers would create after it. As Denham summarizes,

> [m]uch of the scant commentary on *White Narcissus* has seen it as an early experiment in realism. Desmond Pacey, for instance, links Knister with Callaghan and Grove in moving Canadian fiction away from regional and historical romance towards a realistic rendering of ordinary places and events. Although most critics agree that the novel has serious flaws, they usually assert that its strength lies in its rendering of the life of a particular place and time. (70)

The realist properties of this novel are undeniable—the techniques of his early modern-realist works, including concision, direct expression, and mimetic dialogue, are obvious

throughout. Also, the length of the novel relative to the short stories means that Knister's portrait of a recognizable locale and depiction of the daily lives of characters are especially developed and vivid. But White Narcissus also exhibits some of the experimental techniques geared toward the creation of a heightened sense of psychological realism. As Child argues, "Nothing quite like *White Narcissus*, with its combination of a psychological approach to the main characters with a realistic yet poetic treatment of the landscape of the Ontario rural scene, had appeared before in Canadian fiction" ("Introduction" 12). This novel's reputation as the representative work of Knister's *oeuvre* is probably appropriate inasmuch as it represents the refinement of many of the techniques he had experimented with beforehand. But White Narcissus, in and of itself, gives a skewed impression of Knister's over-all career: it is more melodramatic and implausible than most of his other works, and it avoids his most adventurous and perhaps significant technical experiments with first-person and unreliable narration.

Nevertheless, White Narcissus marks the crystallization of many of Knister's innovative techniques. His narrator, although omniscient and detached, offers sustained symbolic and personified descriptions in the manner of "The Strawstack," and these same passages frequently reflect the psychological states of characters in their tone and style:

> The road made fitful efforts at directness, and would ignore the swing of the high river banks, only a little farther on to skirt a depression, a sunken, rich flat, bearing rank, blue-green oats surrounded by drooping willows, elms through which only a glimpse of the brown ripples of water could be seen . . . . (20)

This novel also builds upon the kind of direct, psychological analysis present in earlier

stories by offering descriptions of mental states that are less cold, stolid, and artless than many previous examples: "Yet it was complete content that embraced his mind as he lay in his room that night, and the thought which came to him, whether then or through the hours of sleep, was that nothing mattered . . ." (126). And Knister supplements these external observations with passages that do speak partly from within the consciousness of the novel's main character, Richard Milne; while the narrator is omniscient, his voice is very frequently filtered through Milne's own point of view. The most believable passages in the novel combine centre-of-consciousness narrative with concise, descriptive observations that are neither excessively scientific nor inappropriately verbose, resulting in a seamless alternation between two complementary perspectives:

> Was Ada thinking this? She had been looking at him with starry eyes in the pearl dusk. Did she think his decision mere complacent briskness? Now, wearily she rose from the bench, and he with her, and before she could turn into the house, he led her half by force down the veranda and they walked in silence. . . . (133)

The over-all psychological impact of White Narcissus is cumulative. There are no sustained passages that step outside of the main narrative and follow Milne's thoughts in an unmediated fashion. Still, the impression generated by the third-person narration is predominantly subjective. The story is both grounded in realistic observation, and plainly coloured by an individual perspective. As Kennedy writes, "This book is distinctly an experiment in a *genre*. In it, Knister relaxes the strict objectivity of the early stories in favour of a 'style' . . . . While farm life and manners are identifiable and immediate, they are viewed through the coloured spectacles of a temperament and a prevailing mood" (460). White Narcissus, then, is not among the most radically

experimental of Knister's fictions, yet it provides perhaps his most balanced example of psychological realism.

Knister's most ambitious experimental writing is found in his unpublished novel, Group Portrait, probably written in 1923.[22] Although this work was written before White Narcissus, it is more self-consciously innovative, thereby reinforcing the idea that Knister's career is not accurately viewed as a linear progression from a traditional realism to experimental modernism. His attempts to render human consciousness mimetically are more pronounced and varied in Group Portrait than in any other single Knister work, and it is his only work of fiction to explore the thoughts of more than a single character (unless his objective third-person narrators are considered characters in the stories they narrate). Knister's techniques in this novel have many remarkable similarities to those that would later be developed by William Faulkner in his landmark novels, The Sound and the Fury (1929), and As I Lay Dying (1930): multivocality, fragmentation, and interior monologue. Knister's correspondence makes it clear that he was aware that his efforts in this novel were highly experimental, and that he intended the narrative to be structured primarily upon a subjective principle:

> In fact . . . since you enquire about my novel [Group Portrait] . . . [e]ach chapter will be recorded as it is seen by one of the characters, and colored by his or her vision. There will be about a dozen points of view, so that superficially the piece will lack unity . . . . My aim is a picture of a farm family, neither typical nor atypical, and instead of a dramatic conflict of interest there will be a failure of the wills of these individuals to impinge on each other. (Knister to Frankfurth, 11 Apr. 1924)

These comments suggest that the novel will rather simply manipulate point of view, perhaps along the same lines of the then unwritten White Narcissus, but this novel also

uses a variety of techniques to mimic thought processes, and imitate the ebb and flow of human consciousness. While there is a third-person narrative framework provided to help connect the various fragments of centre of consciousness that come from at least ten different points of view, analytical comments on the characters' thoughts from an external perspective are minimal. Interestingly, the third-person narrator, from the first paragraph of the book, is neither purportedly objective nor impersonal, and he addresses the reader directly, in the manner of many nineteenth-century narrators:

> Over the tangle of hay in which he reclined guiding the team, he watched the shadowed lake swing from sight. The farms lay smoothly along the banks of the lake shore. They were of gravel, coarse and smaller, and yellow sand in places. This was their surface, and the surface of farms, down to a few feet, counts; a farmer would not need to tell you. (1)

This third-person narrator with a discernible personality is perhaps created to provide a level of comfort that might potentially offset the disorienting shifts in perspective that rapidly follow his introduction, and subsequently appear unrelentingly in a loosely connected series of juxtaposed fragments.

The first unconventional manipulation of point of view along these lines emerges in the second paragraph of the novel. Almost as soon as the third-person narrator has established a presence, the narrative voice shifts unexpectedly into the second-person: "To come early was to find great washes and streaks of light color, unsuspected as you strolled, unless accompanied, along away from the sunset to the bank" (1). As the novel unfolds, it becomes apparent that second-person narration is used as an intermediary technique to make the transitions from a third-person objective perspective to subjective centre-of-consciousness passages less abrupt. Many of these centre-of-consciousness sections are similar to those discussed in relation to

Knister's other stories: "Robina couldn't help her mother with the threshing meals–how could she when she was finishing the dress she was to wear in the evening. She was to sing at the social. She'd been asked . . . . [Knister's ellipsis]" (40). Relatively lengthy sections of the novel use this technique to forward the action of the story, and simultaneously permit the action to be witnessed from an internal perspective, effectively eliminating the need for the third-person narrator to offer excessive commentary from above. Other centre-of-consciousness passages more closely resemble internal monologues, and many of these portray characters speaking their internal thoughts in the second person, again possibly doing so to help acclimatise the reader to what Knister perceives to be a radical form of realism: "When you thought of it, though it did seem ridiculous, it made a difference, she being all dressed up, and they, in dusty shirts and red- or blue-handkerchiefed necks . . . [Knister's ellipsis] Though they came to the social with other girls; or went away from it perhaps with them. Glad enough they'd be if she–" (43). These second-person passages, at once addressing the reader directly and mimicking thought processes in the minds of the figures who make up the group portrait, elicit reader involvement in the story, and add an additional subjective layer to the narrative. At the same time, in this above passage and in many others, Knister uses ellipses and dashes to end sections of the text abruptly, emphasizing the inconstant flow of the mind, and creating an over-all effect of fragmented multivocality. Whether or not the various fragments of the novel eventually merge into a cohesive impression, or group portrait, is a subject for debate, yet Knister's experiments in this important work mark the closest point that he, and perhaps any Canadian modern realist, comes to duplicating the innovative techniques characteristic of much high-modernist fiction. This novel also offers some of the clearest indications that the techniques of modernism and modern realism are, in their

more conservative and radical forms respectively, one and the same. Yet as is the case with so many of the most revealing works of Canadian modern realism, this novel has never been published, and to date has gone almost entirely unexamined by critics. A future determination of Knister's significance in the development of early-twentieth century Canadian writing will be largely predicated upon his efforts in Group Portrait, and in several of his other under-examined works, which have been discussed here, however briefly, for the first time.

Despite the persistent characterization of Knister as a realist, some of his critics have noticed his experiments with the realist form that grow out of his preoccupation with representing psychological states. While there has been no sustained critical examination of Knister's most innovative techniques, even the first major article written on Knister casts him in the role of innovator, and reveals that his virtuosity has ironically led to his critical neglect. As Kennedy writes:

> To those who revel in American experimentalists, and adumbrate the poppycock that outside of Callaghan's pages there is no experimental work to be found, I submit the novels, stories, and trivia of Raymond Knister again . . . . The keynote of Knister's literary career up to the present is experiment. This sufficiently explains why it is that his place has been that of a minor and little-known artist in the departments of *belles lettres* . . . ("Raymond Knister" 459)

While Knister did not live to see these first significant critical affirmations of his pioneering spirit published in the Forum in September 1932—he drowned in Lake St. Clair on August 29th of the same year—it is clear that he was keenly aware of his role as an experimentalist, and that he embraced it as enthusiastically as he did the modern-realist aesthetic. In fact, he considered modern realism and experimentalism

to be contingent terms in the Canadian context. While Knister probably did not communicate substantially with foreign writers of modernist prose, he considered himself and his modern realism to belong to a larger, experimental movement prevalent in the literary circles of his time. His correspondence with Ernest Walsh, editor of This Quarter, is revealing in this regard. Writing in response to Knister's submission of work to his prestigious journal, Walsh offered a series of comments that strongly encourage the experimental impulse in Knister's writing:

> Your stuff is real. The story we took. Keep at it. Lets [sic] see more of your things. Poems not so good. Dig all you can out of your surroundings. Don't play safe. Try anything. You may manage something really big if you risk failure in trying. Study our men. Note Hemingway and McAlmon. (Walsh to Knister, 23 Apr. 1925)

Interestingly, Walsh's letter is both offering the American modernists as a model for Knister's prose, and emphasizing the importance of a realism in writing—"Dig all you can out of your surroundings"—reinforcing what Knister knew all along: the new realism is modern. Knister's responses to Walsh were enthusiastic, and he was very eager to accept the role of experimentalist proffered to him from Paris, then the centre of the vibrant expatriate scene. Just as significant were Knister's assertions that his writing was already experimental: "I have written a novel (twice) [Group Portrait] which I think shows a real technical innovation. The usual structural functions are reversed" (Knister to Walsh, 12 May 1925). Perhaps even more tellingly, Knister considered his work to be comparable to that of the writers endorsed by Walsh:

> Hemingway's prose is real and earnest! I doubt if there is a word wrong in "Big Two-Hearted River." I see fully achieved in it the effect I have occasionally tried for. (One story of mine you might have liked is "Mist

> Green Oats") . . . The others are all interesting, and I must, particularly, see more of Robert McAlmon's work . . . . But of course my major satisfaction is in being one of these fine fellows myself. (Knister to Walsh, 3 June 1925)

The form of modern realism that Knister advocates, and effectively defines in his own creative writing, is not in his mind, or Walsh's for that matter, significantly different from the less-experimental strain of modernist prose that I have already attributed to the writers that Walsh mentions, and to others including Rhys, Anderson, Fitzgerald, and Lawrence.

Yet Knister drew a clear distinction between his form of experiment and the writing of the more extreme modernists of the period. To him, experimentalism was a necessity, but not an end in itself. And, in accordance with his wide reading and reluctance to abandon literary tradition, Knister did not perceive his era to mark a bold break with the past. As he wrote to Merill Denison of the Bookman in 1923, anticipating the argument that Stevenson would make four years later,

> [t]he matter of modern movements in literature and the drama is interesting to me . . . . I think that while there must be experiment, the main line of tradition will be continued, and change will be represented by a curve rather than a corner. Much of the stuff in a magazine such as "Broom" for instance I think is bunk . . . though any of these experiments may prove of value to one who can apply them to a vision of his own and to a knowledge of the tradition. (Knister to Denison, 3 May 1923)

Even after his publication in This Quarter and his correspondence with Walsh, Knister's essential views on experimentalism in writing remained largely unchanged. Writing to Frankfurth several months after his exchange of letters with Walsh, he would again, this time indirectly, express a relatively conservative view on the issue: "Gertrude

Stein? I'm not learned enough to say whether her writings have any value to psychology; they seem to me exercises in the association of ideas. But I can't see their relation to literature" (Knister to Frankfurth, 19 Nov. 1925). Again, we return to the view of modern writing expressed by Stevenson in "Is Canadian Poetry Modern?" Experiment, for both Stevenson and Knister, is not, in and of itself, particularly desirable or even characteristic of the modern impulse in literature. Knister's assertion that "change will be represented by a curve rather than a corner" reaffirms his own modern-realist aesthetic, with its links to tradition, and its innovative strategies that follow from its psychological emphasis. Yet Knister is not opposed to the experimental trend in fiction: he would even suggest, in the midst of writing his most traditional major work in 1931—the fictional biography of Keats that would be published posthumously under the title My Star Predominant (1934)—to a probably baffled Grove that "I may use the present book as material for a new one altogether. It would be an interesting attempt . . . to translate the . . . profound mind of Keats into the modern manner of interior monologue. Possibly also a book say after the pattern of Joyce's 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'" (Knister to Grove, 9 Feb. 1931). Knister's experiments, then, are neither eclectic attempts to create a profoundly new form of writing that departs from tradition, nor half-successful emulations of high-modernist techniques. They are focussed, deliberate, and individualistic efforts to achieve a more penetrating realism than Canada had previously known, a realism that could simultaneously document a surface world of appearances, and the hidden processes of human consciousness: a modern realism.

As I have suggested, the last major project of Knister's career, My Star Predominant, is not easily placed alongside Knister's earlier work, and suggests that in his final years he may have been moving away from the modern realism he helped to

shape and define. While to a degree this novel is realist in a traditional sense, and well-written and well-researched, it offers none of the experimental writing that characterizes Knister's most significant fiction. Was Knister in the process of abandoning his earlier views on writing? A curious and very rough novel plan that Knister wrote three weeks before his death, entitled "Via Faust," offers the last, and perhaps the most ambiguous of Knister's statements on realism. While Waddington has cautioned against an autobiographical interpretation of "Via Faust,"[23] there are clearly some parallels to be drawn between Knister's career and that of the unnamed writer-protagonist of the unwritten novel. In his early career, the writer struggles with the expression of a traditional realism in his work: "He decides a la Keats that the truth about life is its beauty, etc, and grimly struggles to put this into his novels, realistic" (1). Certainly, this character's efforts parallel Knister's attempts to "impart a hint of the wonder and mystery behind the circumstances, yet remain true to these latter" (Knister to Frankfurth, 11 Apr. 1924). A later stage outlined in the life of the writer, a Faust figure, is less clear and leaves Knister's final views on realism open to speculation:

> Decides that one must pass beyond the Keats-Shakespeare stage to the Goethean and beyond that, if possible. But these preoccupations and ideas, he notes, take the greatest writers away from realism. Tolstoi to an ethical world, Goethe to creation but cerebral more than instinctive, Anatole France to brilliant generalization and satire, no effort at realism. (1)

Certainly, Knister is again adumbrating his career-long conviction that a traditional realist form is inadequate to the task of representing the lofty "preoccupations and ideas" that he associates with a number of writers in this passage. And, as I have argued, these same concerns are the catalyst behind Knister's boldest experiments with the realist form. Yet whether he is suggesting that great literature is not realistic

(great writers do not bother with a limited form such as realism) and negating his own life's work, or suggesting that truly great writing attains a plateau at which it becomes effortlessly realistic, is unclear. Surely, Knister's own hard-won modern realism can, on one level, be seen as the result of a persistent effort to create fiction that appeared effortless, and this may partly explain his own distaste for literature that foregrounds its own experiment, or ambition, or conscious effort. And, if nothing else, "Via Faust" suggests that, however diverted from his modern-realist project Knister may have become with his work on My Star Predominant, he was, until his death, still exploring the creative possibilities of modern realism.

Of course, it is not possible to know where Knister's fiction might have led Canadian writing in the 1930s and beyond. This truism aside, Knister was the first writer of prose in Canada to think seriously about modern writing, to direct consciously the changes that were taking place in Canadian literary circles, and to arrive at a practicable modern-realist aesthetic in his work. With Knister's premature death, Canadian modern realism undoubtedly lost its most experimental and perhaps most committed advocate. Yet by 1932, modern realism, having been boldly advocated and defined in the literary magazines of the 1920s, and aesthetically realized in the first modern-realist fictions, was becoming firmly established as the new form for prose fiction in Canada, and it was already evolving in a variety of *oeuvres* and contexts. Of the loosely identifiable schools of modern realism in Canada, the best-known is the prairie realism of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, to which I now turn my attention.

Chapter Three

The Proliferation of Modern Realism in Canada, Part 1: Prairie Realism Reevaluated

The new modern realism surfaced throughout Canada in the 1920s and 30s in a variety of regional, ideological, and aesthetic contexts. My approach has thus far been genealogical, tracing the origins and development of modern realism chronologically through discussions of the literary manifestos of the 1920s and the early experiments of Raymond Knister. Henceforth, I explore the movement as a kind of literary "matrix," to borrow Sanford Schwartz's term, in which the types of modern realism in Canada are facets of a larger literary sensibility.[1] Of the various mutually dependent realist "schools" that proliferated in the decades after World War One, none has been more widely discussed, critically problematic, and unfairly characterized than prairie realism. This chapter, in the broadest sense, reevaluates and redefines prairie realism in the context of the larger modern-realist movement of which it is a part. In doing this, I necessarily refute several of the prominent critical conceptions of prairie writing that have led to its persistent characterization as conservative, monolithic, derivative, and isolated from larger movements and trends in early twentieth-century Canadian culture. In order to keep imperative and overarching literary, aesthetic, and philosophical concerns at the centre of my discussion, and to discuss the phenomenon of prairie realism in an innovative manner that would not otherwise be possible, I have resisted the temptation to examine the *oeuvres* of individual prairie writers of the period sequentially. While such an encompassing methodology makes it impractical to offer in-depth analyses of individual novels and short stories, including many that are discussed here for the first time and warrant substantial attention, it allows my discussions of various prairie writers—most prominently Bertram Brooker, Douglas

Durkin, Wilfrid Eggleston, Frederick Philip Grove, Nellie McClung, Edward McCourt, W. O. Mitchell, Martha Ostenso, Sinclair Ross, Robert J. C. Stead, Arthur Stringer, and Christine Van Der Mark—to explore crucial points of convergence and divergence.

The most influential critics of prairie-realist fiction have repeatedly called it homogeneous and anomalous, almost uniformly predictable and limited in subject matter and technique. As all of the book-length studies of prairie realism indicate, the central concern of these same critics has been the presence of a deterministic "landscape" in prairie fiction. The first such study, Edward McCourt's The Canadian West In Fiction (1949), discussed prairie writing in terms that endure to the present day, emphasizing its regional relevance and mimetic aesthetic in a geographical context: "It is the purpose of this book to examine some of the prose fiction written about the Canadian West by native Westerners and others, and to attempt an estimate of the extent to which it is an artistic re-creation of the prairie way of life" (v). More exclusively thematic in its approach, though no less inclined toward the geographical thesis, Laurence Ricou's Vertical Man / Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction (1973) sought to unify all of prairie writing with a single vivid image that stresses the isolating effect of prairie geography on writers and their fictional characters: "The basic image of a single human figure amidst the vast flatness of the landscape serves to unify and describe all prairie fiction" (ix). In 1977, Dick Harrison's Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction argued that "prairie fiction is about a basically European society spreading itself across a very un-European landscape. It is rooted in that first settlement process . . ." (ix). In The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature (1983), Susan Jackel emphasized the regional subject matter supposedly determined by prairie geography, finding a unifying theme in the only three, presumably representative, prairie novels of the 1920s that she

mentions—Grove's Settlers of the Marsh (1925), Ostenso's Wild Geese (1925), and Stead's Grain (1926): "All three novels explore the relations of men and women, parents and children, families and communities, in the context of a distinctive agricultural way of life" (678). In his "Introduction" to The Prairie Experience, published as part of the Themes in Canadian Literature series, Terry Angus wrote that "[t]he literature of the Canadian prairies reflects the geographical nature of the west. The three prairie provinces are primarily flat . . . Man's struggle with the land and his battle with the seemingly hostile elements characterize much of prairie writing" (1). Even Deborah Keahey's very recent and sophisticated book-length study, Making It Home: Place in Canadian Prairie Literature (1998), while challenging the traditional geographical reading of "prairie literature" in which "place has overwhelmingly been defined in narrow, deterministic terms," still asserts that geography provides an overarching, universalizing interpretation, if appropriately reimagined:

> What is needed for the Canadian Prairies . . . is a more flexible concept of the *relationship between* home and place . . . . Rather than discard the notion of place entirely and replace it with a notion of culture, then, place must instead be reimagined as a creation of the social, psychological, and cultural relationships that people have to particular landscapes or physical spaces. (6-7)

And numerous other critics, in studies of the works and *oeuvres* of individual writers, use these same geographical concepts and metaphors as starting points for their analyses, including A. T. Elder in "Western Panorama: Settings and Themes in Robert J. C. Stead" (1973), Robert G. Lawrence in "The Geography of Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese" (1976), Salvatore Proietti in "Frederick Philip Grove's Version of Pastoral Utopianism" (1992), and Hallvard Dahlie in Isolation and Commitment: Frederick Philip

Grove's Settlers of the Marsh (1993), among many others.

Such monolithic and narrow notions of prairie realism have obscured the individual achievements and failures of writers, and through sheer repetition have established a critical view of prairie writing now so firmly entrenched that it is difficult to challenge. Still, other critics have always sensed that prairie realism was a more complicated phenomenon than the geographical thesis insists, and even some of the most traditional criticism has hinted that it ought to be viewed with a more dynamic model in mind. As George Woodcock argued in 1991,

> we see the prairie novel, at its best, as one of those mongrel breeds that often show so much more vitality than the purebred strains. It is realist in the sense that it consciously and conscientiously gives us the . . . 'things as they are,' . . . the struggle to subdue the land and to survive it in the process that is man's life on the Prairie, and the way that life shapes and often misshapes both communities and individuals. But it takes its own vitality from the tension between this 'reality' and the emotions and aspirations and longings that rebel against it . . . . (12)

Woodcock's final sentence here is revealing and draws attention to what I am contending in this chapter: the term "prairie realism" is highly misleading. Not only is prairie realism not rigidly bounded or defined by a geographical place called the prairie: like the modern realism that includes it, prairie realism can only partly be accounted for under the rubric of "realism." While Woodcock does not clearly define "the emotions and aspirations and longings that rebel against" the "realist" sensibility, other critics have hinted at the need to define this revolutionary impulse by exploring the modern aesthetics, concepts, and issues that are inadequately accounted for by more traditional readings of prairie fiction. A small wave of critics, for instance, has identified

the naturalistic properties of prairie realism that link it to the early modernist writings of Europe and America: Rudolf Bader's "Frederick Philip Grove and Naturalism Reconsidered" (1985), Rosalie Murphy Baum's "Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese: More Insight into the Naturalistic Sensibility" (1984), Irene Gammel's Sexualizing Power in Naturalism: Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove (1994), and Mac Fenwick's "Neils's Saga: Colonial Narrative and Nordic Naturalism in Settlers of the Marsh" (1997) are examples of works that do just this. Other critics— including Frank Birbalsingh in "Grove and Existentialism" (1973), Thomas Gerry in "M. F. Dante, C. D. Burns and Sinclair Ross: Philosophical Issues in As For Me and My House" (1991), and John Ming Chen in "Re-Reading Grove: The Influence of Socialist Ideology on the Writer and The Master of the Mill" (1995)—have pinpointed modern ideologies and philosophical influences in the work of a few well-known prairie writers, demonstrating that geography at best only partly explains their aesthetic. The largest group of critics indirectly to challenge the geographical thesis has explored gender in prairie writing from a variety of perspectives, demonstrating both a psychological intensity and surprising feminism in even some of the most conservative works of the period: some examples of such studies are Isobel MacKenna's "As They Really Were: Women in the Novels of Grove" (1976), Lorraine McMullen's "Women in Grove's Novels" (1974), Elizabeth Potvin's "'The Eternal Feminine' and the Clothing Motif in Grove's Fiction" (1987), Helen Buss's "Who Are You, Mrs. Bentley? Feminist Revision and Sinclair Ross's As For Me and My House" (1991), and Terry Goldie's "W. O. Mitchell and the Pursuit of the Homosocial Ideal" (1997). Alison Calder's "Reassessing Prairie Realism" (1997) argues for a reexamination of the significance and boundaries of the genre as a whole: "what happens to the writers of the last fifty years whose works do not fit into a 'realistic' and therefore tragic view of prairie existence?" (51). And Donna Bennett's

"Conflicted Vision: A Consideration of Canon and Genre in English-Canadian Literature" (1991) suggests that prairie realism is a form of literary modernism that has been unfairly treated by Canadian critics: "It is important to grasp the effect upon Canadian canon-making of one segment of Canadian modernist writing [prairie realism] remaining virtually unrecognized as aesthetically significant . . ." (146). All of these challenges to monolithic conceptions of prairie realism suggest that this body of work is far more complex than is sometimes imagined.[2] Yet while the emphases of all of these critics indicate that traditional readings of prairie realism have emphasized its conservative elements at the expense of more modern issues, no critic has yet offered a redefinition of prairie realism that accounts for its "modernity" in broad and inclusive terms. This chapter builds on the initial work of these critics and argues that prairie realism is *not* a conservative, mimetic, and regional genre at the periphery of Canadian literary development; rather, it is a major component of the modern-realist movement that was developing across Canada in the early twentieth century. My reevaluation of prairie realism, in fact, reveals that it was among the most modern forms of writing in Canada between 1920 and 1950, and its writers carried out some of the boldest and least understood literary experiments of the period.

In spite of prevailing critical conceptions of prairie writing, specific enumerations of the attributes of prairie realism are scarce, and for the most part can only be inferred from the general conclusions of its critics. Even the major works that survey prairie realism—including the studies by McCourt, Ricou, Harrison, and Keahey—scarcely catalogue the techniques of the prairie realists, preferring instead to link the works they study with attention to common themes, subject matter, and theoretical assumptions. The most exacting definition of prairie realism, and one with which most critics, geographically-minded or otherwise, are in implicit agreement, is found in David

Arnason's dissertation, The Development of Prairie Realism: Robert J. C. Stead, Douglas Durkin, Martha Ostenso and Frederick Philip Grove (1980). Arnason lists characteristics of prairie realism gleaned from his survey of the works of several canonical prairie authors and the large body of prairie criticism. He offers "ten propositions" which he believes summarize the prairie-realist aesthetic: "verisimilitude," "mimesis," "ordinariness," "pastoral intent," "no absolutes of good and evil," "reject[ion]" of the "sentimental romance," "belie[f] . . . in human progress," "concer[n] . . . with the psychology of . . . characters," presentation of "a unified world," and "liberal humanism" (7-11). While I disagree that several of these traditional "propositions" are as ubiquitous as Arnason suggests, his list serves as a good starting point for an over-all summary of the traditional view of prairie-realist writing. But while Arnason acknowledges that prairie realism is not merely a Canadian application of nineteenth-century realism, the "emotions and aspirations and longings that rebel against" these "propositions," to reinvoke Woodcock's phrase, will have to be accounted for in terms more modern and exacting than those provided by his definition.

My definition of "prairie realism," then, is paradoxically both broader and narrower, more specific and more inclusive. One limitation of the traditional definition of prairie realism is hinted at in Arnason's mention of "pastoral intent," and I widen the definition of the genre to include any realistic novel written in residence on or about the prairie, regardless of whether or not it treats the traditional homesteading subject, the prairie "region," or some variation of either or both of these. Numerous critics have counted the detailed depiction of traditional farm life among the chief defining characteristics of the prairie-realist novel, including both Ricou—"In choosing the common man and everyday activity as subject matter, in refusing to idealize the demanding conditions of agriculture in this environment, and in describing setting with

an eye toward evoking the actual, these writers moved toward realism" (16)—and Harrison—"The techniques of this new fiction encouraged a more thorough representation of the prairie environment and way of life than can be found in earlier fiction" (Unnamed Country 34). A more accurate view of the prairie-realist novel acknowledges that its authors were, in fact, not nearly so preoccupied with geography or uniformly rural and regional, but were writing about the same modern and cosmopolitan themes and issues as the other modern realists and modernists in other countries. Accordingly, my discussion of prairie realism includes the novels of Brooker, Durkin, and McClung, for example, despite their predominantly urban prairie settings that make them difficult to fit into the traditional boundaries of the genre. In fact, I consider any realistic work of prairie fiction, regardless of its subject matter and whether or not geography is among its significant concerns. In order to demonstrate further that the geographical boundaries of prairie fiction are arbitrary and that prairie realism and modern realism are all but synonymous, I consider a handful of novels written by "prairie" writers that are not even set on the prairie, including, for example, Grove's Master of the Mill (1944), set in north-western Ontario. In spite of my contentious and more modern emphasis, the term "prairie realism"—signifying regionalism on the one hand, and derivation from nineteenth-century realism on the other—has been firmly established, and to replace it with a new term such as "modern prairie realism," or "prairie modern realism" would be cumbersome, confusing, and precocious. While I intend to reveal that prairie writing of the period is neither as homogeneous nor static as many literary histories would suggest, to propose that all prairie realism is "modern" would be misleading. I am not so much redefining "prairie realism," then, as reevaluating it. I continue to use the term largely as most critics have to connote works of early twentieth-century fiction that are generally "realistic" in their

technique. When I use the larger term "modern realism" in this chapter, I intend to highlight a connection between the prairie realism I am discussing, and the larger, national movement that includes it. Ultimately, prairie realism is a term of value only in the vaguest sense: it is realistic fiction written about the prairie, in residence on the prairie, or by writers usually associated with the prairie. The best prairie realism, which incorporates the rebellious impulse that Woodcock and others have highlighted, is really nothing more or less than modern realism.

My discussion begins with a refutation of the myth of the isolated and derivative prairie writer. To this end, the first section of this chapter investigates the general literary activities, connections, and influences of a number of prairie realists, drawing attention to their participation in the modern-realist movement. This section also briefly explores early conceptions of prairie realism in Canadian Bookman and The Canadian Forum in order to reveal the concurrent emergence of prairie and modern realism, and to understand why the modern contributions of prairie writers have been overlooked from the start. In my second section, I highlight the undeniably modern subjects and ideas explored by prairie writers, and demonstrate that geographic readings of prairie realism have eclipsed them. My third section exposes the experimental strain of psychological realism that is a crucial tenet of both prairie realism and modern realism, and demonstrates that regionalist interpretations, with their emphasis upon a mimetic aesthetic and the recreation of particular geographic locales, have overshadowed this epistemological emphasis. My final section foregrounds the prairie, not as a deterministic force imposing traditional realism on its authors and placing the prairie realist in a passive and imitative mode, but rather as a new creative opportunity that permits its writers to carry out some of the most remarkable and individualistic literary experiments in early twentieth-century Canadian writing. This chapter, then, seeks to

offer a new, modern interpretation of prairie realism by revealing its crucial contribution to the modern-realist movement.

* * *

In order to establish the significant role of prairie writers in the modern-realist movement it is first necessary to debunk the enduring critical myth of their isolation from other Canadian writers of the period. From the start, critics have emphasized the struggles faced by prairie writers who wished create without a supportive literary culture, and in the shadow of an overwhelming geographical presence. As W. J. Keith states, the efforts of the prairie realists ought to be considered "isolated attempts to come to grips with the country and its people in imaginative terms" (Canadian Literature in English 121). The origins of this myth are not difficult to uncover. One need only recall the most memorable characters of the best-known prairie-realist novels of the period to find fictional characters who fit the stereotype—Niels Lindstedt of Grove's Settlers of the Marsh (1925), Caleb Gare of Ostenso's Wild Geese (1925), Gander Stake of Stead's Grain (1926), and, most memorably perhaps, Mrs. Bentley of Ross's As For Me and My House (1941). The central characters of these widely-read novels have become the archetypal figures of prairie realism, their lives better known to readers than those of even the most canonical prairie writers. Consequently, the prairie realists themselves are often presumed to be writing autobiography. This perilous assumption was made as early as January 1927 when a Canadian Bookman review signed H. M. R. insisted that New Furrows (1926), a little-known novel by Flos Jewell Williams, was an "authentic" rendering of "the first-hand experience of the author, who for many years has lived in the west" (21). Similarly, an early essay on Grove's work, published as part of the series entitled "Canadian Writers of Today," appeared in The Canadian Forum in 1932, and set the tone for much of the reductive

biographical reading of Grove's fiction that would follow. In this piece, Robert Ayre creates a derogatory portrait of Grove, the archetypal prairie writer—"Frederick Philip Grove is a solitary giant, treading his own lonely trail, heedless of his contemporaries, unhurried, undistracted . . . Grove shrinks from . . . modern life . . . and gives himself to the slow rhythms of the grudging prairie"— before using this biographical caricature to account for Grove's fictional characters: "[t]he inner meaning of Len's union in death with Lydia is that a sensitive man cannot live without ideals . . . this, too, [as with Grove] is a denial of life" (255-56). In his much more contemporary study, Ricou's commentary on the prairie artist figure perpetuates the same stereotype, conflating the circumstances of real-life prairie authors with those of their fictional characters:

> When a character in a prairie fiction is either an artist, or of artistic temperament, the writer's creative responses to the environment are objectified. The absence of feature in the bleak and empty landscape, like the absence of feature in the social and cultural life of the prairie, leaves the aspiring artist without stimulus, without encouragement, and without the varieties of human intercourse which are his traditional subject. (8)

The fictional image of the isolated prairie dweller, then, has erroneously become a lens through which critics often evaluate the conditions surrounding the production of prairie writing itself. As Calder argues, "[t]he prairie that the prairie realists construct becomes real for these critics, and that constructed prairie is then used as a standard of evaluation to measure other books" (58-59).

As compelling as this myth may be, and as easy as it is to find it thematically reflected in much prairie-realist fiction, it is responsible for at least one crucial misreading of the phenomenon of prairie realism as a whole: prairie writers of the early twentieth century are, in our literary histories, erroneously located far from the centre of

Canada's literary culture, and their works are often critically viewed as regional efforts of dubious significance in the over-all development of Canadian fiction. As a result, the supposedly amateurish, anomalous, imitative, and insignificant prairie author is rarely considered part of the experimental, "modern" writing of eastern Canada. The dismissal of prairie realism can be traced back to The Canadian Forum of the 1920s and 30s, which apparently considered it the antithesis of the modern writing it favoured, and deliberately denigrated, satirized, and dismissed it. As my discussion of the modern-realist manifestos in Chapter One revealed, the Forum's view of Canadian literature in the 1920s won the claim to legitimacy, and its version of the events of the period is now enshrined in most of our literary histories. While the Bookman of the 1920s considered even some of the most obscure works by prairie writers,[3] only a tiny handful were reviewed in the Forum during the same period, and almost nothing in these reviews was positive. None of Grove's novels of the 1920s, for example, was considered worthy of comment in the Forum, although his two books of nature sketches were reviewed. In May 1923, an unsigned piece examined Over Prairie Trails (1922). While it would offer some praise of Grove's realist technique, it was nevertheless written in the typically dismissive and patronizing tone that the Forum critics employed in their discussion of western writers: "Over prairie trails in a buggy or cutter seems to an Easterner to promise a minimum of interest" ("Land and Weather" 248). While the reviewer does reluctantly concede that Grove occasionally offers a "fascinating narrative," he or she indulges in the kind of personal attacks on the prairie realist that are characteristic of other Forum articles, emphasizing the stereotype of the isolated prairie writer: "a moody man's moods . . . . Mr. Grove of the book is a queer man, and a stubborn, whose opinion of us is not very high" (248). A review of Grove's other work of prairie non-fiction, The Turn of the Year (1923), also unsigned, appeared in the

February 1924 issue of the Forum. While the reviewer of this book of nature sketches found less fault with the Grove persona—"[t]he moody bitterness . . . which expected no understanding appreciation from us . . . is noticeably absent"—he or she nevertheless found relatively little value in the book's descriptive power: "there is . . . a fatiguing minuteness of sustained description which calls for dilution with incident . . ." ("The Turn of the Year" 152). The only 1920s prairie novel reviewed in the Forum, Stead's Grain (1926), was similarly derided in an unsigned review in the January 1927 issue. While the writer acknowledged "vivid accounts of farming operations in the West," he or she nevertheless found the book mundane, commenting on Stead's "kindly realism" and remarking that "[t]he book strives for no cosmic proportions" ("Four Novels" 121). And idiotically the reviewer failed to distinguish this ground-breaking prairie-realist work, also one of the most serious and slow-moving novels of the period, from the most sensational forms of action and adventure fiction set on the western frontier: "it looks like a prostitution to a story-craving public" (122).[4]

More obviously indicative of the Forum's dismissive attitude to prairie realism are the short stories it published that satirize prairie novelists and novels. One such example, "The Romance of the West" by Paul A. W. Wallace, appeared in the March 1923 issue, mocking the nationalistic ambitions of prairie writers, holding up their realist aesthetic for ridicule, and diminishing their efforts with derogatory references to their regional concerns:

> Jedidiah Jennings had an itch of the pen, and an appetite for journalistic fame. Seeking lands to scoop, he became fired with the notion to write up Canadian prairie life, or, as his own phrase ran, to interpret in literature the land where history is being made . . . . But Jennings was too careful an artist to rest content with getting his romance second hand. He took an

excursion ticket west for genuine local colour. (174)

If this story leaves some doubt as to whether the Forum was critical of all prairie fiction, or merely the most sensationalist forms of western romance, Robert Ayre's "The Pollyanna Farmer," which appeared in the November 1930 issue, suggested that even the most serious realistic fiction by prairie writers was not up to the Forum's cosmopolitan literary standards. Ayre's story—comprising 32 chapters of approximately one paragraph in length—is a parody of the prairie-realist novel, invoking almost every cliché of the genre imaginable. He begins the story with an English emigrant named Bellow travelling west, and satirizes the prairie writer's trademark descriptions of the physical world: "Wire fences, and stubble, and dejected stooks from last year's harvest humbled by the winter, rusted machinery, black earth and snow . . . Prairie and more prairie, and still more" (56). He spoofs the awkward sentimentality of the worst prairie novels: "'I feel like the Swiss Family Robinson,' said Bellow. He was of a romantic temperament" (56). Critiquing the slow pace of the prairie-realist novel and the destructive forces of nature described by many prairie novelists, he reduces the action of entire chapters to a single line: "*Chapter Fourteen* / The first crop of the Bellows fell before the assault of the rust, cutworm, and sawfly after it had been thinned out by drifting and flooding" (57). The commonplace protagonist of the prairie novel, and the prairie author's penchant for mimetic dialogue, are similarly held up for ridicule: "'I don't know about these 'ere turnips,' said Alf, wiping the sweat off his brow. 'Blimee if I don't think I've gone and planted them upside down'" (57). Implausible plot twists are parodied by the *deus ex machina* ending of Ayre's story in which "Oil was discovered on the farm. Incredible quantities of oil, and fortunes were being made over-night" (59). And any doubt that Ayre intends the story to discredit both the place of prairie novels in Canadian literature as a whole, and the nationalistic aims of the

movement celebrated in the rival Canadian Bookman, is obliterated by his ironic one-line opening "Preface": "Here, at last, is the Great Canadian Novel" (56).

Certainly, many of the characteristics of prairie fiction derided in the reviews, articles,[5] and satires of the Forum are not difficult to find even in some of the most accomplished works of the period. There are few if any prairie-realist novels written in the 1920s and 30s that are wholly satisfying aesthetically or free of romantic and nationalistic sensibilities that continue to dominate Canadian fiction long after the emergence of modern realism. In spite of this, the Forum's attitude to prairie writing is excessively cursory and dismissive and obviously motivated by the well-documented desire of central Canadian writers and critics of the period to establish a modern literature in Canada that was, they believed, in just about every way imaginable, unlike even the most serious and ambitious works of the prairie realists. As the Forum's views of Canadian literature in the 1920s have eclipsed those of the Bookman, not only is modern realism absent from our literary histories, but the individual writerly struggles of prairie realists to change the direction of Canadian fiction have been ignored.

At first, some general facts about Canadian literary culture of the period appear to justify the Forum's neglect. There can be little doubt that institutionalized literary culture in western Canada, in the early twentieth century, paled in contrast with those of Montreal and Toronto; while Winnipeg remained Canada's third-largest city until well into the twentieth century, there were almost no publishing houses of note in western Canada before 1950, the most modern and significant literary magazines of the period were published in the east, and the largest markets for Canadian fiction were in the United States, England, and in the most populous eastern provinces. Yet individual prairie writers themselves, whatever the general indifference to literary enterprise in the west, were often far more connected to their modern-realist counterparts than most

literary histories suggest, and a survey of literary periodicals of the day—most importantly Canadian Bookman—reveals that prairie writers played leading roles in the national movement for a new Canadian fiction.

Nevertheless, prairie writers themselves have done almost nothing to dispel the notion of their literary isolation. In several cases, for dubious reasons, they have deliberately perpetuated it. In an article which appeared in The Canadian Forum in August 1931, "Apologia Pro Vita et Opere Suo," Grove responded to criticism of his writing published in the magazine by suggesting that he was not connected to the literary world it endorsed, and ought not to be judged by its literary standards: "Metaphorically speaking, I live in the wilderness and cannot afford to take part in the activities of my fellows . . . . we artists need solitude above all" (420-21). In Grove's famous autobiography, In Search of Myself (1946), tellingly called "My Life As A Writer In Canada" in the prologue, he blames cultural isolation and Canada's indifference to literature for his failure to achieve greater recognition as a writer, something he is apparently convinced he warrants:

> Half a century ago, that Frenchman [André Gide] had considered *me* as the most lavishly endowed among the young men then living within his orbit . . . . What, so I asked myself, had been the reason of my thus grievously disappointing my friend? . . . . the chief reason . . . was that I never had an audience. (5-6)

A more direct and specific statement on the cultural isolation of the prairie writer appears in Literary Friends (1980), the memoirs of Wilfrid Eggleston, author of a little-known prairie-realist novel, The High Plains (1938). Like Grove, Eggleston suggests that the lack of an audience leads to economic hardship and greatly hinders prairie writers in their quest for literary achievement. Somewhat paradoxically, however,

Eggleston also equates the absence of literary culture on the prairie with the presence of traditional literary influence, and he emphasizes the imitative impulse in prairie writing:

> The market for sophisticated works on the agricultural frontier was virtually non-existent . . . . The struggling craftsmen imitated the best models within their reach . . . . The isolated writer is almost doomed to be a generation or so behind the times, mastering, it may be, a literary fashion just about the time it has run its course and become passé and unremarkable in the livelier centres of sophisticated culture. (146)

It is important to note, however, that both Grove and Eggleston emphasize their own cultural isolation as a way of justifying their own perceived failures as writers. Grove's autobiography, revealed by D. O. Spettigue to be largely fictional,[6] takes the form of an *apologia* for his literary underachievement relative to Gide, whom he claims to have known as a young man. And Eggleston insists that economic hardship, not lack of talent, led him away from his "lofty ambitions" and his literary pursuits: "If I could not make Canadian writing my vocation, no one could deny me a series of hobbies" (1-2).

In spite of these writers' grim and self-motivated descriptions of early twentieth-century prairie culture, numerous other sources suggest that literary life on the prairies was not quite so bleak. McCourt, for example, offers a surprisingly vibrant, if unsophisticated, characterization of early prairie literary life in The Canadian West In Fiction (1949):

> in the Canadian West the first community institution seems to have been either a church or a police barracks; the second, one is tempted to feel, a Literary Society . . . . Other indications of the emphasis placed by the early settlers interested in literature or . . . culture are to be found in the literary

> controversies which from time to time enlivened the correspondence columns of the prairie newspapers. (5)[7]

Other sources reveal that McCourt's observations on late nineteenth-century prairie culture are equally true of the 1920s, when the works of prairie realism begin to appear with some frequency. On the first list of "Members Admitted to the Canadian Authors' Association," which was printed in the September 1921 issue of the Canadian Bookman, 95 of the 247 "regular" members of the new association are from the four western provinces, making western Canadians substantially over-represented on a per-capita basis relative to their eastern counterparts (56). And Arnason's The Development of Prairie Realism does much to challenge the myth of the isolated prairie writer, proposing instead that they share a common intellectual heritage:

> The thesis seeks to dispel a common misapprehension that they were isolated figures whose work is simply a reaction to the landscape they inhabited. It argues instead that their shared assumptions about literature are the result of a response to intellectual conditions in Canada when they were writing. (ii)

Although Arnason does not discuss the new modern-realist movement in the course of outlining his "shared assumptions," he does identify a number of general European intellectual trends and concepts common to the major prairie realists, including a "belie[f] in human progress," an acceptance of so-called "new psychologies," and a general attitude of "liberal humanism" (ii-iii).

However limited prairie literary culture of the early twentieth century might have been, and however much economic pressures undeniably presented hardships for prairie writers (as they have for all but a handful of Canadian authors up to the present day), the prairie realists did not live entirely, or even primarily, within a closed sphere of

prairie literary culture. Even the most basic facts of the prairie realists' biographies suggest important connections to a larger Canadian literary scene. Two of the prairie-realist autobiographers,[8] regardless of their other statements, had substantial literary connections. Grove, of course, took three nationwide reading tours in 1928-29, sponsored by the Canadian Club, that were well-attended and well-covered by the Canadian literary periodicals and newspapers of the day. He served from 1930-31 as "President and Editor of the Ariston Publishers," an endeavour that helped him establish numerous literary friendships, including one with the pioneering modern realist, Raymond Knister (Stobie, Frederick Philip Grove 147). He was a frequent contributor to and discussed in the Canadian literary periodicals of the day, including the Bookman and to a lesser extent the Forum, and his letters reveal his connections to dozens of significant literary figures of the period, including Marcus Adeney, W. J. Alexander, Richard Crouch, Pelham Edgar, Barker Fairley, Watson Kirkconnell, Hugh MacLennan, Desmond Pacey, Lorne Pierce, E. J. Pratt, and Carleton Stanley. Eggleston, despite his lower profile, was just as connected to the national scene: his memoirs discuss his numerous literary friends and acquaintances, including Grove, Knister, Pratt, Edgar, Bliss Carman, Sir Charles G. D. Roberts, and many others.[9]

All of the other major prairie realists also deviate from the stereotype of the isolated writer to varying degrees. Stead spent most of his early years in Manitoba where he was the editor of several journals and newspapers, including The Southern Manitoba Review. He moved to Ottawa in 1919, where he wrote his prairie-realist novels, and served as the president of the Canadian Authors Association from 1923-24. Durkin and Ostenso both wrote their best-known prairie-realist novels—The Magpie (1923) and Wild Geese (1925) respectively—after settling in New York City where they lived relatively cosmopolitan lives: "Durkin's sister had already made her

name as an opera singer in New York, and she drew Durkin and Ostenso into the glittering world of New York society" (Arnason, "Afterword" 304). McCourt was born in Ireland, emigrated to Alberta, and attended Oxford University as a Rhodes scholar before accepting lecturing posts in Ontario and New Brunswick; his novels, beginning with Music At the Close (1947), were written, however, after his move to Saskatoon in 1944. Stringer was Ontario-born and lived in both Montreal and Toronto before moving to Alberta in 1914 where he wrote his prairie trilogy—The Prairie Wife (1915), The Prairie Mother (1920), and The Prairie Child (1921). In the same year that the last installment of his trilogy was published, he moved to New Jersey, where he spent the rest of his life and effectively became an American writer. Born in England, Brooker's creative reputation was established as an avant-garde abstract painter; he left the prairie for Toronto fifteen years before the publication of his only novel, Think of the Earth (1936). Ross's best novel, As For Me and My House (1941), was written long after he had left small-town Saskatchewan for Winnipeg in 1933, but before his departure for England as a soldier in 1942, and his eventual settlement in Montreal in 1946. And even Mitchell, who spent a larger portion of his adult life on the prairies than most of the others, published his work in numerous well-known magazines of the period, including The Atlantic Monthly.

Admittedly, these general biographical facts provide only circumstantial evidence of significant literary connections, but they certainly indicate that prairie literary culture of the period was far less insular than some critics suggest. More convincing evidence of the role played by prairie realists in the larger modern-realist movement is found in the literary periodicals of the period. In fact, an examination of the Canadian Bookman of the 1920s reveals that the birth of modern realism in the magazine's manifestos, and the emergence of prairie realism, occur simultaneously

and contingently: prairie realism does *not* develop independently, or after the fact as a particular regional application of the larger, national literary sensibility. Rather, works of prairie fiction are considered in the Bookman, alongside the manifestos for a Canadian modern realism. New works of prairie realism, as they appear throughout the 1920s, are billed in the Bookman as groundbreaking works of fiction with national relevance, at the vanguard of literary experiment and change, and are considered the exemplary works of modern realism in Canada. The central place of the prairie realists in this new movement is unmistakable; the Bookman of the 1920s reviewed most of the new prairie novels as they appeared—the majority of the novels reviewed by the Bookman in the 1920s were prairie novels—and almost without exception the magazine's reviewers discuss the works in relation to the new modern writing in Canada.

While a detailed examination of the ample discussion of prairie writing in the Bookman of the 1920s would largely retread the same ground covered in Chapter One with a slightly different emphasis, it is nevertheless worth remarking upon some of the many book reviews of prairie novels that appeared alongside the Bookman's manifestos. Although typically boosterish in their attitudes to new Canadian writing, many of the Bookman reviewers of the period are surprisingly reserved in their praise of the least realistic new works by prairie writers. In fact, supporting the assertion that prairie realism and modern realism develop contingently, most of these reviews appear to be directing Canada's prairie writers toward the emerging modern-realist aesthetic, and the writers appear in kind to be responding, becoming more realist in their approach to literary endeavour as the decade wears on. At the same time, the reviewers consider new works of prairie-realist fiction to be exemplary of the new writing in Canada, and the Bookman manifestos shape much of their discussion of modern realism with new prairie fiction in mind. In the first issue of the Bookman in

January 1919, the first prairie realist,[10] Robert J. C. Stead, is encouraged by the unnamed reviewer of his romantically emplotted third novel, The Cow Puncher (1918), to make a move toward more realistic writing. Remarking that Stead's novel "falls between the two stools" of the "romantic" and the modern "life-like and sincere picture of the normal," the reviewer prophesies that "it will certainly be of value when Mr. Stead takes to the portrayal of more normal and more accurately observed Canadian life" ("The Cow Puncher" 69). In the October 1919 issue of the Bookman, an unsigned reviewer had similar advice for Durkin, objecting to the sensationalism of The Heart of Cherry McBain (1919):

> Mr. Durkin can write excellent narrative and description, and his literary abilities seem worthy of much better material than this outworn theme of the youthful fighting man . . . . We are convinced that there are deeper and finer themes than this in the Canadian West and that Mr. Durkin knows them or will find them . . . . ("The Heart of Cherry McBain" 23)

Despite its improbable twists of fate, unrealistic dialogue, and generally romantic tone, B. K. Sandwell, in the December 1920 Bookman, praised Arthur Stringer's The Prairie Mother (1920) as a novel about "human life as lived by ordinary human beings," and he held it up as an example for other writers of the period to follow:

> It is when we read books like this that we begin to feel something of the appalling waste of time and intellectual abilities, and even costly paper and binding, that is involved when men who could write truthfully and nobly about Canadian life spend their talents upon commercial novels of intrigue, of crime, of adventure . . . . (84)

And a prominent Bookman reviewer, Austin Bothwell, directed another important writer of the period toward realism in a review of Purple Springs (1921) that appeared in the

December 1921 issue; accusing Nellie McClung of having "falsified the record" in her fictional account of the "decline and fall of the notorious Roblin government," Bothwell muses that "if she had stuck resolutely, if not to the facts, to the spirit of facts, she might have enriched our literature permanently" (16).

As prairie-realist novels begin to appear with more regularity later in the decade, the Bookman critics turn from their pleas for realist fiction, to a celebration of the new novels as they arrive, and they openly equate a realistic aesthetic with artistic accomplishment. When Stead's fifth novel was published, Neighbours (1922), an unnamed reviewer in the November 1922 Bookman announced that it marked "entirely new ground, and much richer and more productive ground . . . . the whole picture is drawn with . . . much faithful observation . . . . 'The Cow Puncher' made him a best-seller; 'Neighbours' makes him an artist" (Rev. of Neighbours 293). In February 1924, an unsigned review acclaimed Durkin's social-realist prairie novel set in Winnipeg, The Magpie (1923): "It is a very fair story of Canada in general and Winnipeg in particular at more or less the present moment . . . as a resumé of the situation in all its nebulous, overgrown, loose-endedness, it is distinctly striking" ("Durkin's New Novel" 43). An omnibus review by Georges Bugnet in the December 1925 Bookman drew attention to the realist properties of Grove's Settlers of the Marsh (1925) and Ostenso's Wild Geese (1925), lauding the former's "accurate and penetrating analysis" and the latter's realistic achievement and literary promise: "If Miss Ostenso . . . can write such a strong and realistic novel for a *début*, we may expect from her a real masterpiece, perhaps Canadian, in a few years" (203). In January 1927, the Bookman featured a review of Stead's Grain (1926) by T. D. Rimmer that remarked upon the "convincing" depiction of "intimate detail of prairie life" (14). A March 1929 review by A. S. M. of another almost unknown prairie-realist novel, Chas. W. Peterson's Fruits of the Earth (1928), not to be

confused with Grove's novel of the same name published five years later, suggested that "particular attention should be paid to [Peterson's] prologue, in which the author has summed up his subject in a brilliant and realistic manner" (71); reflecting the growing emphasis on realism in Canadian literary circles of the day, Peterson's "Preface" to the novel states his realistic aims in no uncertain terms: "There seems a persistent demand for a plain, unvarnished story of the prairie farm, truthfully portraying . . . pioneer life, without introducing the artificial glamour of the conventional roaring cowpuncher . . ." (7). And these are by no means the only examples of such reviews of prairie fiction; in issue after issue, the Bookman critics sought out the new modern realism in the works they reviewed, and they found it more often in the works of prairie writers than anywhere else.[11]

The Canadian Bookman reviews of the 1920s, then, indicate that prairie writers and their works were an integral part of the new Canadian writing. Apart from these reviews, prairie writers were frequently mentioned in many of the magazine's modern-realist manifestos. Further dispelling the myth of the isolated prairie writer, numerous other minor Bookman articles exploring the social aspects of Canada's literary circles in the 1920s indicate that the major prairie writers, including McClung, Grove, and Stead, were regarded as cultural celebrities, and stimulated both gossip and adulation.[12] Additionally, prairie novels in the 1920s and 30s were receiving more "official" recognition than new works from eastern Canada: Ostenso's Wild Geese (1925) won the famous $13,500 Pictorial Review prize for best novel, Grove was awarded the Lorne Pierce medal in 1934, and the first two Governor General's Awards for fiction, presented in 1937 and 1938, went to prairie novels—Brooker's Think of the Earth (1936) and Salverson's The Dark Weaver (1937). Prairie books were also among the best-sellers in Canadian fiction from the very beginning: two of Ralph Connor's first

three books—Black Rock: A Tale of the Selkirks (1898), The Sky Pilot: A Tale of the Foothills (1899), and The Man From Glengarry (1901)—which together sold more than five million copies, were set in western Canada (J. Grant 307). McClung's Sowing Seeds In Danny (1908) was for a time the best-selling novel in Canadian history. Many of Stead's novels made the best-seller lists in Canada, England, and Australia (Bowker 99), The Cow Puncher (1918) alone selling 70,000 copies (Harrison, "Robert J. C. Stead" 771). And Grove's first two Canadian books of prairie sketches, Over Prairie Trails (1922) and The Turn of the Year (1923), were widely reviewed and among his best-selling works upon their publication. Yet despite all of this evidence that prairie writers played a central and crucial role in the creation of modern-realist fiction in Canada, the stereotype of the isolated, anomalous, imitative, and insignificant prairie realist persists. But the best, and most surprisingly overlooked, indication of the "modernity" of the prairie realists is in their fiction itself: it explores an abundance of modern themes and issues and undertakes a variety of technical experiments with the realist form. While many of the prairie realists' aesthetic goals are awkwardly pursued and never fully attained, they nevertheless make a concerted effort to change the direction of Canadian fiction, and to develop a new mode of realism capable of dealing with some of the most modern subjects of twentieth-century literature.

* * *

way of life. Such themes, of course, are natural extensions of the geographical thesis, and it is not surprising or inappropriate that they have received considerable attention. But the limitations of geographical readings become apparent when critics use them to offer definitive and encompassing interpretations of the genre. Ricou, for example, uses a highly creative interpretation of the prairie landscape to make his geographical thesis unequivocal: "The basic image of a single human figure amidst the vast flatness of the landscape serves to unify and describe all prairie fiction" (ix). To prove this, he creates an imaginary, personified prairie landscape that takes on a series of archetypal personae: "Benign," "Implacable," "Invisible," "Obsessive," "Internalized," "Eternal," and "Bewildering" (vii). Although Ricou and other thematic critics of prairie realism with similar concerns—including Angus, Comeau, Dahlie, Elder, Harrison, Kreisel, McCourt, Stich, and Thompson—offer important insights, their studies marginalise prairie fiction that does not fit into their larger schematizations, and neglect important similarities of prairie fiction to the rest of early twentieth-century literature. Brooker's Think of the Earth (1936), a novel that was all but forgotten for decades until reissued in a critical edition edited by Glenn Willmott in 2000, demonstrates this phenomenon. Despite being set in an archetypal prairie town in 1907, and its claim to cultural relevance as the winner of the first Governor General's Award for fiction, Think of the Earth is not treated substantially in any of the first three book-length studies (McCourt, Ricou, Harrison); Ricou does not even mention Brooker's novel, and Harrison excludes it from his larger analysis on the basis that it does not fit into his geographical schema: "*Think of the Earth* is its title but not its tendency; the action could have been set on the fringe of anywhere" (125). Think of the Earth is among the finest novels written in Canada before 1950. Its exploration of religious decline and urbanization, and emphasis upon human psychology and spirituality, make it one example of prairie realism that cannot

be accounted for without acknowledging the genre's underlying modern sensibility. But Brooker's novel is hardly alone in this regard. While it is unfortunately not possible to discuss at length the complex handling of the many modern ideas and issues explored by prairie writers, this section offers an overview of these same concerns in order to make a case for their recurrence and prominence. It is neither possible nor desirable to deny the importance of either the story of the homesteader's travails in prairie fiction, or the numerous ways that prairie writers explore the effects of landscape on individuals and communities. Nevertheless, the interest prairie-realist fiction shows in modern technology, the forces of urbanization and industrialization, modern social and political ideals, moral and religious change and decline, human sexuality, evolving gender roles, and modern historical events, including the two world wars, make it some of the most thematically modern writing produced in Canada in the early twentieth century.

The growing presence of technology in Canadian life is a concern found in most works of prairie realism of the period, even those that foreground the traditional settler experience. Like the urban and social realists to be discussed in Chapter Five, prairie realists express an ambivalence about technological change, revealing it to be a liberating and threatening force, associated at once with twentieth-century notions of progress and dehumanization. While the prairie realists do not generally discuss technology in the sweeping fashion of the urban realists, or in the ideological terms of many of the social realists, they do often provide detailed descriptions of new machinery and its effects on the lives of prairie inhabitants. Frequently, these are agricultural machines, possibly explaining why this concern has been overlooked by the cosmopolitan critics, who perhaps consider this type of technological innovation part of a regional preoccupation with prairie life and detailed description of landscape. One of the earliest prairie-realist representations of the machine appears in Stead's Grain

(1926). New agricultural equipment, in this case the "threshing machine," represents both the promise of the future and a threat to traditional life and the financial security of the homesteaders:

> Bill Powers was the chief thresherman of the community. He had graduated from the old horse-power days in the steam-engine class in the early nineties, and was now wearing out his third machine, which, with the assistance of his homestead quarter, carried the accumulated mortgages passed on by its predecessors. (47)

In other cases, the prairie realists juxtapose vivid descriptions of the machine with images of rural life evoked in neighbouring passages, drawing attention to their ambivalence. Realistic description of landscape is an unmistakable feature of Eggleston's The High Plains (1938), yet his technical descriptions of machines shatter the placid surface of his "pastoral intent," to reinvoke Arnason's phrase, emphasizing, almost mimetically, the quick pace of technological change in the early twentieth century, and its effects upon the lives of prairie dwellers:

> the pant of the loader became more laboured, the separator emitted a low moan, rapidly rising in pitch to a thin whine as a hundred wheels and pulleys, rocking arms and steel elbows, sieves and fans, endless chains of buckets, whirled and vibrated in a perfect frenzy of concerted motion . . . David, looking on, felt that it was the satisfying culmination of their homestead venture. (120)

The machine is also frequently used to symbolic ends by the prairie realists, allowing them to comment indirectly on the larger social forces that inform their works. Grove, in a famous example found in the Master of the Mill (1944),[13] plays upon the popular prairie-realist convention of investing symbolic significance in the landscape by

superimposing a grand-scale technological image over the natural setting, and imbuing it with symbolic meaning. His mill is at once a powerful representation of progress and technological achievement, and an embodiment of the dehumanizing forces of global capitalism:

> Its image lay on the mirror-smooth water like a fairy palace inverted . . . . that mill stood as a symbol and monument of the world-order . . . of a ruthless capitalism which had once been an exploiter of human labour but had gradually learned . . . to dispense with that labour, making itself independent, ruling the country by its sheer power and producing wealth. (20-21)[14]

These descriptions of machines suggest that the prairie world these authors represent is far more connected to outside forces and modern influences than the critical characterization of the isolated prairie would suggest. The modern forces of change in motion on the early twentieth-century prairie, transforming lifestyles and challenging belief systems, are the same ones critiqued and celebrated in the urban and social-realist novels of Canada and much of the rest of the world.

The prairie realists commonly accompany these images of the machine with descriptions of a rural prairie world being urbanized and industrialized. Much as prairie writers view the machine with ambivalence, these larger modern forces are rarely depicted as either wholly malevolent or benign. The presence of an encroaching modern world is a key concern, even in some of the first prairie-realist novels. Stead's Homesteaders (1916), which spans the period between 1882 and about 1910, is set against the backdrop of a prairie landscape that is quickly changing, and the cacophonous language that Stead uses to describe this process draws attention to many of the negative aspects of modernization: "Railways had supplanted ox-cart . . .

as the freighters of the plains . . . . The vast sweep of the horizon, once undefiled by any work of man, was pierced and broken with elevators, villages, and farm buildings, and the whiff of coal smoke . . ." (85-86). A similar treatment of urbanization appears in Eggleston's The High Plains (1938), only this time rapid change is depicted as a largely positive, civilizing force:

> The coming of the railroad transformed the life of the . . . community almost overnight. In the swift superficial metamorphosis of the frontier, the village of Thora sprang up and supplanted the agricultural outpost, just as the outpost had replaced the wild desolation of the range. (135)

The archetypal prairie town of Poplar Plains in Brooker's Think of the Earth (1936) presents a predominantly urban setting for modern change on the prairie, and Glenn Willmott rightly draws attention to the symbolic function of Brooker's story, which he argues can be seen as "an allegory of a larger nation" ("Introduction" xix). Think of the Earth opens with a reference to the quick pace of urban development, and its inherent constructive and destructive forces: "He had been there thirty years and the place had changed beyond belief . . . a second railroad was coming through . . . Jim Conover's farm had been torn up with steam shovels and turned into a huge gravel pit" (4). And, perhaps owing to its later date of composition and its author's leftist leanings, Vera Lysenko's Yellow Boots (1954),[15] an almost unknown work of prairie realism, expresses a wholly negative view of the industrial world that has reached the prairies, and likens the situation to the transformation of Europe during the industrial revolution:

> The factory . . . was a modern one, well-lighted, with big panes of glass and modern machines . . . . Some of the older workers recalled songs they had sung . . . regarding exploitation within the European factories – the terrible speed-up, the whip of the foreman, the child labour. (291)

Lysenko's novel offers an almost socialist-realist example of the kinds of critiques offered of the industrialization of the west. But images of an urban world at odds with the rural landscape and a traditional way of life, however they are characterized, remain a constant if peripheral concern for the prairie realists. The geographical thesis, with its emphasis upon human struggle solely in relation to a threatening *natural* environment, denies the prairie-realist concern with a number of the most fundamental and modern subjects of the twentieth-century novel.

The prairie realists also frequently raise the contemporary social issues of their day and explore early twentieth-century society and politics from a variety of ideological perspectives, despite the common characterization of the prairie as disconnected from social and political movements in other parts of Canada and the world. In his last novel, Dry Water (finished in 1935 but unpublished until 1983),[16] Stead offers an exploration of the effects of modern economics on the lives of prairie farmers. Although replete with conventional descriptions of farm life and the prairie landscape, Stead's portrait of a family devastated by unsuccessful land speculation captures what Prem Varma calls "the tempo of the times; the ups and downs in the stock exchange, the frantic buying and selling . . . the busy telephone lines, the crowded banks . . . and the ruthlessness with which many were wiped out" (vii). Donald Strand, an honest, hard-working, traditional homesteader, is manipulated by bankers into believing that his traditional values are not at odds with the new economy. His banker, Mr. Sutherland, lures him with flattery and platitudes into collaboration with the very forces that threaten his livelihood: "'the source of all wealth is still in the land . . . . wealth is accumulating at an unprecedented and ever-accelerating pace. We are entering a new era, Mr. Strand. But we will do well to still give honor to the homely virtues of industry and enterprise" (158). In the end, the downfall of the Strands is representative of the decline of

traditional ways of life in the modern world, and of the subjugation of rural Canada to urban interests and values. In his earlier novel, The Smoking Flax (1924), Stead explores changing social demographics, and the contrast of traditional ways of life with modern sensibilities. Cal, a university graduate with a degree in sociology, comes to work on the Stake family farm and attempts to apply his sociological theories to farm life: "Of what use was his higher education if he could not grapple with a situation of this kind; if he must leave this farm as crude and ugly as he had found it?" (95). The romantic conclusion of the novel brings Cal's modern sensibilities together with a traditional way of living, suggesting a possible reconciliation between the forces that so often compete in prairie-realist novels. As a result of awkward manipulations of plot, Cal marries Minnie, the attractive daughter of farmer Jackson Stake, and the closing scene emphasizes pastoral beauty and harmony—"The world is at peace, and, it might be asleep, save for the slow shuttling of the ploughs back and forth across the summer fallows"—as Cal and Minnie make plans to go to the "Electric theatre" (298-99).

Durkin's The Magpie (1923), another novel exploring modern politics and social concerns, is perhaps more representative of the period by virtue of its pessimism. Here, no such reconciliation is possible between traditional and modern views of the world. The protagonist, Craig Forrester, finds himself torn between his progressive social conscience and his hypocritical involvement in a capitalist society that exploits farmers and industrial workers—he is a trader on the Winnipeg grain exchange. Images of the prairie landscape and references to large socio-political events, often juxtaposed with one another, constantly flow through Craig's mind, representing the two worlds, the modern and the traditional, between which he feels caught:

> Before a week has gone the water is lying in pools in the lowlands . . . .
>
> Bolshevism had risen like a black cloud in the east and was threatening to

> overcome Polish resistance . . . . It was thus he argued with himself as he walked westward along the avenue thronging with late afternoon shoppers. (95)

At the end of the novel, disillusioned by the moral decay of the modern world and the social disruption caused by events that include the Winnipeg general strike in 1919, Forrester returns to his childhood home and takes up a traditional way of life, reinforcing the common prairie-realist critique of modern society that runs throughout The Magpie: as Peter E. Rider remarks, "Craig reaffirms his traditional values . . . and reject[s] the corruption, callousness, and selfishness of urban life" (xiii).[17]

The prairie realists' exploration of moral change and the decline of traditional religion is closely related to their broader concern with the tension between accepted values and the modern social issues that challenge them. In Grove's Our Daily Bread (1928), generational conflict within a single family is representative of larger conflicts between generations, and competing notions of family and community found in twentieth-century Canadian society; as Margaret Stobie argues, "the degeneration of the family" is the subject of Our Daily Bread, and "[t]he family chaos is the symbol of the chaos of nations; society—or the family—is taking the wrong turn" (Frederick Philip Grove 39). In Grove's novel, a homesteading patriarch named John Elliott struggles to impose his traditional values upon his children who have more modern sensibilities, and his failure in this endeavour is parallelled by his physical decline and emotional disintegration. Elliott's story begins with an account of his worldly success and a description of his rural empire built over the years through "introspection, dreams, ideas," and old-fashioned hard work (5). By the end of the novel, Elliott is a broken man; in declining health and feeling abandoned by his children, who leave the homestead to pursue their own more modern pursuits, he "passes from hand to hand"

(350) before dying and symbolically taking a way of life with him: "Henceforth, [the Elliott children's] eyes would be focussed on their own, individual futures" (390).

In Brooker's Think of the Earth (1936), changing moral and social values are explored in an overtly religious context when Tavistock, a mad eccentric who believes himself to be a modern Christ figure, arrives in a prairie town and, in what he conceives to be part of his messianic role, begins prophesying a murder and preaching an almost Nietzschean moral relativism: "Do you think it is possible for us—you or me—to experience . . . suffering, without *ourselves* committing a murder?" (45). The Canon, a traditional Anglican minister who has long theological discussions with Tavistock, becomes increasingly frustrated as his traditional religious knowledge fails to rebut the modern Christ-figure's perspective on human existence: "'Don't ask me,' said the Canon . . . 'I'm just an old-fashioned parson who believes in original sin'" (238). The ending of the novel is enigmatic, and closes with Tavistock's partial acceptance by the prairie community, and his final assertion that the traditional moral and religious concepts of good and evil do not adequately define the modern condition: "As soon as I saw—what I saw—the perfection of everything—the harmony of good and evil—I knew there was no need . . . for Christ—or any new Christs" (289).

While the particular theological issues raised by Brooker's novel are hardly typical of prairie realism in general, the notion that religion is losing its relevance in the modern world is found in numerous other works, including, most famously, Ross's As For Me and My House (1941). Mrs. Bentley, a preacher's wife whose diary provides the novel's first-person narrative, comments on the superficiality and hypocrisy that characterize the religious beliefs of her community: "In return for their thousand dollars a year they expect a genteel kind of piety, a well-bred Christianity that will serve as an example to the little sons and daughters of the town . . ." (5). The unreliable story

provided by Mrs. Bentley's diary implicates both her and her husband Philip in the religious and moral hypocrisy of the town; Philip, an uninterested and ineffectual preacher, commits adultery with Judith, a young woman from the town, and the diary also hints at Mrs. Bentley's possible adultery with a local intellectual. Ross provides many ironic statements in the novel to draw attention to his religious and social critique; when the Bentleys, for largely selfish and concealed reasons, adopt Judith's illegitimate baby after she dies in childbirth, a woman from the town remarks, "You and your husband are good people. You're real Christians, and I'm glad you're taking the baby" (211).

As For Me and My House, with its discussion of sexuality within and outside marriage, reflects another important modern concern of the prairie-realist novel. While no prairie writer of the period explores human sexuality with the frankness of the European modernists, this subject is nevertheless dealt with in the prairie-realist novel in ways almost unseen in earlier Canadian fiction. In Stringer's prairie trilogy—The Prairie Wife (1915), The Prairie Mother (1920), and The Prairie Child (1922)—a remarkably frank and modern portrait of a marriage between another prairie diarist and her husband is depicted. While explicit sexual situations are not directly presented in the text, Stringer's first installment offers a portrait of a traditional woman whose feelings of sexual guilt prevent her from revealing her pregnancy to her husband:

> I promptly assured him that I was in the best of health. He not only agreed with me, but said I was as plump as a partridge. When I am alone, though, I get frightened and fidgety . . . . I want to be a good woman and a better wife. But I shall never let Duncan know—never! (188)

Later prairie writers would make deliberate attempts to deal with sexuality more graphically in their works. In one particularly memorable scene, Gander Stake, the

hero of Stead's Grain (1926), is overcome with frustration and seems about to sexually assault a young woman for whom he has been unable to express his desire. While Stead's novel avoids sexually-explicit language, his sexual scenes possess an uncommon psychological intensity, and his depiction of sexual desire as a powerful psychological force is unconventional for the Canadian novel of the period:

> She read it in his eye, in the twist of his face, in the pose of his body like an animal set to spring. A horror of fear swept her . . . . He was coming toward her, this new Gander, this man she had never seen before; coming with slow menacing strides across the grass. For a moment he held her in his spell; then, with a scream, she regained control of her limbs, and fled across the prairie . . . . (153)

In Grove's novels, sexual language is less restrained, and while sex is still not openly described or depicted, sexual scenes are portrayed with less ambiguity and a heightened sense of psychological realism. Like Gander Stake, Niels Lindstedt, the protagonist of Settlers of the Marsh (1925), has difficulty openly expressing emotion and sexual desire, and Grove explores this aspect of his character's personality at length. While Grove's descriptions of sexual scenes may appear tame, even banal, by contemporary standards, his novel generated significant moral controversy when it was published:[18]

> he opened the door and saw her standing by the stove, her dressing gown thrown back, warming herself in the heat . . . . She displayed herself to him . . . . Had he made a single motion towards her, had he said a single word, even though it had been a word of forgiveness instead of desire, perhaps the worst might still have been averted . . . In him, however, all sexual instincts were dead. (197)

And in other prairie novels of the period, even many of those that do not make an effort to discuss sexual matters directly, there is often a sub-textual eroticism that runs throughout; as Arnason writes of Ostenso's Wild Geese, which is a conservative novel in terms of its treatment of sex, "*Wild Geese* . . . creates a profoundly Freudian situation. A cruel patriarchal father, out of his own sexual inadequacy, dominates and oppresses his children. The power of their sexual needs, however, is too great to be constrained . . . " ("Afterword" 306). While few of the modern realists would ever treat sexual themes directly and candidly, the prairie realists of the 1920s were among the first writers in Canada to suggest that the new realism needed to broaden its scope to include some of the most sordid, taboo, and modern subjects of the age. Their propensity for experiment is evident in their willingness to approach sexual subjects to an unprecedented degree, by Canadian standards, even when their efforts sometimes scandalized their conservative audiences.[19]

Another under-acknowledged but almost ubiquitous feature of the prairie-realist novel is the modern representation of evolving gender relations, and the exploration of women's roles in a changing world.[20] Certainly the prairie novel of the period abounds with uncritical representations of women in the traditional roles of wife and mother, yet there are a surprising number of portraits of prairie women found in these same novels, reflecting, and in some cases advocating, the new roles of women in early twentieth-century society. The most obvious and striking feminist portraits of prairie women appear in the otherwise relatively conservative novels of McClung, herself a vocal suffragette and a member of the "famous five" who fought for the legal recognition of women as "persons," a goal incredibly achieved only in 1930. In Purple Springs (1921), McClung creates the vivid psychological portrait of Pearl Watson, a character who represents many of the feminist aspirations of the time, and experiences considerable

personal conflict as a result of her willingness to challenge conventional gender assumptions:

> If Pearl Watson had not a taste for political speeches and debates; if she had read the crochet patterns in the paper instead of the editorials, and had spent her leisure moments making butterfly medallions for her camisoles, or in some other lady-like pursuit, instead of leaning over the well-worn railing around the gallery of the Legislative Assembly, in between classes at the Normal, she would have missed much; but she would have gained something too. (228)

While such portraits of women as social activists are rare in Canadian fiction of the period, numerous indirect evocations of feminist ideals appear in other works of prairie realism. Even Stringer's prairie trilogy (1915-22), written in an ironic tone that undercuts many of the assertions of the prairie-diarist narrator, offers a portrait of a woman who is keenly aware of many of the limitations and contradictions of her place in a society dominated by men. On the one hand, her musings offer an authentic exploration of the psyche of a woman who has internalized the values of a traditional society. In The Prairie Mother, Chaddie considers the emotional challenges that might face a woman after several years of marriage, and she advocates self-sacrifice as a method of preserving domestic harmony: "if you are wise you will no longer demand the impossible of him. Being a woman you will still want to be loved" (11). Yet when her husband's prospects at homesteading fail, Chaddie breaks the stereotype of the passive and effusive female perpetuated in much of the novel, taking action to preserve her family's well-being: "I haven't surrendered to any sudden wave of emotionalism when I talk about migrating over to that Harris ranch. It's nothing more than good old hard-headed, practical self-preservation . . ." (42).

Other prairie novels use the homesteading experience almost as a metaphor for the struggle of modern women to survive, physically and psychologically, in the presence of hostile social forces. In one of the best prairie-realist novels, Christine Van Der Mark's almost unknown In Due Season (1947), we are offered the portrait of Lina Ashley, a strong and independent woman who through hard work, persistence, and a neglect of many of her own emotional and spiritual needs, achieves material success in spite of the usual travails of prairie existence, and the negative influence of her irresponsible and inept husband. Van Der Mark's feminist message in this novel is double-edged; on the one hand, Ashley's material success suggests that motivated women can achieve much in the face of powerful opposition; at the same time, the emotional toll that Ashley's pursuits exact on her suggests that such victories are often pyrrhic:

> "Lina, why are you so hard? You didn't used to be like this. You've changed, Lina."
>
> She looked down at her hands. "I don't mean to be hard," she said miserably. "Daddy used to say that too. You and him, you put everything on me. I got everything on my mind."
>
> . . . "But Lina, you don't need to. Can't you leave some things to me? . . . We'll make out."
>
> "Oh yes, we'll make out!" she cried . . . . I got to go to town today to make a deal you're too weak-kneed to handle!" (145)

It is not always clear whether or not individual prairie-realist novels offer an endorsement of the changing roles of women in the early twentieth century. But the prairie setting, and harsh conditions of homesteading life that frequently see women forced to work outside the immediate domestic sphere, would appear to invite

exploration of the subject, judging by the number of novels that take up the issue. Unfortunately, many of the thematic critics—with their emphasis upon the relation of *man* to the natural environment— at best treat the subject in universal terms, highlighting the influence of a hostile physical world on the individual. Most often, such studies explore a predominantly masculine experience, stressing, to the exclusion of other interpretations, the at times violent process of wrestling subsistence from the land, and the imposition of a patriarchal social structure on the landscape. These thematic readings ignore the fact that many of the prairie realists use the prairie experience as a metaphor for the exploration of the psychological struggle of women to thrive in a male world. Ricou, for example, misses much of the point of McClung's vision, and critiques her technique of characterization on the basis of its non-conformity to his unifying theme: "The image of man in a horizontal world . . . seldom seems essential to McClung's conception of character . . . . McClung apparently feels that the physical environment is important, but she does not reflect upon the possible . . . imaginative impact of this distinctive situation" (17). In many prairie novels, including Stringer's, McClung's, and Van Der Mark's, opposition appears at least as much in the guise of limitations imposed by a traditional social structure upon ambitious women as in the form of hostile natural forces. In fact, McClung and many of her contemporaries are being far more imaginative than Ricou recognizes; they are moving beyond the standard investigation of the individual in a threatening geographic world, and adapting this powerful creative opportunity to suit their own explorations of the modern roles of women in twentieth-century Canadian society.

The impact of two world wars on Canadian culture is another modern concern that appears with frequency in prairie-realist fiction. Again contradicting the notion of the prairie as an isolated and disconnected region of Canada, the impact of the wars is

often felt very directly and immediately by prairie individuals, and plays a formative role in many of the psychological portraits that prairie realists create. Gander Stake, the unintelligent and self-concerned protagonist of Stead's Grain (1926), irrespective of his preoccupations with farming, romance, and achievement of material success, experiences the Great War as a sinister and confusing psychological presence that threatens to disrupt his fortunes:

> He went on working fourteen hours a day in the harvest field . . . trying to keep the war out of his mind . . . In all this it is not to be granted that Gander was essentially less patriotic than other young men who responded to the call . . . . He was not lacking in courage, or in a spirit of readiness to defend his home . . . . But Belgium? Gander was unable to visualize a danger so remote. (121)

Stead's novel uses the Great War largely as background material to connect the prairie to grand, historic twentieth-century forces. Other prairie novels do more to incorporate its influence into the central movement of their narrative. McCourt's novels deal directly with the psychological effects of war on the individual and society, and the war experience is a defining event in the lives of several of his protagonists. In Music at the Close (1947), McCourt frames his narrative with reference to both world wars, and writes his prairie story within a larger historical context, making it on one level symbolic of the experience of the lost generation in Canada. Neil Fraser, the novel's hero, finds his destiny inalterably bound up in international circumstances beyond his control. The opening chapter presents an orphaned Neil travelling to the homestead of his Uncle Matt, and the indifference of future "history" to his aspirations is foreshadowed when he encounters a townsperson who hopes the Great War will continue because of the high prices it ensures for his crop:

> "Lloyd Peers has been killed. Word just come through this mornin'. Don't know as his people have heard yet."
>
> "That so? Too bad . . . Matt, if them Huns can just hang on for about two more years we'll all be able to retire. Two years— that's all I ask." (18)

Grand historical events remain in the background of McCourt's story throughout, with references to "The Armistice of November 11, 1918" (46), "the new Fords that had appeared in the district" (56), "T. S. Eliot" (128), the stock market crash in "the spring of 1929" (136), the "Defence League" (148), and "Hitler" (200), making Neil a kind of archetypal everyman of Canada in the interwar period. In McCourt's final chapter, as Neil lies dying on a battlefield during the Normandy invasion, he muses about the meaning of his wasted life, and concludes that his experience is in some respects representative of that of an entire generation:

> And what was true of himself was true of those who died with him. Most men lived and died and left not even a memory of their having been . . . . Strange that in the irrational, fantastic society of earth, war and war alone could justify the existence of countless millions who in peace were of no importance, not even to themselves. (217)

McCourt's novel closes with universal commentary, linking the fictional prairie of the novel to the disillusioned modern world of which it is unmistakably a part. In terms of subject matter, McCourt's forgotten novels are among the most modern works of prairie realism, and some of the most modern novels written in Canada before the contemporary period.

The modern concerns and issues that are an integral part of these and other works demonstrate that the prairie realists were as much informed by a "modern

sensibility" as any Canadian fiction writers of the period. On this basis alone, we can conclude that the prairie realist shared defining, twentieth-century ideas and assumptions with other modern realists. But modern realism comprises much more than a general modern outlook on the world and a willingness to engage modern subjects in fiction. Perhaps the most unfortunate effect of the critical emphasis upon geographical themes in prairie fiction is not its tendency to close out modern issues and concerns, but the very emphasis upon *theme* itself. The modern-realist aesthetic, as it is defined in the 1920s manifestos and applied in works of fiction from all parts of Canada, consists of a number of formal and technical characteristics that have little or nothing to do with either theme or subject matter. Too much attention to theme has meant that the many technical experiments and innovations of the prairie realists, among the most remarkable in all of Canadian writing, have gone almost entirely unexamined. In subsequent sections of this chapter I change my emphasis from the subject matter to the techniques of prairie realism, and explore some of the most significant achievements of Canada's modern realists.

* * *

Prairie realism, as the name critics have given it suggests, is commonly perceived to be a regional form of fiction, dedicated to the mimetic and faithful representation of a particular locale, or grouping of locales. From the very start, critics have foregrounded its regional concerns, and defined it by virtue of its otherness to the literature of the rest of Canada and the modern world. This tendency may well have its origins in the prevalent literary tastes of the era when early prairie realists were writing and publishing. As Gordon Roper contends in "New Forces: New Fiction,"

> [t]he other striking phenomenon of the literary taste of the period was the appetite for local colour, or regional fiction. It was the fashion that affected

> more Canadian writers of this period than any other. The purpose of the local colourist was to capture in a short story or in a book made up of related sketches the particular flavour of his chosen locality. (296)

Both major Canadian literary magazines of the 1920s approached prairie fiction with the criteria outlined by Roper in mind. The Canadian Bookman, with its assertion that new fiction ought to be true to the details of a particular contemporary setting, indirectly privileged regional subject matter, although it clearly indicated that such realist portraits of particular locales were a feature of the larger, national movement in Canadian literature.[21] The Canadian Forum, as I have argued, implied that prairie writing, owing to its supposed geographical emphasis and referentiality, was inferior to the cosmopolitan writing of eastern Canada and Anglo-American literary modernism, and dismissed it in a quest for a national literature that looked more like those of other countries. Even McCourt, despite having already written his own prairie novel concerned with universal issues—Music at the Close (1947)—emphasized the regional nature of prairie writing above all else in The Canadian West In Fiction (1949): "there is a remarkable unity of spirit prevailing among prairie dwellers; and a way of life as distinctive as the region which fosters it" (v).

Critics writing after McCourt have done little to alter the regional characterization of prairie realism. D. O. Spettigue links the prairie novel unqualifiedly with a regional impulse: "The novel seems inseparable from what we call realism . . . it reveals something about the hero as he reacts with or against his environment" (Frederick Philip Grove 79). Roy Daniells denies the existence of any kind of national movement in Canadian literature of the period altogether, suggesting that prairie realism, and all other types of Canadian fiction for that matter, must be considered individually and defined by their own particular regional characteristics: "[a]nalysis of the Canadian

scheme of things must be regional, or at least begin by being regional" ("Literature" 40). Terry Angus, like other thematic critics, emphasizes the influence of a regional geography on the prairie writer, and considers this limited subject matter to be far more important in defining prairie realism than technique: "The literature of the Canadian prairies reflects the geographical nature of the west . . . . Snow, drought, floods, wind, and extremes in temperature are central events; geography and climate *dominate* the imagination of the prairie artist [my emphasis]" (1). And, more generally, major literary surveys of Canadian literature, including both Literary History of Canada and The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, insist upon discussing prairie realism as a separate, partitioned, regional form of expression that has little in common with the rest of our national literature. In the latter reference work, for example, Donald Stephens's entry entitled "Novels in English 1920 to 1940" is subdivided into three sections that represent the types of Canadian fiction produced during the period: "Western Novels," "Historical Fiction," and "Other Fiction" (571-73). These isolationist characterizations of prairie writing have unfortunately proven to be as limiting as they have enduring. As Calder writes,

> [p]rairie realism is, by definition, regional; it is *prairie* literature. When it comes under the label of 'regional,' . . . it is perceived in a specific way. Regional literature, at least in Canada, is defined as being both realistic and referential. Its value resides in its ability to mirror a specific environment, to show what real 'life' is like in, as Edward McCourt says, 'a limited and peculiar environment.' (52)

According to the regional and referential definition, prairie writing is concerned with the surface details of everyday life on the recognizable Canadian prairie, and this has meant that its writers' exploration of both the outer and *inner* worlds of individuals has

not been sufficiently acknowledged. In other words, critics have tended to focus on the prairie realists' attention to the physical world: as Ricou says, "the writer discovers a new sensitivity to the minutest details of life. In the absence of landscape spectacle the artist must sharpen his observation and detect those nuances which are the essence of art" (8). Yet one of the most striking characteristics of prairie realism is its psychological realism, or its attempts to explore the workings of human consciousness in a manner that is universal, rather than rooted in a specific region and its geography. In this sense, the aims of the prairie realists are in line with those of so many other modern realists, and their strong interest in psychological realism leads them to a variety of unacknowledged technical experiments with the realist form.

The psychological emphasis of prairie writers has of course not gone entirely unnoticed to date. Henry Kreisel's famous essay, "The Prairie: A State of Mind," for example, incorporates psychological concerns into the thematic reading of prairie realism: "All discussion of the literature produced in the Canadian west must of necessity begin with the impact of the landscape upon the mind" (257). Consistent with their thematic and regional emphases, however, such discussions have usually limited themselves to the study of characterization in prairie realism, and the various ways in which the prairie landscape shapes the mind of the prairie settler. In these instances, critics are shifting their focus slightly to include the representation of a regional *experience* within their larger notion of prairie literature as a representation of a regional *environment*. As David Jordan claims, the

> suggestion that authors might examine a lived experience, rather than try to quantify external phenomena, suggests an alternate approach to regionalism: if we consider this distinct regional *experience* as the subject of fiction, we might examine ways in which fiction reflects not only distinctive

> external facts, but also a distinct regional existence governed by local forces. (105)

Such efforts, still firmly rooted in a regional concept of prairie writing, do little to draw attention to the concern prairie writers show for the effects of modern forces on the psyche and a universal form of psychological realism in which the prairie individual experiences thoughts and emotions that are not regulated by a particular time and space. The psychological realism that most critics identify in prairie realism, then, is not psychological realism at all; the psychologies of individual characters in such readings are merely extensions of the prairie setting itself, part of a larger regional geography being represented. As Kreisel suggests, "Man, the giant conqueror, and man, the insignificant dwarf always threatened by defeat, form the two polarities of the state of mind produced by the sheer physical fact of the prairie" (256). In Ricou's view, "Canadian prairie fiction is the record of the implication of man's exposure . . . the record of man's responses to the emptiness" (xi). Harrison partly defines his study of prairie fiction in relation to "[t]he long struggle to adjust physically and psychologically to the environment" (x). Many studies of the individual works of Canadian prairie fiction also focus upon the psychological impact of the environment. In his discussion of Wild Geese (1925), Arnason notes that Ostenso creates "exquisite types whose experiences of isolation, landscape, and love are acted out on a vast and heroic scale, identified with the mournful cry and urgent quest of the wild geese" ("Afterword" 305). In the "Afterword" to Grove's Settlers of the Marsh, Kristjana Gunnars remarks that "[t]he setting is the prairie . . . . Consequently a sense of isolation and silence sets in . . . . [P]eople who are too isolated and wrapped in silence are, in Prairie fiction, often reduced to suicide or even murder" (267). And Sandra Djwa, in her discussion of Ross's As For Me and My House, argues that "The wind makes Mrs. Bentley feel that

she has been lost and abandoned" ("No Other Way" 60). In all of these cases, critics are not discussing a modern form of psychological realism; they are discussing regional representations of landscape reflected in the minds of fictional characters.

On the simplest level, regionalist interpretations of the prairie novel neglect a more or less traditional exploration of psychological issues that have little or nothing to do with landscape or geography. In one of the very first prairie-realist novels, The Homesteaders (1916), Stead offers much traditional landscape description, but creates psychologically real characters that exist independently of their prairie environment. Stead's novel, one of the first prairie works to depart from the conventions of romantic and adventure writing, a genre that includes his first work, The Bail Jumper (1914), makes awkward but deliberate attempts to create characters whose psychological experiences are recognizable, believable, intense, and unexplained by regional circumstance:

> He would not allow his mind to be drawn into speculation—the thing was the remembrance, now, when it was offered him. Old lullabies stole into his brain; a deep peace encompassed him, and consciousness faded thinner and thinner into the sea of the infinite . . . . [Stead's ellipsis] (267)

Another straightforward but seldom-regarded technique used to heighten the psychological realism of the prairie-realist novel is detached, impersonal, psychological analysis provided by a third-person narrative voice. In Grove's Fruits of the Earth (1933), the author accompanies his ambitious descriptions of everyday farm life and prairie geography with passages that explore archetypal human relationships that have little or nothing to do with landscape, as this passage detailing the marital stagnation of Abe and Ruth Spalding reveals:

> Just what had happened between Abe and Ruth? Neither of them knew;

> they had simply drifted . . . . Both had tried to forestall it . . . . Gradually such attempts had been abandoned till, in occasional retrospection, both were often struck by the fact that a day, a week, a month had gone by without their having spoken more than such few words as were demanded by the routine of life. (41)

And even later prairie novels, including those that employ experimental techniques used to mimic the workings of human consciousness, offer examples of third-person psychological analysis, as this passage from McCourt's Home Is the Stranger (1950) demonstrates: "Norah was beginning to feel frightened . . . . Gail Anderson's words were an intrusion upon her privacy, a violation of something which because it had been a feeling, an emotion rather than a conscious thought, was in some manner sacred" (42).

Less conventional techniques employed to heighten psychological realism can also be found in these and other prairie-realist novels. One general method frequently employed to this end is the symbolic distortion of landscape to reflect the psychological experience and development of characters. While many critics, including Kreisel, Ricou, and Harrison, suggest that landscape is reflected in the psychological portraits the prairie realists create, more often than not the reverse is true; landscape is symbolically manipulated by the prairie realist so that it reflects and reinforces the thoughts of independent characters, often in an elaborate and sustained form of pathetic fallacy. Some of the most successful examples of this technique can be found in Mitchell's Who Has Seen the Wind? (1947). In this novel, the thoughts and emotions of characters are projected onto the prairie landscape, not determined by it: "Ben had about as much moral conscience as the prairie wind that lifted over the edge of the prairie world . . ." (30). In Mitchell's simile, the state of mind of the character is

reflected, not passively moulded by environmental influence. Another technique used in the same novel is the symbolic manipulation of landscape to add psychological intensity to particular scenes, as in this example in which one of Mitchell's characters is having his moral convictions challenged: "A gentle wind stirred the leaves on the poplars, setting disks of shadow dancing over Hislop's earnest face" (29). And, in numerous passages that strive for psychologically real character development, Mitchell uses subtle landscape symbols, juxtaposed with psychological commentary, to nuance his psychological portraits. In this example, the novel's child protagonist struggles to understand the meaning and impact of his father's death, and the prairie environment is shaped by his emotional state: "Nothing seemed any different, thought Brian O'Connal . . . . The fall wind was gentle at his window screen; carelessly it stirred a tissue of sound through the dry leaves of the poplar outside. He wondered what his mother was thinking alone in her room" (236).

In other situations, prairie realists manipulate their descriptions of landscape more dramatically to build the psychological intensity of dramatic situations. In this scene, from Eggleston's The High Plains (1938), a character is hopelessly lost in a prairie blizzard, and the narrator describes the environment, not in the precise and specific terms that one might expect of the prairie realist, but in impressionistic, vivid, and visual language that reflects the psychological confusion of the situation:

> It was useless to look aloft for guidance. The sun was heavily obscured in clouds. The horizon on every side was blotted out by swirling drifts. The only constant thing was the wind. No doubt it still blew from the west. David felt no panic. He had managed to keep from freezing so far; and he still had some reserve of strength. (17)

In another novel, Dry Water (1935), Stead infuses the prairie landscape with symbolic

sexual imagery in order to bring out the undertones of repressed carnal desire, as this awkward courtship scene demonstrates:

> He smiled assurance in answer to her question, and spoke to his horses; the traces tightened; the crackle of roots came up from the shares; two long, smooth, earthen streams began to flow back . . . she suited her pace to the plow, watching the colters as they ruthlessly cut through the sod, regardless of the prairie flowers that blossomed on its breast . . . she saw the moist, glazed, straight line of the furrow . . . . (8)

And in response to her observation of this sexually charged landscape, Clara playfully asks permission to pick Donald's "strawberry blossoms": "You don't mind my picking a few on your estate, Mr. Big Farmerman?" (88).

In numerous other passages, prairie writers create landscape scenes that symbolically reflect, in a sustained and general way, the temperaments, or general psychological profiles, of their characters. Grove's Fruits of the Earth (1933) draws attention to the mental state of the cold, practical, industrious Abe Spalding, by mirroring it in the landscape that he surveys, thereby revealing that Abe has not been shaped by his prairie environment, but rather imposed his own will upon his surroundings:

> Abe's eye swept over the landscape beyond his fences . . . . Rarely, during the first years of his life on the prairie, had he given the landscape any thought. It had offered a clear proposition, unimpeded by bluffs of trees or irregularities . . . the trees he wanted he had planted where he wanted them. (35-36)

In a more emotionally charged passage, the orphaned Neil Fraser of McCourt's Music At the Close (1947) travels toward his new home on the prairie and finds his own

feelings of fear and nostalgia reflected in another symbolic landscape. In this passage, McCourt's river is not brought to life through vivid description, but rather through an evocation of its archetypal and symbolic significance:

> The word river stirred something in Neil's blood. All the way from the bleak little prairie town he had been looking, much of the time instinctively rather than consciously, for water . . . . Back home there had been streams everywhere, a river winding through the very heart of the village where Neil had gone to school. And because the word river suggested something he had left behind, the boy's eyes were shining with expectation . . . . (17)

In all of these cases, psychological realism, not regionalist, mimetic representation of place, is the aesthetic concern that guides the authors' treatments of geography. These prairie writers are not depicting a "real" prairie in straightforward, traditionally realistic terms: they are broadening the definition of realism to include the psychological, and recreating the prairie in imaginative, fictional, and symbolic terms. The realism of many of the prairie realists is much like the modern realism of Knister, true to universal concerns and broad human experiences, rather than to a particular geographical reality. A regionalist interpretation of prairie writing that casts its authors in the role of passive interpreters of a pre-defined geographical space is in conflict with this more modern reading of prairie writers, who are engaged in the act of creating their landscape in imaginative terms that suit their larger aesthetic aims.

But the symbolic manipulation of landscape is a limited technique, and the concern of prairie writers to achieve psychological realism leads to numerous other forms of experiment and technical innovation that broaden the realist aesthetic. The most difficult challenge for the prairie realist in this regard arises out of an incompatibility, on one level at least, between the traditionally *objective* thrust of

realistic writing, concerned with fact, detail, and detached observation, and the desire of prairie writers to create portraits that are highly psychologically real, and therefore *subjective*. The traditional realist form, with its third-person narrative, makes it extremely difficult for prairie writers to do more than offer detached psychological character analysis. And, while third-person narrative enables referential descriptions of geography and landscape, it makes mimetic representations of human consciousness extremely difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, the number of methods that prairie writers find to incorporate such individual subjectivities into their larger objective frameworks, even when these attempts appear highly-contrived and half-successful, confirms their predilection for a degree of modern experimentation.

Centre-of-consciousness narrative, discussed in my earlier chapter on Raymond Knister, is the most common technique used to depict human consciousness in prairie-realist fiction. The versions of this device used by various authors, however, vary dramatically.[22] Two primitive centre-of-consciousness techniques appear in Stead's Grain (1926). Although Stead's narrative aims for a detached and objective point of view, his narrator has a perceptible, if vaguely defined, personality, and portions of the novel are coloured by the narrator's ironic perspective, especially in humourous passages, including many of those that offer physical descriptions of characters: "During the next year or two Gander stretched up into a lanky youth . . . his Adam's apple became the feature of his long neck; it jumped and gulped and hopped about with prodigious activity" (69). Stead's narrator's persona, however at odds it may be with the novel's generally objective point of view, enables him to explore the mind of his main character, Gander Stake, through a bizarre form of centre-of-consciousness writing in which the narrator appears to speak Gander's thoughts aloud in the act of directly addressing the character:

> Gander never had shot a goose; this was his chance at sudden glory. Steady, Gander, steady! What will they say at home when you carry in a great grey goose – maybe two of them? What will they say at school? What will that detested brother Jackie say, who is forever belittling your marksmanship? Gander raised his gun slowly. (21)

A more commonplace version of the same technique is used by Stead elsewhere in the same novel. In order to present the flow of thoughts running through the mind of Gander's father, Jackson Stake, Stead places his thoughts in quotation marks. While the section is written in mimetic dialogue, obviously trying to "sound" as the character would, it is not meant to represent words actually spoken aloud, but rather thoughts passing through the character's mind: "Time enough. An' if the crop comes off all right I'll slip him a little cash after threshin'; maybe a twenty dollar bill to do as he likes, an' no questions asked" (45).

Less awkward centre-of-consciousness methods are found in other well-known prairie novels of the period. In Purple Springs (1921), McClung uses a subtle modulation technique that at key points alters the perspective of the third-person narrative slightly, and very briefly, in order to incorporate a range of points of view. In this passage, a single sentence in the middle of a paragraph otherwise rendered from a detached point of view allows a brief insight into the perspective of a single character:

> The young doctor, whose handsome face had grown pale, watched him with a sort of fascination. [Shift to individual perspective] The words seemed to roll from his lips without the slightest effort, and apparently without causing his heart one emotion. [Shift back to narrator's perspective] If the young doctor had not known him so well, he would have thought him entirely unconcerned. (35-36)[23]

In Grove's The Master of the Mill (1944), a sustained impression of thoughts passing through a character's mind is achieved through a subtle shift in tone and diction in the middle of long narrative passages. As in McClung's novel, the third-person narrative voice is not abandoned, but redirected slightly so that the objective narrator begins to speak largely from the point of view of an individual character, in this case forwarding the main narrative while expressing the individual biases of Samuel Clark: "All that he would change. He would begin by building a huge hall with a gymnasium, with rooms for games and reading, with a swimming pool and a lecture hall. He would raise wages and give the men a voice in the administration" (39). In Durkin's The Magpie (1923), this technique is used even more effectively. The thoughts of Craig Forrester, and the psychological issues he wrestles with, are foregrounded by the use of sustained centre-of-consciousness techniques and extremely pared-down writing that all but negates the presence of the dominant narrative voice, giving the impression, despite the use of third-person perspective, that the passage is rendered in the first person:

> But why could he not do that and keep fresh the young love that brought him and Marion together? He could. He would not permit himself to think he couldn't . . . . He would not give a place to the thoughts that had arisen in his mind since dinner. He would sweep them out of his mind. (109)

And McCourt, whose comments on the regional and thematic properties of prairie writing I have already critiqued, would eventually become one of the most ardent proponents of the centre-of-consciousness technique. In an unpublished address entitled "The Artist and His Environment," (c. 1955-1960), McCourt would state in no uncertain terms that psychological realism, and not the representation of physical environment, ought to be the main preoccupation of the prairie writer whom he believed had so far been too concerned with "a physical environment so overwhelming that it

distracts us from the real business of writing, which is to bring people to life" (qtd. in Bogaards v). In one of the most remarkable and unjustly forgotten novels in all of prairie fiction, The Wooden Sword (1956), McCourt writes almost entirely in a centre-of-consciousness mode, and the main narrative voice almost never completely escapes the consciousness of the main character, Steven Venner, a poetry professor whose loneliness, feelings of sexual inadequacy, and haunting memories of World War Two colour almost everything the third-person narrator communicates. Detached narrative, in this novel, is kept to a bare minimum, usually appearing as a single line of description indicating action followed by a long centre-of-consciousness passage:

> Steven looked at the members of the Faculty . . . It would shock them to know that they taught for the love of God. But that was true. The believers, the agnostics, the atheists were all alike in this . . . Why else did they accept the material harassments which were the inevitable accompaniment of the academic treadmill . . . . (199-200)

While these and numerous other examples of the centre-of-consciousness technique are clearly striving to achieve a heightened form of psychological realism, they nevertheless obviously rely upon many of the traditional conventions of third-person narrative. Even though there is a concerted effort made to mimic the flow of consciousness from thought to thought at points in these novels, their authors make no sustained attempt to experiment with language along the lines of the high modernists in their impressionistic writing and stream-of-consciousness passages. The result is a form of writing that allows numerous subjective perspectives to appear within the framework of an objective narration, without offering more than a fleeting impression of the epistemological workings of any individual human consciousness.

The most successful passages of epistemological writing in all of prairie realism

appear in Brooker's Think of the Earth (1936). In an important departure from most applications of the centre-of-consciousness technique, Brooker moves even closer to conveying the impression of thoughts actually passing through the mind of an individual with the use of a temporary first-person narrative voice within a larger third-person narrative, and periodic modulation into the present tense in a narrative written predominantly in the past tense. Some of these passages take the form of characters, in effect, thinking aloud in sections enclosed by quotation marks: "He seems to have gotten under my skin. And yet I can get nothing down but a lot of gabble—a lot of dry old doctrine. Somehow he made this thing a matter of life and death. What's the matter with me that I can't answer him in his own terms? I must be getting old-fashioned" (6). In other passages, incorporated into the main body of his narrative rather than separated by quotation marks, Brooker maintains the third-person point of view, but shifts to the present tense and heightens the psychological mimesis of his writing through the use of language that abandons much of the rhetoric of traditional written narrative. These passages attempt to represent thoughts as they occur, not using the patterns of speech, but in the epistemological style of stream-of-consciousness narrative. Brooker further emphasizes that his characters are "thinking" rather than "talking" with unconventional punctuation and fragmentary sentence structure:

> A deep, penetrating voice. A splendid talker. He stirred you. There was almost a hint of greatness in the way he spoke—the ringing conviction—the prophetic fervour in his voice. Somewhere—in the right place—he would be an outstanding man . . . What a pity!—a man like that throwing his life away—hiding his light under a bushel. (24)

Ultimately, all of these attempts at psychological writing, including Brooker's, fall short

of creating a thoroughly convincing mimetic impression of human consciousness. Yet their prevalence in a body of work so often characterized as traditional and regional is significant. In one respect, these passages indicate that prairie writers of the period were profoundly concerned with representing more than a particular geographic landscape in their works; psychological realism, in fact, appears in many cases to be the primary literary aim of the prairie realist. More importantly, these passages reveal that prairie writers were willing, even compelled, to experiment with the realist form as they knew it, and accordingly shared important assumptions about writing with modern writers from outside of their geographic region.

Curiously, while virtually all of the prairie realists show at least some interest in achieving a form of psychological realism in their work, and while many of these writers were willing to go to considerable lengths to find ways of incorporating subjective points of view into their novels, only a tiny handful of prairie-realist works are narrated in the first person. The same holds true for modern-realist works in general, underlining a key problem for the modern realist: how can both subjective states and impersonal narrative exist in the same work of fiction? The first-person narrative form would seem to mitigate the all-important objectivity of modern-realist writing advocated in its manifestos. The third-person narrative form requires tireless and difficult manipulation if it is to encompass, and perhaps ultimately fall short of encompassing, a wide range of individual perspectives. This problem sheds light on many of the experiments and failures of the prairie realists and their other modern-realist counterparts: many of their techniques ought to be viewed as individual attempts to broaden the framework of the modern-realist novel to include both purportedly objective and subjective modes of expression, rather than as dim reflections of the most subjective forms of modernist expression, including impressionistic, multi-vocal, perspectivist, and stream-of-

consciousness writing. The modern realists are not failing in an attempt to depict wholly subjective states; they are refusing to abandon their impulse toward objectivity entirely, and struggling to make their impersonal form more inclusive. An examination of some of the very few works of prairie realism written in the first person helps to illustrate and clarify this tension between subjective and objective modes. At the same time, it reveals some of the ways in which critical conceptions of prairie realism have changed over the decades. Ultimately, the same psychological realism that so many critics have neglected in the prairie novel, when brought together with the more objective aspects of prairie realism through the use of first-person narration, would win critical acclaim for at least one prairie novel, Ross's As For Me and My House (1941).

Before discussing Ross's novel in the context of modern realism, it is useful to consider Stringer's prairie trilogy, The Prairie Wife (1915), The Prairie Mother (1920), and The Prairie Child (1922). In spite of their having appeared over a period of eight years, these three novels have a common narrator and the same ongoing chronological plot—each picks up exactly where the former leaves off, without any contextualizing passage that would make any installment stand alone. The trilogy takes the form of a first-person diary written by the wife of a Scottish emigrant, and while the traditional tribulations of the settler experience provide much of the drama of the novels, and details of everyday life intrude into the narratives with frequency, the creation of a vivid psychological portrait is Stringer's primary concern throughout. He seizes upon the first-person perspective as a way of bringing his vivid, albeit romantic, patronizing, and at times almost misogynist, portrait of a woman of refined sensibilities to life:

> isn't it wonderful to wake love in a man, in a strong man? To be able to sweep him off that way, on a tidal wave . . . It's like taking a match and starting a prairie-fire and watching the flames creep and spread until the

> heaven's roaring! I wonder if I'm selfish? I wonder? But I can't answer that now, for it's supper time . . . . (The Prairie Wife 15)

While his portrait of Chaddie McKail is certainly colourful, Stringer falls short of providing the objective and detached rendering of the prairie locale demanded by many critics of prairie realism. But in 1915, works of prairie realism were few and far between, and the initial manifestos of the Bookman were still half a decade in the future. Whether the realistic depiction of the prairie locale was indeed Stringer's aim is debatable, but it seems unlikely considering the prevalent romantic thrust of Canadian writing that was still in full force at the time.

Without a body of discourse on prairie realism, or realism in Canadian writing in general, and without third-person examples by other prairie realists, Stringer was able to carry out one of the most original literary projects yet seen in Canada. But critics with their regional demands of prairie writing have generally been dismissive of Stringer's work. Eggleston, writing in Literary Friends, recalls encountering Stringer's prairie trilogy as a young man and aspiring prairie realist: "I was disappointed in his interpretation of the prairie *milieu*, and the prairie people; but I had to admit that [his prairie novels] were highly readable, witty, entertaining, diverting . . ." (25-26). McCourt, in The Canadian West In Fiction, did not see Stringer, despite his psychological realism, as a realist at all: "Stringer's trilogy does not rise above the level of the ephemeral popular success" (78); "Stringer does not convey any strong impression of a peculiar regional atmosphere" (81). And Roper, among Stringer's most generous critics, concedes an "honest realism" in relation to "some aspects of ranch life," but regrets the absence of "a living sense of . . . farm environment and the moulding effect of that environment on . . . characters" ("The Kinds of Fiction" 313). While other prairie novels that are notoriously unsuccessful at achieving a degree of

psychological realism, including many of Stead's, now rest near the centre of the prairie-realist canon, Stringer, whose psychological realism was unmatched in his day, is now treated as an afterthought by critics, so apparently unconvincing was his portrait of the prairie region. Of course these facts again stress the regional biases of so many critics of prairie realism. But they also suggest reasons why almost no prairie realist would use the first-person narrative form again until the contemporary period, despite their unmistakable and ongoing concern with psychological realism. The prairie and modern-realist aesthetics, because of their uncompromising interest in exploring the contemporary world, favoured a form of narrative objectivity. While the prairie realists, as artists, clearly realized from the beginning that literature had to do more than describe physical reality, hence their psychological emphasis, they recognized possibilities for achieving their aims within the traditional objective framework of the realist novel, and set about experimenting with the realist form. Their projects were ambitious in scope, and they usually sought to represent the subjective perspectives of a whole range of individuals, something that surely appeared impossible to achieve with a first-person narrator. I have stated from the outset that modern realism is both a conservative and experimental aesthetic; its proponents are neither bound by a desire to reflect the physical world, nor willing to abandon the externally referential aspects of their writing in the quest to explore the inner human world. The third-person perspective at least held out the promise of achieving both literary aims in the same work, and perhaps the prairie realists' failures in this regard are only readily apparent to a contemporary audience wary of terms such as "objectivity," and accustomed to varied forms of contemporary writing that experiment with the possibilities of subjective narration. For the Canadian modern realist wholly to abandon the impulse toward objectivity would have seemed a backward turn to romanticism—the mode of writing

against which the realist aesthetic was contrasted in manifesto after manifesto of the period—rather than a modern comprehension of the new realist form proliferating in Canada at the time, amid much acclaim and deliberation.

The next writer seriously to explore the possibilities of first-person narration in the context of prairie realism was Ross in As For Me and My House (1941), more than twenty years after Stringer, but this time with much more success and recognition. Ross's novel makes the importance of Stringer's work clear, even if the earlier of the two writers apparently had little impact on either the other prairie realists or critical conceptions of prairie writing. Ross's novel is undeniably structured on Stringer's work,[24] as the numerous similarities between the two efforts, unacknowledged by critics to the present day, reveal: the female prairie diarists in both novels write at length of their powerful emotional attachments to unloving husbands; both women indirectly and perhaps unwittingly reveal their husbands' adulterous affairs; both women remark frequently upon the sense of isolation and entrapment associated with their prairie houses; both narrators reveal their unreliability through discussions of pregnancy; both women develop suggestive but vaguely defined romantic attachments to an intellectual neighbour; both husbands escape their unhappy wives by secluding themselves in their studies; both wives write of avoiding sexual relations by pretending to be sleeping when their husbands come to bed at night. Ross, perhaps, sensed the possibilities for the prairie writer concerned with psychological realism suggested by Stringer's trilogy, and fused this influence with what he had taken from the two decades of third-person prairie novels written since the last installment of Stringer's trilogy. As For Me and My House comes closer to achieving the balance between subjective and objective expression, sought by the modern realist, than any other prairie novel written before 1950. None of the technical fumbling apparent in many of the centre-of-consciousness novels is

present in Ross's work, and, while he does not undertake a grand-scale representation of prairie life in his novel, the prairie town of Horizon, its surrounding physical reality, and the psychological portrait of Mrs. Bentley come alive side by side, in numerous evocative passages:

> The sand and dust drifts everywhere . . . . I watch the little drifts form . . . if the wind has been high and they have outdrifted themselves, then I look at them incredulous, and feel a strange kind of satisfaction, as if such height were an achievement for which credit was coming to me. (97)
>
> We've all lived in a little town too long. The wilderness here makes us uneasy . . . . A Main Street is such a self-sufficient little pocket of existence, so smug, compact, that here we feel abashed somehow before the hills . . . . we dare not admit an indifferent wilderness, where we may have no meaning at all. (131)

To be sure, Ross's critics have frequently noted his achievement in this novel; it is unquestionably the most written about novel of the period, and his critics often remark upon both his psychological realism and his graphic representation of the prairie, sometimes in the same comment. D. G. Jones, in Butterfly on Rock (1970), writes: "the land which embodies the authentic life of the Rev. and Mrs. Bentley becomes the more sinister and haunting as it reveals unconsciously their own suppressed vitality" (38). Warren Tallman states that "[t]he overwhelming desolation which rims Horizon around . . . recurs on the pages of Mrs. Bentley's diary as outward manifestation of the inner desolation felt by her husband" (41). And W. H. New suggests that "[t]he overall impression left by the book is certainly one of aridity: of dust and heat, the Depression on the prairies and the drought . . . And accompanying [this] is the dryness of the people" ("Sinclair Ross's Ambivalent World" 28). These comments reveal two things.

On the one hand they draw well-deserved attention to Ross's achievement in balancing objective mimetic presentation and subjective psychological states in the same work, something earlier prairie realists apparently believed was unachievable in the first-person form. But these comments also demonstrate that, for critics, psychological realism in the prairie novel is only recognized when it is inseparable from the representation of the physical aspects of region. The first-person form makes it impossible for critics to discuss Ross's interpretation of the prairie environment without acknowledging Mrs. Bentley's subjective perspective: as Harrison writes, "we place Ross's *As For Me and My House* as the central expression of the prairie experience, because Ross's narrator . . . expresses so well the defensive function of the imagination confronting the prairie" (Unnamed Country ix). In the many third-person examples of prairie realism, the subjective perspectives are muted, and easily detached by critics in search of a "real" prairie landscape portrait, or the recurrence of a particular unifying prairie theme. Interestingly, Ross's novel, which perhaps marks the most sustained and successful realization of a key modern-realist aim in fiction, the bringing together of the modern, objective rendering of place with a subjective, psychologically real perspective, is also considered, by at least one critic, to mark a new beginning in Canadian writing: as Robert Kroetsch declares, "Mrs. Bentley . . . writes the beginning of contemporary Canadian fiction" ("Afterword" 217).

* * *

Critics often identify an inescapable deterministic force associated with prairie geography that shapes, both the lives of characters in prairie novels, and the form and subject matter of the prairie-realist novel itself. As I have already argued, thematic readings of prairie realism stress the overwhelming presence of landscape, and suggest that it is the unifying geographic theme common to all prairie fiction. Calder

points out that many critics see prairie realism and the deterministic influence of landscape to be inseparable: "Criticism of prairie realism is predicated on a belief in the primacy of the land. Geographic determinism is evident even in the critical label: *prairie* realism" (56). Similarly, the regionalist interpretation of prairie realism foregrounds a geographic determinism that explains the particular characteristics of a given regional experience. As Frank Davey argues,

> [t]he reliance of regionalist ideology on environmental determinism, on a belief that landscape has – or should have – effects on the personalities and perspectives of its inhabitants, leads to the assumption that these effects should have greater importance to the individual than do other possible grounds of identity. ("Towards the End of Regionalism" 4-5)

Accordingly, both thematic and regionalist interpretations consider the psychological and dramatic action of the prairie-realist novel the result of environmental influences. This deterministic focus, together with the tendency of many critics to characterize the prairie as indifferent and destructive, leads critics to posit what Calder calls a "tragic view of human existence" (51). Many critical readings of prairie novels emphasize this "tragic view," depicting prairie individuals as doomed heroes, condemned to wrest a living from the land in a perilous natural world, their ultimate failure predetermined by forces larger than themselves.

Many of these same readings often imaginatively broaden the influence of prairie landscape so that not just fictional individuals, but prairie writers themselves become isolated victims, overwhelmed by a prairie subject that forces them into a referential mode of expression. Harrison, for example, suggests that early prairie realists had little hand in shaping their aesthetic: "the bleak solitude of the plains seems to have stirred the imagination," but in "most of the [early prairie] fiction, the writer's

imagination could hardly be said to have engaged the new environment, let alone assimilated it into artistic form" ("Beginnings of Prairie Fiction" 159). Such statements suggest that the prairie subsumes its writers and determines their subject matter and mode of expression. In this view, the geographical presence of the prairie does not merely provide the ordinary, straightforward, everyday subject matter of the prairie-realist novel; it also strips prairie writers of their artistic license and determines a bare, direct, unembellished form of literary realism. This model locates the source of the unifying themes associated with prairie realism, not in the creative imagination, but in the personified prairie landscape, and suggests that these themes underlie the realist aesthetic of prairie writers: as Ricou argues, "[t]he landscape and man's relation to it, is the concrete situation with which the prairie artist initiates his re-creation of human experience" (xi). If Ricou is correct, then all prairie literature must necessarily be considered regional as it deals fundamentally with a human response to a particular geographic locale; as regional writing is by its very nature referential, the mimetic, realist aesthetic is the predetermined mode for all prairie writing. Placed in such a passive role, prairie writers cease to be artists in the fullest sense of the word, and they become mere transcribers, as fated to be traditional realists as the fictional prairie settler is to succumb to hostile and imposing natural forces. Curiously, many of the same critics have tended to equate the mimetic, referential writing that results from the prairie writer's supposed passivity with aesthetic imitation, as if literary influence and geographic determinism are identical forces: as Eggleston writes, "[b]ecause of the isolation of [prairie] writers . . . from the main forces of literary activity in other parts of the world, a tendency to be imitative and derivative was inescapable" (Literary Friends 8). There is an obvious contradiction here. Literary imitation implies a concerted effort to recreate another artistic style and, by extension, a keen awareness of that style. If

prairie writers are passively applying a geographically determined literary style, then they cannot imitate. If prairie writers are imitative and derivative then their style is not geographically determined. The fact that both of these contradictory characterizations of the prairie realist have proven enduring suggests that the origins of their aesthetic needs fundamental reconsideration.

Obviously, both the imitative and deterministic critical interpretations of prairie writing ignore its experimental phases. As some of my readings of individual prairie novels have already suggested, prairie realists are often actively engaged in transposing their own meanings and symbols onto the prairie landscape. This indicates that the prairie subject is best viewed, not as a monolithic, deterministic force, but as a creative opportunity that allows the prairie realists to carry out their literary experiments in relative freedom. Given the number of prairie stories taking up modern issues and with a concern for psychological realism at their centre, the prairie might best be seen as a kind of open canvas, deterministic only insofar as it effectively requires that the modern writer experiment with literary form in order to represent it artistically. The significant number of experimental approaches to the prairie environment suggests that it is one of the most conducive subjects awaiting the creative whim of the modern realist, not an oppressive and fixed subject resisting all but the most mimetic and referential forms of expression.

While the influence of geographic determinism on the prairie-realist aesthetic has been overemphasized, it is impossible to deny the thematic presence of this force in many prairie-realist works, at least insofar as the pressures of prairie life are frequently depicted as a challenge to imported cultural notions, and an influence upon social behaviour. Stereotypical portraits of practical, hardworking, isolated, and emotionally-stunted settlers abound in prairie fiction—Niels Lindstedt, Abe Spalding,

Caleb Gare, Gander Stake, Lina Ashley, to name a few. The harshness of settler life clearly has a degenerative impact on many of these individuals, and by extension much of their hardship can be traced to the influence of the prairie landscape. Arising from this geographical influence, then, it is possible to identify an essentially "tragic view" of prairie existence, even if one ignores the fact that many of the so-called tragic prairie novels provide "happy" endings: as Gunnars writes of Settlers of the Marsh (1925), for example, "it must be acknowledged that Niels and Ellen do get together in the end, and there seems to be a benevolent hand holding the reins of fate after all" ("Afterword" 274). In her "preface" to In Due Season (1947), Van Der Mark provides an outline of her novel that emphasizes many traditional characteristics of the prairie-realist novel, including isolation, hardship, spiritual decline, and the idea of nation building:

> This is the story of a woman, alone, forced to work . . . to wrest a living from the land. This is also the story of a pioneer community. There is the constant passing of seedtime and harvest, and the pushing back of the wilderness. The community grows and develops; the woman degenerates in spirit. For it is the very soul, as well as human blood and bone, which goes into the building of a new land. (ii)

This general pattern of the prairie-realist novel, appealing as it might be to critics interested in a "tragic view of human existence" resulting from geographical pressures, holds true for only a limited number of the relatively few prairie novels that posit deterministic influences in the first place. In other works, the deterministic forces that drive plot and psychological character development have little to do with geographic pressures; instead they are the result of individual psychological factors, or sociological concerns, or historical circumstances.

The central character in Grove's Our Daily Bread (1928), John Elliott, actually

triumphs over the travails placed in his path by the prairie environment. The tragedy in this novel results from Elliott's psychological flaws and his failure to develop healthy relationships with his children. If Our Daily Bread is deterministic, and many critics have argued that it is—Spettigue suggests that "at the heart of [John Elliott's] problem is the individual ego predetermined by its heredity"—then this determinism has little or nothing to do with geography (Frederick Philip Grove x). Several of Grove's prairie novels, in fact, appear to derive much of their sense of determinism, not from the prairie landscape, but from European naturalism, an almost scientific approach to realism that emphasizes heredity, evolution, social influences, historical circumstances, and an exploration of many of the more traditionally taboo aspects of human existence, including sexuality, psychological disturbance, and animal impulses.[25] As Spettigue reveals, Grove

> wrote his German novels under the influence of French and German naturalism, a critical development that emphasized heredity and environment, accumulated materialistic detail, stressed the animal side of life and scientific detachment in the study of it . . . . (x)

Although it is difficult to trace the specific influence of naturalism on prairie writers other than Grove, owing to a dearth of critical and archival material, in many cases the determinism of prairie novels appears to derive from an attempt by their authors to offer a kind of "scientific" study of the individual in the modern world, rather than from a regional, geographic interest. McCourt's Music at the Close (1947), for example, offers the story of Neil Fraser, a twentieth-century everyman who appears fated to die a meaningless death in World War Two, and many of the major events of his life anticipate his end. Craig Forrester of Durkin's The Magpie (1923) sees his idealistic hopes systematically destroyed by twentieth-century social and historical forces much

larger than himself and his prairie environment. Stead's Dry Water (1935), despite its depression-era setting, equates the Strand family's demise, not with geographically-imposed hardship, but with large economic forces and swift social and political change. And even some of the prairie-realist novels that *do* depict a kind of geographic determinism at work often suggest that this force is not the product of physical environment alone: as Gunnars writes of Grove's Settlers of the Marsh (1925), "[Neils] is not sure whether he can control his own fate . . . . [he] is at the mercy of circumstance, origin, and time" ("Afterword" 270).

The extent of the influence of European naturalism on prairie writing is impossible to ascertain. But as these examples reveal, the prairie realists, rather than passively rendering tales in which geographic determinism is the catalyst behind plot and character development, frequently structure their novels around their own dramatic concerns. In Grove's Fruits of the Earth (1933), the structure and subject matter reflect a highly personal artistic vision. Like Our Daily Bread, Fruits of the Earth explores, not the influence of environment on the individual, but the influence of the individual, in this case Abe Spalding, on the environment: "With his mind's eye he looked upon the district from a point in time twenty years later" (4). Grove's novel has all of the makings of a grand-scale sociological and psychological study in the naturalistic style. The author superimposes his own aesthetic vision over the prairie landscape, prefacing the novel with a "Map of the Spalding District" that lays out the imaginary geography of his fictional world. Grove also draws attention to his own almost scientific approach to writing in his "Author's Note," explaining that he offers a "composite impression" that came into being after he had "investigated" the "history" of farms similar to the one he depicts in the novel. Spalding is less a product of the prairie milieu than a man who imports his own hereditary and cultural values into a more or less blank geographic

space; Grove's "Author's Note" hints at Abe's heredity and agency, likening him to "a race of giants" (vi). Abe comes to Manitoba from Ontario, bringing with him his own predispositions, and a "land hunger" that reflects his desire to control his new world: "he dreamt of a time when he would buy up the abandoned farms . . . . he saw himself prosperous . . . . Abe was a man of economic vision" (4-5). Furthermore, Grove's novel depicts the closed social world typical of the naturalistic novel in which authors carry out their creative social experiments. Abe Spalding is the central figure, and the action of the whole novel supports his psychological development as he becomes increasingly successful materially, and increasingly incapable of developing and maintaining emotional attachments. His eventual defeat appears predetermined, coming after his heroic efforts to subdue his world. But, in true naturalistic fashion, it results from his own inabilities to alter innate patterns of behaviour: "He had meant to do what, in his weariness, seemed fulfilment of his desires. True resignation meant accepting one's destiny; to him it meant accepting the burden of leadership . . . His own life had been wrong, or all this would not have happened" (333). Grove's novel, in spite of its ironically earthy title, has little to do with the prairie environment. It is a sustained character study, written largely in accordance with the traditions of European naturalism, and as such offers a key example of a prairie realist using the creative possibilities of the prairie subject to suit his own artistic aims.

As a culturally neutral, and, in the early twentieth century, largely unexplored subject, the prairie, contrary to the regionalist assumption, provided a curiously timeless and receptive space in which the prairie writer could create stories of psychological intensity, often with very little attention to spatial markers and geographic mimesis. In an especially perceptive reading of Wild Geese (1925), Keahey remarks that Ostenso uses the creative freedom afforded by prairie in just this way, inscribing the region with

her own artistic vision:

> For a novel in which 'place' plays such a central role, Ostenso seems not to have wanted to 'place' it. The desire to have the setting unmarked by explicit regional or national location may be linked . . . to the fact that she was writing it specifically for the purpose of submission to the best North American novel contest . . . In other words, an explicit rural Manitoba setting may have been regarded as too 'regional,' . . . for Ostenso's 'international' aspirations. (15)

The result of Ostenso's refusal to "place" Wild Geese is a story of remarkable psychological depth for its period, and Ostenso uses the open prairie subject to reflect the temperaments of her vivid characters. The prairie she describes is symbolic and archetypal, often reflecting her character's mental states, and more a product of her own literary imagination than a landscape portrait drawn from careful observation:

> As he rode along, a mood of loneliness overtook him . . . . A steady blue was creeping over the prairie in place of the magnificent light that had been there the moment before . . . . He lifted his face up to catch the strange sound that was passing over him, a great summoning trumpet-call, that seemed to hollow out the heavens. (55-56)

Accordingly, Arnason rightly remarks that Wild Geese is as much a contribution to "Canadian mythology" as a contribution to the development of prairie realism ("Afterword" 303). Writers such as Ostenso, on one level at least, appear far more interested in exploring human behaviour, and experiences that are more or less universal, than offering a purely referential representation of the prairie region.

For prairie writers concerned with an exploration of the most modern of human concerns, the prairie can be shaped to become an almost mythical, archetypal,

"everyplace" in which grand-scale twentieth-century concerns are easily explored. The prairie of the early twentieth century, to the non-aboriginal writer or settler, was a place without cultural baggage, large-scale social structures, mythological codes, or literary tradition. Accordingly, it freed prairie writers to explore their own cultural values, sociological interests, symbolic patterns, and aesthetic forms in an uninhibited space. In Eggleston's The High Plains (1938), a modern form of "wasteland" symbolism is ascribed to the prairie, and the author manipulates the prairie landscape to make it reflect his broader concerns with the modern sense of malaise and disillusionment that results from major historical events of the twentieth century: "A progressive deterioration of the countryside was under way . . . the finer grasses and flowers were disappearing . . . . The villages shrivelled in sympathy . . . . The dance hall burned down and was not rebuilt" (169); "Robert had returned from Germany . . . There was an ugly scar across his forehead almost to his ear. His right arm was amputated above the elbow. He was thin and drawn, and his eyes were often dark with pain" (174). The prairie of Eggleston's novel is not a photographic reproduction of a "real" space; it is a fictional creation, an archetypal place that exists to mirror larger sensibilities, universal experiences, and the psychological impact of modern events upon individuals.

McCourt is less subtle in his attempts to make the lives of his prairie characters stand representative of the modern human condition, and he too takes advantage of the cultural neutrality of the prairie to infuse his character studies with larger historical significance. To emphasize the broad thrust of his stories, McCourt links them to the larger twentieth-century experience through the frequent use of historical reference and allusion. His Music At the Close (1947), already discussed for its representations of the world wars, is an archetypal story detailing the life of a man who becomes disillusioned with the modern world and is senselessly destroyed by political forces larger than

himself. In this novel, key allusions mark progressive stages in the protagonist's process of disillusionment. In one passage, Neil Fraser reads the poetry of T. S. Eliot, though, as a young man, he has only begun to be critical of the world around him and he finds the poetry unsatisfying:

> He found Eliot at first incomprehensible. But as he read on, the words, which in themselves seemed without meaning, began to weave a strange and sinister spell. He was first depressed then savagely rebellious. Surely the end of poetry was not to plunge men into black despair? But 'The Hollow Men' and 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' could have been intended to serve no other purpose. (128)

Allan Bevan remarks on the significance of this passage in connecting Neil Fraser's experience to larger cultural forces: "Unfortunately for Neil . . . he is an inhabitant of the Waste Land, living in the post-World-War-One era of frustration and futility" (7). A more complex pattern of literary allusion runs throughout McCourt's later novel, The Wooden Sword (1956), in which the protagonist is pushed to the edge of mental breakdown by, among other things, his inability to deal with horrifying memories of his World War Two past. McCourt links the experiences of Steven Venner to the grand-scale experience of the twentieth century by juxtaposing literary allusions, and references to well-known historical events, with Venner's own private history:

> Abe Lincoln died, Grandad died, Mother died, and death was corruption . . . . No trumpets sounding. Only the bell in the church-tower that I heard from my bedroom window then for a long time afterwards. Never ask for whom the bell tolls. *Here, coffin that slowly passes, I give you my sprig of lilac.* Spring and lilac-time and death. (71)

McCourt perhaps overuses the technique of allusion, and at times the contrast between

his evocative mythological images and their prairie background appears too striking: "The cloud rose up like a great wave, like a fringed black scarf flung soundlessly skywards, like the upraised hair of some fierce Mænad lusting to envelop and destroy" (7). Yet McCourt is clearly exploiting the receptiveness of the prairie subject, even as late as 1956, to suit his own artistic intentions and to tell a kind of universal story. At the same time, he is perhaps unwittingly suggesting that those cosmopolitan writers and critics who locate the prairie at the fringe of literary relevance are wrong, and he acknowledges the prairie's cultural neutrality in the very act of linking the world he creates to a larger literary tradition.

The prairie subject, then, offers a full range of creative opportunities to the experimental writer. It presents a new and uncharted region that, for the most traditional prairie realists, provides everyday, observable details and activities to represent. But it was also, when the prairie realists were writing, a region with almost no cultural history, and it allowed the writer who was so inclined a chance to explore modern concerns, be they psychological, sociological, historical, or purely imaginative, within limits defined only by the individual artist. The critical conceptions of the prairie that have ignored the particular experiments and creative strategies of the writers I have discussed so far need not be abandoned entirely. The sheer quantity of traditional prairie writing that conforms to the thematic and regional expectations of many critics ensures that a modern-realist interpretation of prairie realism will never wholly supplant the conventional view. But this view should be, at the very least, shifted far enough to one side to allow a recognition of the undeniably modern impulse in prairie fiction, which is more dynamic and varied than critical discussions have yet come close to suggesting. Hardly an isolated "school," the prairie realists had a variety of individual, creative, and experimental conceptions of how the prairie might be

represented, and of how the prairie milieu could be used to explore the issues and concerns that interested modern realists in all parts of Canada.

Chapter Four

Frederick Philip Grove's Eclectic Realism and "The Great Tradition"

Frederick Philip Grove is an uncooperative and inconvenient modern realist. The well-known inconsistencies of his life story aside, his novels offer a troublesome mixture of some of the most ambitious experiments and spectacular failures in all of Canadian literature. He wrote both some of the most famous and representative modern-realist novels, and some of the most atypical, peculiar, misunderstood, and ignored examples of the genre. Grove derived his writerly principles from an idiosyncratic melange of half-understood and partially assimilated aesthetics, including nineteenth-century realism, Anglo-American modernism, naturalism, romanticism, classical drama, and all three major sub-genres of Canada's modern realism: prairie realism, social realism, and urban realism. Complicating matters further, his prolific and often misleading critical statements on modernity and realism in literature, examined at length in this chapter, are filtered through a frequently pompous, defensive, deceptive, and self-conscious persona: as Margaret Stobie says, "Grove liked to pontificate, but it often meant little" (Frederick Philip Grove 95). Just as troubling, Grove's lack of formal critical training results in his imprecise application of literary terminology, making most of his critical statements—which insist upon using established critical terms—appear contradictory, convoluted, ambiguous, at times even opaque. Yet Grove is a giant on the Canadian literary scene of the early twentieth century, indisputably its highest-profile writer of fiction, and it is neither possible nor desirable to avoid him in a broad study of realism in the period. Furthermore, there is scarcely an aspect of the modern-realist movement that does not bear his imprint: he contributed to both Canadian Bookman and The Canadian Forum in their early years, he was discussed more frequently than any other new modern writer in Canada during the 1920s and 30s, he

corresponded with most of the other major modern realists, he wrote numerous manifesto-style articles outlining his thoughts on modernity and realism in Canadian and foreign writing, he travelled widely in Canada lecturing to the general public about countless literary subjects (including modern realism), he had a hand in publishing some of Canada's modern-realist fiction, and, of course, he was one of the most prolific modern-realist authors of the period, writing well-known examples of both social realism and prairie realism.

In spite of the varied and eclectic nature of Grove's work, the majority of his critics discuss him as a prairie realist, and there has been relatively little examination of his work in relation to the rest of Canadian writing. To be fair, he is without a doubt the preeminent prairie writer of his generation: he wrote more prairie novels than any of his contemporaries except Stead, and the body of critical work on his prairie fiction is now about as large as that on all other prairie writers of the period combined. Grove's works are considered at length in all major critical surveys of prairie realism, there have been several book-length studies that consider his prairie works exemplary of their genre, and his four prairie novels, Settlers of the Marsh (1925), Our Daily Bread (1928), The Yoke of Life (1930), and Fruits of the Earth (1933), were among the most widely read and discussed Canadian novels of their day. No other prairie realist came close to achieving the literary recognition that Grove enjoyed: his two books of nature sketches, Over Prairie Trails (1922) and The Turn of the Year (1923), were among the most reviewed books in Canada upon their release, he took three much-publicized national reading tours of Canada in 1928-29, and received more official acknowledgment than any of his contemporaries; he accepted the Lorne Pierce Medal in 1934, was elected to the Royal Society of Canada in 1941, and won the Governor General's Award for his penultimate published work, In Search of Myself, in 1946. While all of these

circumstances have led to a portrait of Grove as the archetypal prairie realist—the strategies critics have employed in their examinations of Grove's work have greatly influenced the critical reception of prairie realism in general—he was not singly, or even predominantly a prairie writer. His own comments reveal that he saw himself as a modern writer, working in an international "tradition," and he certainly did not consider himself a member of a "school" of prairie realists.

Apart from four prairie novels and two books of prairie nature sketches, Grove published eight books in his lifetime, including two novels set in Ontario, a volume of essays on literary, cultural, and political matters, an allegorical science fiction novel about an ant colony, a volume of autobiography, a vaguely autobiographical novel set predominantly in the United States, and, under his real name, Felix Paul Greve, two German novels.[1] My previous chapter discussed several of Grove's novels in the context of prairie realism, and revealed his subject matter and techniques to place him among the most modern of his contemporaries. In this chapter, I explore Grove's eclectic realism in relation to the larger modern-realist movement, considering both his well-known works and numerous unpublished and largely ignored archival sources, some of which have not been previously considered.[2] Rife with fascinating and irritating contradictions, Grove's critical statements finally begin to explain his elusive and problematic literary aesthetic when examined in the context of modern realism. As we shall see, Grove's work embodies tensions between highly traditional and experimental impulses, between regional and universal subjects and concerns, between referential and symbolic modes of expression, and between a modern-realist and a highly individualistic literary identity. This chapter, by exploring Grove's expression and negotiation of these various tensions, arrives at a definitive reading of his misunderstood realism, and an elucidation of his "modernity". The image of Grove

that emerges from this study remains contradictory, and many aspects of his writing cannot be accounted for under the rubric of modern realism. But his vocal and individualistic struggles to come to terms with many of the same aesthetic tensions and issues faced by his modern-realist contemporaries, even when his techniques and methods are atypical, reveal much about the movement and genre as a whole.

It is not surprising, given his preeminence among prairie realists, and many of the critical assumptions about prairie realism engaged in the previous chapter, that much Grove criticism articulates a thematic emphasis and offers him up as a paradigmatic writer, dedicated to the regionalist's duty of transcribing a prairie landscape and social environment. As Pacey writes in Frederick Philip Grove (1944), the first full-length study of his work, "[l]ife to Grove is a perpetual struggle, a struggle of man to assert his will against the various pressures of the environment" (123). McCourt echoed these sentiments in The Canadian West In Fiction (1949), which berated many of Grove's works and achievements, but nevertheless dubiously justified his contribution to Canadian letters solely on the basis of its regional and documentary significance:

> Not that we should willingly give up any of the novels of the Canadian West which Grove wrote . . . he brought a cultured and philosophic mind to the contemplation of the Western scene, and an eye for specific detail which will make his work a valuable source of information to the rural historian of the future. (70)

Curiously, in spite of the tendency of critics to discuss the regionalist aims of Grove's work, they have placed much emphasis on the imitative aspects of his writing, suggesting that his sensibilities and literary forms were derived from European tradition. Often his work is considered a dim reflection of late-nineteenth century

European fiction. As Frank Birbalsingh writes in "Grove and Existentialism," his "writings suggest that his preoccupations are primarily European. The treatment of his personal themes, free-will and humanism, reveals insights that are similar in kind, though neither in cogency or intensity, to those of well-known European writers" (57). In spite of such traditional and derogatory readings of Grove's work, much of the broad range of criticism on Grove and his *oeuvre* generally acknowledges that his traditionalism is creative and eclectic. While numerous critics focus upon the most conservative aspects of his realism, many of the best articles written on Grove find a kind of awkward modernity in his writing. As Ronald Sutherland argued in his 1969 book-length study, Frederick Philip Grove, critics looking back on Grove's writing were failing to take notice of his modern emphasis, and many critical discussions were perpetuating the stereotypical portrait of the prairie writer:

> the belated notice which has been accorded to . . . Grove . . . tends to foster the image of a single-minded, limited author; a chronicler of the Canadian prairie pioneer; a writer who was determined, honest, lumbering, and awkward. [Yet] there is a complexity, a multiplicity, indeed a modernity about the man and his writing which have largely escaped critical attention. (5)

Generally, then, criticism is divided about Grove's place in Canadian writing. On the one hand he is positioned as a traditional realist, labouring to adapt outmoded European forms to a realistic representation of Canada's prairie. On the other, many identify a "modern sensibility" in his work, although no critic to date has been able to define it in precise terms.

Several studies, including some of the best by Grove's most recent critics, attempt to explain the apparent tension between modern and traditional impulses in his

writing by emphasizing its naturalist properties. On the surface at least, a naturalistic affinity on Grove's part would appear to explain the curious blend of realism and modern experiment in his work. Naturalism, a late nineteenth-century form with its advocacy of an artless, at times formless brand of realism, might explain the loose, even clumsy structure of most of Grove's novels, most notably Our Daily Bread (1928), The Yoke of Life (1930), and Two Generations (1939). Rudolph Bader insists that many of the aesthetic shortcomings of Grove's novels that have bothered even some of his earliest critics are explained by his naturalism: "It seems obvious that such a commitment to naturalism does not leave much room for a flourishing imaginative style" (232). Furthermore, the naturalistic emphasis upon biological and social determinism in characterization and plot seems to account for the inescapable fates of some of Grove's key characters, including John Elliott and Abe Spalding, as a few critics have pointed out, and as I suggested in Chapter Three. Pacey argues that "Grove oscillates between conceptions of a universe controlled by forces deliberately malignant towards man and one controlled by forces which are simply ignorant of or indifferent to human aspirations" (Frederick Philip Grove [1944] 124). Stanley McMullin insists that a naturalistic determinism underlies the process of characterization in Grove's fiction: "Grove's heroes have epic stature; they are larger than life": they "embar[k] on hopeless struggles against forces they do not understand, knowing they will fail" ("Grove and the Promised Land" 14). And naturalism, with its interest in the sordid, vulgar, and taboo aspects of human life, perhaps explains Grove's well-documented, fictional interest in sexual matters, briefly discussed in Chapter Three in relation to Settlers of the Marsh (1925).

Certainly, a naturalistic presence in Grove's novels is most detectable in two of his prairie works: Our Daily Bread (1928) and Fruits of the Earth (1933). Furthermore,

many of Grove's comments on the art of fiction demonstrate his affinity with some of the characteristics and aims of naturalism. For example, in an essay entitled "The Novel [1]"[3] published in Grove's collection of essays, It Needs To Be Said (1929), he reveals that his techniques of characterization rely upon psychological determinism: "the novel presents an emotional crisis in the life of its hero or heroine. But the emotional crisis is not barely 'sprung' on the reader; it is led up to from its antecedents in circumstance and character; its unavoidable necessity is shown" (122). Yet in spite of such language, Grove openly, and probably unwittingly, rebels against other conventions of naturalism, and according to his critical conception of the term at least, he is definitely *not* a naturalist. In "Realism and Literature" (1929), Grove draws a distinction between Flaubert, a writer he greatly admires who, "growing out of the Romantic School, became a realist," and Zola, whom he deprecates and labels a "naturalist":

> With this Flaubert, the mature, self-critical, and austere artist, Zola, the naturalist, has no connection whatever . . . . A naturalist in English means a scientist . . . To him the novel was not an art-form which enabled him to cast on his canvas a picture of life as he saw it; it was a "scientific experiment" . . . The moment we examine these scientific pretensions of Zola's . . . they appear singularly weak, confused, and altogether lacking in the permanent power of art. (55-56)

Clearly, Grove associates literary value with what he calls "realism," and he sees realism as an outgrowth of the romantic sensibility. Naturalism, to Grove (and his definition of the term is broadly in line with most accepted definitions), may be modern with its emphasis upon science, but it does not fulfil his requirements for "realistic" writing and "the permanent power of art": as Grove says of Zola's naturalism, it

"produced artificially facts and sequences of facts" (56). If we take Grove's own comments on naturalism at face value, then it seems a conventional view of naturalism only partially defines Grove's aesthetic, and does not wholly account for his particular brand of determinism.

The questions surrounding Grove's concepts and applications of naturalism have still not been resolved by his critics, and a survey of their comments on the subject uncovers numerous emphatic yet remarkably dissonant statements. For Sutherland, Grove's naturalism is undeniable: "we must accept that [he] was every inch a literary naturalist. Those who have called him a realist or whatever, including Grove himself and several of his leading critics, are simply guilty of inaccuracy or inattention" ("What Was Frederick Philip Grove?" 8). Birbalsingh is just as convinced that the opposite perspective holds true, and he even contradicts Grove's own statements on determinism and characterization: "Grove was no naturalist. His characters are anything but impersonal beings reacting mechanically to outside influences" (59). The best of Grove's recent critics on the subject, Irene Gammel, attempts to move beyond some of these contradictions through a redefinition of the term naturalism that accommodates, on one level at least, both the obvious determinism in his work, and Grove's assertion that realism grows out of a romantic tradition. Drawing upon her reading of critic David Baguley, she arrives at a more open-ended, multigeneric concept of naturalism in Sexualizing Power In Naturalism: Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove (1994): "Grove's fiction . . . echoes Baguley's point about naturalism's multigeneric quality, which both feeds on and degrades other generic forms, particularly the expression of 'high' art forms such as myth and tragedy" (10). Crucially, Gammel recognizes that Grove's literary aesthetic has its origins in numerous literary modes and traditions.

But while Gammel favours an interpretation of Grove's aesthetic under the rubric of a multigeneric naturalism, I nevertheless contend that ultimately naturalism, however broadly defined, cannot account for the broad range of impulses and concerns, both traditional and modern, that make up what Grove repeatedly calls "realism." An examination of his works in relation to his critical statements on the subject, many of them unpublished and critically ignored, reveals that realism, to Grove, is a modern, experimental form with its roots nevertheless deeply embedded in literary traditions that go back as far as Greek tragedy. Grove supplements the oldest aspects of this heritage, notably the concepts of fate and poetic justice often identified by his thematic critics, with many of the techniques of European naturalism outlined above. His critical statements also reveal that he was aware of many of the boldest and most experimental forms of high modernism, and had read the works of Joyce, Lawrence, Woolf, Stein, Conrad, Chekhov, and T. S. Eliot, among many others. Like other modern realists, Grove disregards many of the most experimental high-modernist techniques—especially those aimed at the sustained and unmediated representation of subjective states—but undeniably favours innovation in writing, and he argues for a modern and experimental interpretation of the realist novel. More revealingly, Grove sums up his thoughts on realism in terms that are broadly in line with the definitions of modern realism found in the literary manifestos of the 1920s, and in the works of many of his contemporaries, including Knister and Callaghan. But in spite of the undeniably modern-realist aspects of his work, Grove cannot be singularly labelled a "modern realist." He remains, to a significant degree, an anomalous figure, subscribing to many of the assumptions of the modern realists, yet often neglecting, failing, or refusing to execute their narrative strategies in his work. Most dramatically, and through much ambitious experiment, Grove redirects the central preoccupation of the modern

realist—psychological realism and epistemological emphasis—toward a broad, universal, historical, probing of the human condition that links contemporary Canada to what he calls "the great tradition" ("Literary Criticism" 33). In so doing, he demonstrates the flexibility of the modern-realist form in the hands of the innovative writer, and reveals himself to be paradoxically one of the most traditional and most experimental modern realists.

In spite of Grove's bold critical statements on the importance of innovation in writing, and his clear alliance of realism with experiment, most critics consider him a profoundly conservative writer. Such a characterization may lack depth, but it is nevertheless substantiated by many of Grove's claims, and certainly by many of the traditional features of his novels, including their attention to detail, omniscient third-person narratives, and sweeping attempts at social realism reminiscent of nineteenth-century European works, including those by Balzac and George Eliot. This orthodox characterization of Grove—which can be traced back to The Canadian Forum and articles such as Robert Ayre's "Frederick Philip Grove" (1932) discussed in Chapter Three—may derive from a misunderstanding of Grove's concept of "the great tradition."[4] For Grove, literary value depends upon a writer's engagement of works that have come before, and he argues, in a 1929 essay called "Literary Criticism," that the critic's job is to evaluate new works of fiction by this seemingly conservative set of criteria:

> True criticism cannot help judging because it refers one thing to another; it measures all things by standards derived from the comparison of many works produced in the past, or derived from the great tradition—which it presumes to be permanent because it denies, outside of that tradition, the essential progress of man. Progress on earth *consists* in that very tradition.

(33)

In one sense, Grove is articulating a modernist attitude to tradition as offered up by T. S. Eliot in his 1919 essay, "Traditional and the Individual Talent":

> Tradition . . . involves, in the first place, the historical sense . . . and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with the feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. (367)

Nevertheless, however much Grove may wish to establish his works in a rich literary heritage, his view of history and "the great tradition" is not entirely modernist: for one thing, he apparently does not perceive a modern break in the long line of cultural continuity; and his realist aesthetic favours, not fragmentation but aesthetic unity, not literary allusion but contemporaneity and attention to the actual lives of living individuals. For Grove, as we shall see, "the great tradition" represents a kind of universal truth, the sum total of the creation of all great writers through the ages who have aimed at the representation of timeless human experiences. For a work of art to be a part of "the great tradition," for Grove, a kind of universal vision must rest at its centre. Curiously, Grove aligns this form of writing, the polar opposite of regional depictions of surface events and details of everyday life, with what he calls "realism." The writer becomes a realist, in Grove's opinion, when he treats grand-scale themes and issues, not surface minutiae. As he argues in "Realism In Literature" (1929), "[t]he artist—or the realist; for to me, personally . . . the two terms are synonymous—must mirror, in his presentation, an emotional response to the outside world and to life which

is . . . a universal response" (63). And Grove differentiates between this kind of universal realism, and the brand of regional realism often attributed to him and his contemporaries: "a work produced to-day may hold a great appeal through its very inessentials; through the accuracy, for instance, with which it reproduces, in fiction, certain aspects of modern life" ("Literary Criticism" 36). Ultimately, insists Grove, for a work to be realistic and to have significant literary value, this question must be asked and answered in the affirmative: "Does this work, or does it not, reveal a new corner of the timeless human soul?" (36).

Surely, Grove's definition of realism, as outlined so far, is anything but conventional, and would appear to have little to do, either with the modern world, or with modern realism. Stobie disregards the critical value of Grove's comments on the subject altogether, suggesting that "realism apparently meant whatever Grove happened to like in literature"; "The distinctions that he drew were arbitrary ones without much validity . . . [they] are not very helpful and do not mean much in terms of Grove's own writing" (Frederick Philip Grove 126, 92). Yet while many of Grove's individual comments on the subject at first seem to support Stobie's claims, when his statements are viewed in total we see that his definition of realism is more broadly in line with the idea of modern realism put forth in the literary manifestos of the 1920s. A more conventional concept of literary realism is articulated by Grove in "The Novel [1]":

> Both Short Story and Novel . . . deal with *socially significant* things from the main stream of life. In them, both characters and happenings must be more or less typical for a given society. They must be the normal, natural growth of given conditions actually existing in our midst. In reading them, we must be living the lives depicted as if they were our own. (120)

This aspect of Grove's definition appears reflective of traditional nineteenth-century

realism, emphasizing the importance of social concerns, the need to create representative characters, and the referential re-creation of a given milieu. Nevertheless, in another essay published in It Needs to Be Said (1929), "A Neglected Function of a Certain Literary Association," Grove also links realism implicitly to the new, emerging culture in Canada in the 1920s, employing rhetoric that is reminiscent of the Bookman manifestos:

> It is only natural that a nascent literature, arising in a young country which is on every hand surrounded by old civilizations, should, from a spirit of self-assertion, emphasize those features, conditions, mental and spiritual attitudes which distinguish its life and its nationals from those of other and older countries. (3)

Like the Bookman critics, Grove considers the emerging realism in Canada an inherent part of the growing sense of cultural nationalism. In an unpublished piece, entitled "Art and Canadian Life," he calls for young writers in Canada to reflect this "spirit" in their new forms of writing: "We must see the new spirit which indeed is stirring here and there in every trifle that we handle every day" (8). If Grove's call for a mimetic aesthetic is only implicit in this statement, he makes this aim clear elsewhere in the same article, extolling writers to reflect a clearly recognizable, modern Canada in their works: "to the writer: Show us Canadian life and make us realise what we feel but dimly; namely that it is a new kind of life, a kind which has never been lived before anywhere on Earth. Let painter and writer do that and we shall concede to them that they stand in the great tradition of all art" (6). In this example, Grove brings together what, on the surface, appear to be two contradictory poles of his sense of the new realism in Canada. On the one hand it ought to reflect "the great tradition," on the other it ought to represent a "new kind of life" that is distinctly Canadian. The challenge awaiting the realist, in

Grove's view, is to find ways of creating literature that is unmistakably Canadian, yet at the same time representative of the universal human truths that he indicates are the subject of all great, modern, and realistic literature.

All of Grove's major experiments with the realist form, then, grow out of this concern: how can literature mimetically reflect Canada but move beyond the surface details of everyday life to reveal the issues of broader significance underneath? This concern is very similar to that raised by Knister in a letter discussed in Chapter Two: "How to impart a hint of the wonder and mystery behind the circumstances, yet remain true to these latter?" (Knister to Frankfurth, 11 Apr. 1924). However, the experimental forms of realism that Grove's novels apply toward the exploration of universal human concerns are different from Knister's. More specifically, Grove's novels reflect contemporary Canadian life, as the modern realist demands, while pursuing his ideal for modern literature and wrestling with the grand-scale subjects worthy of "the great tradition." This dual emphasis has been vaguely identified by at least one critic: Mac Fenwick suggests that "Grove attempted to restage an older tradition within an entirely new context. Shakespeare and Milton reinterpreted their traditions for their societies; Grove wished to help create a new tradition within a new society" (298). Yet as Fenwick's somewhat self-contradictory statement perhaps inadvertently reveals (how exactly does one restage an older tradition and create a new tradition?) this proves to be a difficult literary enterprise. For his part, Grove tells us that his Canadian novels, and in particular his prairie novels, sought to apply an old tradition to a new context: as he writes in an unpublished address entitled "Mrs. President * Ladies of the Canadian Club": "I returned to the pioneers. What was it that drew me? . . . . In a world gone insane with transportation and speed; in a world forgetting eternal things in the hunt for material things . . . these pioneers stand unmoved . . . concerned with the eternally

valid thing – valid no matter where life is lived, no matter when" (9-10). For Grove, the prairie is a creative possibility awaiting his "realistic" interpretation. In the culturally neutral, timeless, receptive, open literary realm of the prairie, Grove perceives a universalism. Like the "open" prairie subject of other modern realists who find it conducive to their symbolic and psychological explorations of modern concerns, Grove's prairie, rather than determining his passive interpretation of subject matter, allows him to inscribe his own universal concerns onto it.

To a degree, this explains the determinism found in Grove's novels, especially the prairie novels, in which his protagonists—Niels Lindstedt, John Elliott, Len Sterner, Abe Spalding—appear driven to their final circumstances by forces largely beyond their control. Pacey makes this point directly in his 1944 book on Grove, although later critics would largely supplant this notion of Grove's tragedy with the naturalistic interpretation: he remarks upon a "view of man's conduct as determined by forces external to him" before suggesting that "Grove's conception of these forces . . . resembles rather the Greek conception of Fate than the scientific determinism of the naturalists" (124). If at times Grove's novels appear contrived and unrealistic—the marriage that provides a happy ending to Grove's Settlers of the Marsh comes to mind—this may have more to do with his concepts of fate and poetic justice than with a lapse in his realism. In two of his other prairie novels, the endings are not so fortunate, and the decline of Abe Spalding and John Elliott are perhaps governed by Grove's notions of the tragic view of human life, put forth in his "Happy Endings," also from It Needs to Be Said (1929): "It is the universal verdict of mankind at its highest that the feeling released in the human soul by the contemplation of life is tragic; and therefore, by inference, that human life itself is a tragic thing" (86). It is clear that Grove's fundamental concern with the prairie is not referential, or linked to its propensity for

regional representations of everyday, ordinary life. Rather, the prairie affords Grove the opportunity to explore his grand tragic and comic "truths" about human life. In this sense, Grove may be departing from conventional conceptions of realism, yet he is certainly keeping his own preoccupation with "the great tradition" and its universal themes at the centre of his artistic vision, thereby being a "true" realist by his own definitions.

As conservative and atypical of modern realism as many of Grove's concepts of realistic literature may appear, there is little doubt that he considered himself an experimental writer, much as the other modern realists did. Although he wrote poems, short stories, and essays, Grove was fundamentally a novelist, and he saw the novel as a new and highly experimental form of literature, as he makes clear in another unpublished essay, "The Technique of the Novel":

> Contrary to the belief of some people that the novel, after a career of a hundred and fifty years, has pretty well run its course, I hold that it stands on the very threshold of its potentialities. But, whether I am right in this or not, it certainly is fact that the novel is very much alive today; and this is surely attested to by the fact that it is still highly experimental. (1-2)

Again, Grove links this experimentalism to the particular aim of realism that he favours: the expression of universal truths. At the same time, Grove considered the novel a distinctly modern art form, and he believed that the realist ought to use the boundless potential of the novel to explore modern themes, concerns, and issues, always with attention to the larger truths that he maintained were the substance of literature in "the great tradition." Grove's descriptions of the novel form are strikingly modern, and were perhaps derived from his surprisingly broad readings in the genre.[5] In a passage from Grove's unpublished article, "The Novel [2]," he represents the novel in a light that is as

true of the European high-modernist example as it is of his own peculiar realism:

> Even as it stands today, experimental, chaotic, the novel is, artistically speaking, the most powerful, the most adaptable form of expression which the human mind and soul have ever devised for themselves. It lends itself to every purpose which modern man may wish to see served. It can do what, so far, no other art form has been able to do, namely lay open and view the mainsprings, not only of action but of being as well. It can reveal to us with equal clarity what is conscious in us and what remains subconscious or unconscious . . . . it can conclusively deal with . . . every problem of sociology, morals, or philosophy. There is no limit to its possibilities. (2)

Given the largely traditional form of Grove's own novels, however modern many of their subjects may be, his experimental conception of the novel form at first seems surprising. But if there appears to be a contradiction in Grove's thinking, it is only because his conception of what marks legitimate experimentation in the novel (and this is typical of the Canadian modern realist in general) differs substantially from that of the Anglo-American high modernists.

Like his friend and contemporary, Raymond Knister,[6] Grove was particular about the kind of literary experiment he approved. While he celebrated the novel as a modern and experimental form, Grove was openly hostile to the most experimental fiction produced in his day. At the same time as he openly advocated experiment with the realist form towards the realization of universal concerns, he was put off by literary virtuosity, or what he considered literary experiment for its own sake. In his unpublished radio talk, "Literary Criticism" (1938), Grove publicly demeaned what critics have retrospectively termed high modernism: "The critic will recognise the enduring

thing no matter how gaudily it be bedecked with the baubles of juvenile antics" (4). Nevertheless, it is important to note that Grove, in characteristically contradictory fashion, also called for critics to suspend their judgments about the experimental novel, and to recognize that much innovation was happening in fiction that was not easily understood: "if, in the novel—just now the most experimental of all forms of expression—we meet with things to which we are inclined to deny the attribute of beauty, we should hesitate before passing sentence" ("Art and Canadian Life" 7). Grove's apparent waffling on this issue of experiment in writing is explained by an examination of his concept of "modernity." In accordance with his notion that a modern form of realism brought together universal truth and contemporary circumstances, Grove contended that modernity and experimentation in literature were not new concepts: "The spirit of true art has always been iconoclastic: to use a modern phrase, it is always 'experimental'" ("Art and Canadian Life" 7). While Grove was critical of many modernist writers, including Joyce, Woolf, and Stein, he was a great admirer of earlier modernists, including Conrad and Lawrence. But even in his attempts to describe the technique of Lawrence in his unpublished "Technique of the Novel," and in spite of his preference for experimental writing, he again arrives at a seemingly conservative stance:

> In fact, as far as methods are concerned, I am unable to see in Lawrence a great innovator; when I ask myself in just what the greatness of Lawrence consisted, I find no answer but that he managed to do what all great artists have done, namely to pour new wine into old skins. It has always been the criterion of true greatness ~~not to be~~ that it is not overscrupulous about being original. Goethe said, 'I take what is mine wherever I find it.' (2)

In this sense, Grove's notion of experiment is broadly in line with the ideas of other

modern realists, including Knister, Callaghan, and the Bookman manifesto writers. As I argued in Chapter One, for the modern realist, literary experiment and technical innovation are neither characteristic nor atypical of the modern; a modern literature is involved in a representation of its contemporary environment by whatever technical means necessary. For Grove, modernity and experiment are relative terms; they are characteristic of every age: writers are modern and experimental, or, in Grove's lexicon, "realistic," not when they strive for virtuosity, but rather through identification with a universal, eternally modern spirit.

Thus far, my discussion of Grove's realism has emphasized the universal subject matter he favours, and suggested that he believes writing is experimental when it seeks to reconcile a universal emphasis with contemporary circumstances. But Grove has much to say about exactly how, technically, this aim is to be realized in early twentieth-century Canada. As Grove contends, realism is more about technique and form than subject matter: "But—and this is the important point—realism in this mistaken sense is a matter of the choice of subject, not of literary procedure; realism in my sense is a matter of literary procedure, not of the choice of subject" ("Realism In Literature" 53). If Grove's own statements are taken at face value, the techniques of his modern realism, like those of the other modern realists, fall largely under the heading of psychological realism. In characteristically vague terms, Grove wrote of this aspect of fiction in "The Novel [3]": "Let me express it this way: you do not see actors; or in other words, the novel aims at *psychologic illusion*" (1).

Grove's critics have also drawn attention to the psychological emphasis of his work. Sutherland, for example, remarks that "Grove felt that external details were strictly secondary to psychological accuracy" (Frederick Philip Grove 28). Still, despite the prominence of psychological realism in Grove's novels—note his intense

psychological portraits of Niels Lindstedt, Ruth Spalding, and Len Sterner—its precise nature has proven difficult to define. This is largely because Grove's idea of psychological realism is, not surprisingly, at odds with standard definitions, and is bound up, both in his notion that universal truth is at the heart of realistic writing, and his guiding principle that the human experience is tragic. In another unpublished essay, "Some Aspects of a Writer's Life," Grove discusses the problem of achieving this sort of psychological realism in the novel, and reveals that this aim underlies much of his literary experiment:

> One of the strange things about this sort of work is that a given psychological development . . . may be perfectly obvious, logical, and cogent to the writer's mind; but he cannot see his way clear towards making this development of this action appear natural, necessary, and inevitable to others. There are, of course, a thousand purely technical devices which he may try; occasionally I had tried scores of them in succession. (2)

For Grove, psychological realism is equated with the act, not of mimetically reflecting human consciousness or of depicting modern psychological themes, but rather of making his depiction of universal truth unfold in a convincing, realistic manner, and this remarkably does not necessarily entail the representation of a single mind or psyche. Unlike most of the modern realists and the high modernists in their epistemological phases, the individual human consciousness is not his concern; he is interested in universal psychological truths, and his novels aim to offer objective portraits of individuals or communities that are psychologically driven and derided by the tragic, or tragicomic, nature of the human condition.

Grove's confusing thoughts and aims in this regard are made clearer in his statements on many of the high-modernist experiments of the period that aim for the

mimetic representation of human consciousness, including the most famous of these forms: stream-of-consciousness writing. In this lengthy passage from the unpublished "The Novel [3]," Grove explains the shortcomings of subjective forms of modernist writing in a manner that sheds much light on his own literary aims and techniques:

> in the "first person" novel, the "thoughts and feelings of . . . the focal character . . . ten[d] to merge into analysis. Of late, this psychological analysis has, very naturally, assumed a greater and greater importance . . . I need only mention . . . Proust's Du Côté chez Swann, and Joyce's Ulysses. In both these the thoughts and feelings of only a single character are given, in fact, nothing else is given at all, except in as much as it is mirrored by these . . . . The greater, in the development of the novel, the share of analysis became, the more rigorously novelists saw themselves compelled to restrict their focal characters to one or two. It is almost a corollary of this that, the more analysis lost in breadth and variety, the more it gained in detail and depth . . . just now, analysis has tended to swamp the novel and to crowd its central element, namely narration, off the scene. It is the common characteristic of all experimentation to swing from one extreme to the other. In our case, novelists are fully aware that the real formula of the novel has not yet been found; and so they try this and that; and much brilliant effort may be lost because it proceeds in the wrong direction. (9)

The importance of these observations in clarifying Grove's literary aesthetic is difficult to overstate. He draws attention to the importance of psychological analysis in the modernist novel, something he has tried to achieve with his own brand of modern realism. Yet crucially, Grove highlights what he believes to be the main disadvantage of first-person narrative and narrative depictions of individual consciousness: a narrow

subjectivity. In the previous chapter, I speculated on the reasons for the absence of first-person narratives in prairie-realist novels, and I suggested that many prairie writers—most successfully Ross in As For Me and My House—strive to achieve a balance of subjectivity and objectivity that is demanded by a novel that purports to be both an accurate reflection of a contemporary milieu and a convincing exploration of individual human psychology. These observations may also explain a similar lack of first-person narration in Grove's fiction.[7] But, for Grove, first-person narration would have had the added detrimental effect of mitigating the universality of his grand-scale depictions of human truths. Certainly, Grove employs most of the standard techniques of the modern realists in his attempts to achieve psychological realism; I have already discussed his impersonal passages of psychological analysis (recall the discussion of the Spalding marriage in Chapter Three) and his frequent use of the centre-of-consciousness technique, which appears in one form or another in almost all of his novels, including The Master of the Mill (1944), also discussed earlier in this context. Grove is preoccupied with maintaining a narrative impersonality and objectivity in his writing because his notion of psychological realism has little or nothing to do with epistemology. The consciousness that he seeks to depict in action is not individual, but universal, not unique to any particular time and place, but rather part of a kind of historical consciousness, or a *Zeitgeist* of sorts.

Grove's most ambitious experiments with psychological realism derive from his attempts to depict what he calls a "world consciousness" that puts the reader in touch with a larger historical reality. Grove identifies this aim in "Realism in Literature," offering a passage that helps to account for his avoidance of overtly subjective perspectives in his work:

> in realistic art the creative spirit as such will never appear in the first person;

> whatever it has to say it will say indirectly, through the medium of action and character; it will submerge itself in the world of appearances . . . . realistic art . . . . will place itself and thereby the reader in the heart of things in such a way that they look on at what is happening from the inside, as if they were themselves a world consciousness. (76)

Grove makes it clear that the reader's own experience of universal truth, or "world consciousness," is the aim of modern realism, and that third-person, detached writing, with its ability to stand above a situation and explore it from a variety of perspectives, is the only way of achieving this:

> Naturally, then, prose narrative, conceived and written to be read . . . is the form most commonly chosen by the artist of to-day as the one most directly adapted to his purpose which is, of course, to waken an emotional reaction and response, in the largest possible number, to a given set of conditions, data, circumstances, events, and characters. ("The Novel [1]" 118)

In light of these two pronouncements, a number of the most troublesome aspects of Grove's novels begin to make sense. The awkward characterizations in three of his early prairie novels—Settlers of the Marsh (1925), Our Daily Bread (1928), and Fruits of the Earth (1933)—can be seen to derive from Grove's attempts to make his characters archetypal or historical representations first, and psychologically "real" individuals second. In The Yoke of Life (1930) and Two Generations (1939), Grove's overlaying of a symbolic structure onto otherwise traditionally realistic novels might best be viewed as an attempt to make his unremarkable characters representative of universal concerns and issues. In The Master of the Mill (1944), Grove's awkward manipulation of temporal chronology can be considered an experiment designed to establish the action of his novel within larger, repetitive historical patterns. And his final unfinished

and unpublished novel, The Seasons (c. 1938-1945),[8] with its ambitious attempt to recreate all aspects of human life, can be seen as the culmination of a career aimed at recreating broad human "truths" in the confined space of a particular locale.

As I have already discussed three of Grove's four published prairie novels in a number of contexts, I will forego further discussion of them here. The Yoke of Life (1930), however, stands out among this group by virtue of its strange coupling of traditional realism and symbolism, making it, in many ways, Grove's most ambitious prairie novel. A survey of the criticism of Grove's work, however, reveals that it is also probably his least-esteemed effort. W. J. Keith, in "Grove's 'Magnificent Failure': The Yoke of Life Reconsidered," has anticipated much of my interpretation of this novel: "Only when we become accustomed to the curious shift in the narrative from a basically 'realistic' to an unabashedly 'symbolic' level will the novel yield up its most satisfying effects" (104). Grove begins The Yoke of Life with a relatively straightforward, realistic narrative that is similar to those of his other three prairie novels; in his opening chapter, the narrator offers detailed physical descriptions of characters and landscape, much mimetic dialogue, bits of social commentary on the lives of pioneers, a centre-of-consciousness technique, and representations of everyday life on the prairies. Yet beneath the surface of this realism, there is a symbolic current unlike that found in any of his other novels. As Keith argues, "Superficially realistic, [the first chapter] is in fact so constructed as to communicate to the careful reader a symbolic digest of the book's major emphases" (104). Grove suggests larger significance in his characters and setting by supplementing his realistic description with much symbolic content: "Len saw a huge spruce tree ahead, out-topping the poplars all around. It stood close to the road, guarding like a sentinel a homestead in the margin of the forest" (10). Yet in this novel Grove is not merely supplementing traditional realism with a vivid symbolism;

rather, he attempts, increasingly as the novel moves forward, to subsume his realistic world into a larger symbolic pattern with universal emphasis. The characters in the novel cease to behave as "real" people would, and begin to act as representative, or archetypal figures. As Sutherland writes of the protagonist's relationship with Lydia, "soon she becomes symbolic of all the beauty embodied in his visions—the human correlative of his artistic goal in life" (Frederick Philip Grove 52). Lydia, who represents many female archetypes to Len at different times in the novel—virgin, fallen woman, mother, sister, nurse—is also clearly representative of Len's artistic vocation. The strange double-suicide that ends the novel—Len ties himself to Lydia, and they lie together in the bottom of a boat as it floats down a river to be smashed against the rocks—does not make sense in the context of pure realism, but it does provide a satisfactory symbolic conclusion in which the artist unable to realize his vocation sees both himself and his art destroyed in the process. To be sure, critics have criticized this novel for its failure to conform to a tradition realism: as an unsigned review that appeared in The Saturday Review of Literature in 1930 states, "we found it a trial . . . to witness the death of Len, neither plausible nor inevitable, in a suicide pact with his sweetheart" (Rev. of The Yoke of Life 274). Stobie writes in Frederick Philip Grove (1973), "[a]s the thesis takes over and determines the action of the second half of the book, characters stiffen to puppets" (88). But as Keith who does an admirable job of charting many of the symbolic patterns in Grove's book argues, "this [critical] neglect is closely related to [the novel's] unique fictional qualities" (104). While it is difficult to argue that The Yoke of Life is a wholly successful or satisfying novel, it is nevertheless undoubtedly reflective of Grove's efforts to broaden the scope of realism beyond the merely referential in order to encompass universal archetypes within a realistic framework. W. A. Deacon came close to summing up Grove's intentions in the novel in

a 1930 review in The Ottawa Citizen: "that the novel should be so utterly authentic a description or dramatization of the place and period . . . is only incidental. The crucial point is The Yoke of Life is a novel of power, plumbing the depths of an aspiring human soul" (qtd. in Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove [1970] 145). To this end, The Yoke of Life is most fairly seen as a bold experiment with the realist genre rather than a romantic mitigation of the realist form.

In The Master of the Mill (1944),[9] Grove strives to depict "world consciousness" and universal human concerns in a different and more successful manner. Less overtly symbolic than The Yoke of Life, despite the looming symbolic presence of the mill itself discussed earlier, this novel manipulates and distorts temporal sequence in order to establish the action of the novel within a larger framework of human history. Grove, in "The Technique of the Novel," indicates his belief that the novel may manipulate time in order to link the story to a larger "experience of life" (6): "A temporal sequence may be perfectly logical and convincing; and, on the other hand, it may be fanciful or even irrational. In neither case can the mere stringing together of many "And then's" make a work of art out of a mere sequence in time" (6). The temporal sequence of The Master of the Mill is notoriously difficult to follow. Grove's novel shifts awkwardly among numerous periods in time, between the founding of the mill in the mid-nineteenth century and 1938. The technique used to mark the passage in time is clumsy and jarring: "That, the senator reflected, had been the last time for many years that he had stood face to face with a woman unselfconscious. [New paragraph] But instantly he was back in the past" (62). Grove's temporal shifting in this novel is reminiscent of techniques used in numerous high-modernist works, most notably perhaps Woolf's To the Lighthouse (1927). Yet Grove's concern is not solely with the subjective, individual experience of temporality. His temporal discontinuity seems awkward if it is meant to

represent the memories and recollections of the individual character, Senator Clark. But Grove's movements back and forth through time are not meant to mimic the individual consciousness experiencing history; they are designed to highlight connections between disparate time periods, and to show circular historical patterns as they affect a large-scale society through time. In this sense Grove's novel has more in common with Woolf's most enigmatic work, The Waves (1931). As Stobie remarks,

> [i]t was not enough, however, for The Master of the Mill to comprehend all of Canadian life, and beyond that the general theme of changing cultural epochs, and beyond that the prophetic history of man . . . . In order to reach the fullest limits of Grove's vision, they had to be fitted within the revolving universe. (Frederick Philip Grove 173)

The enduring symbol of the mill reveals that, to Grove, historical consciousness is something quite different from historical reality: "that mill would live on though it might crumble; it would live on in the thoughts of man, for it had demonstrated the possibility of a new way of life" (328). It is easy to see, given this broad, visionary emphasis, why Grove found traditional realism to be too limiting a form of expression; he wants, not merely to reflect the surface details of life, but also to communicate the broad, historical forces that underlie human experience. This is the sense in which Grove perceives a kind of eternal modernity in great writing: writers are modern, realistic, and experimental, by Grove's definitions, when they succeed in representing their own contemporary period in a way that manages to tap in to the larger, perhaps spiralling forces that inform the communal experience of history. Grove's key historical image in this novel is not the mill which may "crumble," but the image of the "wheel" invoked in the final chapter. Speaking of the grand-scale passage of time, one of the women in the final scene conceives of history as a cyclical process of evolution: "'A wheel! . . . . .

A wheel that rotates. Attached to that wheel we return to every point at which we have been" (332). The Master of the Mill sees Grove taking the psychological emphasis of the modern-realist novel to a new level: it is an attempt to depict, mimetically, as impossible as this may be, what Grove calls "world consciousness" in action; as Miss Dolittle reveals in the final line of the novel, "I have come to place a great confidence in the capacity of the collective human mind" (332).

While The Master of the Mill, by virtue of the sheer ambition of Grove's vision, might appear destined to have fallen short in achieving the representation of "world consciousness," it apparently did not deter his efforts, and Grove set himself an even more difficult task in his final, unpublished novel, The Seasons (c. 1938-45). Content in The Master of the Mill with temporal distortion as a means of achieving his universal vision, in The Seasons Grove sought to distort space to similar ends. In this novel, his general approach to characterization and his tragic view of human life remain essentially unchanged, but his scope is even more ambitious: "As for 'The Seasons' . . . I have the deliberate purpose in mind of making it my *magnum opus*, by which I mean that I shall put into it . . . the thoughts and fates of the several scores of characters and the hundreds of background figures" (Grove to Pacey, 2 Feb. 1941). In this novel, Grove seeks to depict, in a single locale, what he conceives to be the sum total of all human experience. Set in and around an Ontario town based on Simcoe, The Seasons traces the lives of what seem to be countless individuals (they number more than one hundred) over the course of a single year, the novel being divided into four mammoth sections, "Summer," "Fall," "Winter," and presumably "Spring."[10] Two letters Grove wrote in 1941 reveal his ambitious intentions both in the scope of his subject matter and his technique:

> I have for two years been working on a panoramic novel which will require

> another two years to finish. In it, I aim at replacing the time sequence by an extension in space, giving a whole countryside, with its towns, farms, etc., within the compass of a single year. I call it "The Seasons." (Grove to Pacey, 20 Jan. 1941)
>
> The aim is not to spin out a plot in time, but to extend the scene in space, giving a bird's-eye view of all that happens typically within an area thirty miles square, including the (imaginary) town of Rivers and its whole population and all its activities, from the odd job man to the great industrialist. (Grove to Pierce, 13 Mar. 1941)

Perhaps his most modern book thematically—The Seasons explores both human sexuality and socialist politics to a degree unprecedented in his work—it is in many ways his least successful artistically. And for all of Grove's talk about manipulating time and space, the techniques of this novel are ultimately less remarkable and innovative than those of The Master of the Mill. The desire for inclusiveness, and the sheer number of characters it produces, means that few if any well-developed and psychologically "real" individuals emerge: although Grove throughout his career tended to emphasize "world consciousness" at the expense of the individual experience, ultimately it is through individual characters—Niels Lindstedt, Abe Spalding, Len Sterner, Senator Clark, Phil Branden—and the use of characteristically modern-realist techniques such as centre of consciousness, that he manages to come closest to exploring the universal concerns he prefers.

In The Seasons, Grove's boldest experiments with realism, rather ironically, return him almost to a traditional form of nineteenth-century realism that sacrifices individual characterization in order to offer up a cross-section of society. Ultimately, this novel suggests that Grove considered society, not the individual, the most

important subject of the modern novel. But nearly all of the other modern realists, even the social realists discussed in the next chapter, held the opposite opinion: the individual's experience of the world is fundamental. The "world consciousness" that Grove aims for in The Seasons, then, is not psychological realism in the modern-realist sense. In fact, Grove's "world consciousness" is hard to differentiate from narrative omniscience. Ultimately, Grove is aiming, not to offer psychologically "real" representation of individual characters, but to give the reader a feeling of "world consciousness," or a credible experience of a whole society moving through history. Whether The Seasons, had it been finished, would have evolved into a more typically modern-realist example of psychological realism is not clear. Yet it is unmistakable from what survives that, almost until the end of his life, Grove's interest in experimenting with the realist form was unshaken, and his efforts were growing more ambitious and eclectic with time.

With his wide variety of creative projects, elaborate personae, and peculiar literary concepts, it is surprising neither that Grove has generated tremendous critical interest nor that he never achieved the kind of recognition in his lifetime that he felt he warranted. It is also not surprising that, after eight decades of criticism, his readers are still in disagreement about the fundamental nature of his realism, the extent and authenticity of his "modernity," and his significance in the development of modern Canadian fiction. A reconsideration of Grove's problematic *oeuvre* in the context of modern realism makes sense of many of his peculiar aims and techniques. His realism was not borrowed intact from others nor imported wholesale from foreign traditions: it was the product of a highly individualistic, eclectic, and experimental vision, pursued with attention to the new movement in Canada. Grove's awkward modernity consists in his realism, which both explored the contemporary world, like so many modern realists,

and sought to connect this world to a timeless, eternal modernity: "the great tradition." And some of his most idiosyncratic experiments with literary form can be considered an outgrowth, or individualistic application of the modern-realist preoccupation with psychological realism. Yet to suggest that modern realism wholly accounts for Grove's complex career fails to do justice (or perhaps gives too much credit) to a writer whose endeavours were not so focussed. Like modern realism generally, Grove straddles many of the traditional boundaries in and of the literature of the period: he was a prairie realist and a social realist, referential and universal, Canadian and international. Like other modern realists, he faced formidable aesthetic challenges—negotiating the regional and universal, referential and symbolic, traditional and experimental—and arrived at workable solutions that were at once individualistic and attuned to the modern spirit of the new movement in Canadian writing. And Grove's eclectic modern realism is irrefutable evidence of the complexity, sophistication, flexibility, and vitality of the movement as a whole: these very qualities are what enabled the movement to appeal to such a broad and diverse group of Canadian writers, who were working in such a wide variety of communal and individual contexts.

Chapter Five

The Proliferation of Modern Realism in Canada, Part 2:

Urban and Social Realism Reclaimed

The urban and social realism that emerged in Canada in the 1920s, in a variety of social, political, and regional contexts, is the most indisputably modern of the forms of realism produced in the period. Canada's first urban-realist novel, J. G. Sime's Our Little Life (1921), appeared shortly after the first manifestos for a modern realism were published in the Canadian Bookman in 1919. Over the next three decades, Canadian authors produced a body of ambitious, dynamic, eclectic, and often experimental fiction that engaged nearly all of the pressing and grand-scale social issues of the period, and explored life in Canada's rapidly growing urban centres with unprecedented intensity. This fiction is similar in quantity to the prairie realism produced contingently in the same period—about three dozen novels and scattered works of short fiction[1]—yet Canada's urban and social realists have only very rarely been critically examined as a school of writers, and they have never figured prominently in our literary histories, either as a group or as individuals. At present, Canadian criticism all but denies the very existence of urban and social realism before the mid-point of the twentieth century. Pacey writes, for example, in Literary History of Canada, that "Realism, and especially urban realism, was a very unusual commodity in Canadian fiction between the wars" ("Fiction 1920-1940" 186). Accordingly, urban and social realism of the period has not yet been the subject of any comprehensive critical study, it is scarcely mentioned in the critical surveys of the period, and almost all of its authors have been forgotten, if they were ever known at all.[2]

This chapter, in the broadest sense, aims to explore these most uncompromising examples of modern realism, and to highlight their crucial but

unacknowledged place in Canada's literary heritage. In doing so, this chapter reveals that modern realism was a truly national movement of writers in both urban and rural contexts, in disparate regions of Canada, with different social and political affiliations, but sharing a commitment to contemporary subject matter and particular aesthetic assumptions. For a number of reasons, this chapter also aims to situate Canada's urban and social realists in the context of early twentieth-century literary culture: they wrote many of their best works just as leftist literary culture in Canada was waging war on modernist aesthetics and calling for a new, bold, realistic literature that was willing to take on major social and political issues; yet leftist literary culture in Canada rejected modern realism even though it did engage these issues, largely because of its similarity to modernist prose. More specifically, then, this chapter explores the relationship between modern realism and the socialist realism advocated by the leftist little magazines of the period. Such a comparison reveals the complex and diverse manner in which Canada's modern realists explore social, political, and psychological concerns. Also, highlighting the differences between modern and socialist realism reaffirms the similarities between the modern-realist and modernist literary aesthetics, and clarifies the relationship between the broad and often competing impulses and influences that make up modern realism as a whole. And finally, examining urban and social realism in the context of leftist literary culture of the period uncovers some of the critical and material reasons for its persistent neglect.

The array of individual works I explore in this chapter is insufficiently defined by the terms "urban realism" and "social realism." Yet these terms are useful, indeed unavoidable, as they denote two unmistakable tendencies of the modern-realist fiction of the period. In Social Realism In the French-Canadian Novel (1977), Ben-Zion Shek offers a loose definition of "social realism" in accordance with my usage: "social realism

. . . must of necessity have as one of its points of reference the economic, social and political conditions . . . having existed during the fictional time-span covered by the works in question" (15). Of course, more sophisticated theories of social realism abound and have proven the subject of much critical debate over the decades, although rarely in the context of Canadian literature. A number of critics focus on some of the ways in which the form of the European social-realist novel is determined by its leftist content, including Georg Lukács, the most prominent theorist of social realism: "in the materialist dialectic content is the overriding moment that ultimately determines form" ("Reportage or Portrayal?" 59). But the English-Canadian social-realist novel of the period generally explores individuals in relation to the forces outlined by Zion-Shek only on a thematic level, de-emphasizing ideological interpretation of subject matter; to consider these texts "social-realist" in the sense outlined by Lukács would prove limiting by denying their important formal similarities to other types of modern realism. For example, later in this chapter, I explore various forms of "reportage" in specific urban and social-realist texts that are typical of modern-realist fiction as a whole. In other words, I discuss social realism as a form of modern realism with a predisposition for a particular subject matter. While the exploration of social and political forces has some impact on the formal properties of the social-realist text, there is no substantiative difference between the technique of social-realist fiction and that of other forms of modern realism; in this sense, the generic boundaries of social realism are as arbitrary as those of prairie realism, discussed earlier. Similarly, the term "urban realism" in this study is meant to denote a tendency of much modern-realist fiction to investigate the modern urban experience, and to unfold in a realistic cityscape. Yet much as my discussion of prairie realism revealed the inadequacy of regional labels applied to a diverse body of texts that can only be partly accounted for in regionalist terms, the

discussion of urban realism in this chapter acknowledges the inadequacy of a generic heading defined by a particular kind of geographical space.

A further indication of the difficulty of categorizing the fiction of the period is suggested by the fact that social and urban realism, as George J. Becker reveals in Realism In Modern Literature (1980), are closely linked but divergent concepts: the "movement to the city provided the realist with new social and psychological data" and this "widespread experience . . . challenged and contradicted time-honored conceptions of man's place in the world and his obligations to his fellows" (12). But, while the generic boundaries of social and urban realism overlap—the increasing interest that Canadian writers showed in urban settings and contemporary life in expanding centres of population effectively assured that social and political issues would become more prominent, and the reverse is also true—not all of Canada's social realists were urban realists: for example, many of Grove's novels—Our Daily Bread (1928), Fruits of the Earth (1933), The Master of the Mill (1944)—are profoundly concerned with social issues, but are not examples of urban realism. Furthermore, there are urban-realist novels that are set on the prairie—Durkin's The Magpie (1923) takes place in Winnipeg, for example—revealing that fiction of the period does not always fall neatly into the categories of "urban" and "rural." Nevertheless, much as it is impossible to deny a "prairie realism" with its own thematic preoccupations, there is undeniably a body of urban and social-realist fiction in Canada that foregrounds the cityscape and emphasizes political and societal concerns. The very fact that prairie realism has a permanent place in our literary canon and urban and social realism have been ignored reveals that such distinctions exist, and to deny them out of convenience would create an arbitrary sense of the coherence of the modern-realist movement as a whole. When I use the terms "social" or "urban" realism in this chapter, then, I use them to indicate

general thematic categories of the larger modern realism that includes these and other forms.

While the works of a few individual writers of the period have very occasionally been discussed in the general context of urban and social realism, there has not yet been a study of the English-language novel comparable to Shek's Social Realism In the French-Canadian Novel. Unfortunately, our notions of urban and social realism have also been distorted by the fact that nearly all of the extant criticism on the subject has focussed exclusively on the *oeuvre* of Morley Callaghan who, despite his predominantly urban settings, is not singularly or even primarily a social realist. Indisputably the most influential urban novelist of his generation—the next chapter explores Callaghan as a link between Canada's modern realists and the international modernists—the critical work on Callaghan alone is many, many times larger than that on all the other social and urban realists of the period combined. Not only has this uneven focus of attention eclipsed the contributions of Callaghan's forerunners and contemporaries, but it also has had the somewhat paradoxical effect of both denying and mischaracterizing fiction of the period. Callaghan is sometimes called the only urban realist, the exception to the rule that Canadians write about the landscape, and this leads to the neglect of other works about the city: Justin D. Edwards, for example, argues that "[a]s Canada's first urban novel, *Strange Fugitive* is an important text not only for exploring the rhetorical changes in articulations of Toronto, but also as a document that constructs and manipulates conceptions of urban space within the Canadian cityscape" (213-14). Edwards's general statements about Canadian literature of the period ignore the fact that, even before Callaghan created his formative fictional portrait of Toronto in 1928, Sime had written about Montreal in Our Little Life (1921), Durkin about Winnipeg in The Magpie (1923), Gilbert Knox [Madge MacBeth] about Ottawa in The Land of Afternoon

(1924), and a contemporary Vancouver had appeared in The New Front Line (1927) by Hubert Evans. At the same time, the general critical emphasis on Callaghan generates the impression that any other works of urban and social realism must necessarily pale in comparison: as Pacey writes, "A few forgotten novels have virtues that lift them above the level of mediocrity . . . but even the best of them fall short of the level of . . . Callaghan" ("Fiction 1920-1940" 168).

Such comparative notions of urban and social realism ensure that the fortunes of the genre as a whole remain bound up in the literary reputation of one writer whose canonical status has been in serious decline for decades, and many of the common critiques of Callaghan's work—moralism, didacticism, heavy-handed symbolism—turn up in critiques of the fiction of the period as a whole. On a somewhat more positive note, Zhongming Chen's 1989 dissertation, The Politics of Fiction: Social Realism in English-Canadian Novels (1920-1955), provides a survey of social realism of the period that does not place Callaghan in a preeminent position. Chen's work certainly offers some desperately needed readings of neglected works but discusses only eight novels that are supposedly exemplary of the genre owing to their leftist ideology. While Chen's leftist reading of the novels of the period begins to fill a significant gap identified by Kenneth J. Hughes in his "Introduction" to Voices of Discord: Canadian Short Stories from the 1930s—"Canadian literature needs an intelligent reassessment by the left" (14)—I disagree with Chen's assertion that writers as disparate as Frederick Philip Grove, whose half-hearted run for public office under the C. C. F. banner marks the furthest extent of his radicalism, and Dyson Carter, a political revolutionary and blatant propagandist, are allied in their "shared literary tenets and socio-political beliefs" (iii). The present chapter explores Canada's social and urban realism in broader terms than any study to date. As we shall see, the "literary tenets" of modern realism and those of

the socialist realism advocated by the leftist magazines are in fact in conflict with one another. A thorough assessment of the urban and social realism of the period requires attention to its prominent place, not within a particular ideological sphere, but rather in the broader modern-realist movement that resisted the notion that literature ought to have an ideological basis.

Before examining the urban and social-realist aesthetic in the context of leftist literary culture, it is necessary, owing to the dearth of critical material on the subject, to provide a brief overview of this fiction. In terms of their general development, urban and social realism are indistinct from the rest of Canada's modern realism: they arise in the 1920s contemporaneously with the modern-realist manifestos, the first distinguished works of prairie realism, and the experimental works of the first major modern realist, Raymond Knister. While the subject matter of the urban and social-realist novel was affected by the heightened attention paid to political issues in the 1930s, as of course were prairie realism and the projects of individual prose authors of the period, this troubled decade did not, as some literary histories suggest, give birth to social realism. And urban and social-realist authors, again like their prairie-realist contemporaries, began, as mid-century approached and passed, to write with ever-increasing psychological intensity: even a cursory contrast of works such as Ethel Wilson's Hetty Dorval (1947), Hugh MacLennan's The Precipice (1948), or Brian Moore's Judith Hearne (1955), to Callaghan's early works reveals this development in concrete terms. Urban and social realism are also very similar in technique to the other forms of modern realism discussed in this study. Aside from the urban realist's heightened interest in contemporary language and speech patterns, and the social realist's occasional preoccupation with creating character types that allow the synecdochic exploration of grand-scale social issues (both of which are present but

less evident in prairie realism), there is little other than subject matter to separate works such as Stead's Grain (1926) from Evans's The New Front Line (1927). But the subject matter of urban and social realism is pronounced: its unflinching and daring exploration of even the most weighty and taboo subjects of the age makes it some of the most modern literature produced in the English-speaking world.

Canada's urban realist is concerned with the same great themes that interested the Anglo-American modernists and captures the modern cityscape in a manner that reflects the rapid pace of life of urban centres, the threatening and often destructive forces sometimes associated with city living and urbanization, and the psychological effects of city dwelling on the individual. At times, the urban realist goes to great lengths to capture the vibrancy of the growing Canadian city, and to convey a sense of the impact of technological development on contemporary life. J. G. [Jessie Georgina] Sime's Our Little Life (1921) generates just such an impression of Montreal:

> he . . . . used to sit in the window of the Lunch Room, and look out at the people passing to and fro on the sidewalk . . . and watch the unceasing traffic in the street. There were the electric cars making their way down the middle of the street with an unending clang . . . . [and] the great leviathans of motor cars that came rolling through the traffic to the ground bass of their tooting motor-horns. (128)

Previously unattempted in the Canadian novel, portraits such as this one convey the sense of optimism regarding technological advance and industrialization present in the minds of many authors in the 1920s, and reflected in the language of the manifestos calling for these sorts of celebratory and realistic depictions of Canadian life. With the onset of the Great Depression, however, many urban portraits grow noticeably darker, and the urban realist becomes more interested in exploring the ominous and

foreboding character of the urban world. In Irene Baird's Waste Heritage (1939), for example, Vancouver is represented as an urban waste land in which many of the social problems of the novel—poverty, class struggle, violence, unemployment—are almost personified:

> They walked up past the harbor, approaching . . . . by the low road that ran parallel to the railroad tracks. The squalid streets were quiet and steeped in shadow, the high canyons running between the blocks were blacked out except where the moonlight fell in patches, sharpening angles and creating crude planes of light and darkness. These streets that appeared merely dreary and damned by day took on a sinister air by night. (231)

And in Callaghan's most sustained work of social realism, They Shall Inherit the Earth (1935), the narrator describes Toronto in a manner that conveys both the sordid aspects of big city life and the inexplicable effects of the city on the mind of the city dweller:

> there was nothing human going on in that city block that she did not understand, the weeping of a girl deserted . . . the young man brutally beaten in that room over the poolroom on the corner, the lustful old man coaxing the innocent girl to sit on his knee . . . she heard the noises on the street, smelt the gas and oil from the cars, and then looked up, full of joy, at the dark sweep of the city sky. (140-41)

The urban realists, then, are not unlike the prairie realists in their concern with imaginatively interpreting, rather than merely describing, the landscape or cityscape. The urban realists' concern with universalizing the city and exploring its symbolic possibilities is further indicated in their allusive renaming of well-known Canadian cities: numerous critics, including Brandon Conron, have remarked that Callaghan's refusal to

"name" Toronto in his novels indicates his desire to have his urban world take on a universal significance, Philip Child, in God's Sparrows (1937), renames Hamilton "Wellington," Sime's Montreal is called "Regalia" in Our Little Life (1921), and Baird, in Waste Heritage (1939), allusively and symbolically renames Victoria and Vancouver "Ashkelon" and "Gath," respectively.

Novels of the period also unfailingly engage, to varying degrees, dominant and dramatic social, political, and moral concerns. While the specific concerns that the urban and social realists raise are many and varied, generally speaking they pertain to the effects of the economic conflict and crisis between the wars—unemployment, labour unrest, capitalist exploitation of the worker, the hardships associated with factory life, poverty—and to issues arising out of social identities and conflicts—exploitation of women, tensions between religion and secular society, racial prejudice, class issues. While the majority of these works, true to the spirit of modern realism, are structured around the psychology of one or more individuals, they nevertheless take account of social forces in motion on a grand scale. In A. M. Stephen's The Gleaming Archway (1929), for example, labour conflict and the socialist movement in British Columbia are analysed in some detail, and used as a catalyst to the main action of the novel:

> The labour situation in Vancouver was passing through an intense period when the contending forces were active and aggressive. One wing of the party was demanding industrial action—the other counselling prudence and constitutional measures which would find expression at the polls. (123)

More sympathetic to revolutionary causes, and more subtle and convincing as a novel, Baird's Waste Heritage (1939) focusses on the lives of two out-of-work individuals during the Depression. While Baird's characterization of Matt Striker, who rides the rails into Vancouver in hopes of taking part in labour demonstrations, and the mentally-

challenged Eddy whom he befriends, is convincing, the novel is also concerned with depicting larger social forces, rather than merely analysing or describing them. A particularly notable aspect of Baird's technique is her exploration of group psychology. The emotional fluidity of crowds comes across in her many descriptions of demonstrations as she modulates among various levels of detached description, and communal centre-of-consciousness points of view:

> As the long line of measured shuffling hardened to a measured tramp the tenement watchers shrilled a cheer; then as they caught sight of the cops' red machines the cheers soured to catcalls and the boys on the billboard joined in . . . that made handling the crowd a dangerous, thankless job. (44)

In Nellie McClung's Painted Fires (1925), the author tells the story of a Finnish immigrant to Canada named Helmi who confronts both sexism and class discrimination in a variety of social and personal contexts. While McClung exploits her dramatic situations to their fullest as a means of commenting on a variety of social issues of the period, she largely avoids didacticism in the novel through the creation of vivid characters who represent various social and political affiliations without losing their psychological credibility, as McClung's portrait of the self-serving and revolutionary minded Anna Milander reveals:

> Miss Anna Milander was locked in a cell at the police station, charged with having maliciously and with intent to hurt hurled a stone at a policeman . . . she was well pleased with her afternoon's work. She had struck a blow in Freedom's cause . . . . Her picture would be in the paper . . . . the pride of achievement burned in Anna's heart. (20-21)

In Earth and High Heaven (1944), Gwethalyn Graham tells the story of a love affair between a wealthy Christian socialite, Erica Drake, and Marc Reiser, the Jewish lawyer

she falls in love with to the horror of her family and friends. In the process of exploring an anti-Semitism insidiously rooted in Montreal society, Graham weaves in and out of the minds of her characters, examining the complex interplay of their social, racial, and linguistic identities side by side with the petty psychological motivations and hangups that underlie their prejudices: "He remembered what a shock he had had when the parents of a Jewish importer whom he had known for years . . . the very best type of Jew . . . turned out to be pure ghetto" (130-31).

Closely related to the exploration of social issues and concerns is the social realists' tendency to situate everyday, commonplace occurrences in relation to encompassing historical events and patterns. In one respect, this dual emphasis on the local and the universal results in a form of social determinism that explores the ways in which the lives of "real" individuals are bound up in larger forces. But the social-realist novel is not essentially naturalistic, and one gets a sense that writers of the period are concerned more with exploring modern life, and the confused relation of micro-to macrocosm that it entails, than with putting forth sociological theories. Hugh Garner's Cabbagetown (1950)[3] offers an excellent and representative example of some of the ways in which writers of the period situate their stories in history. Garner's novel, as its name suggests, is on one level a portrait of a specific working-class, immigrant quarter of Toronto, firmly grounded in the "real" world with references to specific landmarks: "The street names greeted him with long-known familiarity—Sackville, Parliament, Taylor, Oak, Sumach, Sydenham . . ." (6). But the manner in which Garner structures his story reveals that his intentions are more ambitious, and that Cabbagetown is meant to represent an archetypal urban experience of the Great Depression. In a manner reminiscent of Dos Passos, Cabbagetown is epic in scale, and the narrative almost cinematographically moves in and out of the minds of

numerous characters, striving for psychological realism on the level of the individual mind, but always subtly emphasizing the connection between the individual life and the spirit of the times. The life of the protagonist, working-class Ken Tilling, begins optimistically, with promising prospects for the future: "Getting a job was an easy step in the early months of 1929. Business and employment were climbing to unprecedented heights" (3). But soon Tilling and the other characters in the novel are caught up in the maelstrom of changing times: "One evening in October the newspapers printed extra editions reporting a stock market crash" (36). Ken Tilling is in stages driven to a life of crime; his father, stripped of his role as breadwinner, withdraws into a non-responsive state; Tilling's mother, unable to cope with economic hardship and its impact on her family, self-medicates with alcohol; and Tilling's beloved, Myrla Patson, impregnated out of wedlock by her wealthy boss who takes advantage of her poverty and ignorance, is driven in stages to prostitution. Undeniably, Garner's novel seeks to explore the effects of the Depression on certain types of individuals: as he remarked in an interview with John Moss, "*Cabbagetown* . . . happens to be—it's been called—the best book about the Depression, the Depression and the urban poor, so it will probably remain a sort of textbook of that particular era" (53). But Garner avoids drawing moral conclusions about the events that take place in the novel, and his characters do not simply function as symbols: Ken Tilling is driven to crime, partly out of need, partly out of greed, his parents are victims of hard economic times but also partly to blame for their own misfortunes, and Myrla's descent occurs, not just because of social forces and the influence of others, but also because of her own questionable moral reasoning. What is the relationship between the individual and society? Garner acknowledges that this is a complex and unanswerable question better left to historians and sociologists than novelists. Like most of his modern-realist contemporaries,

Garner appears persuaded that convincing characterization is necessary if such social commentary is to appear credible, and that social commentary is not the primary concern of the modern realist.

The period of modern-realist proliferation in Canada is roughly bracketed by two disastrous world wars that are defining moments in Canada's national development. Accordingly, the wars are often viewed with ambivalence in the Canadian novel of the period, authors seemingly torn between depicting the devastating effects of war and exploring the nationalism and national sense of "coming of age" sometimes associated with the war experience. Canada's social realists engage the war subject from a variety of perspectives, sometimes exploring specific social effects of the conflicts, at other times exploiting the weightiness of the war subject to symbolic ends.[4] In one of the most unjustly neglected works of the period, Sime's thematically linked cycle of short stories entitled Sister Woman (1920), the Great War is explored for its indirect effects on the lives of women of the period, and seen as an historical force inextricably bound up with their daily lives, urban experience, and psychology. As Sandra Campbell writes in her "Introduction" to the 1992 Early Canadian Women Writers series reprint of Sime's book,

> [m]any of these women are depicted at work in the occupations open to women in the Montreal of World War I: they struggle to survive as seamstresses, shop clerks, factory, office and domestic workers and even as prostitutes. In their struggle, they experience the evolving psychic and social pressures brought to bear on women as a result of the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation which Georgina Sime witnessed between 1907 and 1919 in Montreal, then Canada's leading city. (vii-viii)

In Durkin's The Magpie (1923), social events that cause moral questioning in the mind

of the protagonist, Craig Forrester—namely class responsibilities during the Winnipeg General Strike—are posited as effects of the Great War, and in this way the individual, the local, the national, and the universal are linked:

> "The strongest organization in the country during the next few years will be the returned soldiers, the veterans of the Great War . . . . The men who have come back from the front will just about control the political life of this country for the next generation" . . . . Craig lighted a cigarette . . . Why was it that everybody was so keen to take sides and prepare the ground for a new struggle now that the great struggle had ceased? He didn't want it. He felt the men and women he met in the street day after day were as tired of struggle as he. (33)

Graham's controversial and contemporary Earth and High Heaven (1944) linked the Nazi atrocities committed against Jews in Europe, even while they were still occurring, to her ambitious story of anti-Semitism in Montreal, as this short centre-of-consciousness passage reveals: "so long as the Jews of Germany, and after 1938 the Jews of Europe, continued to suffer purely for their Jewishness, then to run down the Jews of Canada was in some way merely to add to that suffering" (74). And another forgotten novel of the period, Philip Child's God's Sparrows (1937), uses the war subject to somewhat more symbolic ends. In this work, Daniel Thatcher, a wealthy, young protagonist from Hamilton, lives out his childhood in relative ease, the most significant conflict in his life occurring on a symbolic level between the two sides of his family, one attached to American ideals, the other to British. But such social conflicts, suggested by Child to represent competing ideas of the "old Canada," lose their importance when Daniel goes off to fight in the Great War. He loses many friends in the fighting, loses his beloved in an influenza epidemic, and returns to Canada a

broken man. The symbolic function of the war in the story is identified by Dennis Duffy in his "Introduction" to the New Canadian Library edition: "this novel is as much about the end of an era in Canadian history as the life of a single family: the novel concerns not only the agonies of an individual, but the destruction of a culture" (6). Child does what many of the best social-realist authors of the period do: he writes with a muted symbolism that allows his story to transcend the merely topical without compromising its grounding in "reality"; the best social-realist novels of the period embody a non-oppositional dualism, supplementing "straight" realism with a symbolic, psychological, or universal thrust.

Such is also the case with many of the "case study" novels produced by the urban and social realists. These novels generally purport to explore the lives of more or less typical individuals as they negotiate key social or moral problems presented by modern life. In some of these works, the protagonist is a kind of everyman whose struggles represent those of larger segments in society. In another little-known novel of the period, Hubert Evans's The New Front Line (1927), we follow Hugh Henderson, a more or less typical young man who returns to Vancouver after World War One and struggles to reintegrate into society. While Evans's psychological portrait of Henderson is often intense, at times it appears that the author is more concerned with exploring the social problems of the returned soldier in general than with creating a unique character:

> Some returned men he knew were resuming their interrupted university studies. They were attending lectures with young men and women who had been children when the war broke out. Hugh knew his parents would finance him if he wanted to go to University. But he was too honest to accept financial aid . . . (40)

The most convincing case study novels, however, tend to reflect the modern-realist preoccupation with psychological realism more clearly. In Callaghan's novels, for example, the characters nearly always have an air of typicality, an everyman quality about them—they are generally unremarkable, inarticulate, unheroic—yet it is not usually possible to ascertain exactly what, if anything, such individuals are meant to represent. Accordingly they are both individual, in the sense that they do not stand obviously representative of some larger social group, and paradoxically universal by virtue of their independence from such symbolic functions. As Daniel Aaron writes, social issues and concerns are, in Callaghan's work, "neither planted nor exploited for their ideological import . . . . Callaghan observed how individual persons — never 'social types' — comported themselves during the hard times. Their anxieties are felt more than recorded or exploited" (24). This is the situation in Callaghan's best-known case-study novel, More Joy In Heaven (1937). While Callaghan's psychological portrait of Kip Caley cannot be called subtle, he nevertheless writes a novel in which the effects of the Depression on the individual become manifest in an indirect and idiosyncratic manner. Firstly, the questioning in the novel is moral, rather than social and political—is redemption possible in the modern world?—and Callaghan's social critique is levelled at a general hypocrisy that runs across all segments of society, rather than at a specific class or ideology. Caley, used and discarded by a depression-era world eager for a positive symbol during a period of hardship, is at once strikingly credible in his response to those who manipulate him and suggestively symbolic in his embodiment of their guilt, selfishness, and hopelessness.

Also indicative of the urban and social realists' efforts to relate both public issues and the private experience of them, is their omnipresent examination, from a variety of philosophical and narrative perspectives, of the changing roles of women.

Generally speaking, the dramatic changes in women's lives during the period are portrayed with ambivalence: new roles for women become available due to events of the period—we see women working outside of the home because of a lack of male labour during the wars or due to economic necessity during the depression—and the move beyond the domestic sphere is sometimes pictured as liberating. In Sime's "Munitions!," from her short-story collection Sister Woman (1920), Bertha Martin finds personal fulfilment in going to work in a munitions factory during the war: "the sense of freedom! The joy of being done with cap and apron. The feeling that you could draw your breath—speak as you liked—wear overalls like men—curse if you wanted to" (43). One of the better-known feminist portraits of the period appears in Hugh MacLennan's Barometer Rising (1941). In this novel, Penny Wain, a ship designer, flourishes in a traditionally male profession, but must still face constant criticism from her male colleagues who doubt her abilities; yet there is no question that she represents on one level the "new woman" of the period, and finds a degree of satisfaction through the actualization of her talent in her work:

> To be a woman and work at a profession pre-eminently masculine meant that she must be more than good. She had to be better than her male colleagues; she had to work longer hours and be doubly careful of all that she did, for a mistake would ruin her. It had taken a war to open such a job for her in the first place, but she was undeceived as to how superior she must be to continue to keep it. (11)

In other works of the period, the move from the domestic to public sphere does not offer any form of liberation, and women go to work out of economic necessity, not desire, as this passage from Sime's Our Little Life (1921) reveals:

> Girls go out to work, perhaps, but with the expectation of matrimony in their

> minds. They do marry more often than not, and there is the end of it. Miss McGee thought like this: she regarded a woman as a home-keeping animal . . . . Her work had no romantic appearance in her eyes; it was merely a means of gaining bread, and no more than that. (114)

In McClung's Painted Fires (1925), the psychological pressures of a society with double standards—necessitating that women work, but denying them equality—on the minds of a number of characters are vividly depicted. In this stream-of-consciousness passage, a maid who has conceived out of wedlock reflects on such injustices, critiquing a hypocritical society and revealing its personal and spiritual toll when it leads her to question her faith in a higher power:

> God couldn't blame her for quitting. Why didn't He make life a little easier for women? God was all powerful—He could make life as He liked . . . . Why had a baby come to her when she had no home? . . . . God was mean to women . . . . no one wants a girl with a baby. (222-23)

Such portraits of women caught up in the double standards of a changing society are, in fact, very common, and the over-all representation of women's opportunities in the urban and social-realist novel is bleak: in Callaghan's Such Is My Beloved (1934), two young women, Ronnie and Midge, are driven to prostitution out of economic necessity, as is Myrla Patson in Garner's Cabbagetown (1950). The novel of the period also abounds with portraits of unempowered housewives and mistresses: Vera in Callaghan's Strange Fugitive (1928), Faustina in Len Peterson's Chipmunk (1949), and Marion in Durkin's The Magpie (1923).

And finally, before moving on to a specific examination of the aesthetic of the urban and social-realist novel in the context of leftist literary culture, it is worth remarking upon a few of the peripheral concerns of the novel of the period that indicate

the degree to which writers were concerned with engaging the modern world. These concerns, some of them simply references or allusions, do not in themselves take up a large portion of the urban and social-realist narrative. In some cases, modern references are simply provided to add to the vividness of the urban space being described; in other instances, these references reveal the willingness of the modern realists to broaden the scope of the Canadian novel to include subjects that are controversial and taboo, intensifying their social analyses and heightening their psychological realism. Not least among these subjects is human sexuality, and its frank depiction in a variety of lights, ranging from relatively explicit descriptions of sexual acts—in Peterson's Chipmunk (1949) and Garner's Cabbagetown (1950)—to direct if unenlightened discussions of lesbianism—in Callaghan's No Man's Meat (1931), and male homosexuality, again in Cabbagetown—to sordid subjects such as prostitution, venereal disease, and illegal abortion, in Such Is My Beloved (1934), They Shall Inherit the Earth (1935), and Chipmunk, respectively. The declining influence of traditional religion finds a place in many of Callaghan's novels, and also in Joyce Marshall's Presently Tomorrow (1946) and Graham's Earth and High Heaven (1944). Virtually all of the novels of the period make reference to the various and sometimes radical political movements that figured prominently in newspaper headlines, including Communism, Marxism, Bolshevism, and Socialism. Other novels discuss the influence of fascism from various points of view: Henry Kreisel's The Rich Man (1948) tells the story of Jacob Grossman, a Torontonian Jew who visits Vienna in 1935, Child's Day of Wrath (1945) is set in Nazi Germany, the rise of Nazism provides a backdrop for events in two Montreal novels, Presently Tomorrow and Earth and High Heaven, and Hilda Glynn-Ward's The Writing on the Wall (1921) is itself a stupid racist propaganda tirade directed at Chinese Canadians whom the author suggests will soon overrun

British Columbia unless prevented.[5] And countless other modern subjects of varying importance appear in these novels: psychoanalysis in Strange Fugitive (1928), the flu epidemics in Our Little Life (1921), occult spiritualism in The Gleaming Archway (1929), professional sports in Callaghan's The Loved and the Lost (1951), and modern publishing in Leslie Bishop's fusion of realism and satire, The Paper Kingdom (1936), to name a few. But as modern as these subjects may be, the most important kinship between modern realism and the modernist fiction of Europe and America is found when one examines the aesthetic assumptions shared by writers of the two forms. To do this, it is necessary to come to terms with the complex interrelationship that existed in Canada among the urban and social realism I have outlined, modern realism as a whole, modernist aesthetics, and the socialist realism advocated by the leftist literary culture of the period.

* * *

As Canada's modern-realist movement entered its second decade, the roaring twenties became the dirty thirties, and dramatic political and social changes were felt by all segments of Canadian culture and society. Of course, for the urban and social-realists already concerned with representing a contemporary Canada, these changes confirmed their long-held belief that the modern world was a dynamic subject, and they rose to the challenge of probing big concerns and issues in fiction. But the 1930s would present a host of other obstacles for the modern-realist author, both material and aesthetic. One of the most significant events of the decade for the movement was the rapid decline and eventual demise of the original champion of modern realism: the Canadian Bookman. The effects of the Great Depression struck hard across the spectrum of Canadian culture, presenting tremendous financial hardship for all of the little magazines of the decade,[6] and none suffered more than the Bookman which, even

in the 1920s, had struggled to stay afloat. While this journal fought and failed to publish regularly and occasionally showed an interest in modern realism almost until its total collapse in 1939, after 1932 it was a shadow of its former self, and it had lost its important place in the literary culture of the period: as James Mulvihill summarizes, "By the mid 1930's a typical number might consist of little more than a lead article followed by sundry short book notices and perhaps some ads . . . In 1937, frequency became irregular and several numbers simply failed to appear" (57).[7] The decline of the Bookman left no single periodical in Canada with a serious interest in Canadian fiction, and no intellectual or creative forum for the discussion of modern realism.

The few magazines that did publish significant critical work during the Depression were all clearly leftist in political orientation and generally uninterested in Canadian prose, both qualities in marked contrast to the Bookman, which wrote extensively about fiction, and was, as Mulvihill writes, "[e]ssentially apolitical in any overt sense, [and] it remained so even when literature became more preoccupied with politics during the 1930s" (49). The most polite leftist voices of the era were heard in The Canadian Forum, which continued to publish throughout the 1930s and produced a few articles of relevance to modern realism that are discussed later in this chapter.[8] But as the realities of the Depression began to sink in, this repository of cosmopolitanism began to show even less interest in Canadian writing than it had in the 1920s—it engaged primarily and fiercely in political debates—and nearly all of its scant discussion of literature during the decade focussed on poetry. But two other little magazines of greater importance to the modern-realist movement in the 1930s, both with a peripheral interest in prose and a loud and uncompromising leftist political bias, had brief but intense runs during the decade: Masses (April 1932-April 1934) and New Frontier (April 1936-October 1937). Like the Bookman, neither of these little

magazines has ever been granted a significant place by Canada's literary historians. Critics tend to mention them as examples of the kind of propagandist writing supposedly characteristic of the decade before promptly dismissing them: for example, despite offering rather lengthy discussions of other early twentieth-century Canadian periodicals, Bruce Meyer's entry on "Literary Magazines in English" in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature has only the following to add about the two journals: "*Masses* (1932-4) was primarily political. *The New Frontier* (1936-7), which mixed politics with socially oriented poetry and criticism of a more radical cast than the *Forum*, is notable for having published such writers as A. M. Klein, Dorothy Livesay, and Leo Kennedy" (458). While it is difficult to defend most of the literary work published in an average issue of either of these magazines on a purely aesthetic level, certainly they deserve recognition as the founding periodicals of the leftist literary tradition in Canada which continues to the present day.[9]

But another significant aspect of Masses and New Frontier has been entirely overlooked: their loud and polemical pages abound with comments on the importance of realism in modern writing, and their critical contributors engage in hot and frequent debates about the very nature of literary realism in Canada and the world. For these reasons, these magazines are of crucial significance to the modern-realist movement which, as I have suggested, produced some of its finest works in the years during and surrounding their brief runs. But to suggest that Masses and New Frontier simply pick up with modern realism where the Bookman left off would be grossly inaccurate. In fact, two rather remarkable points become apparent when these leftist organs are considered in relation to modern realism: firstly, while both Masses and New Frontier unmistakably argued for a new realist literature in Canada—a realistic literature willing to engage the harsh realities of the Depression and its political and social causes and

effects—they approached the already extant modern realism with alternating hostility and indifference, defining their own aesthetic largely in direct opposition to it; secondly, and more significantly, the leftist magazines of the 1930s spurned modern realism because they perceived it to share crucial aesthetic assumptions with international modernism, which they considered indulgent, elitist, escapist, pointlessly experimental, decadent, bourgeois, and reactionary.

If one ignores their ideological emphasis, the manifestos for a new realism in Masses and New Frontier are almost indistinguishable from those that appeared in the Canadian Bookman a decade and a half earlier. Such a similarity reveals that, on the surface at least, modern realism was a remarkably dynamic, receptive, adaptive, and resilient form in the minds of writers of the period; few if any other modernist forms appealed for so long to such a wide range of writers with such various ideological dispositions. One common endeavour attracted both the Bookman and the leftist critics to realism: they were utterly convinced that writers, to be modern and relevant, had to engage uncompromisingly and realistically the life that was being lived *today* in contemporary Canada. But these two groups of writers, as we shall see, had very different definitions of such an uncompromising realism. While the boosterish Bookman directed realism towards the representation of a great nation that needed to be celebrated and understood, the leftists found the realist form useful for critiquing the ills and injustices of a sick and hypocritical society in order to bring about reform and socio-political change. If this shared interest in contemporary life brings the modern realists and the leftists together superficially, in the final analysis their different ideas of what representing contemporary life entails divide them irreconcilably.

In the April 1932 inaugural issue of Masses, L. F. Edwards offered a piece called "Authorship and Canadiana" which allied the appearance of the new magazine

with a desperate need for a new writing in Canada that was willing to engage a troubled world in realistic fashion. Edwards's manifesto reflects both the revolutionary tone of the leftist magazine and the sense of distaste with which its writers viewed Canadian writing of the period:

> The total inadequacy of Canadian authors to portray the true ideology of the people in this country, has had the effect of creating an intellectual impasse . . . . they seem to be totally unaware of the obligation to endeavour to express the feelings and thoughts of their countrymen, here or anywhere else . . . . No one will deny that the field is here, awaiting but the stroke of the quill to transfer realistic life to the written page. (7)

Other important assumptions underlying the leftist calls for realistic writing that superficially establish their similarity to those of the modern realists are found in the opening, unsigned editorial, "Our Credentials," also appearing in the first issue of Masses. In this piece, the founders posit the magazine as a direct response to the lack of realistic writing in Canada and list some of the general concerns that should be on the minds of Canada's new realists: pressing social questions, the life of the "common man" or "worker," political debates, the interconnection between art and life, the modern and realistic writing of other nations, and a distinctly Canadian character:

> They [the founders] were justifiably disgusted with the barren fields of Canadian bourgeois culture, with the smirking complacency of Canadian artists and writers, with their puerile ignorance of and contempt for social questions, with their snobbish nose-thumbing at the workers and their movements . . . . [Masses] rejects the theory that art can have nothing in common with politics, that art functions only by and for art . . . . Art is the product of the current (and previous) social and economic conditions . . . .

> Are there any honest intellectuals, who will study the life of the workers, who will make the aims of the workers their aims . . . Will they do what Gorky is doing, what Gropper is doing, what Dos Passos is doing, what Barbusse is doing? . . . . MASSES is the first publication of its kind to appear on Canadian soil, produced from the life of Canada's factories, farms — and breadlines. (1)

The concerns that Masses wanted the new realists to focus upon—"social and economic conditions" and "workers and their movements"—indicate, on the surface at least, only an ideological disagreement with the Bookman: the more conservative magazine demonstrated an interest in socio-political forces at work in contemporary society, but not the leftist interpretation of socio-economic conditions, and an interest in every day life, common people, and ordinary subjects, but not specifically the working class. Minus the ideological emphasis, most of the demands of the Masses manifesto can be found in the modern-realist manifestos of the Bookman, and they had already been reflected in modern-realist fiction produced before 1932.

Less shrill, but still unmistakably revolutionary in its political orientation, New Frontier also linked its very *raison d'être* with the need to establish a new realism in Canadian writing. This journal, however, had somewhat higher standards for the literature it printed, and its manifesto pieces correspondingly offer somewhat more commentary on the aesthetic and stylistic aspects of the new realism. The unsigned opening manifesto of this journal is, in fact, startlingly astute, and demands a Canadian realism that engaged the issues foreground by Masses but avoided two of the pitfalls awaiting the modern-realist writer—regionalist representation and excessive virtuosity and experiment—which are offered as reasons that the Canadian realists have not turned their attention sufficiently, or with the right ideological disposition, to "social

realities":

> Though technically adequate, so many interpretations of the Canadian scene in creative writing . . . have been singularly disregardful of or unfaithful to the social realities of our time. This effect roots in a diversity of causes. One of these was the re-discovery of the Canadian north country landscape . . . with its infinite possibilities for presentation in art, and its eminent suitability as background for sentimental romance. Another, also of geographic *origin*, was the physical isolation in which many domestic creative artists have had to work . . . fostering the provincialism of sectional differences . . . Allied with and developing from these is the tendency of the ivory tower . . . ("Editorial" 3)

These manifestos, which echo so many of the issues I have already discussed in other contexts, raise one unavoidable question: why did the leftist magazines neglect the fiction, already produced in Canada, that fit their definitions for new writing in just about every way? They wanted writing that was concerned with society and politics, the common man, and the Canadian scene; modern realism, especially in its social-realist phase, was precisely this. Like the modern realists, the leftists were not interested in either regionalist idylls or modernist virtuosity. And both groups wanted a modern, realistic writing that was on par with the literature of other nations. So why did the leftists and modern realists not come together in the 1930s? The reasons that modern realism proved irreconcilable with leftist literary culture are complex, and can be roughly divided into three overlapping categories: politics, issues surrounding the material production of literature, and aesthetics.

The political reasons that the leftists did not embrace modern realism as it existed are, on the surface, fairly obvious and straightforward. While the modern

realists, especially in the social-realist mode, expressed a fundamental concern with social and political issues, Masses, and to a lesser degree New Frontier, wanted literature that, at the very least, openly expressed a leftist opinion about these same issues. In its opening manifesto, "Our Credentials," the founders of Masses stated in no uncertain terms that art necessarily had a political purpose: "Art is propaganda, or more precisely, a vehicle of propaganda" (1). The opening "Editorial" of New Frontier similarly demanded that art have a political focus, yet conceded that such art ought also to have, as a secondary characteristic, aesthetic worth: "certain individual creative artists and groups . . . are becoming more interested in the social implications of Canadian life, [and] are turning out work which has both social and artistic value" (1). Yet the modern-realist novel of the period was not propagandistic, and was rarely interested in offering political commentary, or even with taking sides in the weighty social and political struggles of the day. Callaghan's work produced in the 1920s and 30s is indicative of the modern realists' general detachment from political ideals. Strange Fugitive (1928) focusses on the life of a "common" man, Harry Trotter, who works in a lumber yard in Toronto. While several of the stock leftist motifs are played out in Callaghan's novel—Trotter is fired for attacking his oppressive boss, for example—the author avoids exploiting such situations for their political implications, and they appear to be included more for their dramatic potential than their ideological import. Similarly, Callaghan's second and third novels, It's Never Over (1930) and A Broken Journey (1932), invoke a vivid and contemporary urban landscape, but avoid explicit discussion of the political conflicts in the air in the years following the crash of 1929, focussing instead on psychological realism. Even his later novels with a more overtly socio-political emphasis—Such Is My Beloved (1934), They Shall Inherit the Earth (1935), and More Joy In Heaven (1937)—all briefly discussed in this chapter in

other contexts, explore issues of political substance more for their dramatic possibilities than for their ideological weightiness.

The leftist magazines, to be sure, took Callaghan to task for appearing indifferent to issues of the day. In the October 1936 issue of New Frontier, for example, Israel Jordan reviewed Callaghan's collection of short stories, Now That April's Here (1936): "the sensitive artist cannot help reflecting the cruelty and injustice which are invading the most intimate relations between individuals in the present order of society" (29). But the same reviewer critiqued Callaghan for merely reflecting the injustice of life in the modern world and expressed hopes that in the future Canada's "foremost living writer" would learn to politicize his work: "Perhaps when his compassion has passed beyond the contemplative stage and he has begun to formulate a way out for the people whom he describes with such truth, he will be able to write a sustained novel" (he had already produced five novels, three novellas, and two volumes of short fiction) (29-30). For his part, Callaghan, like most of the modern realists, appeared to reject the political novel on the grounds that it was both intellectually and aesthetically limiting. In a 1939 article which appeared in Saturday Night, "Little Marxist, What Now?," he gloated over the dilemma that the Russian-German non-aggression pact had forced upon the culture of the left, stating in no uncertain terms that it was the price to pay for small-mindedness:

> It didn't seem to occur to . . . the little communists . . . that they were intellectually servile. They were just being good soldiers in their thinking. Well, they should now be thankful that they have such a long training in intellectual servility. For by this time the party line on the Stalin-Hitler deal has probably come through and they can venture on to the streets. (24)

Callaghan's contempt for the extreme left, however, appears to derive also from his

perception that their politics limited the creative freedom of the modern writer, and one can hardly blame him, considering the kinds of critiques his works were sometimes submitted to. Turning the tables in "A Criticism," published in the first issue of New Frontier in 1936, Callaghan provided a critique of the short stories published in the magazine at the request of the editors. He was kinder than he would be in 1939, but stated unequivocally that political subject matter alone did not make for a good story:

> Right here is the place to state emphatically that class consciousness, or an intention directed toward that end is not enough . . . . It is odd that these . . . pieces should have been on one theme—the man out of work. The editors tell me that this was not a deliberate selection, but that nearly all the stories they received were about men who were out of work. If this keeps on it will appear that . . . all the young writers of the country are out of work. (24)

The fact that the leftist magazines could muster only muted praise even for the most high-profile of the urban and social realists of the period solely on the grounds that he was not political *enough* is evidence of the degree to which they considered political activism the function of the new realism.

Both Masses and New Frontier considered themselves the centre of the new writing in Canada, and both published poetry, drama, and fiction in an effort to direct this writing in accordance with their ideological aims.[10] So it is hardly surprising that the novel, which for material reasons they were unable to "control" as easily as poetry, drama, or short fiction, received less critical attention than other literary forms. Both magazines, in fact, give the impression that no novels of literary worth at all were published in Canada during the 1930s. Apart from a tiny handful of reviews of Callaghan's work, there is almost no mention of the Canadian novel of the period in these magazines.[11] This is not altogether surprising: given the state of Canadian

publishing in the decade, very few new writers of any temperament were able to publish novels. As Pacey writes,

> [s]everal firms, and notably one of the most ambitious and experimental, Graphic Press of Ottawa, went bankrupt early in the 1930s; others cut back their lists and survived only by acting as agents for foreign houses. Even established Canadian writers such as Morley Callaghan and Frederick Philip Grove found it increasingly hard to get their books published, and new writers could scarcely get a hearing at all. ("The Writer and His Public" 12)

And it is hard to imagine that the chances of such "new writers" getting a "hearing" would be increased if their politics were both more important than their command of literary form and directed against the broad reading public and the capitalist system that any profit-making publishing house indirectly endorsed. So while the output of modern-realist novels actually *increased* and many of the finest works in the genre were produced in the 1930s—Brooker's Think of the Earth (1936), Stead's Dry Water (1935), Baird's Waste Heritage (1939), Grove's Fruits of the Earth (1933), Two Generations (1939), The Yoke of Life (1930), and most of Callaghan's best known works, including Such Is My Beloved (1934), They Shall Inherit the Earth (1935), and More Joy In Heaven (1937), to name only the best-known—the over-all visibility of the novel in the literary culture of the period declined. Given this state of affairs, there were almost no propaganda novels published in the period—the work of Claudius Gregory, author of Forgotten Men (1933), is all that fits clearly into this category.[12] Clearly, then, the neglect of the novel in Masses and New Frontier stems partly from the fact that the novels of propaganda, which they endorsed, were not appearing, and they were powerless to make them appear.

But the leftist aversion to the novel derives from more than a rejection of its subject matter. In many articles published in the little magazines, the novel is derided as an indulgent and bourgeois literary form, and allied with a social class seen to be the enemy of the leftist cause. As Edwin Berry Burgum wrote in New Frontier in September 1937, "it is a commonplace of reputable criticism at the present time that the novel culminates in the writers of bourgeois decadence, the Prousts, Manns, and Joyces" (25). The magazines made it clear, in the discussion of the few novels they did deem worthy of attention, that one had to look outside of Canada for achievement: Jack Conroy wrote in "New Forces in American Literature," printed in the April 1936 New Frontier, that in the United States, "a solid body of moving novels . . . ha[s] been produced" but "We are still looking to the future . . ." (23). The vast majority of books reviewed in both Masses and New Frontier were not by Canadians, and by far the most sustained discussion of any fiction in either magazine occurred in Felix Walter's "French Novelists of Today," a column that appeared six times in New Frontier between September 1936 and March 1937.[13] Also, the leftist neglect of modern realism may be the result of more than an aversion to the novel form; both Masses and New Frontier, if the space they allot to discussion of various literary genres is any indication, rank fiction third in importance behind poetry and, incredibly, drama. Poetry, obviously, better suits the space constraints of the little magazine interested in publishing original creative work than does either drama or fiction. But the leftist interest in drama can be accounted for in broader material terms as well: as Ruth McKenzie wrote in her 1939 article entitled "Proletarian Literature In Canada," "The field of drama is more encouraging than that of fiction. Perhaps this is because it is easier in Canada to get a play performed than to get a story published" (59). Certainly, the popular agit-prop dramatic form of the period lends itself better to the kind of activism advocated by the

magazines—involving the audience in a direct and immediate manner—than does fiction, and many of the journalistic pieces in both magazines report on the effects of various performances on proletarian audiences.[14] The leftist neglect of modern realism, then, may be partly a byproduct of the lack of attention that the leftist magazines paid to fiction in general, and the novel form in particular.

But the most significant objections that the critics and writers of Masses and New Frontier raised to modern realism grew out of these political and material concerns, and related to their notions of the very function and form of realistic writing. The contributors to these little magazines, as we shall see, go to great lengths to describe and justify the precise differences that divide the "socialist realism" they advocated from the "bourgeois realism" they opposed. While these magazines may be fairly accused of questionable literary standards in terms of what they often allowed to be published in their pages, their rejection of a so-called "bourgeois realism" was not arbitrary, or simply the result of aesthetic ignorance or indifference, as is sometimes suggested. The leftist writers and critics had very specific reasons for preferring their socialist realism, and these reasons stem, not just from political and material concerns, but also from their vehement disagreement with certain practices of both the modern realists and the high modernists: ambiguity, impersonality, experimentalism, and psychological realism. For reasons I have discussed, Masses and New Frontier paid less attention to fiction than to other literary genres, but between them they *did* publish a few dozen short stories during their runs, and these works constitute a distinct if minor genre in their own right; Donna Philips's Voices of Discord: Canadian Short Stories of the 1930s (1979) gathers together 26 of these Depression-era stories of protest, which she argues "offer a fascinating view of Depression-era experiences," which include "poverty, the alienation of industrial workers, the memory of world war,

the threat of fascism and renewed war" (9). Even a cursory glance at these short stories reveals that they share both these thematic concerns and many technical aspects with modern-realist fiction: all of them are realist, at least insofar as they discuss real individuals facing pressing issues of the day, they generally employ straightforward language, engage contemporary subjects, have a descriptive emphasis, and provide idiomatic dialogue. But in spite of these similarities, some very important differences exist between these stories and modern-realist fiction of the same period.[15]

The first of these differences grows out of the socialist-realist belief that literature ought to function as propaganda and critique. While the modern realist, as I have argued, carries out a variety of experiments to permit the inclusion of subjective perspectives within the framework of purportedly objective narration, one function of socialist realism—often called "proletarian realism" or more inclusively "proletarian literature" in discussions of the day—is to interpret so-called "reality" in a creative manner in order to foreground a particular ideology. As McKenzie reveals,

> 'proletarian literature' is defined as literature which describes the life of the working class from a class-conscious and revolutionary point of view. It is literature in which the worker is regarded as the victim of capitalistic exploitation; as the instrument of revolution by which a new social order will be ushered in. He, himself, is of more importance as a factor in society than as an individual. Our capitalist system is regarded as responsible for the disintegration of society with its attending evils, and as the root of all wars. (49)

In other words, the primary task of the socialist realist is *not* to reflect life as the broad reading public has been used to seeing or experiencing it. This is the revolutionary aspect of his or her art: to record life so that ideological conclusions can easily be

drawn by a narrator or reader. As V. F. Calverton wrote in "Literature as a Revolutionary Force," an article which appeared in The Canadian Forum in March 1935, "Proletarian literature . . . is more than realistic literature. It is a literature dominated by a dynamic *mythos*, carrying within itself the seeds of prophetic conviction and challenge" (225). In other words, the "realism" of a given work, or its credibility as a reflection of reality, is enhanced rather than mitigated by the infusion of a "mythos," an admittedly subjective element, into the melange: this is the sense in which socialist realism is "more than realistic literature." And E. Cecil-Smith's "Propaganda and Art," which appeared in Masses in January 1934, further reveals that the differences between the two forms of realism lie not simply in an ideological disagreement about how so-called reality ought to be interpreted. Citing the Russian writer N. Bukharin, Cecil-Smith arrives at a clear distinction between the competing ways—one passive, one active—in which the two types of realists supposedly approach their subject matter:

> The following very big difference between socialist and bourgeois realism immediately strikes the eye: bourgeois realism as such is content with reality, with reflecting it. Marx said that bourgeois philosophy interprets the world, while the task of socialism is to remake it. But the remaking of the world by the proletariat is a deeply realistic remaking. It is carried out on the basis of a precise study of the real laws of nature . . . . (10)

Cecil-Smith does not discuss these differences between "socialist" and "bourgeois" realism in the context of Canadian literature, but this distinction, judging by the volume of articles published in the 1930s journals that acknowledge it, was widely accepted by writers and critics favouring both forms (although only the leftists called modernism and modern realism "bourgeois").[16] Here, then, is the most fundamental difference between socialist realism advocated by the leftist magazines and the modern realism and

modernism they critiqued: the first group of writers was actively engaged in remaking reality in their works; the second group was, at least from the point of view of the leftists, concerned with merely reflecting reality.

While both types of realism are concerned with the lives of ordinary individuals and their place in the modern world, the ways in which they approach this subject reflect their differing approaches to how "reality" ought to be conveyed. The social-realist portraits of the "common" individual of the period display a remarkable unity of tone and technique: they are *all* written from a third-person, detached, impersonal, omniscient perspective, and their narratives are stark, grounded in unremarkable, everyday happenings, lacking in dramatic incident, and generally resistant to ideological interpretation. Even those novels of the period that deviate from this model to a degree do so in the typical modern-realist fashion: that is, they stretch the boundaries of the realist form to infuse their objectivist portraits with limited subjective perspectives. In Callaghan's Strange Fugitive (1928), the life of Harry Trotter is portrayed largely without dramatic incident—we follow him through everyday events of working, drinking, romancing—almost until he is gunned down by gangsters in the melodramatic final chapter of the novel. While the conclusion to Callaghan's novel has a clear symbolic meaning—Trotter's demise is the result of his own moral disintegration brought about by both the effects of modern life and his own solipsism—it does not provide an ideological conclusion to the story. And, while many of the typical subjects of the leftist story are impersonally rendered in this novel—unemployment, economic hardship, strained family relations—Callaghan chooses to supplement (or compromise) the objective mode of reportage only through an indirect symbolism that has a moral and psychological function. A later social-realist novel, Len Peterson's unfortunately titled Chipmunk (1949), also uses a symbolic device to draw attention to his characters'

psychological experience of the modern world. Again, we are given a portrait of everyday, working-class individuals whose situations might easily be exploited for their ideological import: the central character, Claude Widgewood, a baker, and his wife Faustina live a working-class life in an archetypal Canadian city of the period. Peterson's intent, on one level at least, is clearly to convey the dreariness of lives lived at the bottom of the economic scale, and this partly explains his title: the protagonist is compared to a "chipmunk" which is, of course, "a tiny, squirrel-like rodent inhabiting the North American continent . . . it scurries about, busily collecting and storing . . . it is easily trapped; perhaps it is not too intelligent" (1). Yet as the metaphor suggests, Peterson is critical primarily, not of the society in which the Widgewoods live, but of his characters' stupidity and lack of ambition. Peterson's novel is not so much an ideological examination of working-class life as a naturalistic caricature of the working-class man who is derided and ultimately defeated by his society. Although there is a perceptible leftist bias to the narrative, Peterson, like Callaghan, avoids offering obvious ideological interpretations of situations. The Communists who encourage Claude to join the struggle for workers' rights, for example, are depicted as small-minded, self-serving, and manipulative. And, while Claude's boss, Mr. Cadenza, is constantly concerned with financial matters, he is hardly the stereotypical capitalist boss of the leftist magazine story, and is shown to be fair and legitimately concerned with the well-being of his employees. Peterson's novel is exemplary of the social-realist novel of the period; while it is willing to stretch the boundaries of the realist form to symbolic ends, its central preoccupation remains with providing a detached, purportedly objectivist rendering of everyday life in the modern world.

While socialist-realist fiction is certainly more limited in terms of basic subject matter—not only must it render the lives of common, everyday, ordinary individuals, but

it must also do so within the context of leftist ideology—it is, perhaps surprisingly, much more varied in form. In fact, the extremes to which the socialist realists go to convey their political message within the confines of the realist form are sometimes ridiculous. This is because there appears to be a fundamental conflict inherent in their aesthetic: on the one hand, the socialist realist desires the materiality, authority, objectivity, simplicity, directness, honesty, and credibility of the realist form; on the other hand, the project of "remaking the world," as outlined by Cecil-Smith, is idealistic, revolutionary, subjective, complex, indirect, propagandist, and likely to be met with incredulity. The result of this conflict is a body of fiction that, while superficially realistic, has very little in common with other forms of realistic writing, including modern realism. Most obviously, this conflict manifests itself in a heavy-handed didacticism that is apparent almost uniformly in the leftist story of the period, and in sharp contrast to the aims of the modern realist. For example, in H. Francis's "Freedom of Contract," published in Masses in March-April 1933, the out-of-work Ollie Godden—who could be a character in any of the social-realist novels of the period—is presented in a manner that emphasizes neither his psychology nor even the particulars of his own situation. Rather, the author uses the story of Godden as an opportunity to expound on political matters using the catch-phrases of leftist culture:

> he was going to work—at the Pogey House. That was why he was not bubbling over with joy, for this day's work would pay no light bills or pay anything else for that matter. Ollie had thought it was work he wanted but now he had discovered that what he wanted was the right to participate in useful production for himself and his family. (12)

In other stories, a pointed symbolism is employed to similar ends. While the modern realist occasionally employs symbolism to shade an otherwise impersonal narrative,

many of the socialist-realist pieces become so symbolic that their realist intentions are all but eclipsed. In James Hinton's "Meat!," published in New Frontier in July-August 1937, the story of two hungry, presumably out-of-work, Canadian men is told in a realistic fashion. Yet a symbolic strain that runs through the story gets out of control, and the two men, in order to feed themselves, end up stealing meat from a caged bear named "Trotsky," while a number of obviously typecast passers-by interfere: "Then there comes a fat-buttocked policeman with shoulders like the neck of a beer bottle, the embodiment of supercilious insectile buffoonery" (7). And such flights of fancy are not at all uncommon in the socialist-realist magazine stories. In another example, George Winslade's "Rainbow Chasing" from the July-August 1932 Masses, the realistic narrative begins like so many others: "Smoky was broke. He had got up early that morning, before the wife and kids were awake. Relief was cut off" (7). But after Smoky goes to the unemployment office and spends "the forenoon . . . discussing the class struggle in the slave market," he lands a job on a schooner and the tale becomes, in effect, a sea yarn. While Smoky does appropriately get caught up in the politics of the longshoremen during his tenure as a member of the crew, by the end of the tale, the language of the story has changed entirely, and the realistic opening is only a vague memory: "Smoky was helping the old man pack his clubber, when a chippy walked up the gangplank and inquired for captain Doyle" (8).

These stories foreground a fundamental difference between the aesthetics of socialist and modern realism. In contrast to the socialist realists, who write texts that first and foremost identify clear problems with ideological import and solutions, the modern realists appear convinced that a kind of moral or spiritual ambiguity is a defining feature of the modern human condition. The modern realist neither sees this state of affairs as a problem, nor seeks to analyse it in an endeavour to find "solutions."

Rather, this ambiguity—which arises out of complex social relations, human psychology, the decline of traditional religion and a host of other early-twentieth century preoccupations—presents the modern realists with an exciting creative opportunity. Accordingly, the modern realists rise to this challenge, and they present detached, impersonal, purportedly objective portraits of the modern individual in a state of social, psychological, moral, and spiritual crisis: Callaghan's Father Dowling from Such Is My Beloved (1934), Graham's Erica Drake from Earth and High Heaven (1944), Athanase Tallard from MacLennan's Two Solitudes (1945), Craig Forrester in Durkin's The Magpie (1923), and Matt Striker in Baird's Waste Heritage (1939), to name only some of the most memorable. Issues of social and political importance are raised in these novels but not for their own sake, and the modern-realist story is not rhetorically structured to solve or explore these issues systematically or directly. But such an impersonal, objectivist stance is what the leftist critics found most distasteful in modern writing of the period. As John Fairfax wrote in one of the few articles on socialist realism to appear in The Canadian Forum, "Art for Man's Sake" (August 1936),

> [t]he present revolt against those who pretend to have achieved a neutral objectivity in their art is based upon three contentions: first, that it is impossible to do anything of the kind; second, that most of the supposedly 'objective' artists are in fact biased in favour of the kind of society we have, and implicitly justify its defects as either negligible or ineradicable; third, that those who contend that environment has little to do with shaping character are posing an indefensible thesis. (24)

Yet the socialist realist does not, following the logic of Fairfax's argument, simply attempt to negate detached, impersonal objectivism in fiction; in fact, it is the modern realists with their commitment to representing subjective experiences with their

narratives that ultimately come closest to achieving what Fairfax advocates. Rather, the socialist realist supplants a different claim to objectivity over that of the modern realist: my writing is closer to the "truth," more "real" because I am aware of the reality of the Marxist dialectic and you are not.

This explains a seeming contradiction in the statements of the socialist realists who insist almost in the same breath that their art is idealistic and objective. Cecil-Smith, for example, in the July-August 1932 Masses, would contrast the revolutionary socialist realism to modernism by identifying an idealist thrust in the former: "The revolutionary artist today is not the modernist who continues to express the ideology of the ruling class under capitalism . . . He is the artist, however poor he may be mechanically, who strives to express the ideas of the future ruling class—the working people" (5). Yet another Masses article, from January 1934, reveals that Cecil-Smith believed, as did so many of the other socialist realists of the period, that such idealism was precisely what characterized their writing as *objective*: "We, the revolutionary artists, are the true realists; the dynamic realists. They—the static realists, the naturalists, the romanticists—are the ones who can see only part, sometimes a very small part, of the whole picture and therefore can tell only a partial truth" (11). In one respect, then, socialist realism differs from modern realism in that it seeks to create a realistic portrait of a fictional world, whereas the latter seeks to make a so-called "real" world into fiction. Ultimately, however, the modern realists did not consider impersonality or objectivity in their writing to be synonymous with, or even closely related to, political neutrality or writerly disinterest in the social import of subject matter. Rather, objectivity and impersonality were part and parcel of a technique, common to all modern-realist fiction, that might loosely be termed "reportage." On the simplest level, this meant the kind of detached, omniscient, detailed rendering of events that I

have discussed already in a variety of contexts. But the boldest experiments with the modern-realist form also grow out of this interest in reportage; my discussion of the *oeuvres* of major writers in other chapters reveals a variety of writerly struggles to report things not easily reported: mental states, spiritual experiences, moral questioning, the modern human condition. "Reportage," in fact, is perhaps the one concept that most inclusively defines the technique of the modern-realist novel; as we shall see, it is also the characteristic of modernist writing that most outraged the socialist realists.

Reportage, then, is both the feature that most clearly distinguishes modern realism from socialist realism, and a larger and encompassing mode that both arises from and necessitates so many modern-realist techniques and assumptions. There are three general types of reportage found in the urban and social-realist novel in particular, and the modern-realist novel in general. Each of these types represents a different strategy by which the modern realist attempts to engage the contemporary world from a detached, objectivist stance, while at the same time incorporating a range of subjective perspectives into the narrative. The fundamental importance of these types of reportage to modern realism as a movement cannot be overstated: *every* modern-realist novel employs at least one of these methods, all of the major experiments of the modern realists with literary form grow out of these methods, and they have much in common with related techniques usually associated with modernism. The most common and least remarkable of these methods might be called "direct reportage," something I have indirectly discussed in a variety of contexts while pointing out the simplicity, directness, omniscience, and purported objectivity sought by so many modern realists. In this mode, the writer becomes almost like the imagist poet who attempts to establish a direct connection between language and the subject being

represented. These modern-realist texts are at once concerned with an immediate representation of "reality," of the "thing itself," and with appearing autotelic. They have no clearly defined narrative persona, and they imply an accuracy of method and honesty of purpose throughout. The narrative in these stories is designed to generate the impression of transparency, extreme impersonality, complete omniscience, and utter objectivity. At the same time, these narratives are not simply journalistic: they display a profound concern with exploring subjective states within their objectivist frameworks, and with telling a story in a manner that is artful. These characteristics, as we shall see in the next chapter, form the core of the Callaghan style, and all of his early novels are examples of direct reportage. So, too, are most of the other urban and social-realist novels of the period, including Evans's The New Front Line (1927), Patrick Slater's Robert Harding: A Story of Every Day Life (1938), and Margaret Duley's Highway to Valour (1941).

One of the best novels of the period, Baird's Waste Heritage (1939), also presents an example of direct reportage. It is worth examining in some detail as it is one of the few social-realist novels to have received some critical attention and is often wrongly called a propaganda novel. In fact, all three of the critics who have written in detail on Baird's novel similarly conclude that its social and political concerns are its most significant feature: Robin Mathews considers it an example of a novel "in which the clash of classes provides the main focus in such a way that the reader ought to be made dramatically aware of the concept of class" ("Waste Heritage" 65); Anthony Hopkins asserts that "Baird depicts characters and situations which illustrate or emphasize particular personal or social consequences of the Depression" (78); and Roger Leslie Hyman claims the novel is "engaged in the battle against political oppression and war" (80). Granted, Baird's portrait of working-class men taking part in

sit-down strikes in Vancouver explores all the issues raised by these critics. But Baird does not take sides in her story, and her detached narrative throughout offers a classic example of the direct reportage style. Even in situations where ideological comment might easily be provided, Baird maintains the illusion of objectivity:

> Since he stepped inside the hall Matt was experiencing an odd feeling of black-out, as though his identity were being sucked away and absorbed by the powerful currents of an organization. It made him touchy and defensive; at the same time it gave him a sting of excitement. He tried to pick up the atmosphere quickly, the feel of a mass of men, of hurry, of action, of numbers, of detail, of the dangerous anger boiling in the air. (28-29)

Not surprisingly, given the lengths to which Baird goes to keep didacticism out of her story, she was bothered by critiques of her novel that insisted on talking about it as a work of propaganda, and in an aptly titled 1976 article, "Sidown, Brothers, Sidown," she described her technique, and implicitly endorsed the direct reportage style:

> What people reading the novel must now understand is that I found those jobless people irresistible, urgent, challenging. I went to the job as a writer with a tremendously important assignment; how to get it down right, how to make it live, how to make Canadians see it and feel it . . . I lived with the story, I listened to what went to [sic] around me . . . . I have never been connected with Communism and I have never thought of myself as a radical if being a radical means wanting to overthrow the system we live in in favour of another political system. I think a reader of the novel will find . . . that I don't praise or condemn some of the most important people in the novel who are obviously connected with radical politics. (82)

In light of Baird's remarks, the proliferation of the direct reportage style among modern realists is easy to account for: it is the most obvious technical manifestation of "reportage" in that it closely resembles the style of journalism; and it allows the writer interested in the contemporary life to approach the subject immediately and directly. Of course, such writers quickly discovered that detached reportage makes it difficult to enter into the minds of characters, and to explore the internal, psychological realm with the same intensity as the outer world. This also explains the ubiquity of the centre-of-consciousness technique in the novel of the period: so many writers came to the direct reportage style as a way of engaging the modern world, and had to find a way of bringing real characters to life in a manner that acknowledged subjectivity without appearing less objective.

Another, much less common, narrative form found in the modern-realist novel might be termed "mediated reportage." In this mode, the impersonal, authorial presence itself, or the objective narrator found in the direct reportage mode, reports from or "through" a sustained subjective perspective. The most obvious method of mediated reportage is also by far the least common: first-person narration. In fact, there is not a single social-realist novel of the period written from the first-person perspective, and there are only a tiny handful in all modern-realist fiction. Almost all of the very few first-person, modern-realist novels take either the diary or epistolary form, which of course implies a kind of objective framework surrounding the first-person narrator—"what you are reading is in fact a personal journal or a collection of someone's letters." The best examples of mediated reportage in the diary form are Ross's As For Me and My House (1941) and Stringer's prairie trilogy (1915-22). Another neglected novel by Irene Baird, He Rides the Sky (1941), takes the form of letters written by a Canadian R. A. F. pilot, fighting in World War Two, to his family and

friends. Baird's novel, like Ross's, is one of the most psychologically intense works produced during the period. But the difficulty of maintaining a sustained first-person voice and simultaneously engaging the large-scale concerns of central interest to the modern realist, and the social realist in particular, is obvious, and this no doubt accounts for the lack of first-person narratives in the period.

A more common method of mediated reportage involves the use of a central, and of course subjective, character who "experiences" or "records" for the reader. While this method differs from direct reportage only by degrees, there are clear examples of texts in which the central character is not merely "reported on," but rather *acts* as a reporter. In these cases, the story is not told directly in the central character's voice, but rather filtered through his or her perspective by means of either sustained centre of consciousness, or simply heightened narrative attention to his or her particular interpretation of events. Another prairie / social-realist crossover, Stead's The Smoking Flax (1924), offers a good example of mediated reportage; in this novel, a university graduate in sociology named Cal becomes a lens through which the novel reports life on a prairie farm as it changes in the early twentieth century. A more complex, and almost metafictional, example of this mode is A. M. Stephen's The Gleaming Archway (1929). This novel rather ingeniously both reports and explores the idea of reportage by making the protagonist a reporter who investigates leftist movements in British Columbia. Stephen hints at still another level of reportage to the text by naming his central character Craig Maitland (A. M. Stephen's initials stand for "Alexander Maitland"). This method allows Stephen to express his own relatively conservative views in this novel without appearing didactic. Maitland explores a full range of leftist positions in the novel, from the moderate to the revolutionary, yet in the end he does not side with the leftists. As Pacey writes, "The reporter stands for

evolution rather than revolution, and he comes to the conclusion that it is by changing individuals rather than by mass action that society must be reformed" ("Fiction 1920-1940" 198). Maitland, in the closing scenes of the book, is depicted standing aloof, able to view the political movements of the day with a detached eye, like the ideal modern-realist author himself:

> he was withdrawn, impersonal, looking beyond the man who, like a gramophone, repeated the ancient catchwords of his creed—the confession of faith subscribed to by the scientific Socialists—evolution, revolution, the Movement, the Party, class-consciousness, the class struggle, proletariat! . . . . Yes—but then, so had all Utopias [seemed] to all the starry-eyed dreamers since the morning of time. (288-89)

Of course, Maitland arrives at his own ideological interpretation of contemporary politics, and as the reporter himself, is depicted as rendering an objective verdict on the situation. Yet he remains a step removed from the narrator who, in turn, is simply reporting on Maitland's own thought process and conclusions. While the novel offers a clear albeit moderate ideological stance, the opinions appear to be those of a character being objectively rendered by an impersonal narrator. Stephen's example draws attention to the fact that the socialist realists were right in their assertions that the purported objectivity of the modern-realist text was largely an illusion; but it also suggests that the modern realists were aware of this very fact, and were willing to experiment with creative ways of bringing a subjective perspective, for whatever reason, into a work with an objectivist framework.

A third type of reportage is especially useful to the social realist seeking to explore the individual experience of grand-scale social forces. "Orchestrated reportage" describes the technique of novels in which the over-all structure is

manipulated to allow portions of subjective narration to appear in an objectivist framework. Applications of this technique are highly varied in the modern-realist novel and are often approximations of techniques generally associated with modernist prose. As discussed in the previous chapter, Grove's The Master of the Mill (1944) and The Seasons (c. 1938-45) manipulate temporal chronology and space in order to explore the subjective perspectives of a number of individuals while maintaining an impersonal, almost god-like omniscience. Few examples of orchestrated reportage are as ambitious as Grove's, but such experiments, especially in the social-realist novel, are more common and diverse than one might expect. In some of these examples, the manipulation of structure is designed to allow the author to offer social critique without surrendering the pretence to detachment. In MacLennan's Two Solitudes (1945), for example, the examination of the lives of several type-cast individuals takes place within an epic, mythological framing narrative that depersonalizes the third-person narration to such a degree that much of the novel's didacticism is muted. In Peterson's Chipmunk (1949), the reader is distanced from the protagonist by the narrator's persistent use of a derisive symbolism that frequently links the central character to the animal for which the novel is named. Still, the narrative is otherwise impersonal and the narrator does not critique the central characters directly, encouraging readers to draw critical conclusions of their own. In Child's God' Sparrows (1937), the narrator borrows one of Joyce's methods from A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and permits his language to change its tone and level of sophistication with corresponding thematic developments in the novel; this is partly responsible for the creation of a structural irony in Child's story that permits the reader to side voluntarily with and against a critical narrative voice that might otherwise appear too didactic. In Sime's short-story cycle, Sister Woman (1920), the individual stories are framed by a prologue and epilogue in

which an unnamed man and woman debate "The Woman's Question," expressing attitudes that correspond to typical assumptions of their respective genders; the stories related by the woman to the man between these bracketing narratives are not didactic in themselves, but they take on heightened social significance in the context of the book as a whole.

One of the finest examples of orchestrated reportage is found in Garner's Cabbagetown (1950). In this text, the author creates a number of narrative layers that allow him to emphasize both the immediate and broad significance of his story. Some individual scenes are rendered in the direct reportage style; in other scenes there is a perceptible, ironic narrative voice. The individual scenes are precise, detailed, autonomous, almost like photographs. Garner identifies "photographic realism" to be a tenet of his work in a 1969 interview with Allen Anderson: "I think I got the photographic realism from my literary mentor who happens to be hardly known by this generation—John Dos Passos. He influenced me more, I think, than anyone, including Hemingway or any of the others. He of course dealt in photographic realism" (21). But in order to enable his narrative to weave in and out of the minds of his characters, and to move from scene to scene, from snapshot to snapshot, he builds a detailed, realistic scaffolding around his story that makes it read almost like a book of history with a detached perspective and broad sweep: there are countless references to "real," identifiable places in Toronto's Cabbagetown, and individual sections of the novel are dated. And, predating A. M. Klein's modernist novel, The Second Scroll, published a year later in 1951, Garner employs the "mythic method" to lend his novel large symbolic significance and an almost Biblical sense of impersonality and authority: large sections of Cabbagetown are titled "Genesis," "Transition," and "Exodus."

The orchestrated reportage of Garner and his contemporaries freely included

elements such as irony, symbolism, and myth, revealing that the modern realists did not consider themselves reporters in the journalistic sense, or scientists, or historians. Their aim was not to provide a truthful account of what happened on a phenomenological level. Instead, they wanted to build inventive narrative structures that enabled them to move across a broad range of subjects, in and out of psychological states and across the varied terrain of the physical world, in a manner that was both credible and artful. The modern realists' "reportage" was designed to enable them to represent any subject, however large or small, or tangible or abstract, that was relevant to their exploration of the modern human condition. Given these aims, it is not difficult to see why Garner credits Dos Passos with providing an important literary influence. In his U. S. A. trilogy—The 42nd Parallel (1930), Nineteen Nineteen (1932), and The Big Money (1936)—Dos Passos offers a distinctly modernist example of orchestrated reportage. In these works, sections of direct reportage are juxtaposed with fragments of contextualizing and largely factual "newsreel" items, "camera eye" passages that offer up interior monologues rendered from the perspective of the implied author, and biographical sections on the lives of important Americans that contrast sharply with those of the "common" characters in Dos Passos's story. In comparison to these methods, the modern realists' experiments were subdued but their goals and the effects they achieved were similar. Objectivity and impersonality in fiction did not necessitate a style closely resembling journalism: they entailed, for both modern realists and other modernists, a creative manipulation of literary form, often in striking and obviously "subjective" ways, to tell a larger objective "truth" about the contemporary world.

All of these types of reportage, so central to the modern-realist aesthetic, are fundamentally different from the standard, journalistic type of reportage that is

sometimes associated with the writing of the period. F. W. Watt, in fact, identifies the journalistic form of reportage as a key defining feature of 1930s prose, and a catalyst to the "emergence" of realism in Canadian fiction:

> the events of the 1930s proceeded to channel . . . critical reaction along ideological lines [and] the impact on both prose and poetry was marked. There appeared numerous examples of "reportage," a new prose form . . . . [that] required a certain discipline: a balance between editorializing and artistry, an eye for vivid and telling detail, powers of concentration. Its significance was not so much in itself, however, as in the movement which it symptomized and encouraged: the movement towards contemporaneity and realism in fiction. ("Literature of Protest" 487)

Watt identifies Dorothy Livesay's "Corbin—A Company Town Fights for Its Life," published in New Frontier in June 1936,[17] as a prime example of the reportage of the period. While it is true that the sketch was a relatively wide-spread prose form of the 1930s,[18] these sketches are simply journalistic pieces, and their form of reportage must not be confused with the modern-realist reportage that, as I have already argued, was *not* a byproduct of 1930s ideological concerns, having come into being following the first manifestos for modern realism a decade earlier. It is immediately obvious that Livesay's story does not fit any of the categories of modern-realist reportage; indeed it is not even fiction, but journalism, as this passage suggests:

> Again, going on relief would have a bad effect on the single men, many of them union leaders, by forcing them out of the town into relief camps. For in spite of the Federal Government's promises, these camps remain open in Alberta and B. C. Lastly, relief would not be granted to all the miners, as a goodly number of them have property in the shape of automobiles bought

during the boom days . . . (8)

Unlike the modern-realist story that strives to generate the impression of objectivity through literary artifice that is often elaborate, Livesay's sketch presumes to be, like good journalism, merely factual and artless.

But most of the little-magazine short fiction of the period is not like Livesay's sketch. One of the characteristics of the socialist-realist short story of the period is the usually unsuccessful attempt to achieve authoritative factuality within a fictional narrative. Such stories, because they fail so demonstrably, are very useful for highlighting both the differences between modern-realist and socialist-realist reportage, and the kinds of struggles the modern realists faced in their own variously successful attempts to bring subjectivities into an objectivist narrative. In A. Poole's "Fish," a short story which appeared in Masses in July-August 1932, the first-person narrator, an unnamed worker who has been placed in a labour camp for reasons that are not made clear in the story, aims to heighten the reader's outrage at the capitalist treatment of the worker. Presumably in order to make this mistreatment more readily apparent and to heighten its emotional impact on the reader, the mistreatment of the worker takes place in the present tense. Yet the fact that the narrator is engaged in the act of reporting these events just as they occur appears ridiculous; on the one hand we have the narrative voice describing degradation from a highly subjective perspective; on the other hand it is rendered to us coldly, directly, without emotion: "I am afraid to drink water out of the tin cup. Some of the boys working in the quarry have syphillis [sic] and gonorrhea. They drink out of that cup, too. I don't want to get venereal disease, but what can I do? I am thirsty. I drink and trust to luck" (5-6). The author's attempt to fuse an objective authority with a subjective, personal account of the situation results in the incredibility of both perspectives. A much better story, J. K. Thomas's "Production,"

published in the July-August 1937 issue of New Frontier, embodies the problem of managing perspectives differently. This story, vividly describing the experience of women working in a tomato-peeling factory, begins with the typical, detached, third-person narrator: "There was a silence, while they peeled the steamed tomatoes with skilled fingers . . ." (24). Yet before long, detached reportage is presumably not conveying the political message of the story sufficiently, and a didactic narrative voice intrudes: "The Canadian government has a maximum hour law for women . . . There is no such law for the men who get twenty-cents an hour. They work a fifteen hour day . . . so that they can make a living wage" (24). Next, the narrator shifts jarringly into the first person—"I had drifted into Burlington, on the shores of Lake Ontario"—before continuing the story with a clumsy intermingling of all three voices.

These leftist magazine stories demonstrate that the modern realists were not the only ones who experienced difficulty reconciling objective and subjective perspectives in their writing. Yet while the modern realist considered such a balancing act a creative challenge and developed complex and varied technical strategies to make it happen, the leftist writers, if their works are a fair indication, all but ignored the problem. This may partly have been due to a lack of skill: the vast majority of contributors to Masses and New Frontier were amateur writers. But there are also important aesthetic issues that explain the divergent methods of the modern and socialist realists. As my discussion of the various forms of "reportage" revealed, the modern realists devise numerous narrative strategies to incorporate subjective perspectives into their work, but such perspectives always appear within a larger objectivist framework. The socialist realists, on the other hand, are not interested in the aesthetic distinction between objective and subjective modes of narration, and they include both modes, without a final "appeal" to objectivity, detachment, or impersonality.

The modern-realist and socialist-realist modes can also be contrasted, perhaps more revealingly, in this way. Behind (or underneath, or around) all of the various subjective layers of the modern-realist narrative, there is an implied objective and impersonal artist, not unlike the modernist author in Joyce's famous image from A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916): "The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (233). The modern-realist text, even when it presents subjective and competing perspectives, always implies such a detached author, or reporter, writing the various forms of reportage I have enumerated. In the case of the socialist realist, the author is anything but impersonal, and frequently involved in the action of the story itself in various ways: authorial intrusion, overtly didactic narration, the obvious manipulation of structure to reflect ideological models. In these stories, the detached, authorial presence is supplanted by the Marxist dialectic itself, which is itself at once an objective, absolute truth, and subjective by virtue of the fact that it is, as Calverton revealed earlier, "dominated by a dynamic *mythos*, carrying within itself the seeds of prophetic conviction and challenge" (225). The modern-realist text, then, is governed by a formal aesthetic of impersonality and objectivity that ultimately takes precedence over subject matter. Any subject that is rendered in accordance with such an aesthetic is suitable for the modern realist; this again clearly contradicts notions that modern realists were somehow merely reflecting "reality," and explains why there is no significant formal difference between the works of rural and urban modern realists. But the socialist-realist aesthetic is *not* defined by any clear formal principles. It is defined, rather, by a particular subject matter that is more important that any formal, stylistic, or technical device or method; by the same token, in the socialist-realist paradigm, objective and subjective modes are conflated.

Accordingly, when the modern realists laboured to reconcile objectivity and subjectivity in accordance with their aesthetic, developing their varied forms of reportage, the socialist realists responded with alternating hostility and indifference. Such technical innovations, to them, were unnecessary distractions from the overriding socio-political functions of literature, and were called indulgent, elitist, escapist, pointlessly experimental, decadent, bourgeois, and therefore reactionary. On these grounds, numerous articles in both Masses and New Frontier reprobated experimental prose and poetry, calling for writers to leave their so-called "ivory tower," and face the world directly. These articles revealingly equate modern realism with the more obviously experimental forms of modernism. The leftist critique of experimentalism—either modern-realist or modernist—is not the result of a superficial disagreement about the value of experiment itself, or the form of "reportage" that ought to prevail in the new realism. Calverton, in a March 1935 Canadian Forum article entitled "Literature as a Revolutionary Force," summed up the socialist-realist problem with modern realism by drawing attention to two competing aims of literature of the period:

> Literature . . . can be *interpreted,* however, in only two ways: psychologically or sociologically . . . . The psychological approach tends to stress the importance of the individual more than that of the environment; the sociological tends to stress the importance of the environment more than that of the individual. (221)

The socialist realist considered society, and its close connection to politics and ideology, the fundamental concern of literature, and the context in which authors must inalterably situate their stories. But the modernists and modern realists, because of their interest in psychological realism, were considered by the leftists to be "bourgeois," focussing on the individual rather than the greater good, and ignoring the social

implications of art in their selfish and indulgent aesthetic exercises.

Accordingly, a considerable amount of space in the critical articles of both Masses and New Frontier is devoted to critiquing the psychological thrust of modern literature. The leftist critique appears to have derived from the assumption that the sociological and psychological impulses were incompatible. This point of view is summed up by the influential critic Georg Lukács in a 1932 article, "Reportage or Portrayal?": "the bourgeois novel, ever more lost in the psychological depiction of private fears and feelings, was absolutely unsuited to tackling in any way the great and general questions of our time, let alone to adopting an appropriate attitude towards them" (46). And this critique was reflected by Canadian critics of the period writing in the leftist magazines. In an April 1937 article published in New Frontier, "Man Alive in the Novel," Sybil M. Gordan argued that "The problem of the individual . . . and society can only be solved in the novel when the writer sees the solution clearly in life. The individual can no longer solve the problem simply by looking within himself" (24). Even more tellingly, Margaret Fairley's "Books," published in New Frontier in May 1937, linked psychological emphasis to a kind of epistemological "reportage" in a condemnatory manner, and argued that reporting inwardly and outwardly derived from the same indulgent, decadent, "ivory tower" impulse that ought to be resisted:

> Neither writer nor reader . . . can be passive if the art is good . . . That is why realistic, photographic, description, whether of factory or drawing-room, is not good art, and that is also why the recording in words or paint of dream-images which flit across the mind's eye is not good art. Neither recording, nor playing with, the world as made is a satisfying occupation for the man who is aware in his bones of the effort which goes every day into the remaking of the world for us. In the present time of crisis only the

> bourgeois artist can deny the urgency of life. He prides himself on remaining aloof, he is sceptical because he is so completely immune from the need of using his energy that he has to waste it on thinking this way and that . . . Only by belonging either actually or with full imaginationfi [sic] to the class, which has to create or perish, can an artist of today satisfy his own impulse . . . literature has become divorced from the most significant effort, and has become merely an enjoyment, a rest, a consolation. (26)[19]

Critiques of epistemological writing such as these reveal the socialist realists to be inalterably opposed to some of the boldest technical experiments of the modernists with psychological realism—stream of consciousness, multivocality, internal monologue, impressionistic writing, and symbolism—which they consider methods of heightened "realistic" reportage. The socialist realists found the modern realists too experimental, too subjectivist to be included in their ranks, even when their works were political, because their emphasis upon psychology led them away from the unambiguous world of the Marxist dialectic. At the same time, the socialist realists found the modern realists too objectivist because, as Fairley's argument reveals, the experiments of the modernists and those of the modern realists arose from the same "aloof," "sceptical," and "bourgeois" contentment with the world as it was, and not from an idealistic contemplation of the world as it might be. The leftist critique, then, indirectly confirms what I have argued all along: the modern realists were modernists.

Of course, the leftist critique also indirectly confirms the claims made by both of the major modern realists discussed so far in this study—Knister and Grove—who also differentiated their own realism from modernism only by degrees, only by virtue of their avoidance of self-conscious or extreme experimentation. But because the distinctions between socialist realism and social realism have not been clearly drawn by our critics,

the subtle experiments of the modern realists have been easily overlooked, and the important aesthetic assumptions they share with other modernist writers have not been acknowledged. Instead, their urban and social-realist works are conflated with the more infamous socialist realism of the period which is neither modern—in the sense that modernist experimentalism is modern—nor realist—in the sense that it avoids the romantic subject and seeks to represent an actual, contemporary world in an "objective" manner. By the same definitions, the modern realists were in their own minds unmistakably modern *and* realist: this entailed, in the broadest sense, balancing the sociological perspective with the psychological, to reinvoke Calverton's terms, and experimenting with the realist form to allow it artfully to include both concerns.

Callaghan's most clear-cut example of social realism, and the best known social-realist novel published in Canada before 1950, They Shall Inherit the Earth (1935), demonstrates one writer's attempt to achieve the balance of these two concerns. On the surface, this novel is almost a catalogue of the important social concerns of the period: the Depression, the aftermath of the Great War, the urban experience, class warfare, political radicalism, changing moral values, are all discussed in its pages. The central character, Michael Aikenhead (his psychological problems are alluded to in his symbolic last name), is a well-educated young man who cannot find work because of hard economic times and his own unwillingness to embrace capitalist values. The entire story is built around one central dramatic event: Michael allows his half-brother to drown in a boating accident after the two have a heated argument which has an underlying sociological cause:

> "I hated everything you ever stood for. I hated your soft useless life. I hated you because you were a bum and got away with it and I had to work. I hated you because you didn't have a spark of pride in you. I hated your

> guts because you never believed in anything but your balls and your belly. I know all about you. Guys like you are all around, just vomited up by a sick class in society." (62)

Undeniably, there is a certain didacticism inherent in this exchange. Callaghan invites us to see Michael, who speaks these words to his half-brother David, as an embodiment of the leftist revolutionary anger at a capitalist society. Yet after this incident occurs about a quarter of the way through the book the real story begins to unfold: the psychological aftermath of the murder. Michael, for reasons that are not ideologically grounded, dislikes his father and is unwilling to ask him for help, instead allowing him to be blamed for the death of David. The most compelling sections of the novel are those that describe the guilt of Michael and the psychological alienation of his father:

> Aikenhead came a little late to church, for he did not want to be noticed by the prominent merchants and professional men and their wives who had once been his friends. He wanted to be unobtrusive and quiet this morning, for his loneliness had been greater than he could bear, and now he was going to make a simple, unpretentious gesture toward the world and his God. (215-16)

The social and political issues found everywhere in the novel refuse to coalesce into any kind of ideological pattern or to offer a sustained social critique. Instead, Callaghan exploits these issues for their dramatic and moral significance. And this novel, despite being Callaghan's most obvious example of social realism, is also his first to employ a sustained centre-of-consciousness technique, revealing that, for the modern realist, a heightened attention to social concerns could in fact *increase* the psychological intensity of the novel.

Given the clear differences between the aesthetics of urban and social realism and the socialist realism of the 1930s, it is unfortunate that the two have been conflated and compacted into a few small spaces in our literary histories. The dominant place of the leftist little magazines in the literary culture of the 1930s, and the fact that they ignored urban and social realism and supplanted it with their own fiction, means that urban and social realism are often dismissed along with the leftist movement that many critics would rather forget. As Watt writes about the prose of the period in "Literature of Protest,"

> [t]he direct and savagely indignant protests [of 1930s fiction] have no doubt permanently given way to the subtler and more profound probings and ironies of works like Gabrielle Roy's *The Tin Flute*, and Hugh MacLennan's *The Watch That Ends the Night*, but recent novelists (Ethel Wilson, John Marlyn, Earle Birney, Roger Lemelin) have drawn attention to rather than exhausted the richness of the material. (488)

Denigrating or ignoring the urban and social-realist contingent of modern realism also leads to a skewed sense of the types of modern realism that have *not* been overlooked. Without its urban counterpart, prairie realism becomes a regionalist anomaly on the Canadian literary landscape, and it can easily be concluded that rural representation and realism go hand in hand. As Pacey writes,

> [s]uch realism as there was [in Canada between the wars] developed almost exclusively on the prairies, where there was a distinctive pattern of life which could be clearly differentiated from that of Europe and even from that of the United States, and where the conditions of pioneer life were so forbidding that it was impossible to idyllicize them. ("Fiction 1920-1940" 186)

And one cannot help but wonder what effect the neglect of this national body of fiction

concerned with the largest issues of the twentieth century has had on our conceptions of Canadian literature as a whole. In fact, it is only by displacing urban and social realism from its rightful place in Canadian literary history that some of the most enduring readings of our literature as a whole become possible, as George Woodcock's work reveals:

> During the 1930s a few isolated novels of some merit might have been classified as vaguely 'social realist,' . . . [b]ut the main development of Canadian fiction in fact bypasses the matter of realism, European or North American, largely because Canadians, faced with the wilderness on one side and a dangerously powerful neighbour on the other, had little doubt as to the actual nature of their predicament; what they needed was the combination of mythology and ideology that would enable them to emerge from mere escapism and present a countervision more real than actuality. Hence the weakness of realism as a tradition in literature . . . ("Possessing the Land" 20)

Still, one need not rewrite Canada's literary history as a whole in order to acknowledge that some of the most modern literature of the early twentieth-century was produced in this country. Recognizing the full extent to which Canada's realism was modern, however, necessitates an appreciation of the efforts of the urban and social realists, who approached the same subjects as the international modernists with similar aesthetic assumptions and concerns. But why, exactly, did the modern realists *en masse* reject the boldest experiments of the high modernists in favour of their own, relatively conservative forms? What is the precise nature of the relationship between international modernism and modern realism? To answer these questions, I now turn my fuller attention to the work of Morley Callaghan, the one Canadian writer of the

period who was both a central figure in the modern-realist movement, and a part of the larger movement generally called international modernism.

Chapter Six

MORLEY CALLAGHAN: MODERNIST OR MODERN REALIST?

Although Morley Callaghan is undeniably the preeminent early twentieth-century Canadian social and urban realist, it is impossible to account for his literary aesthetic and influence solely in these contexts. As I have argued in the previous chapter, much of Callaghan's fiction is concerned with the place of the individual within larger social structures, and with exploring many of the issues of interest to Canada's urban and social realists generally. Yet Callaghan's most important and influential contribution to early twentieth-century Canadian fiction is stylistic, not ideological or thematic.[1] To date, Callaghan's critics have discussed most aspects of his work in depth: no other Canadian writer of the period has received nearly as much critical attention, and Callaghan is one of very few Canadian writers of his generation to have stimulated interest outside of Canada. Curiously, while these facts suggest Callaghan's central place in Canadian fiction of the period, his literary skill and achievement have always been hotly debated, and none of his contemporaries enjoyed and suffered such extremes of critical appraisal. All of Callaghan's novels, for example, were initially received with profoundly mixed reviews, even by the most boosterish Canadian magazines. The critical reception of his first novel, Strange Fugitive (1928), is a case in point. In September 1928, Cleveland B. Chase wrote in The New York Times Book Review that Callaghan's style was "fresh and vivid" and his characterization "sharp and convincing" (24), but he lamented the "dull and boring characters" (26). An unsigned review in the Toronto Daily Star, entitled "Strange Fugitive New Type In Canadian Realist Novel" (1928), remarked that the novel was "the most untraditional piece of fiction ever produced by a Canadian," but criticized Callaghan's "totally cynical estimate of most people and . . . complete disdain of any of the merely artistic elements in

writing" (13). Callaghan's literary reputation remains contested: Edmund Wilson, in a much cited 1960 celebration of Callaghan, called him "the most unjustly neglected novelist in the English-speaking world" (106), and many more recent critics continue to echo this claim, albeit usually with less enthusiasm. At the other extreme, a recent article by John Metcalf, "Winner Take All," offers a spirited refutation of those who have praised the Callaghan style and provides a systematic denigration of his technique and modernist credentials: "Callaghan was not really in the modernist tradition at all . . . his major impulse was moralistic and didactic and . . . this impulse was constantly at war within his work against what little artistry he possessed" (143). It is not my intention to enter into the debate about the literary merit of Callaghan's writing. Nevertheless, the intensity of the debate surrounding Callaghan's work suggests that more than his own literary reputation is being contested by his critics: as I shall argue, some of the debates about Callaghan's work are, on a fundamental level, about Canadian fiction of the period in general.

Both Wilson's and Metcalf's comments are revealing in that they draw attention to an issue that underlies much if not most of the serious discussion of Callaghan's work: was he Canada's international modernist? So much of the praise lavished on Callaghan, especially in his early career, appears motivated by a nationalistic desire to prove his significance in an international context. While criticism of early twentieth-century Canadian prose is often unabashedly self-referential, focussed on Canada and seemingly uninterested in its relation to literatures from other nations, Callaghan's critics frequently compare him to foreign writers and position him conspicuously within international literary circles. Such is the case with most of the major studies of his work: Victor Hoar's Morley Callaghan (1969) offers muted praise for his achievements and insists that he be located "in an American tradition rather than in one that is

singularly Canadian. I have not done this out of a desire to denigrate Canadian literary tradition . . ." (118). Brandon Conron, in Morley Callaghan (1966), calls him Canada's "most distinguished novelist" and closes his book with the assertion that "his place as a world author is beyond dispute" (170-71). And Fraser Sutherland's The Style of Innocence: A Study of Hemingway and Callaghan (1972) draws international connections that are implicit in its title. Without a doubt, Callaghan's literary connections suggest that he was a significant but minor figure among Anglo-American modernists. For one thing, the list of his literary friends and acquaintances reads like a who's who of the modernist age, something no other Canadian prose writer of the period can claim: Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Sherwood Anderson, Ford Madox Ford, Ezra Pound, Sinclair Lewis, Robert McAlmon, among many others. His first published stories appeared in highly-regarded literary magazines with a penchant for the experimental, in both Paris and New York. And if we believe Callaghan's own account in That Summer In Paris (1963), he received direct affirmation from many of the now canonical figures he encountered in his early years, especially Hemingway and Fitzgerald. But in spite of all of this evidence the question persists: was Callaghan really a modernist? If not, why the constant comparisons? If so, why is his work almost unflinchingly realistic and seemingly apathetic to the boldest literary innovations of his international contemporaries? In this chapter, I examine Callaghan's work in the contexts of international modernism *and* Canadian modern realism. Ultimately, as we shall see, Callaghan was the most internationally connected Canadian prose writer of his generation, and he shared many writerly assumptions with his experimental friends and acquaintances. At the same time, Callaghan's decision steadfastly to remain a realist in the face of the experimental modernist writing he knew well reveals that he was

among the most conservative of the modern realists. In coming to terms with this apparent contradiction, we can both make sense of Callaghan's idiosyncratic style and further clarify the problematic relation of modern realism to international modernism.

In a study such as this which aims, in the broadest sense, to reveal the "modern" spirit that underpins the realist revolution in Canadian writing, it is tempting to trace Callaghan's aesthetic impulses back to the experimental circles he moved in while in Paris in the late 1920s, as some critics have done, and draw a clear line of literary influence. Hemingway's influence on Callaghan, for example, has been the subject of numerous studies, and something that Callaghan himself has intermittently both acknowledged and denied. In That Summer In Paris (1963), Callaghan's memoirs of his 1929 Paris sojourn, he enumerates many of his aesthetic assumptions alongside reconstructions of literary conversations with Hemingway, inviting readers to make the obvious connections. Numerous critics have done just this, arguing for a striking similarity, at least on the surface, between the forms of writing the two authors advocated.[2] But this often-cited, autobiographical source on Callaghan's literary preferences provides only a small part of the story. In numerous articles, book reviews, and interviews published in a wide variety of journals and magazines over several decades, most of which have received almost no critical attention, Callaghan has offered a full articulation of his literary aesthetic. Callaghan's fiction undeniably bears a stylistic similarity to the work of Hemingway, and of other writers of the period, both American and Canadian, but his borrowing from Hemingway was, at best, highly selective, intentionally or otherwise. As Metcalf has argued, "Callaghan was not much influenced by Hemingway and did not really understand Hemingway's stylistic innovations. He certainly never attempted to use or reproduce them" (118). From Hemingway, Callaghan perhaps drew his unshakable conviction that a plain, direct, and

sparse form of writing was required for the representation of the modern world. The literary techniques that grew out of these assumptions, however, reveal that Callaghan had his own idiosyncratic and original conception of what made writing modern and relevant.

Most of Callaghan's own critical writings have been little regarded by his critics. His own commentaries on the works of the most experimental of his contemporaries—published primarily in forgotten issues of Saturday Night—reveal that, while he favoured the apparent hyper-simplicity of the Hemingway style, he was outspokenly contemptuous of most other forms of literary innovation. He also revealed in his articles, even as early as the 1920s, and somewhat contrary to his own public assertions that he was not essentially a Canadian writer, a surprising awareness of the emerging modern realism in Canada, lending his support to the new realism in the style of the Bookman manifestos. And, like the most talented and energetic of his Canadian contemporaries, he concluded that the key characteristic of the new writing in Canada ought to be psychological realism. The image of Callaghan that emerges from these ignored critical statements is significantly different from that we which currently possess: he conceived of himself as a modern writer fundamentally, not because of his internationalism, but because of his (he believed) uncompromising realism: only it could engage the contemporary world directly and objectively. And, for all of his supposed affinities with international modernism, he loudly eschewed most forms of literary experiment which he considered to be at odds with his realistic intentions.

The most often-remarked upon aspect of Callaghan's aesthetic is its straightforward, pared-down, "journalistic" style, a refined and extreme form of the "direct reportage"[3] method so important to the modern realists generally. For some critics, the emergence of the Callaghan style marked a clear point of development in

Canadian prose, leading other writers of the period towards realist expression. As Desmond Pacey contends,

> Callaghan looked closely at the people about him, and in a simple, stripped, suggestive prose style recorded the small triumphs and tragedies of their ordinary lives . . . . His stories are good by any standards, but by comparison with most of the tales being spun in Canada in the twenties they stand out like pyramids in the desert. (185)

To a greater degree than any other Canadian writer of the period, Callaghan writes in the manner prescribed by the manifestos of the Bookman and the Forum of the 1920s. And unlike Knister and Grove, whose commitments to realism were no less unwavering but whose techniques were constantly evolving, Callaghan's style was evident, confident, and almost wholly intact from the very start of his career. Significantly, Callaghan was considered an experimentalist not just by Canadians: his early, hyper-realistic short stories were received eagerly by experimental modernist literary magazines of the period, including Ernest Walsh's This Quarter (Paris), Eugene Jolas's transition (Paris), and Ezra Pound's The Exile (New York).[4] This acceptance validated Callaghan's own belief that his brand of realism was indeed modern and experimental. More importantly, this affirmation indicates that modern realism, at least as Callaghan practised it, was perceived to be markedly different from nineteenth-century realism—so different, in fact, that it could be considered experimental, not just by Canadians, but by international modernist circles as well. Accordingly, Callaghan's work acts as a kind of bridge between Canadian and international literary circles of the period. While the validation Callaghan received is atypical for a Canadian writer of the period, his style, although more pronounced and consistent than the styles of his contemporaries, is more or less typical of the best Canadian writing of the period.

Callaghan, then, can in one respect be considered an exemplary modern realist: in examining his literary aesthetic—with its uncompromising commitment to realism in the context of unparalleled access to modernist circles—we see a number of the issues faced by all of the modern realists amplified and illuminated.

Nowhere is the Callaghan style more apparent than in his early short stories, published in various journals and little magazines in the 1920s,[5] around the same time that Knister was carrying out his varied experiments with the realist form, and the first major achievements in prairie and urban realism were occurring elsewhere in Canada. I have already identified in several contexts the direct reportage mode advocated by the 1920s magazines as a fundamental tenet of the new realism in Canada; while many writers of the period apparently heeded the call for this new mode of writing, only Callaghan developed a full-blown literary style based upon direct reportage. He makes the importance of this method clear in That Summer In Paris (1963), linking it to his Hemingwayesque approach to language:

> Writing had to do with the right relationship between the words and the thing or person being described: the words should be transparent as glass, and every time a writer used a brilliant phrase to prove himself witty or clever he merely took the mind of the reader away from the object and directed it to himself; he became a performer. Why didn't he go on the stage? (21)

On the surface, it appears that Callaghan believed naively that words can be straightforward, "transparent," factual signifiers, and that the author can achieve objective, realistic, mimetic representation of a given subject simply by choosing the appropriate diction. A number of critics have identified an imagist influence on Callaghan's prose style, and suggested that he believed language ought to be a direct

link to "the thing itself." Victor Hoar (1969), while discussing Callaghan's "distinctive plainness of language," notes that, "[i]n Callaghan's time, the Imagist poets, with Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle and Amy Lowell in the vanguard, sought to distill poetic language, to purge it of editorial comment, to focus on the image and only the image" (3-4). Gary Boire (1990) notes the imagist influence more explicitly: "of all the influences that impinged on the young Callaghan, perhaps none exerted so far-reaching an effect as the imagist movement of the early 1900s" (86). Boire compares a number of Callaghan's statements on technique from That Summer In Paris with those of the imagists, noting important similarities and concluding that "Callaghan is part of that wave of later writers who gained impetus from the earlier movement which . . . was relatively short-lived" (88).[6]

On the simplest level, then, it appears that Callaghan conceived of the modern-realist style in unsophisticated terms: it ought to present an object "as is" in a direct, referential fashion. Indeed, most of Callaghan's stories appear to do just this, as the opening passage from "A Wedding Dress," first published in This Quarter in 1927, reveals:

> For fifteen years Miss Lena Schwartz had waited for Sam Hilton to get a good job so they could get married. She lived in a quiet boarding-house on Wellesley Street, the only woman among seven men boarders. The landlady, Mrs. Mary McNab, did not want women boarders; the house might get a bad reputation in the neighbourhood, but Miss Schwartz had been with her a long time. (56)

A particularly characteristic trait of Callaghan's writing found in this passage is the use of deliberately bland adjectives ("good job," "bad reputation") to convey a sense of the utterly ordinary, of narrative detachment and impersonality, and to avoid creating the

impression that words have done more than simply convey a given situation or subject.

But a fondness for simplicity and direct expression alone hardly constitutes a distinct literary style. Callaghan's entire method is built upon his explicit belief that modern writing ought to be based in contemporary speech patterns, not writerly convention, and that rhythms of speech ought to inform *all other aspects of literary style and technique*. As he argued in "The Past Quarter Century," a retrospective article published in Maclean's in 1936,

> [i]f only this could be seen; if only it could be made clear that if Canadians have a way of thinking, feeling, and expressing themselves it's to be found in the way they use the language in everyday speech; and if writers would only learn to write by ear, then they could be free, then they could learn and it would be time to start worrying about technique. (38)

This passage also draws attention to one sense in which Callaghan links the concept of the modern with a realistic aesthetic: writing is good when it emulates (represents realistically) the immediate, contemporary (modern) language of everyday life. Style, to Callaghan, is not merely a formal approach to subject matter: it is the fusion of form with subject matter, of direct reportage with the contemporary world it explores: as he wrote in That Summer In Paris (1963), the writer ought to "strip the language, and make the style, the method, all the psychological ramifications, the ambiance of the relationships, all the one thing, so the reader couldn't make separations" (148).

Given that the root of his aesthetic is in contemporary speech, it is not surprising that Callaghan puts his theories into practice when writing dialogue. He was blunt in his assertion that dialogue ought to be mimetic in a 1931 book review of Polish novelist Ferdynand Goetel's recently translated From Day to Day:[7] "Goetel writes dialogue as it ought to be written—no tricks, no continual reiterations of little witticisms,

no forced smartness or brightness—in other words he writes conversation rather than 'dialogue.'" ("Novel and Diary" 7). Although representation of everyday conversation is a nearly ubiquitous feature of the modern-realist novel, no writer handles it more convincingly than Callaghan, and few write novels in which dialogue makes up a larger proportion. But this interest in common speech is not unique to the modern realists. As T. S. Eliot wrote in "The Music of Poetry" (1942), this was a defining feature of modernist expression: "poetry must not stray too far from the ordinary everyday language which we use and hear . . . it cannot afford to lose its contact with the changing language of common intercourse" (21). In a 1927 short story published in American Caravan, "Amuck In the Bush," Callaghan's dialogue, in a manner reminiscent of Hemingway, drives the plot forward and is at once ordinary and emotionally charged, convincing and dramatic:

> "I can kick the hell out of Walton," Gus said finally.
>
> "Sure you can, he's not so much."
>
> "Well stick around, I'm going to."
>
> "Sid'll be up at the park at the ball game tonight," Luke said.
>
> "Damn the ball game."
>
> "Don't you want to show him up? Don't you want to have a go at him?" (89)

A more subtle application of speakerly writing occurs in Callaghan's third-person narratives: often these passages, written from an impersonal perspective without a clearly defined narrative persona, introduce contemporary colloquial diction to give the narrative an immediate, authentic, and modern tone or quality. As T. D. MacLulich remarks, "in Callaghan's fiction . . . the colloquial style pervade[s] the narration as well as the dialogue" ("Colloquial Style" 11). This is precisely the technique used to generate, in "Last Spring They Came Over," published in transition in 1927, a quick-

paced, metropolitan, urban-realist impression: "He got thirty dollars a week on the paper and said it was surprisingly good screw to start. For five a week he got an attic room in a big brick house painted brown on Mutual Street. He ate his meals in a quick-lunch near the office" (38).

Although Callaghan's direct reportage method derives from underlying aesthetic assumptions that distinguish it from journalism, there can be little doubt that his work as a journalist influenced his literary style.[8] Almost invariably, Callaghan's stories are told from a detached, omniscient, third-person perspective, and Callaghan himself has often remarked on the desirability of narrative impersonality. This stance recalls that of the other modern realists discussed earlier and suggests another point of convergence for modern realists and prominent modernists—as Eliot writes of the modernist author, "[w]hat happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" ("Tradition and the Individual Talent" 369). Indeed, many of Callaghan's statements reveal that his style arises out of just such an "extinction" of the authorial presence: "I was simply writing in direct contact with my material, you see, so the whole problem of being a literary guy didn't enter into it at all. The question was whether I was telling the truth . . ." (Weaver 4). As a result, the Callaghan style often appears so straightforward, so simple, so like journalism, that it is possible to suggest it is not really literature. Metcalf, for example, takes Callaghan's anti-literary, anti-authorial comments at face value and denies that there is an artistic awareness informing his writing at all: "Callaghan did not seem to grasp the simple point that literature is artifice, that 'the truth' and 'the way it was' are created by smoke and mirrors" (122).

While Callaghan's "smoke and mirrors" can sometimes be unconvincing and

ineffective, they do exist, and it is clear that he is keenly aware that the reportage method requires a writerly approach to subject matter. A closer examination of Callaghan's writing reveals that it only generates the "*illusion* of simplicity";[9] he manipulates language and point of view in a variety of ways to convey subtle subjective impressions within the framework of purportedly objective narration. It is worth looking at a few of Callaghan's techniques in more detail, as they reflect the types and varieties of literary experiments that the best modern realists undertake under the guise of simplicity, and demonstrate the artfulness that underlies the deceptive plainness of the direct reportage mode. Barry Cameron, for example, offers an excellent summary of Callaghan's manipulation of point of view to generate subjective impressions, or "ambiguity and ambivalence," in his direct reportage. Specifically, Cameron notes

> his subtle and deliberate modulation within a single piece of fiction among various points of view—from editorial omniscience to selective omniscience to multiple centres of consciousness to a single limited point of view or centre of consciousness. There is . . . little distance in Callaghan's fiction between either the implied author and narrator or the implied author and author, and as a result authorial voice is frequently in tension with the voice of a particular centre of consciousness. (73)

Although ultimately Cameron is doubtful about the success of these techniques in Callaghan's writing, he nevertheless draws attention to the obvious fact that it is not simply journalism. A typical example of a Callaghan passage that functions in the manner outlined by Cameron appears in "Ancient Lineage," first published in The Exile in 1928. In this example, certainly direct and journalistic on the surface, Callaghan both invites subjective interpretation by his reader, and represents the subjective impressions of two interacting characters:

> Mr. Flaherty got red in the face; of course he understood, but to tell the truth he merely wanted to chat with Mrs. Rower. Now he knew definitely he did not like the heavy nose and unsentimental assertiveness of the lower lip of this big woman with the wide shoulders. He couldn't stop looking at her thick ankles. Rocking back and forth in the chair she was primly conscious of lineal superiority; a proud married woman, surely she could handle a young man, half-closing her eyes, a young man from the University indeed. (170)

One of the most enduring criticisms of Callaghan's work is summed up in a phrase of Cameron's: "The reader . . . is unnecessarily told too often how to feel, how to interpret, how to judge" (73). At first, Callaghan's passage appears laden with authorial value judgments and seems to validate Cameron's claim. But who in the passage is passing judgment, exactly: "she was primly conscious," "surely she could handle"? As Callaghan's purported objectivity is so immediately apparent, it is easy to assume that these are the opinions of an omniscient narrator. But the shifts in centre of consciousness in the passage indicate that the judgments are those of the characters. The first line of the passage—"of course he understood, but to tell the truth he merely wanted to chat"—does not offer the journalistic language of the detached observer; it provides a brief, fleeting impression of the psychological process underlying Mr. Flaherty's emotional state; and in the final lines—"surely she could handle a young man . . . a young man from the university indeed"—the quaint, speakerly tone suggests that this is a sample of Mrs. Rower's internal monologue. When Callaghan writes, "He couldn't stop looking at her thick ankles," this is not an objective description of Mrs. Rower's physical attributes, but a detached and condensed version of Mr. Flaherty's subjective impression of the situation: a less compact description of the scene might

read, "He couldn't stop looking at her ankles because he was impressed by their thickness."

Of course, readers are invited to decide for themselves exactly how thick the ankles are, and exactly why they so impressed Mr. Flaherty. Solicitation of reader involvement is another much overlooked characteristic of Callaghan's prose, and ironically sometimes confused with its opposite: as Metcalf writes, "Callaghan's approach to his material and to his heroes is dictatorial" (140). This demand that the reader get involved by interpreting and piecing together fragments of information, of course, is yet another assumption that Callaghan shares with his international modernist contemporaries. There can be little doubt that the allusive methods of Joyce, the multivocal narratives of Faulkner, the suggestive impressionism of Woolf, the evocative symbolism of Conrad, and the fragmentation and juxtaposition of Dos Passos all require the reader's involvement and interpretation in large degrees. Callaghan's plain, banal diction and emphasis on the ordinary can easily be considered to limit, even suppress interpretation of his subject matter, and place the reader in a passive mode. But this is quite contrary to Callaghan's intentions. The very lack of detail, the refusal to draw a clear, precise portrait of a situation, or place, or individual suggests that Callaghan was doing something markedly different from more traditional realists: demanding that his readers fill in the blanks. Some of the reviews he wrote in the late 1920s make this clear. In a 1926 discussion of Hemingway that appeared in Saturday Night, he distinguished modern realism (or naturalism) from older modes: "He is a fine naturalist who, instead of piling up material and convincing by sheer weight of evidence in the manner of Dreiser or Zola, cuts down the material to essentials and leaves it starkly authentic" ("Introducing Ernest Hemingway" 7).

Nowhere is Callaghan's preference for "essentials" clearer than in his own

writing, particularly in his passages that strive for vivid characterization. In "A Girl with Ambition," his first published short story which appeared in This Quarter in 1926, he tries to bring a character to life with the simplest of details: "Mary was a neat clean girl with short fair curls and blue eyes, looking more than her age because she had very good legs, and knew it" (238). A similar method occurs in "Soldier Harmon," which first appeared in Scribner's Magazine in 1928: "They were watching Joe Harmon, a big man with a slow grin and a dark smudge under his left eye, and his manager, Doc Barnes, a small, neat man with shiny black hair" (180). Based on these descriptions, it is easy to see why some of his early reviewers remarked on his "dull and boring characters" (Chase 26). But Callaghan is not trying to limit interpretations of these characters through such simple descriptions; rather, he relies on these descriptions to leave the characters open-ended, to provide a point of departure for a subjective response in his reader—what are "good legs?" What is a "slow grin?" In his 1928 review of Liam O'Flaherty's The Assassin, Callaghan explains that the "elemental quality of genius" entails a willingness and ability to write in such a way: "It has always amazed me the way he can touch off a character of a man by pointing to one or two characteristic gestures, or the way he simply mentions a woman and she becomes a creature of flesh and blood and passion. Few people writing today can do it so well" ("The Soul of a Killer" 8). Whether or not Callaghan's willingness to achieve such an effect is matched by his ability remains open to debate. And ultimately the success of such a form of writing depends upon a reader's willingness to enter into the creative process on some level, and I am not sure that Callaghan's "hard-boiled" style makes this particularly easy or enjoyable—Callaghan's mention of "good legs," for example, is perhaps more likely to elicit laughter or raise eyebrows than set off a contemplative process in the reader.[10] Regardless, Callaghan's techniques draw attention to the fact that the modern-realist

style is at once conservative and experimental, and characterized by a writerly exploration of a variety of subjective points of view within the framework of objective narration.

Callaghan's fiction approaches setting in a similar fashion. Although his descriptions of the urban environment are among the first and most vivid in Canadian writing, they are rarely specific or detailed in a photographic sense. This passage from Such Is My Beloved (1934) offers a fairly typical example of Callaghan's generalized description of Toronto:

> He looked out over the roofs and lights and noises on the streets, over the corners where on Sunday evenings evangelists sang, and over that street where the crowd at this moment was streaming from the labor temple; somewhere out there where the lighted avenues lengthened and the streets criss-crossed, the girls were loafing and hunting. (95-96)

To Metcalf, such descriptions are clear-cut examples of poor writing: "his writing, far from engaging and celebrating the observable world, usually paints the world like a crude backdrop. His descriptive writing is typically vague, generalized, and unfocused" (120-21). Fraser Sutherland criticizes Callaghan's representation of Montreal in The Loved and the Lost (1951) along similar lines: "Except for its geographical setting—the mountain and the river are skilfully drawn—Callaghan's Montreal might well be Baltimore" (77). E. K. Brown unwittingly reveals the regionalist expectations inherent in such comments while lamenting that Callaghan's stories set in Toronto do not evoke a more detailed urban landscape: "A great opportunity has been refused by Mr. Callaghan—the opportunity of drawing the peculiarities of Toronto in full vividness and force. This is a subject that no writer has yet treated" ("The Problem of a Canadian Literature" 13). But Callaghan is not trying photographically to reproduce Toronto, or

Montreal, or Baltimore, or any other city for that matter: the fact that Callaghan's settings take on a universal symbolic quality is precisely the point, and perfectly in keeping with his notions of what realistic literature ought to do. In the same article, Brown sums up Callaghan's universalizing technique, although he obviously intends his comments to be critical of Callaghan's writing:

> Mr. Callaghan's Toronto is not an individualized city but simply a representative one. I mean that in reading Mr. Callaghan one has the sense that Toronto is being used not to bring out what will have the most original flavour, but what will remind people who live in Cleveland, or Detroit, or Buffalo, or any other city on the Great Lakes, of the general quality of their own milieu. (11)

Such readings of Callaghan's fiction demonstrate that the urban realists of the period have been subjected to many of the same regionalist criticisms levelled at the prairie realists discussed earlier. But whether writing of the prairie, or the city, or of an individual, or of a larger society, the modern realist is more often than not telling a universal tale about the kinds of things that tend to *happen* in the modern world, rather than about something specific that is supposed to have *happened* in a particular time and place. Callaghan is not concerned with describing the minute details of a recognizable locale in his fiction: his realism has larger aims. Much as he does with his characters, Callaghan writes about places using deliberately vague language that invites readers to infuse the scene with their own subjective impressions.

Perhaps owing partly to the fact that Callaghan's settings are so much more (or less) than regional reflections of a particular Canadian environment, his writing is often discussed as though it has little to do with the rest of Canadian literature of the period. Callaghan has, himself, encouraged such interpretations, often claiming that his literary

models and influences were not Canadian, and that he had little interest in other Canadian writers: "It never occurred to me that the local poets had anything to do with me . . . I was wonderfully at home in my native city, and yet intellectually, spiritually, the part that had to do with my wanting to be a writer was utterly, but splendidly and happily, alien" (22). Yet for all his posturing, Callaghan displayed a familiarity with the types of writing being produced by his contemporaries, and suggested that young Canadian writers ought to follow his lead in their search for a new national mode of expression. He offered occasional praise for the most realist of his contemporaries, especially Knister,[11] and denounced the romantic thrust of the national literature as a whole, always measuring it against his own literary aesthetic. In a 1928 article which appeared in Saturday Night, "Looking At Native Prose," Callaghan summed up what he thought was wrong with Canadian writing in terms that echo the Bookman and Forum manifestos, calling for the mimetic reflection of Canada, and a new realist form, indifferent to the rural and urban divide, capable of such an aim:

> Prose in this country is, I believe, more degraded than in any other civilized country on Earth . . . . How many prose writers are there in this country who have a feeling for words alone? . . . . The opportunity awaiting the honest Canadian prose writer is so large that I believe many are appalled, laugh weakly, and prefer to go on writing fairy tales after the fashion of Oscar Wilde. One half of the American world awaits the prose writer, awaits his recording, awaits his acceptance of the new world of the plain, the bush country, and the skyscraper. ("Looking at Native Prose" 3)

But for Callaghan, as I have suggested, the new realism was much more than mimetic reproduction of landscape, or journalistic writing about modern Canadian life. Callaghan advocated that young writers bring their realist aims to bear, not upon a

distinctly Canadian landscape, but a whole modern North American way of life. Callaghan believed contemporary language, and the literary style that proceeds naturally from it, to have the power to tap into the spirit of the times, into a vibrant, energetic, modern, North American *Zeitgeist:*

> The way lies through the acceptance of whatever speech we have in this country, and prose employing it will have the colour, the raciness, the flesh and blood of the people of this section of the American continent. And because of the soil we are American. Not United States, but American. ("Looking at Native Prose" 3)

Just such a literary movement, he surmised, was already in full bloom in the United States (with Hemingway, Anderson, and Fitzgerald among others) and beginning in Canada, with the work of a few writers including Knister, Grove,[12] and, by implication, himself:[13]

> the few young men in this country, Raymond Knister, Tom Murtha, etc., who are interested in prose, are attempting to find a beginning on their own soil, and are on absolutely solid ground. The older generation, regarded so seriously now, never found a beginning, were not interested in technique and had no identity . . . . If any evidence can be found after a canvass of the prose writers in this country, that some writers are aware of modern methods, and are using the speech of the soil, then there should be loud whoops of joy. ("Looking At Native Prose" 3)

Callaghan, then, was fully aware of the new modern realism in Canada and he lent it his full advocacy. But, to him, this movement was not wholly, or even centrally, Canadian. The modern-realist movement, as Callaghan conceived it, was a North American cultural phenomenon.

But why, with all of his exposure to foreign literary modes and models, and with his obvious aesthetic affinities with numerous modernist tenets, did Callaghan remain at core a realist? He might easily have allied himself with any of the experimental writers he encountered in his wide reading of modernist literature and travels in the literary circles of the day: Joyce, Pound, Ford, Faulkner, or Woolf. Even writing from his urban, North American perspective, Callaghan arrived at essentially the same conclusion about literary experiment as did both Grove and Knister: experiment should not be pursued for its own sake but rather directed to serve the causes of realism; just as he might call Victorian literature, with its adornments and flourishes, excessive and evasive, so too did Callaghan conclude that modernist experiments with language occur at the expense of the "truth." Between 1926 and 1940, Callaghan regularly reviewed books for a variety of journals and magazines, and the majority of the works he reviewed were written by foreign writers, many of them among the most canonical modernists: these reviews, most of them published in Saturday Night,[14] interpreted works by Hemingway, Ford, Williams, Mann, Woolf, Dos Passos, Huxley, Faulkner, Joyce, and many others, for a Canadian audience. Although these reviews are the most telling source of Callaghan's opinions of literary modernism, they have yet to receive more than passing critical attention. These reviews are also valuable because they reveal much about why exactly Callaghan perceived realism to be the most modern of forms, and why he favoured his speakerly style of direct reportage but rejected other forms of linguistic experiment. They also draw attention to a much overlooked concern of Callaghan's writing: psychological realism. Like Knister and to a lesser extent Grove, Callaghan saw psychological realism as the key aim of the modern novel. And these reviews reveal that some of the more vexing aspects of his writing—moralism, didacticism, melodrama, artlessness—are not the result of artistic

indifference, but rather the results of his unconventional efforts to unite two competing ideals in modern fiction: impersonality and psychological realism.

While Callaghan, as I have suggested, considered modern speech the foundation of the modern-realist aesthetic, he was remarkably conservative in terms of the type of linguistic experiment he favoured. The author whose work Callaghan most frequently reviewed was William Faulkner, and while Callaghan no doubt saw him as a remarkable talent, he characterized him, not as a literary innovator, but as an outmoded literary decadent. In a 1940 Saturday Night review of The Hamlet, he wrote that

> [a]s for the Faulknerian style one can't help thinking that possibly the best way to get even with him would be to write him letters or pieces about his books in his highly artificial manner and then ask him how he liked it. For surely his is the most deliberately mannered style in modern American writing . . . those elaborate decorative and decadent redundancies are just plain vulgar. ("Faulkner's Fabulous World" 9)

Clearly, a large part of what Callaghan is rejecting here is literary artifice, or a "deliberately mannered style." For Callaghan, "style" ought to strive to connect the reader directly to the modern world, effacing the author, not drawing the reader's attention to him or her, and writing that is self-consciously literary, Callaghan believed, obscured the contemporary subject. He makes this clear in a 1938 review of Faulkner's earlier novel, The Unvanquished:

> Pick up almost any one of the earlier and heavier Faulkner books and try reading them aloud and what you feel is the style is something very literary, something almost antique, something a little rotten that doesn't belong in contemporary life at all: the clean straight line was never there: the effect

> was a crumbling gothic in our time, and not the gothic of the American skyscraper either: it was the crumbling gothic of a dead time. ("Civil War Story" 15)

Callaghan apparently, like Grove, did not equate literary "experiment" with the "modern"; Faulkner was experimental, but "almost antique." Writers, in Callaghan's view, were modern when they engaged contemporary life directly and immediately, and this was only possible with the realistic form of writing, based on contemporary speech, that he favoured. His key critique of Faulkner is the "very literary" aspect of his style, and the attention his writing draws to literature as art at the expense of literature as a reflection of life.

Callaghan was also highly critical of writers who experimented with language in a manner that he *did* consider modern, if such experiments failed to engage the contemporary world. Although Callaghan was a great admirer of James Joyce,[15] he was nevertheless highly critical of Finnegan's Wake in a 1939 review. In this lengthy passage, Callaghan spells out his critique of modernist literary experiment in no uncertain terms, calling it a "literature feeding not on life but on words":

> the tendency toward pure abstraction can only lead finally to the starvation of the medium. It is a gesture of great intellectual pride and spiritual isolation on the part of the artist. But the pursuit has gone on steadily in our time, and it seems to me that the pursuit is continued on page after page of 'Finnegan's Wake': an unholy effort, or if you will, the actual job done, of making pieces of literature with words, simply as words, as the substance . . . And that is why you get the impression that in this book you are dealing with the end of something in literature. It isn't just the Ivory tower, it is the Ivory tower with every window shut and every door locked. It is the great

> artist retreating completely from life and burning his bridges behind him. ("Into the Dream World" 21)

And such critiques can be found in Callaghan's writings on numerous other prominent modernists of the period. In a 1928 review of Woolf's Orlando, he wrote, "it seems to me that the last half of the book is a little too much of a demonstration of marvellous technical competence. I become too conscious of Virginia Woolf, a very clever shrewd and sharp witted author; the reader becomes aware that she is jibing at a certain style of biography, that she is witty, wise, and satirical" ("Breaking New Ground" 8). In That Summer In Paris (1963), Callaghan was openly contemptuous of Stein's work: "Abstract prose was nonsense. The shrewd lady had found a trick, just as the naughty Dadaists had once found a trick. The plain truth was, as I saw it, Gertrude Stein now had nothing whatever to say. But she was shrewd and intelligent enough to know it. As for her deluded coterie, well, I had no interest in finding one of them who would lead me shyly to her den" (184).

In these examples, Callaghan offers a critique of modernist writing that echoes that made by leftist magazines of modernist Canadian poetry, and modern-realist fiction. Joyce's experimentalism, Callaghan argues, represents a "great artist retreating completely from life," not a great artist engaging the contemporary world. Callaghan rejects the excesses of modernist innovation from the point of view of the social realist, and allies the "real" with the "modern"; indeed, to Callaghan these terms are synonymous: realism is necessarily modern, because its subject is the modern world. While Callaghan's views on this subject are somewhat naive and problematic, it is unfair to suggest that he resists experiment in writing out of ignorance, or what Metcalf calls "an indifferent command of literary technique" (115). As he reveals in That Summer In Paris, he is anything but indifferent; modern writing must absolutely engage

the modern world directly or face dire consequences:

> I remember deciding that the root of the trouble with writing was that poets and storywriters used language to evade, to skip away from the object, because they could never bear to face a thing freshly and see it freshly for what it was in itself . . . . Tell the truth cleanly. Weren't the consequences of fraudulent pretending plain to anyone who would look around? Hadn't the great slogans of the first World War become ridiculous to me before I had left high school? (19-20)

Callaghan, then, defines the limits of the modern-realist form as follows: contemporary language is the foundation of the modern-realist style. But so many modernist experiments devolve into mere linguistic word-play. Experimentalism is not inherently bad; it is even desirable, so long as that experiment does not compromise the fundamental connection between language and the contemporary world, between art and life. Realism, to Callaghan, was a form free of excessive experiment and linguistic indulgence. This meant that it was the best literary form for engaging the contemporary subject. Therefore, it was the most modern form of expression by virtue of its formal conservatism relative to other modernist forms.

Curiously, given that Callaghan is one of the few legitimate Canadian prose stylists of his generation, his own pronouncements on the absolute importance of directness in literary expression sound like calls for a kind of anti-style. In spite of his own willingness to manipulate language and point of view to achieve particular effects, Callaghan defines his own style in terms of its conscious avoidance of ostensible artistry. In an interview published in 1980, he remarked in some detail on the deliberate artlessness of his own form and method of composition:

> I write, say, ten pages, and I'm trying to go over it to get it ready for the girl

> who's typing it. And I just go over that, changing syntax here and there, but all I'm really trying to do is get the thing so she can read it. And that's the style. I mean it sounds utterly plebeian, but that's all I'm trying to do, to get the thing so it will read naturally . . . . you'll just say: Gee, this is true, it's all true, absolutely true. ("Eternal Style" 37-38)

I believe it is a mistake to conclude, as Metcalf has done, that such statements prove that Callaghan is the artistically indifferent author of "stumblebum writing" (144). It is true that Callaghan, and all of his Canadian contemporaries, often write passages that are flat, dull, unengaging, and, at least to a contemporary audience, naive in terms of the literary effects they try to achieve. Yet the same authors create passages that are highly convincing and demonstrative of a creative ingenuity and willingness to push the realist form to its very limits. Callaghan writes passages that appear hastily composed, but he also, as I have demonstrated in my earlier discussion of his short fiction, often writes with a remarkable degree of both complexity and transparency. Callaghan's above comments reveal, not artistic indifference, but his belief that writing should *appear* natural and straightforward, and not just on the level of language. In a 1929 review, Callaghan linked what he called the "modern technique" with a "lack of artificial arrangement of material that is very often mistaken for form" ("Lyrical Realism" 8). A 1928 review of Thomas Mann's short fiction was more explicit on the same point: Mann's book was deemed a "masterpiece, modern in manner . . . devoid of plot, devoid of tricks of style and arrangement, direct and simple . . ." ("Impressive Short Stories" 9).

Callaghan's belief in the fundamental importance of avoiding excessive artifice meant that he felt a story should not appear overly structured or even consciously emplotted. In general terms, Callaghan suggested that a narrative ought to reflect the realistic passage of time, and ought to appear to follow the natural rhythm of

contemporary life. More specifically, Callaghan identified the natural, credible psychological development of the individual as the key concern of modern fiction, and he revealed that his own stories were emplotted along psychological lines:

> these [my] stories start out and you think you know what this theme is, what the story is. But after a while you begin to get really mad because suddenly everything goes off in all the wrong directions. It isn't the story you thought it was at all, and from now on you don't know what the people are going to do. Then you get to the end of the story and the stories don't seem to you to end right. The stories end in terms of the people themselves rather than in terms of the pattern for that kind of material. (D. Cameron 25)

Callaghan's concern with psychological realism explains the apparent formlessness of many of his novels, most prominently It's Never Over (1930) and A Broken Journey (1932), discussed later: usually he is more concerned with creating credible psychological portraits than with constructing a gripping plot. And his concern with the psychological makes sense of another problematic feature of Callaghan's writing: melodrama. Much as several of Grove's novels discussed earlier—The Yoke of Life, Two Generations, The Master of Mill—thwart traditionally realistic emplotment in order to depict a kind of "world consciousness" in action, some of Callaghan's novels make more sense as psychodrama than examples of straightforward, realistic fiction. The melodramatic endings that strain the reader's credulity in so many Callaghan works—the "hit" at the end of Strange Fugitive (1928), Father Dowling's breakdown at the end of Such Is My Beloved (1934), Kip's death at the end of More Joy In Heaven (1937)—are appropriate psycho-symbolic conclusions to novels that have the exploration of an individual's psychological degeneration at their centre.

The Callaghan works that are most fundamentally concerned with human

psychology are among his least known.[16] This may be because they are also his works that are least concerned with exploring recognizable Canadian locales and evoking weighty social concerns and issues that lend themselves easily to debate and discussion. It may also be because the personalities and psychological processes Callaghan uses to structure these works are so ordinary and slow to unfold that they fail to engage readers with other expectations: John Chamberlain has called Callaghan's characters "inhabitants of Moronia" (qtd. in Conron, Morley Callaghan [1975] 5). Although most of these psychological novels have received little attention from critics, they are crucial to a full understanding of his realist technique. Callaghan's second and third novels, It's Never Over (1930) and A Broken Journey (1932), both use deliberately tedious, and relatively mundane, psychological processes to "drive" their plot. In the first of these two works, the story focusses on the psychological effects of the execution of a convict upon his friend, John Hughes, and the two women who compete for his affection, Lillian and Isabelle (the latter woman also happens to be the sister of the dead man). Through a series of slow-moving though realistically drawn scenes, the reader becomes aware of Isabelle's deepening conviction that her brother's death has altered her life permanently for the worse, and of her underhanded determination to inflict her unhappiness on John and Lillian. Significant events are few and far between in the novel, and the moments of crisis in the story correspond with important though commonplace moments of psychological development, as in this passage which partly explains John's decision to pursue a new love interest: "Now, when she would not see him, he wished he was still giving her money, though he had become niggardly, but they might at least have been held together by the common payments. And then he felt more confident" (112). A Broken Journey is a love story about two seemingly compatible lovers who are driven apart by circumstance and lack

of confidence in one another. This story, a love triangle like It's Never Over, moves even more slowly: a young couple, Marion and Peter, travel north but a back injury confines Peter to bed for the entire vacation (he is pushed down a flight of stairs by a previous love interest earlier on). During his convalescence, the characters have meaningless conversations in which they exchange platitudes and conceal their growing disaffection from one another. Much of Callaghan's narrative takes the form of detached descriptions of internal states juxtaposed with emotionally restrained dialogue:

> "Nice fellow, the doctor," he said, as if he had enjoyed a social call from the man. "Of course he's a very stupid man, but he's a nice fellow just the same."
>
> She had so much sudden resentment, she was afraid to answer him. At the moment she hated him. She wanted to hit him, hurt him, make him cry out and then feel good watching his pain. (189)

Eventually, after a long process of emotional extrication from the central affair, Marion falls in love with another man, a robust Hemingwayesque character who contrasts with her invalid fiancee. While both It's Never Over and A Broken Journey are occasionally melodramatic, as this passage reveals, the psychological character development that nudges them along is highly convincing, and almost inseparable from the other elements of the novels: even the settings are frequently symbolic and reflective of the internal thought processes the characters are experiencing. While these two novels are also probably Callaghan's least enjoyable, they nevertheless reveal that even early on in his career psychological realism was his primary concern, and the driving force behind his plots.

More compelling are the two substantial novellas that initially appeared as the

second and third sections of Callaghan's 1929 collection of short fiction, A Native Argosy.[17] If anything, these novellas are even more centrally concerned with psychological realism than most of Callaghan's novels. They also deal with psychological issues that are more dramatic and less commonplace. In the first novella, An Autumn Penitent, Joe Harding's incest with his niece Ellen, when it is discovered by his wife Lottie, leads to the suicide of both female characters, who only find the horror of the situation compounded by the fundamentalist Christianity they have recently embraced. Although he was critical of their faith before the suicide, Joe is gradually convinced by a manipulative and self-serving minister to take part in a dramatic baptismal ceremony involving other local converts. In the early parts of the novella, a psychological intensity is generated by Callaghan's skilful and unsensational handling of the incest theme, by subtle suggestions that Ellen has become pregnant, by Joe's obsessive and inappropriate interest in Ellen, and by Lottie's manipulative attempts to win religious concessions from Joe as her own faith deepens. In the latter half, Joe's conversion occurs, not as an immediate response to the suicide, but as the culmination of a personal process involving grief, guilt, and self-doubt:

> In the dark, lying alone in the big bed, he tried to go back to the beginning of things, until his head ached. There he was, lying in bed, outside was the moon and the stars and the lake. Well, what about it, where did it all come from? He remembered learning in school about masses swimming in space and now he thought about it eagerly but got tired . . . (67)

The second novella, In His Own Country, is probably the strangest piece of fiction Callaghan produced in his lifetime. In this work, Bill Lawson, a "common" man who believes himself to be a modern-day Thomas Aquinas, gradually retreats from his young wife and community as his efforts to "make a plan of different fields of science

and show definitely that it could become one fine system in accordance with a religious scheme" grow more and more detached from reality (87). Eventually, Bill's endeavours cause him to fall into a catatonic state. The third-person narrative of this story is skilfully modulated to generate sympathy for Bill's wife Flora: it traces her slow emotional development from love and admiration for Bill, into feelings of neglect and rejection, into anger and emotional detachment, into her gradually yielding to the affections of another man, into her decision to leave her marriage, into her feelings of remorse for her infidelity, into her eventual decision to return to her sick husband and become his caretaker. The psychological portrait of Flora as she moves through these phases is vivid:

> It's terrible to have to go in and out all day by yourself, Bill. We were living together and I had only my own thoughts. A woman that's only my age and only married 'bout two years shouldn't never be left like that. She gets thinking and things get all mixed up and it never does her any good. But wasn't I silly to be afraid of you? (153)

The dramatic but convincing psychological realism of In His Own Country and An Autumn Penitent makes them two of the finest works of fiction produced in Canada before 1950. At the same time, these works are really just very long short stories, and the unity of effect they achieve is not found in Callaghan's novels. Had Callaghan been able to sustain such intense psychological portraits over the course of an entire novel, his legacy might be quite different.

As Callaghan's career moved into the mid-1930s, his concern with social realism intensified, and the type of psychological realism he favoured changed: he began to show less concern with creating individual psychological portraits, and more with exploring the relationship of the individual to a larger social world. While even

Callaghan's first novels have a clear social context—Strange Fugitive (1928) takes place in an archetypal North American city in the 1920s, disguised as Toronto—it is not until 1935, with the publication of They Shall Inherit the Earth, that his stories start to be built as much around ideological schemes as psychological concerns. Unfortunately, his novels begin to appear contrived and didactic as a result; if his early novels appear formless because they are emplotted upon unpredictable psychological processes, his later novels appear contrived because they are constructed to allow Callaghan to explore specific social issues, depict the interaction of various elements in a particular social milieu, and show his characters reacting to powerful social forces. Callaghan's finest novel, Such Is My Beloved (1934), marks the boundary between the old psychological fiction and the new social-realist works, combining the best elements of both. In this novel, Callaghan again creates a vivid portrait of the archetypal North American city (Toronto), and he raises a host of modern concerns and issues that, while muted in this novel, come to take centre stage in later efforts: class politics, the depression, socialism, the decline of moral values, urban isolation, and evolving gender roles and relations. But rather than creating character types to explore these concerns, as he does in later works, the novel is structured around the psychology of the main character, Father Dowling, a naive young priest who attempts to rescue two young women, Ronnie and Midge, from their life working the big-city streets, while all the time wrestling with his own moral conscience and repressed sexual desires. A third-person narrator tells the story but largely from the perspective of Father Dowling—another example of "mediated reportage." The resultant psychological analysis is vivid and convincing. These effects are heightened by a cleverly modulated narrative perspective that permits structural irony, but maintains sympathy with both Father Dowling and the young women, softening the didacticism of the novel's social

observations by filtering them through the naive perspective of the young priest:

> As he walked along the crowded streets, with the women carrying parcels coming out of the big stores, he looked earnestly at each one . . . He longed to see Ronnie and Midge coming along the street in the crowd, well clothed, with some of the independence and commitment in their faces that he saw in the faces of these women . . . . He looked up and saw a woman with a mink wrap . . . Indignant, he wondered why God saw fit to permit so many people to have wealth and comfort, and so many to remain poor and hungry. (41)

The novel's plot follows the psychological development of Father Dowling as his obsession with the women grows deeper and culminates in a mental breakdown resulting from his inability to redeem the women, his awareness of the injustice of modern society, and perhaps his inability to gratify his lusts. The other characters and situations in the novel, however, are static. While Callaghan's later novels retain this method of portraying the destruction of the individual in the face of an indifferent society, never again does he create a portrait of an individual as psychologically convincing as that of Father Dowling.

The problem with the later novels is that Callaghan's concern shifts to the examination of the individual in society, and his psychological portraits appear to reflect social concerns rather than psychological insight. In The Loved and the Lost (1951), for example, Callaghan's characters are as much representatives of larger social groups as individuals. The psychological development of Jim McAlpine, the central character who struggles with his love for a woman who represents a challenge to both his social position and his opinions on race relations, appears contrived at times, and directed to allow the author an opportunity to make various philosophical points:

> if I had some Negro friends and like them as one human being likes another I think they'd get into the habit of talking frankly in my presence, and I'd hear them talking about little incidents of discrimination going on all over the country in restaurants and trains and hotels. A lot of them are porters and they have these stories of one humiliation after another. (148)

This tendency in Callaghan's novels post-1934 has led to one of the most persistent criticisms of his work, again summed up by Metcalf:

> Callaghan's approach to his material and to his heroes is dictatorial. He is always completely external to the stories he is telling. The reader is not invited to participate in any way; we are not allowed to experience events in a Callaghan story and neither are we allowed to draw our own conclusions. Rather, Callaghan relentlessly tells and explains. (140)

It is impossible to dispute that Callaghan's stories very often have an underlying philosophical concern or social comment guiding the narrative. Yet I would argue that in the vast majority of these instances, Callaghan is not telling the reader what to think, or raising a moral question and then answering it. Callaghan is guilty, instead, of telling his reader too bluntly, not what to think, but rather what his characters are thinking. In More Joy In Heaven (1937), for example, we are privy to the thoughts of characters so clearly, entirely, directly, and unambiguously that our narrator appears autocratic, as this glimpse into the thoughts of Julie Evans at a dramatic moment reveals:

> She was watching his face for some sign of incredible violence and cunning. He only looked mild and tired . . . She remembered how hard he was to defeat, how his eagerness and hopefulness always lifted him up. It brought him out of prison . . . She began to feel he was a bigger and stronger man than even she with her love had thought him to be. (145)

As direct and objective as the passage may appear, it is rendered partly from the perspective of a particular character. And while such a method of psychological exposition may not be to everyone's taste, what the passage lacks in subtlety, it arguably makes up for in clarity.

Such passages as this one may not be wholly convincing, but they do reveal that, even in Callaghan's most didactic and moralistic works, a central concern is with the direct, unambiguous representation of characters' thoughts, and he remains willing to modulate narrative point of view to permit the reader to view situations through the eyes of a variety of different individuals. But such directness and lack of ambiguity may be a liability in fiction with a fundamental concern with psychology. As contemporary readers know, and as Callaghan's international and modern-realist contemporaries tried to demonstrate through the epistemological emphases of their writing, human psychology is inherently ambiguous. Even writers as conservative as Grove and MacLennan generally avoided such direct, matter-of-fact verbalizations of psychological states, trying instead a number of techniques aimed at reflecting the human consciousness in action: centre of consciousness, Grove's "world consciousness" passages, MacLennan's "kaleidoscopic" technique. These techniques are a clear step beyond the unambiguous psychological passages found in Callaghan's work: representing a character's mind epistemologically requires a greater degree of experiment with the realist form than does the mere summing up such thoughts under the guise of objectivity. But Callaghan rejects the first option, except in a few scattered, fleeting moments much more suited to the kind of psychological development found in short fiction than to the sustained character development necessary for the modern novel. Even in Callaghan's most convincing works of psychological realism he seldom if ever mimics the flow of human consciousness; his thought processes happen step by

step, in sequential, directly-worded summations of states of mind that occur at intervals throughout a novel.

Essentially, this refusal to abandon a pretense to objectivity, even at times when the representation of a subjective state of consciousness appears called for in a given narrative, is the one thing that most strikingly separates Callaghan from both his modern-realist contemporaries, and the international modernists. Unlike either group, Callaghan is so utterly afraid of "artifice" in writing, so determined to tell the "truth," that he winds up reducing human psychology to a few lines of narrative summation. In a sense, Callaghan is equating objectivity with a lack of ambiguity, although the two are obviously not the same thing. Callaghan, apparently, was unable to accept the modernist notion that the human mind was ambiguous, and that behind conscious perceptions, thoughts, and ethical conclusions, there were many competing and indefinable subjective impulses. Or, perhaps more accurately, Callaghan's idea that modern writing grows out of speech is incompatible with the modernist (and modern-realist) belief that the individual human mind in the process of experiencing "modernity," not the language that expresses this experience, should be the fundamental concern of the modern writer. In his 1938 review of Faulkner's The Unvanquished, Callaghan reveals that he believed attempts to mimic human consciousness led away from psychological realism, rather than toward it, because they replace a detached, objective, unambiguous summary of the contents of the mind with a mere reflection of its ambiguous processes:

> the mind begins to hunger for a pause, some moment of illumination into the souls of the characters. That illumination hardly ever comes; the picture, the action keeps flickering before the eyes: get the illumination out of it if you can, but there must be no stop in the visual recording . . . .

> Faulkner has actually very little illumination of character to offer. Perhaps it has been a mistake to think of him at all as a prober into dark psychological depths. ("Civil War Story" 15)

And he carried his interpretation of epistemological modes of writing a step further in a 1939 review of Faulkner's The Wild Palms:

> All the Faulkner talent for giving you the quality of a moment, or rather the external appearance of a moment, is there . . . It is there on the page as real as a bright dream, but there is something wrong. Nine times out of ten the thing that is wrong is what was supposed to be going on inside the people. It just isn't true . . . . But sooner or later someone is going to ask one important question not only of William Faulkner but of all American writers. It's a simple question, and it's just this: What is a man, what is he doing on Earth? What's your conception of a man? All the big writers understood that question and tried to give some kind of an answer from Chaucer to Gorki . . . Try reading this last book of Faulkner's with this question in mind, and various answers, some of them pretty juvenile, will keep popping out from the pages. ("Faulkner Riddle Is Solved" 20)

Callaghan, the eternal objectivist, is here accusing Faulkner's stream-of-consciousness writing of conveying only the "external appearance of the moment," thereby avoiding the all-important "psychological depths." Ironically, Callaghan's writing, with its desire to get, in effect, to the psychological heart of the matter, leads to a denial of the psychological complexity of the human mind and misses the mark: his brand of psychological writing, with its direct summations of thoughts, is what conveys only the "external appearance of the moment," showing the thought, the mental conclusion, without acknowledging the subconscious process that leads to it. Callaghan rejects

Faulkner's writing because "it just isn't true," or it does not pose the questions he believes literature ought to pose. And ultimately it does not offer up an "answer." Callaghan is not fundamentally interested in the actual, ambiguous workings of the human mind: he is interested in the influence of the larger, social world on the individual mind, and the specific thoughts and choices that arise in an individual's mind when faced with particular situations. How one thinks is not important: he wants to know what and why people think. This contrast draws attention to the essential difference between "realism," or that which strives to convey a sense of reality, and "mimesis," or that which strives to mimic reality, two impulses in tension in Canadian literature of the period. Callaghan, atypically, was an unqualified realist. Other writers of the period were also realists, but willing to stretch the boundaries of the realist form more readily, sometimes through epistemological mimesis, in order to admit the subjective perspectives that Callaghan found distracting, or unnecessary to his literary aims. In this sense, the modern realists were like their high-modernist counterparts.

Callaghan's refusal to abandon the detached, objective mode of narration that he prefers from the very beginning of his career opens his writing to criticism on the grounds that it appears moralistic, monotonous, and heavy-handed. His refusal at all costs to abandon the direct style for psychological mimesis, in one sense, makes him the most conservative writer of his generation. It is perhaps appropriate, given the matrix of contradictions that make up modern realism, that its most conservative proponent should also be its most well-connected and well-versed in modernist forms and modes. Revealingly, the same rejection of mimesis that separates Callaghan from many of his modernist contemporaries also divides him from the modern realists of the period, who willingly supplemented their "direct reportage" with all sorts of epistemological techniques that I have discussed in a variety of contexts. While the

techniques of the modern realists to this end only vaguely approximate those of the most experimental modernists—Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner— their works, nevertheless, bear a striking similarity to those of a whole host of other international modernists whose styles are experimental but essentially realist: Hemingway, Lawrence, Fitzgerald, Rhys, Conrad, Camus, among others. This would appear to offer a possible explanation for why so many Canadian writers believed they were being experimental when they wrote in the realist style, and why international magazines, albeit infrequently, validated their assumptions. It also reinforces my claim that modern realism was not simply a response to a nationalist call for regional writing in Canada, but rather one of numerous often competing and contradictory impulses that make up literary modernism. And it explains why Callaghan, the one Canadian prose writer of the period comfortably to straddle the boundary between Canadian and foreign writing, was able to do so effortlessly and unquestioningly.

Chapter Seven

Beyond modernism and "Back to Tolstoy":

Hugh MacLennan and the End of the Modern-Realist Movement

With the arrival of the 1940s, the modern-realist movement entered its third decade, and Canada's most successful realist, Hugh MacLennan, enjoyed an almost meteoric rise to preeminence among writers of Canadian fiction. Given that MacLennan wrote novels about contemporary Canada in the realist mode, it stands to reason that his career would be significant, even pivotal, to the modern-realist movement as a whole, which was winding down just as his star reached its zenith. Since, for many critics, MacLennan's emergence as a major writer marks the beginnings of contemporary Canadian fiction, it is tempting to suggest that it also marks the culminating point of modern realism. But MacLennan's work refuses to be characterized so conveniently. For one thing, in spite of his wide-spread recognition and apparent cultural significance, estimations of his literary accomplishments have always been profoundly ambivalent, and elements of MacLennan's aesthetic have perplexed, and sometimes even offended, his critics. As Paul Goetsch writes in the "Introduction" to his 1973 critical anthology on MacLennan, "he is a novelist of major importance for Canada and the history of Canadian fiction," but "the majority of critics have time and again voiced reservations" (2). In the same vein, George Woodcock's 1969 book-length study declares that "MacLennan occupies a position of uneasy eminence in Canadian letters. He is probably the most considerable novelist our country has yet produced, yet this is a statement one can make only to the accompaniment of elaborate qualifications" (1). Of course, much has changed since Woodcock wrote these words, and few would probably still rank MacLennan with the finest of his literary compatriots. The fact remains, however, that just as modern realism was entering its final phase, MacLennan

was publishing realist novels that were enjoying a level of fame and recognition previously unknown in Canada, and were being touted as an important point of development in the national literature as a whole. Like the other major authors to receive substantial treatment in this study—Knister, Grove, Callaghan—MacLennan's aesthetic is rife with contradictions that make discussion of him both awkward and highly revealing in the context of modern realism. But MacLennan's contradictory aesthetic, unlike those of Knister, Grove, and Callaghan, cannot ultimately be accounted for by an examination of his writing in the context of modern realism. As we shall see, Canada's most famous and successful *realist* was scarcely a *modern* realist at all; instead, at different times in his career, he was Canada's most indisputably modernist novelist, and the most conservative major Canadian realist of the twentieth century.

There is a general consensus among many of his most-cited critics (Woodcock, McPherson, Boeschenstein, Goetsch, Lucas, Buitenhuis, Morley, E. Cameron, MacLulich, Tierney)[1] that MacLennan is Canada's first truly "serious" and "contemporary" writer, and that this significance has something to do with his being the first to take an exhaustive, "realistic" interest in the nation as a whole. As Woodcock writes, "MacLennan was the first writer to realize and express in a form that would be widely acceptable the social realities of Canada . . ." (Hugh MacLennan 46). Yet rather than exploring, defining, and characterizing MacLennan's realism, his critics have chosen to emphasize his indifference to technique, and they usually suggest that his primary contribution to Canadian literary development is not stylistic. As Peter Buitenhuis writes, "MacLennan has been the great trail-blazer; he has journeyed into the unknown territory of the Canadian mind. We should honour him for this" (19); nevertheless, he argues that "in all of his published comments about his own work, he

has shown a singular lack of concern with matters that have preoccupied many leading twentieth-century novelists: the question of how one's work is to be rendered" (16-17). Proceeding from this assumption about MacLennan's technical disinterest or incompetence, most of his critics have neglected technique and focussed on the subject matter of his novels: his socio-political commentary (Deacon, McPherson), his allegorical, symbolic, classical, and mythological interests (New, O'Donnell, Woodcock, MacLulich), his varied thematic concerns (E. Cameron, Stevenson, Pell), and of course his Canadian nationalism (Lucas, Buitenhuis, Boeschenstein, Farmiloe, Chambers, Davies, Mathews, Arnason).[2] MacLennan's fewer more recent critics have moved on to other concerns, and a handful of them have shown more interest in the formal and aesthetic aspects of his work, including James Steele in "History Repeating Itself as Fiction: Oxyrhynchus and the Novels of Hugh MacLennan," Rosmarin Heidenreich in "Narratological Structures and Ideology: The Case of Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes*," and Francis Zichy in "MacLennan and Modernism." Still, in spite of all of this critical interest, there has not yet been a sustained critical examination of the most immediately apparent and problematic element of MacLennan's aesthetic: his realism.

This chapter disputes the notion that MacLennan was indifferent to technique through a detailed evaluation of his realism. I reveal that, in sharp contrast to what most of his critics have said, MacLennan thought a great deal about literary technique, and he spoke and wrote about it at considerable length. The critical unresponsiveness to MacLennan's realism is symptomatic of a larger failure to acknowledge modern realism as a whole: MacLennan's critics apparently consider his realism a "given" not worthy of further critical commentary. As Alec Lucas writes, in a manner reminiscent of the regionalist critics of prairie realism, "MacLennan, like Paul Tallard, saw the novel as a social force, and became a realist as much by circumstance as by choice . . ." (Hugh

MacLennan 11). The avoidance of MacLennan's realism may also be the result of embarrassment on the part of his many nationalist critics: what does it say about Canadian fiction if its first contemporary writer is essentially a nineteenth-century realist? The apologies that all but MacLennan's most ardent admirers offer at the beginnings of their studies allude to this critical anxiety: as Woodcock writes, "because of the nature of the task he has set himself—the fictional delineation of a nation's odyssey—MacLennan assumes a largeness (which is not necessarily the same as a greatness) . . ." (Hugh MacLennan 1). Following Woodcock's lead, many critics apparently assume that MacLennan's work is worth writing about in spite of its technical flaws, largely because of its Canadianism, and it is no coincidence that MacLennan's canonical status was solidified during the explosion of Canadian cultural nationalism in the 1960s and 70s: remarkably, six book-length studies of MacLennan's *oeuvre* were published between 1969 and 1973 alone, and comparatively little criticism of his work has appeared since.[3] I am able to arrive at new conclusions about MacLennan's realism because I draw upon a wealth of unpublished and critically ignored materials in this chapter, as well as his much-discussed published works. In addition to MacLennan's four novels published between 1941 and 1951, I consider his two remarkable, unpublished, ignored, modernist novels of the 1930s, which alone demand a major reinterpretation of MacLennan's aesthetic assumptions and literary development.[4] I also consider numerous of his letters and essays on literary topics, including several that are unpublished and discussed here for the first time. Finally, I draw upon his critically neglected contributions to popular and literary magazines, and his unpublished lecture notes for his modern novel courses at McGill University. These varied sources reveal that MacLennan's ideas about realism were hardly predetermined by "circumstance," but rather arrived at through a long writerly process. MacLennan's

conception of realism is articulately expressed, complex, expansive, eclectic, and remarkably conservative, even reactionary. Such a revisionary and definitive reading of MacLennan's realism alone represents a significant step forward for MacLennan criticism, and invites a reinterpretation of many troubling aspects of his work—his politics, his modernity, his Canadianism—in light of it.

Still, coming to terms with MacLennan's realism is not the sole aim of this chapter. My second objective is to expand, clarify, and confirm my definition of the modern-realist aesthetic as a whole through MacLennan's problematic and revealing *oeuvre* and example. I have already discussed, in several contexts, modern realism as one of the numerous movements that communally define literary modernism. As we shall see, MacLennan's development (or devolution) from a full-blown modernist writer into a traditional realist is revealing of the relationship between modern realism and both of these forms. Also, MacLennan plays an important transitional role in Canadian literary history that has affected the critical reception and neglect of modern realism. Born in 1907, he belongs to the same generation as two of the other three major modern realists I discuss (Grove was born in 1879, Knister in 1899, Callaghan in 1907), but, for all intents and purposes, MacLennan belongs to a different literary period: Knister had been dead for a decade when MacLennan's first published novel, Barometer Rising, appeared in 1941; Grove's best-known works were produced in the 1920s and 30s, his best novel of the 1940s, The Master of the Mill, was written as early as 1933,[5] and he died the same year that MacLennan published his third novel, The Precipice (1948); and, while Callaghan published fiction until the 1980s, his best work and his finest examples of modern realism were produced in his early period which drew to a close with the publication of his sixth novel, More Joy in Heaven (1937), after which he ceased publishing serious fiction for the decade-and-a-half during which

MacLennan built his reputation with his first four published novels. As a transitional writer between this "earlier generation" and the contemporary period, then, MacLennan is highly significant. But the portrait of MacLennan as the last modern realist and first contemporary writer I arrive at in this chapter is surprising. As I have suggested, MacLennan was only in a vague and approximate way a modern realist, and most of his writerly assumptions had little in common with those of the Canadian writers who came before him. The sense in which MacLennan moves "beyond" modern realism is paradoxical: he becomes Canada's first contemporary writer, not by transforming modern realism into a newer form of expression; instead, MacLennan's aesthetic involves a giant and deliberate step *backwards* from modern realism to the realism of the nineteenth century. Ultimately, MacLennan rejects modern realism for the same reasons that he rejects modernism. As we shall see, the fact that Canada's first contemporary writer was a traditional realist who openly scorned modernist expression has had a deleterious effect on the modern-realist movement as a whole.

Although numerous critics have pointed to various aesthetic influences upon the MacLennan style—including romance (Boone), classical myth (Woodcock), and modernism (Zichy)—it is impossible to deny that his first four published novels—Barometer Rising (1941), Two Solitudes (1945), The Precipice (1948), and Each Man's Son (1951)—are written in a highly traditional and conservative realist mode. All of these works offer a third-person, omniscient narrator but nevertheless have a detectable authorial presence, all employ type-cast characters who represent larger segments of society, all are written in the verbose and often heavy-handed language of the Victorian novel, all attempt the sweeping examination of a whole region or nation, and all offer discernable socio-political and moral theses. While MacLennan's critics only intermittently and indirectly discuss his realism, most of the major studies of his

novels remark upon this list of traditional realist characteristics, and it is not my intention here to offer a detailed reading of his novels solely to prove what his critics have been saying for years.[6] Given his traditional realism, It is not surprising that critics have concluded that MacLennan cared little about literary technique: he employs a century-old literary aesthetic, reminiscent of writers such as Balzac, Tolstoy, Galsworthy, and George Eliot, and this aesthetic is wholly intact even in his first published novels, suggesting that it was simply imported rather than arrived at through experiment. As Woodcock writes, "MacLennan found in the tradition of the realist novel the means to present his vision, and nothing he has written can in a stylistic sense be regarded as experimental" (Hugh MacLennan 49). But Woodcock and others are not acknowledging that MacLennan wrote two unpublished novels in the decade before Barometer Rising was published—So All Their Praises (1933) and Man Should Rejoice (1937)—and that these are anything but traditional realist novels. In fact, they are not only undeniably modernist novels, but also the most clearly experimental and cosmopolitan works of fiction produced by a Canadian at the time they were written. The critical neglect of these two novels is dumbfounding: even Francis Zichy's recent "MacLennan and Modernism" fails to acknowledge these works, instead offering a half-hearted argument against MacLennan's modernist credentials based largely upon a reading of his fifth published novel, The Watch That Ends the Night (1959).[7] Obviously, MacLennan's ignored early modernist novels are crucial to an understanding of his literary aesthetic as a whole. They reveal that he was not unquestioningly adopting a nineteenth-century realism in his early novels: he arrived at his conservative realism as a direct and conscious response to what he believed were the shortcomings of modernism and modern realism, which he believed were synonymous.

MacLennan's first novel, So All Their Praises, was written during his first year at

Princeton University in 1932-33.[8] It is strikingly different from his well-known novels of the 1940s: it is highly experimental in form, employing numerous high-modernist techniques, and it is set, not in a romanticized Canada, but primarily in Germany during the rise of Nazism, although short sections are set in the United States and Nova Scotia. In many ways, So All Their Praises is MacLennan's most thematically modern novel: through a generational conflict between the protagonist and his father, the novel explores tensions between modern and Victorian values. But in contrast to his later novels, this work does not essentially endorse a romantic notion of progress. Instead, the novel expresses a modernist sense of anxiety about the decline of traditional and unifying cultural values: as Elspeth Cameron remarks in the only critical treatment of this novel to date, "MacLennan emphasizes that the whole age is caught, like his three main characters, in tremendous upheaval" (Hugh MacLennan 84). The range of modern issues raised by the novel is impressive: alcoholism, psychological disturbance, the unconscious mind, prostitution, crime, spiritualism, and the decline of traditional religious values and influence. And sexuality is depicted in this novel with a frankness unmatched in his later efforts. The plot of the novel centres on three characters: Michael Carmichael, a British writer, Adolf Fabricus, a German student, and Sarah Macrae, a Canadian musician loved by both men. While the story unfolds in an awkward and largely implausible manner, constructed around the melodramatic intrigues that arise from the love triangle, the twentieth-century world that the novel evokes is arresting and vivid, infused simultaneously with a sense of psychological intensity and ominous foreboding:

> It was a clear autumn night and the streets of Freiburg were whitened by the moon . . . . Roof-tops were sharp as knives against the sky and shadows cut the street into clean-edged rhomboids and slanting triangles

> . . . . Freiburg was silent except for the occasional scream of a street-car wheel; so it was very silent, for the noise of the river enhanced the tranquillity, being like the noise blood makes in one's head when there is nothing else to hear. (5)

MacLennan contextualizes such passages of psychological realism with sections that are more omniscient and strive to set a contemporary historical stage for his action: "Nearly eight million people in Germany unemployed, over three million English unemployed . . . and everyone talking at the top of his voice" (57).

The most conspicuous characteristics of So All Their Praises, however, are technical rather than thematic. While the modern realists who were writing at the same time tended, as I have argued, to temper the boldest and most innovative techniques of the modernists to suit their own aesthetic aims and preferences, MacLennan's first novel unreservedly experimented with modernist techniques and devices. Although the story focusses primarily on the central character, Michael, MacLennan's novel is multivocal, incorporating a wide range of perspectives, both subjective and objective, into the narrative. MacLennan achieves this by freely modulating, sometimes in short passages among third-person omniscient narrative, centre of consciousness, mimetic dialogue, and even stream of consciousness:

> Adolf's eyes were still trying to avoid his father's.
>
> "You may go if you wish, of course. I shall help you all I can. There is a hundred marks you may have."
>
> Adolf saw that his father's eyes were moist. The old man still wanted success in the world.
>
> His eyes were moist for my sake. Does he still think I am a fluid in his loins? I am getting morbid, I am choking in the closeness of this room,

in the obscurity of another century. (12)

Even more remarkably, So All Their Praises includes long, sustained, unmediated, Joycean stream-of-consciousness passages that attempt to mimic the epistemological flow of human consciousness, as this dream sequence, in which the political events in Germany impinge upon Michael's consciousness, demonstrates:

> He kept tossing in his bed, dreaming continuously.
>
> I am sitting up in bed and the bed is enormous and the room about it is like the whole world it is so large. Outside in the street there is tramping. There is steady tramping, I hear the sound of it coming through the window. Tramp - tramp - tramp - tramp - always tramping, for four years that sound. I am looking out the window at the grey houses across the street, at the column that undulates down the street. It bends and sways, but keeps moving on, flowing on like a river flowing between banked stone houses, every drop identical, head bent forward under forage cap, steel helmet slung and the packs behind and the rifles slung, faces all the same, grey and army-masked, no word for them, but only the sound of their feet - tramp - tramp - tramp - dear Jesus stop them from going like that! (21)

The numerous passages such as this one found in So All Their Praises, reminiscent of the final chapter of Ulysses, are the most sustained examples of stream-of-consciousness writing found in Canadian literature of the period. As an epistemological technique, these passages are more radical than those carried out by the modern realists of the period, and they reveal that MacLennan, who would become the most technically conservative major writer of his generation, did not simply begin his career by importing a wholly intact realist method.

MacLennan's central concern in So All Their Praises, however, is not

epistemological representation, but rather a social-realist exploration of the lives of modern individuals in dangerous and important times. In spite of his use of Joyce's epistemological techniques, his ultimate concern is with large social forces, not with the individual human mind. Like Grove and Callaghan, MacLennan is obviously influenced by European and American naturalism, and he explores the possibilities of social and environmental determinism, even in his earliest works. Revealingly, and again emphasizing that MacLennan was interested in literary innovation, at least as a young writer, his naturalistic influence leads him to other forms of modernist experiment. In order to depict the large social and historical forces that influence and shape the lives of his characters, MacLennan developed what he called "kaleidoscopic passages" which incorporate numerous and often competing voices and fragments (MacLennan to Frances MacLennan, 19 Mar. 1933). More specifically, these "kaleidoscopic passages"—similar in technique to passages in F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Beautiful and Damned (1922)[9]—take the form of dramatic dialogues spoken by historical and symbolic individuals:

> Adolph Hitler said: "Deutschland von Marxismus frei! Jobs for all the middle class can be had if we revenge ourselves on Jews and other traitors."
>
> Herr Brüning said: "We must be careful" . . . .
>
> Mr. Baldwin said: "I believe in the innate decency of the English. I am also a born optimist."
>
> The Pope said: "Birth control is murder."
>
> Mr. MacDonald said: "Great steps forward have been taken towards the solidarity of international understanding throughout the whole world" . . . .
>
> An old man said: "I envy the youth today. They will see great things. No one is bored any longer." (58)

MacLennan's goal in these "kaleidoscopic passages" might be compared to Grove's in his later novels, The Master of the Mill (1944) and The Seasons (c. 1948), which strive to depict large historical forces, or what Grove called "world consciousness" (see Chapter Four), in action. So All Their Praises, then, despite being an undeniably modernist novel, is not essentially different in its aims from many of the more ambitious modern-realist novels, confirming, once again, that modernism and modern realism differ only in terms of the degree to which they are willing to partake of the boldest narrative experiments of the period.

MacLennan's second unpublished and ignored novel, Man Should Rejoice (1937), is no less exemplary of his early penchant for modernist experiment than So All Their Praises. This work, one of the very, very few Canadian novels of the period written in the first person voice, is, like its predecessor, both modernist and social realist. Its narrator is an American painter and writer named David Culver. The story begins in Nova Scotia with the narrator telling us that "I came here to live because I could think of no other place to go . . . and there was a job I had to finish" (1); the "job" is writing the dramatic and unreliable story of his life. The son of a wealthy Pittsburgh businessman, David studies at Princeton University, rejects his social background largely because of his artistic temperament, and travels to Paris to become a painter. In Europe, he falls under the influence of socialist friends before returning to America where he becomes an employee in one of his father's mills. Disaffected by the lives of the working poor and the alienating conditions of factory life, he grows to detest the capitalist system that his father represents, becomes a communist, and returns to Europe to take part in an armed socialist revolution that kills his wife and leaves him a broken man.

At first, Man Should Rejoice sounds like a textbook example of the Canadian

social-realist novel of the 1930s (apart from its foreign setting). But it is far more technically innovative than other examples. While So All Their Praises tended to polarize the psychological and the socio-historical by awkwardly juxtaposing stream-of-consciousness passages and detached, objectivist passages, this novel attempts to fuse the two by making David an archetypal, representative figure who embodies the *Zeitgeist* of the modern age itself:

> Being a painter, I see the form and rhythm of things before I see anything else. Now I want to create, in a book, something of the form and rhythm of the most rapid transition from one era to another that mankind has ever known. Whether this is possible, whether I can freeze a durable form out of a state of flux, I don't know. If I succeed I may rid myself of the past, not by burying but by recreating it and giving it a separate life of its own. At least it should not be too difficult to set down what happened to my friends and myself as though it had happened to other people, for I see all vividly, as though I were a stranger looking back from a long distance. (2)

Ultimately, however, the first-person form does not work well for MacLennan: in spite of its obvious subjectivist possibilities, MacLennan is far less concerned with epistemology in this novel than he was in So All Their Praises. As a result, MacLennan's first person speaker sounds like a third-person narrator, and he tells his tale in a manner that is at times too limited to suit the broad historical emphasis of the novel, and at other times too omniscient to be credible:

> How long was it before Arina realized the type of life she had chosen I do not know. They left for Moscow immediately, travelled without a break to London . . . then sailed for New York . . . The crowds of the cities astonished her; coming from a land of peasants she was half-stunned by

> the modern world, and in childish obstinacy rebelled against it . . . as the ship neared Halifax harbour she was strangely comforted. (8)

Such problems with balancing objectivity and subjectivity are even more apparent in the few passages where MacLennan *does* strive for epistemological representation. These scenes share a common weakness with many in MacLennan's later, traditional realist novels: they are didactic. More often than not, these passages represent human consciousness, not as an end it itself, not to explore the complexities and anxieties of the modern human mind, but rather to make a particular social or political comment about the modern world, much as a social realist would do more directly in a third person mode: as David tells us of his factory experience, "It was like walking in a bad dream to be in this maze of figures and lathes and bolts and engines . . . I was tired and they revolved smoothly through my brain like ball-bearings relative to the turning rod until I seem to revolve myself and the slag-illumined sky to revolve too" (5).

Long before Barometer Rising appeared in 1941, then, MacLennan had already explored the possibilities of modernist fiction more remarkably than any of his Canadian contemporaries. If his unpublished novels do not provide ample evidence of this, one need only consider his numerous early statements on the art of fiction. In one particularly revealing letter, written to his sister Frances in 1933, MacLennan reveals that he was working self-reflexively in the innovative modernist mode, and was deliberately experimenting with the form of the modernist novel relative to other modernist writers he admired. This zealous letter also reveals that the balance of subjective and objective modes, so important to the modern realist, was one catalyst to his experimentalism:

> I have big ideas of what to do with the writing game. It seems that I have made a start with my kaleidoscopic passages as it is . . . . James Joyce has

> brought up the stream of consciousness and I don't think anyone can improve on what he has done there. But my idea is to work up the kaleidoscope into a much completer form than I have done already, making it in part subjective and in part objective.

Clearly MacLennan's experiments were not simple exercises in imitation. They certainly involved some precocious posturing relative to famous influences, but more importantly they demonstrate MacLennan's early awareness of and willingness to experiment with modernist techniques. But this is something his critics have ignored entirely: when his unpublished novels are mentioned at all, they are almost invariably dismissed as slight, unimportant, apprentice works that build towards his achievement in the well-known Barometer Rising. Indeed, given the significance of these novels as the most sustained Canadian examples of high modernism, their critical dismissal is almost humourous. Cameron's biography of MacLennan is the only critical work to provide a significant reading of these works, and her emphasis, understandably, is upon their biographical significance. Woodcock's study does not name these novels directly, labelling the first a "literary failure" and the second an "apprentice work," before concluding that MacLennan's decision to set a novel in Canada marked the beginning of his career (Hugh MacLennan 14-15). Buitenhuis's book tells us only that MacLennan "had read very few novels and had to grope his way," writing two unspecified novels before he realized "[h]is next book had to have a Canadian setting" (12). And Cockburn merely tells us that the first novel "has a European setting, inspired perhaps by interests picked up along the way," while the second, "like his first attempt . . . went unpublished" (16-17). Although MacLennan's first two novels have been available to researchers since 1967, his critics have based their evaluations of these works on MacLennan's own misleading comments.[10] The neglect of these two

early novels provides a profoundly skewed sense of the career of the most renowned Canadian realist, and their discovery ought to have had an effect on his critics equivalent in impact to that which the discovery of Grove's secret life had on his. Instead, decades after these novels were first made available, critics still assume that MacLennan began his career as an indifferent, traditional, unproblematic realist who borrowed his techniques and methods from outmoded writers. In fact, MacLennan's realism was not arrived at by default; it was a deliberate aesthetic choice that grew out of a deliberate rejection of the modernist form that he had struggled with as a young writer.

Writing in his later years, MacLennan became an increasingly vociferous opponent of modernist expression, and he articulately and incisively voiced his specific objections to it. One need only contrast a passage from "The Future of the Novel as an Art Form," an article published in Scotchman's Return and Other Essays in 1960, to his earlier letter to his sister to find evidence of a dramatic shift in writerly disposition:

> In my early days I was under the spell of some brilliant friends who believed that if anyone refused to recognize that *Ulysses* was the master-novel of the twentieth century, he was unfit to make a literary judgment in a kindergarten. I got so much fun out of thinking myself a member of the *avant-garde*, it was so delightful to spend long hours in smoke-filled rooms ridiculing every author admired by the bourgeoisie, that for two years I cramped my style by trying to write like James Joyce. But I never honestly liked *Ulysses* well enough to read all of it . . . . (143)

This pointed comment is a reflection of an aesthetic shift that took place in MacLennan's mind far earlier: between completing the modernist Man Should Rejoice in 1937 and publishing the conservatively realist Barometer Rising in 1941, something

monumental obviously happened to MacLennan's ideas about writing. In the broadest sense, MacLennan's eventual rejection of experimental modernism is not particularly surprising: we have already seen examples of three Canadian writers—Knister, Grove, Callaghan—who articulately voice similar reasons for tempering their experimentalism. But why, when MacLennan abandoned his most experimental techniques, did he not become a modern realist like the others? Why did he leap from his position as Canada's most experimental modernist to become the most conservative major Canadian realist of the twentieth century? The answers to these questions go to the heart of MacLennan's aesthetic, and offer a clear and conclusive definition of the differences between modern realism and the nineteenth-century realism with which it is too often confused.

On the surface, MacLennan's critique of modernism is akin to those offered by his modern-realist forerunners and contemporaries. In "The Challenge to Prose," a little-known article published in 1955, he lashed out at the excessive experimentalism, subjectivism, and writerly self-indulgence that he considered to be typical of the modernist form:

> so many of the novelists of the twentieth century have indulged in experiments in form, in symbolism and obscurities of language, in the kind of eccentric subtleties to which so many painters have been driven since the time of Manet . . . one can almost state categorically that the path chosen by Joyce has led his imitators into a desert in which they have died of thirst . . . . (53)

This same article reveals, also, that MacLennan objected to the psychological and epistemological emphasis of many writers, including Faulkner, who "seems incapable of writing about anyone who is sane" (53). And these are by no means isolated

examples of such attitudes. Again and again, in numerous places, MacLennan offered a critique of the modernists on the basis of what he believed was their excessive experimentalism. Some of the best and most concise examples are found in his unpublished lecture notes:[11] "He [Joyce] refused to acknowledge that writing must be a communication"; "Hemingway, however indifferent he may have been as a novelist, was a unique artist, and 'unique' is here the mot juste"; and he concluded, in contrast, that Evelyn Waugh's technically conservative Brideshead Revisted was "as good an example of modern fiction technique as one can find" even though "it avoids all experimentation for its own sake" (Lecture Notes n. pag.).[12] Ultimately, MacLennan's critiques of modernism prove to be far more vociferous than those of Knister, Grove, and Callaghan. For reasons we shall see, MacLennan rejects the middle ground proposed by the modern realists in favour of his own arch-conservative form. This was a reactionary act that he conceived to be radical: "The most revolutionary course any artist can take now . . . is to be conservative" ("The Challenge to Prose" 7).

As I have argued in a number of contexts, the modern realists ultimately reject many of the boldest modernist experiments because of their subjectivism. Modern realism, generally speaking, is an aesthetic of compromise, a middle ground between high modernism, with its bold epistemological techniques, and the realism of the nineteenth-century novel, with its often heavy-handed objectivism. MacLennan, by his own admission, was at least in part working towards the same goal as the modern realists: the balance of these two modes ("my idea is to work up the kaleidoscope into a much completer form than I have done already, making it in part subjective and in part objective"). Yet MacLennan rejects modernism in favour of a form of realism too conservative even for Grove, the most traditional of the modern realists. To understand this peculiar decision requires a much more exacting examination of MacLennan's

attitudes to both modernism and modern realism. Revealingly, and offering another confirmation of my central thesis, these two aesthetics were conflated in MacLennan's mind. In other words, MacLennan did not become a modern realist because, to him, modern realism was synonymous with modernism, and he adopted his conservative aesthetic in direct response to both modern forms. Although MacLennan used the term "realism" rarely in his criticism, when he did almost invariably he applied it to writers who are now generally called modernists. In a little-known article published in the Canadian Author and Bookman in 1949, "Changing Values in Fiction," he contrasted what he called the "realism" of the "modern novelists" to the writing of the nineteenth century:

> one great reason for all these changes [rejection of Victorian values] was the consistent attitude of the English-speaking novelists between 1920 and 1939 . . . This period, with all its faults, was the period of realism. The novelists who gained the greatest honour in that age were those who showed life as it was—often worse than it was—and who never tried to gloss over the ugliness . . . . (11)

In the same article, MacLennan identifies a discernable style characteristic of this writing he calls "modern realism," and identifies numerous writers who are exemplary: in Canada, Gwethalyn Graham,[13] discussed in Chapter Five, in the United States, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Lewis, Dos Passos, and James Farrell.[14] Although MacLennan's list of writers includes a curious mixture of some of the most technically innovative and conservative of the modernists, he unites them on the basis of their shared advocacy of a style that is more or less in keeping with my description of Canadian modern realism:

> during the past twenty-five years prose has never been used with such

> precise and selective care in the description and picturing of the ordinary details of life . . . . Just as the painter eliminates more and more detail from his design and leaves the barest essentials to make his statement, so does the modern realistic novelist eliminate a whole host of impressions . . . leav[ing] only a distillation of those vital ones which remain. (11-12)

MacLennan's characterization of modern writing is not critically exacting, but it reveals that he did not distinguish between modernism and modern realism. Although the generic boundaries he draws are somewhat arbitrary and confusing, it is nevertheless significant that MacLennan confirms what I have been saying all along: modern realism is a conservative form of modernism.

As one might expect, given MacLennan's conflation of these two aesthetics, his "revolutionary" step forward, or beyond modern realism, was really an enormous step backward to the realism of the nineteenth century. The underlying reasons for this bizarre aesthetic choice have not been acknowledged by MacLennan's critics who, as I have argued, generally assume that this outmoded realism marks the starting point of his literary career. But MacLennan's conscious *rejection* of experiment is not the same thing as an *indifference* to experiment. When we acknowledge that MacLennan's aesthetic was a conscious choice, not an accident, we can begin to uncover the underlying writerly motivations that make sense of most of the troubling aspects of the MacLennan style. Ultimately, the main difference between MacLennan and the modern realists was in their different motivations for seeking a balance between subjective and objective perspectives in their writing. The modern realists, as I have argued, believed that the subjective perspective, the state of mind, the epistemological representation, was a desirable, even crucial, part of the modern novel, and an end in itself; they only balked when an experimental strategy became *too* subjectivist. In the broadest sense,

their project entailed the inclusion of numerous often competing subjective perspectives within the framework of a larger, impersonal, objectivist narrative. In this sense, the modern realists, again, are aiming with less abandon for the same result sought by some of the most experimental modernists: Woolf, Joyce, Faulkner. But MacLennan's reasons for seeking a balance of objective and subjective perspectives were markedly different: his notion of an objectivist framework did not involve an appeal to impersonality, but rather to an absolute personality, a higher absolute "truth," an all-knowing authority: the author himself.

MacLennan sought, then, not the effacement of the author-persona, but a means to disguise the author's opinions and ideals in fictional form. Correspondingly, the multiple subjectivities he incorporates into his narratives do not exist for themselves or stand as mimetic reflections of states of consciousness; they are particular manifestations of the larger "absolute truth" offered by MacLennan himself. This confusing ideal accounts for two of the peculiarities of his early modernist novels that stand in contrast to most other modernist works. MacLennan's "kaleidoscopic" technique in So All Their Praises, despite its fragmented multivocality, does not serve to undermine a notion of absolute authority in the way that Faulkner's dissonant perspectivism does in such novels as The Sound and the Fury (1929), As I Lay Dying (1930), and Absalom, Absalom! (1936). Instead, it serves the purposes of the nineteenth-century realist: it attempts to provide a broad, historical context, a sweeping, inclusive, authoritative view of the times. And MacLennan's attempts to bring together the individual perspective and "world consciousness" in Man Should Rejoice also serve a larger didactic aim. He is not seeking, in this latter work, to explore human consciousness in an epistemological fashion, but rather to show his character thinking about the larger social and historical issues of importance to the novel. David Culver,

despite his unreliability and epistemological characterization, is really no less a representative character than Athanase Tallard; as MacLennan would say on the first day of his modern novel courses at McGill University, "The point of view from which the lectures will be given is best stated in this single sentence of D. H. Lawrence: THE NOVEL TREATS THE POINT WHERE THE SOUL MEETS HISTORY" (Lecture Notes n. pag.). MacLennan's modernist novels are different in technique but not in intention from his later works, such as Two Solitudes (1945) and The Precipice (1948), which strive to offer sweeping interpretations of broad historical forces, and to create characters who embody them. MacLennan abandoned modernism because eventually he realized that he had a different goal from writers like James Joyce and the modern realists. MacLennan wanted to discuss and affirm larger socio-historical truths and offer an interpretation of the world as he saw it. The modernists and modern realists, at least in their epistemological phases, were not primarily interested in interpretation but mimesis. Accordingly, for MacLennan, subjective perspectives were extraneous, needless, and only served, at best to affirm indirectly the authorial view, at worst, through their emphasis upon multiple interpretation and individual experience, to mitigate his larger effort. He began with them because they were used by the famous modernists who had *cachet* as cosmopolitan writers, but he discarded them when he realized that they did not suit his purposes. Unlike the modern realists, whose interest in psychological realism would not allow them to dispense entirely with epistemological techniques, MacLennan could and did cast them aside freely.[15]

MacLennan wanted to be the kind of writer that Tolstoy was in War and Peace and to explore, not the psychological terrain of interest to the modern writer, but a grand-scale society in an exhaustive and philosophical manner. In this sense, his aims were not unlike Grove's in The Seasons, discussed earlier. To achieve this objective

required, for MacLennan, more than a rejection of the boldest modern experiments with form: it necessitated, to a large degree, a rejection of the art of fiction itself. As MacLennan wrote in "The Future of the Novel as an Art Form" (1960), "I believe that future ages will recognize that the chief contribution made to literary form in this century has not been made by T. S. Eliot and James Joyce, but by writers of non-fiction" (149). More specifically, MacLennan advocated a different kind of novel that was, essentially, a fusion of fiction with non-fiction. This is precisely the quality that he admired in the nineteenth-century novelist, especially Tolstoy, and it is what appears to have precipitated the shift in his aesthetic from modernism to traditional realism. As he wrote in "Back to Tolstoy," a telling and unpublished article written in 1956,

> [w]hat gives War and Peace such enormous scope, what makes the reader who returns to it feel how much the modern novel has lost in its passion for neatness and technical perfection, are those very scenes which the modern critic would condemn as extraneous . . . [including] the long paragraphs on the philosophy of history itself . . . Why, Tolstoy asks specifically, did the Russian army panic at Austerlitz but stand firm at Borodino? A modern novelist seeking to answer this question in a novel would try to do so through the mouths of the characters themselves, or through some obscure symbolic contrivance. And of course he would fail. For the characters who panicked at Austerlitz and stood at Borodino did not know, and could not accurately explain, why they behaved in one way before Moscow and in another in Bohemia. Nor could this mystery be explained through symbolism, for these events really happened, and in themselves they were far more gigantic affairs than any symbols could encompass. (5-6)

MacLennan's rejection of the modern novel and his lack of faith in its experimental

techniques is multi-layered and complex. But, fundamentally, it derives from his anxiety, expressed in this passage, that experiment mitigates the novelist's authority, capacity to editorialize, and ability to draw large philosophical and historical conclusions about broad, sweeping, socio-historical concerns.

MacLennan's desire to "include long passages on the philosophy of history itself" in his fiction explains a technique he uses often in his realist novels, to the chagrin of many of his critics. Each Man's Son (1951), his novel least concerned with grand-scale, sweeping, historical commentary, is also perhaps his best. This work, set in Cape Breton, tells the story of a Calvinist doctor who for ambiguous psychological reasons—which include his feelings of guilt for performing a possibly unnecessary hysterectomy on his wife early in their marriage—wants to adopt the son of a local single mother who does not want to give him up. But even in this most psychologically intense of his novels, MacLennan structures his story largely around a moral and theological debate, as most critics of this work have acknowledged: "Calvinistic Puritanism is in a large part to blame . . ." (Lucas, Hugh MacLennan 51). And, while this novel does not purport to offer a large-scale social or political message, MacLennan still prefaces his narrative with an "Author's Note" that draws attention to the Tolstoyian authorial presence:

> Continents are much alike, and a man can no more love a continent than he can love a hundred million people. But all the islands of the world are different. They are small enough to be known, they are vulnerable, and men come to feel about them as they do about women.
>
> Many men have loved the island of Cape Breton and a few may have hated her. (vii)

As Each Man's Son demonstrates, MacLennan is unwilling to let his stories stand

alone, and he persistently sets them in a non-fictional framework, indicating all too bluntly that his work has a philosophical, intellectual, and "documentary" purpose that justifies its very existence.

Such a documentary impulse might naturally have led MacLennan to experiment with the various forms of reportage characteristic of the modern-realist form, and discussed in detail in Chapter Five. But this is not the case at all: the differences between MacLennan's documentary impulse and the impulse underlying modern-realist reportage are dramatic, and highlight an important contrast between modern and conservative realism. For the modern realist—and this cannot be overstated—the effacement of the author, the achievement of narrative impersonality, is fundamental. The subject matter of the modern realist—the modern world, the modern mind, the modern theme—is intended to come alive in a manner that is as direct and objective as possible. This is in sharp contrast to MacLennan's method, which sees an authorial personality or presence, not only to be unavoidable, but in fact *desirable*. As he wrote in "Back to Tolstoy,"

> What makes War and Peace such a stupendous experience is not the huge list of characters, who were so numerous that Tolstoy himself forgot a great many of them. It is that the stories of these characters, in the most natural way, are given their place in the historical events of their time. And they are given this place effectively because Tolstoy constantly commits what today's critics insist is a fictional crime. He himself, whenever he feels like it, comes right out on the novel's stage and begins to talk. If the situation calls for it, he talks like a moralist, like an essayist, or like a professional historian. Whenever the situation is right, he instantly disregards the narrow convention that the author should not intrude physically into the

> stories he is telling. Hence it comes about that the greatest of all the characters in War and Peace is Tolstoy himself. (4)

MacLennan is identifying a didactic presence in Tolstoy's novel, and not only justifying it, but *advocating* it. The modern novel, with its experimentalism and impersonality, serves to draw attention from this "greatest of all the characters," and this limits, in MacLennan's view, the philosophical impact and scope of fiction.[16]

Accordingly, all of MacLennan's novels freely borrow this "technique" of authorial intrusion from Tolstoy, and MacLennan himself enters into the narrative of his stories unabashedly whenever he has something important to say. In The Precipice (1948), MacLennan uses a love story between an old-fashioned Canadian woman, Lucy Cameron, and a morally unscrupulous, dynamic, energetic, American businessman as an allegory for the relationship between Canada and the United States. Most of the authorial intrusions in this novel take the form of philosophical musings on the part of a vaguely defined authorial presence, as this passage, coming between a tender moment shared by Lucy and her daughter, and Lucy's contemplation of a failing marriage, indicates:

> It was the spring for which more than a billion people had been waiting for over six years. Any hour now American and British armies would make contact with the Russians in Germany. The nightmare created by a generation of technicians in temporary collusion with a madman was nearly over, and for this little while the world seemed to be wide awake, like a fever patient between dreams. (259)

Other times, however, MacLennan himself appears almost as a character in the novel. Although the action in The Precipice takes place primarily in Ontario and New Jersey, it opens with an internal monologue—with no obvious connection to the action or setting

of the story—delivered by the author himself, who, like David Culver in Man Should Rejoice, is a repository for the *Zeitgeist* of the modern age:

> Sometimes we wake in the night and know why we have become what we are. Walking alone in the night, listening to the cars rumbling under the pavement of Park Avenue . . . we see in a flash against the eyeballs a fragment of what has happened to us all, and lacking the brave illusion of daylight, it is easy to wish we had been born in another century, or had inherited some other time than now. (5)

To be sure, MacLennan's critics have frequently complained about his didacticism.[17] But his critics have not generally acknowledged that such a didactic and conservative impulse in his writing is intentional, not merely the byproduct of an indifference to style. MacLennan's authorial intrusions are a deliberate attempt to compensate for what he felt were the limitations of the impersonal modern novel by appealing to a higher authority, a broader scope, a larger "truth," through the philosophical and intellectual musings of the author-persona himself.

MacLennan's didactic intentions are perhaps even more apparent in his techniques of characterization. While many of his critics generally assume that his type-cast, representative characters are again the product of writerly indifference—in the process of dissecting MacLennan's "irremediably old-fashioned" style, Woodcock remarks that his "characterization is oversimplified and moralistic in tone" (Hugh MacLennan 48)—we must again acknowledge that his methods of characterization involve a deliberate, if unfortunate, aesthetic choice. In numerous places, MacLennan has asserted that the fundamental purpose of character in the novel is to show how the individual is the embodiment of larger social forces: "the point where the soul meets history" (Lecture Notes n. pag.). Robert D. Chambers has made this point, calling

MacLennan's characters "puppet-like stereotypes" because, "[i]n his books, character is not shaped primarily by inner-directed impulses, but by the play and interplay of those historic forces which sweep across Canadian life" (61). In several of his articles, MacLennan declares an interest in psychological writing. But his psychological concerns are with an exploration of the human psyche, not for its own sake, but rather to uncover the origins of historical and social movements and events. As he wrote in "The Challenge to Prose" (1955),

> the novel has gone underground into the subliminal regions where are found the well-springs of human motives which are externally translated into the insensate abstractions of the powerful dramatic nations. It works now in the region where exists the shape of things to come. There it is very difficult for the novelist to create a pattern of order which will be true equally to art and to the life he knows. He must not so much seek to forge the uncreated conscience of his race as to reforge a conscience that has been fragmented. (246)

In a sense, then, MacLennan has little objection to psychological writing as long as it has as its aim, not mere mimetic reflection of fragmentary human consciousness, but a sociological interest in human motives that shape society and history. He obviously, too, has little patience for psychological writing that merely affirms the relativism and chaos of the modern world; as his allusion to Joyce in the above passage suggests, he subscribes to the largely romantic enterprise undertaken by Stephen Dedalus in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man of forging, rather than merely representing, his country, a subject discussed later.

Such an approach to characterization does not, for MacLennan, result in the creation of the kind of psychologically real characters that the best of the modern

realists bring to life. In practice, his characters too often appear to be instruments of the larger philosophical assertions of the book, mouthpieces for the author-persona; as he wrote in "The Future of the Novel as an Art Form," "The novel can make social situations live; it can clothe political and economic forces with flesh and blood" (146). This appears to be precisely the heavy-handed technique MacLennan employs in his characterization of Marius, his stereotypical, indeed almost racist, portrait of a Quebec nationalist in Two Solitudes:

> Marius refused to talk of anything but politics . . . . He claimed he was not a fascist . . . He criticized every other politician in Quebec: they had all betrayed the people . . . He kept repeating the same things over and over. Economic? What did economics matter? A pure race, a pure language, larger families, no more connection with the English, no interference from foreigners . . . . (374)

MacLennan's insistence that his characters ultimately exist to serve the larger political and philosophical concerns of the author persona, and not to stand first and foremost as psychologically "real" individuals, amounts to his rejection of the most fundamental tenet of modern realism: psychological realism. That MacLennan felt very strongly about this point is undeniable, and some of his most vitriolic and unsavoury public statements, which simultaneously betray his deep conservatism as a thinker,[18] were directed towards the psychological realism of modern writing. As he wrote in "Where Is My Potted Palm" (1954),

> Our period, which thinks itself realistic, has adopted in the fiction its critics praise the realism of an alcoholic or a potential suicide . . . . Middle-class sentimentality has been replaced, in our fiction, by a peculiar middle-class *chic* which finds homosexuality more interesting than normal relationships,

> which is interested in women only if they are bitches, which believes ostensibly in liberal politics, yet views the materialistic society produced by the triumph of liberalism with a fascinated revulsion . . . . (50)

For MacLennan, the propensity of modern writing to deal with the social realities of the twentieth-century—when it "showed life as it was—often worse than it was—and . . . never tried to gloss over the ugliness"—also entailed the fall of the artist from his traditionally exalted position; in other words, it effaced and discredited the authorial persona so important to his idea of good fiction. As he reflects mournfully in "The Challenge to Prose,"

> So far as fiction is concerned, the chief change in the mental climate [of the modern age] has been the development of psychology as a quasi-science. A century ago the novelist, the priest, and the philosopher were accepted as experts on the human soul. Now they are not. If the modern reader wants to know what happens to the human soul, he does not go to the novelist . . . . (53)

MacLennan's rejection of the kind of psychological realism practised by the modernists and modern realists, then, occurs for two reasons. On the one hand, he believes that characters ought to be embodiments of larger social and historical forces: in other words, he wants society, not the individual, to be the fundamental subject of the novel. At the same time, he expresses an anxiety about the fact that psychological writing, especially in its epistemological phases, both effaces the author-persona through impersonal mimeticism, and leads away from the expression of larger universal "truths" that are not easily explored through the ambiguous mental states of modern individuals.

Somewhat paradoxically, MacLennan's attempts to "defend" the author-persona

through a rejection of the impersonality and psychological emphasis of the modern form have the effect of limiting authorial freedom and autonomy. MacLennan's brand of didacticism amounts to his rejection of art for art's sake. The modern realists, apart from their insistence that writing ought on a fundamental level to explore the complexities of the modern human condition which necessarily involved an exploration of contemporary Canada, did not feel they had an obligation to take part in a social or nationalistic exercise. MacLennan, however, asserted that the novelist had an obligation to write with a social purpose in mind. As he wrote in "The Future of the Novel as an Art Form,"

> The reason why *Ulysses* has been such a stumbling block to critics of all sorts, it seems to me, is the discrepancy between Joyce's aims and quality as a writer and his actual achievement in this and later works. In *Ulysses* he sought to write an absolutely new kind of novel and in this he surely succeeded. Inevitably the *avant-garde* loved him for his example. But the question for practising writers is not whether the method of *Ulysses* is original, but whether it is useful. (144)

And he makes the link between psychological realism and the avoidance of the writer's social responsibilities more explicit in another little-known article, "Today's Novelist and the Serious Audience":

> But there was another and more potent influence which depreciated the *engagé* attitude. This was the fact that the supreme prose style masters of the last twenty-five years were Joyce, Proust, Hemingway and Faulkner. All of these men deliberately divorced themselves from the great public issues. They thought it the artist's business, first and foremost, to write truly of the senses. (5)

MacLennan's rejection of psychological realism, then, entails more than a rejection of excessive subjectivism. The modern realists avoided the most extreme forms of epistemological representation because it interfered with their larger exploration of a contemporary world. But this avoidance did not generally result in their creation of stereotypical characters or a heavy-handed didacticism in their work: whether they were writing of the human mind or the contemporary world, their stance was largely objectivist, impersonal, and mimetic. MacLennan, on the other hand, rejects psychological writing at least in part because it supplants the "*engagé*" purpose of modern fiction with a belief in "art for art's sake."

In this sense, and in spite of his deeply-rooted conservative ideals about art and life, MacLennan is more like the socialist realists discussed in Chapter Five than the modern realists. This further explains his eventual rejection of modernism, and many of his critiques of the modernist form echo those found in Masses and New Frontier in the 1930s. As he wrote in "The Writer Engagé" (1976),

> Opposite to the *engagé* is the writer in the ivory tower, and what separates the two is simply temperament. In our century the most celebrated examples have been Marcel Proust and James Joyce—Proust writing *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* in Paris in his cork-lined room while France was bleeding nearly to death in the 1914 War; Joyce in those same years living in Switzerland writing *Ulysses*. So far as their reputations are concerned . . . these two men seem to have made the best bargain with posterity, at least between 1950 and the present. I doubt if they have with the future. (271)

Like the socialist realists, MacLennan rejects modern realism because he believes that art should have a social function. The modern realist seeks to explore and represent a

given "reality" in fiction. But MacLennan, again like the socialist realist, has an idealistic, and essentially romantic, aim: the remaking of reality through fiction. In "The Future Trend in the Novel," MacLennan predicted that this impulse toward defining, illuminating, and effectively remaking society would characterize new Canadian fiction:

> I think, therefore, that the significant writing of the next decade will be . . . more interested in illumination and definitions than writing has been since the Eighteenth Century. Its chief function will be a re-statement in the light of recent knowledge—of history, science, and psychology—of the position of individual man in the world, and of his society in terms of historical and scientific evolution . . . . For the Canadian writer, this change of emphasis seems to me favourable. (5)

And this same article would also state that this remaking was essentially a conservative enterprise, both on the levels of literary technique and intellectual values, and that it required the intrusion of the authorial presence into the text in order to supplant the moral relativism of the modern world with a host of traditional, and essentially romantic, ideals and beliefs:

> Evelyn Waugh is wise when he says, 'The artist's only function in the disintegrated society of today is to create independent systems of order of his own.' . . . . To me it looks like a long overdue return to the principle which should guide all artists, which is to seek for value and beauty, pity and terror, humour and love in the scenes around him and in the thoughts and images which emerge naturally out of his own personality. (4-5)

This passage, then, brings together several of the apparent contradictions in MacLennan's writing by revealing how he perceives his literary project to be at once revolutionary and conservative, personal and universal, aware of the modern human

condition and determined to ameliorate it.

In light of this new understanding of MacLennan's aesthetic, it is easy to see why impulses towards realism on the one hand, and romanticism on the other, appear to be competing in his writing. Many of his critics have noted this tension in his work, and have concluded that MacLennan's romantic impulse is an unintentional force that intrudes and mitigates his realism: the result of shoddy writing. As Laurel Boone writes, "*Each Man's Son* is an awkward book . . . . MacLennan intended *Each Man's Son* to be a realistic novel, but an examination of its romance features, of which the author was apparently unaware, helps to explain the contradictions . . . . the tension between romance and realism finally fractures the book" (155). Boone's assertion that romance and realism make uncomfortable bedfellows in MacLennan's novels is hard to argue against, but it is quite clear that MacLennan's romantic gestures are intentional. The romantic elements of even his most conservative realist novels tie in with his larger philosophical aims and social theses. In Barometer Rising, the coincidences, plot twists, and *deus ex machina* that bring Neil and Penny together in the final scene are liable to strain the credulity of even the most forgiving reader. Yet the fact that Neil is one of the very few young men in all of fiction to emerge from the Great War with a sense of optimism is tied in with MacLennan's nationalistic social thesis that Canada is a new nation that emerges out of the wreckage of an old civilization:

> For better or worse he was entering the future, he was identifying himself with the still-hidden forces which were doomed to shape humanity just as the tiny states of Europe had shaped the past. Canada was still hesitant . . . But if there were enough Canadians like himself, half-American and half-English, the day was inevitable when the halves would join and his country would become the central arch which united the new order. (218)

More infamously, in Two Solitudes, MacLennan creates a character who is, in many ways, his alter-ego. Paul Tallard, the central character in the second half of this lengthy novel which also offers a political thesis about Canada, struggles to make sense of his place as a Canadian in the modern world until he arrives at a romantic resolution to his predicament: he will write the great Canadian novel. As Paul mulls over this project, he essentially articulates MacLennan's own romantic vision for the Canadian artist, and simultaneously reveals how writing about Canada, to MacLennan, was at once romantic and realist, revolutionary and conservative:

> "A book about Canada—it would be like writing of the past century!" . . . . Proust wrote only of France, Dickens laid nearly all his scenes in London, Tolstoi was pure Russian. Hemingway let his heroes roam the world, but everything he wrote smelled of the United States . . . . But Canada was a country no one knew . . . a Canadian book would have to take place in the English and French traditions. Both traditions were so mature they were almost decadent, while Canada herself was still raw . . . . "An artist has to take life as he finds it. Life by itself is formless wherever it is. Art must give it a form." (364-65)

In The Precipice, the romantic elements of the story are even more conventional and clearly tied into a larger social thesis. Lucy Cameron's marriage to an American businessman who mistreats her has an allegorical significance emphasized when the characters act as mouthpieces for MacLennan's ideas. The "adventure of Lucy's marriage" involves both personal insights—"Lucy loved her husband's maleness"—and a series of equally banal socio-political epiphanies: "Her [Lucy's] strangest discovery of all was this: while as individuals most Americans she met seemed younger than Canadians in the ways their minds worked . . . their society as a whole seemed older in

every way, more advanced in time" (214, 217).

Regardless of the realist characteristics of MacLennan's novels, the Canada that he writes about is not a "real" Canada. It is a mythological Canada, and the many mythological references and motifs found in his novels appear to be present in an attempt to connect Canada to a lost, classical age that existed before the modern world intruded and destroyed a sense of unity, harmony, and simplicity. The mythological properties of his novels, and the way they function on a nationalistic and thematic level, have been amply explored by his critics, and most prominently by Woodcock who argues that the myth of Odysseus is a recurrent and defining feature of MacLennan's fiction: "the *Odyssey* itself was the product of a people in the process of becoming aware of itself, and, appropriately, the theme which MacLennan uses it to illuminate is the growth of a Canadian national consciousness" ("A Nation's Odyssey" 8). MacLennan's classical references and allusions indicate a nostalgia for a lost age, and draw attention to his deeply idealistic and romantic remaking of Canada in his work. These attempts to mythologize Canada, to locate it in a pre-modern, classical age, are apparent even in some of his descriptive passages that often pass as realist descriptions of Canadian landscape. Unlike the modern realist, ever focussed on the contemporary world, MacLennan, in Two Solitudes, creates a mythological stage on which to enact his drama of contemporary Canada:

> Nowhere has nature wasted herself as she has here. There is enough water in the Saint Lawrence alone to irrigate half of Europe, but the river pours right out of the continent into the sea. No amount of water can irrigate stones, and most of Quebec is solid rock. It is as though millions of years back in geologic time a sword had been plunged through the rock from the Atlantic to the Great Lakes and savagely wrenched out again . . . .

> In winter when there is no storm the sky is generally empty, blue and glittering over the ice and snow, and the sun stares out of it like a cyclops' eye. (1)

Although a full articulation of MacLennan's nationalist project is beyond the scope of this chapter, in general terms its main thesis about Canada is this: Canada will achieve its fullest potential as a "new" country by establishing a cultural connection to a lost past. Certainly, such an act of mythologizing Canada is in conflict with numerous aims of the modern realists: it neglects the contemporary moment through an appeal to history and myth, it avoids psychological realism through an exploration of grand-scale historical possibilities, and it seeks to supplant an exploration of the actual conditions of modernity with the statement of a romantic possibility.

MacLennan's writing, then, is idealistic and romantic in a similar fashion to the socialist realists, because, unlike the modern realists, he is not engaged in a direct and objectivist representation of contemporary Canada. He is striving to depict, not an "actual" Canada, but an ideal Canada. Critics have frequently identified the patriotism inherent in such a project, and have identified MacLennan's literary project to be one of cultural nationalism—as Goetsch writes, MacLennan writes of "important issues of Canadian society . . . showing the way to a general cultural renewal and reconstruction" ("Introduction," 6). But it is not commonly acknowledged that this idealistic representation of Canada has another important impetus: it allows MacLennan, unlike the modern realists, to openly rebel again the modernist sensibility. I have already discussed numerous ways that MacLennan rejects the cultural conditions of modernity: his conservative values and ideals, his preference for outmoded literary forms, his anxiety about the decline of the artist's exalted position, his rejection of moral relativism through the social function of art. Tellingly, romantic elements and idealism do not

enter MacLennan's writing until after he rejects the modernist form after his second unpublished novel, and begins writing conservative, realist novels about Canada. Unlike the essentially romantic theses of Barometer Rising and Two Solitudes discussed above, So All Their Praises and Man Should Rejoice offer pessimistic conclusions, and betray an almost Eliotesque sense of nostalgia for a lost age. As Cameron summarizes, in the first "Michael . . . is left at the end of the novel in painful isolation searching for spiritual meaning aboard a ship bound for England"; the second "novel ends . . . with the hero alone, attempting to make some sense out of his isolation" (Hugh MacLennan 84, 110). MacLennan's rejection of modernism, then, entails not just the rejection of the techniques of the modern form that the modern realists tempered in their works; it also involves a rejection of the cultural conditions of modernity, and seeks, through romantic elements including myth, to restore a connection with a pre-modern past. While this act of mythologizing is in itself a kind of literary experiment, such an idealistic project is anything but modern, and anything but realist.

The fact that the most conservative of Canada's major twentieth-century realists has received so much critical attention partly accounts for the critical neglect and misunderstanding of the modern-realist movement as a whole. Because MacLennan stands like a giant between the contemporary and modern-realist periods, so much of what critics assume to be true of Canadian realism is filtered through his reactionary, problematic, contradictory, and atypical *oeuvre*. It is ironic that the same writer most closely associated with Canadian nationalism has, to a significant extent, unwittingly and unintentionally, distorted and obscured our understanding of the best early twentieth-century Canadian writing. MacLennan's success has had a deleterious effect on modern realism by perpetuating the myth that his conservative work is typical. As

Woodcock writes,

> [t]he reasons for MacLennan's reputation, and for his undoubted importance as a novelist, are to be found in the original way in which he has interpreted the Canadian scene to his fellow countrymen rather than in any originality of approach to the art of the novel itself. Indeed, if we are concerned with fictional technique, one of the most striking characteristics of *Barometer Rising* and MacLennan's four later novels is their relative conservatism. They are unashamedly didactic; they rely heavily on environmental atmosphere and local colour; their characterisation is over-simplified and moralistic in tone; their language is descriptive rather than evocative; and their action tends to be shaped externally by a Hardyesque use of circumstance and coincidence. (Hugh MacLennan 8)

In this critical paradigm, MacLennan is at best a culminating figure in a Canadian realist tradition that goes back to the 1920s, and the writer of "undoubted importance" who consolidates the tentative steps taken by earlier writers into a technically flawed and indifferent body of conservative realism: as Alec Lucas writes, "MacLennan escapes the depressing naturalism and domestic realism of the twenties and thirties . . ." (16). At worst, and more frequently, critics disregard the two and a half decades of modern realism that predates Barometer Rising (1941) and cast him, unproblematically, as the first world-class Canadian writer, the first accomplished realist, and the country's first contemporary novelist. Roger Hyman writes, for example, that MacLennan "set the stage for an entire generation of writers" (316). Buitenhuis writes that "Canada obviously lacked such [a technically competent] tradition of literary expression even as late as the Nineteen Thirties. Hugh MacLennan's task as a beginning novelist was correspondingly difficult . . . . MacLennan's novels have gone a long way towards

constituting a tradition, invaluable to succeeding writers" (16). Buitenhuis even suggests that MacLennan's significance in these respects owes much to his imitation of nineteenth-century writers: "MacLennan has worked in an earlier, more factual, English tradition, accepting almost without question the techniques used by Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, and John Galsworthy. Without a native tradition in letters either to accept or react against, this was probably an unselfconscious choice" (17). And Hugo McPherson writes that MacLennan appeared at a time when Canadian literature lacked a "'movement' in the sense that applies to a more substantial and mature literature" and had "little [writing] that can be classified usefully by such labels as 'realism'"; fortunately, however, MacLennan "[w]earied of the unreality of Canadian fiction," became "the representative novelist of the contemporary period," and "the first novelist to subject the Canadian mind to a searching and informed scrutiny" ("Fiction 1940-1960" 210-11).

But what about the dozens of realists that came before? What about the modern realists who had been exploring modern subjects in a manner that was sophisticated, credible, experimental, artful, and authentic for twenty-five years before MacLennan published? MacLennan's critics suggest that he was new because he wrote about an ideal Canada using outmoded and foreign literary techniques. This effectively obliterates the most important contributions of the modern realists from our literary histories: among Canadian writers of fiction, they were the first to engage the great modern concerns of the twentieth century, the first to wrestle seriously with literary form, and the first to arrive at a coherent and modern aesthetic through thoughtful and indefatigable experiment. Of course, MacLennan cannot be blamed for the narrow-mindedness of some of his readers. And the fact remains that, for all of his technical fumbling and questionable writerly motivations, for all of his disagreements

with the modern realists, he did have his own particular literary aesthetic and ambitious literary aims. Given the critical neglect of his modernist phase and failure to come to terms with his own form of realism, he, too, has not been justly treated by literary historians. Certainly, at very least, MacLennan deserves acknowledgement for arriving at his own individualistic realism through a conscious and often self-reflexive writerly process. He also deserves recognition for writing some of the most engaging and ambitious Canadian realist novels of the century. But suggesting that MacLennan and his conservative realism represent the point of departure for the realist tradition in Canada only serves to obscure the genuine "tradition," the modern-realist tradition, that has been forgotten.

Conclusion

The Lost Legacy of Modern Realism

The modern-realist movement that began energetically and unmistakably with the appearance of Canadian Bookman and its first loud manifestos in January 1919 did not conclude so unambiguously. The movement came to an end in a general sense with Hugh MacLennan's problematic emergence as the first "contemporary" Canadian writer, but it was already beginning to wind down by the beginning of World War Two. All the same, elements and influences of the movement continue well beyond my somewhat arbitrary closing date of 1950. A number of modern-realist works discussed in this study, for example, were published in the 1950s, including MacLennan's Each Man's Son (1951), Callaghan's The Loved and the Lost (1951), and McCourt's The Wooden Sword (1956). There are also numerous works published in the 1950s (and after) that are not essentially modern-realist, but incorporate many of its trademark techniques and characteristics: Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley (1952), Ethel Wilson's The Equations of Love (1952), Brian Moore's Judith Hearne (1955), Mordecai Richler's Son of a Smaller Hero (1955), Adele Wiseman's The Sacrifice (1956), Robertson Davies's A Mixture of Frailties (1958), and MacLennan's The Watch That Ends the Night (1959), to name just a few. Indeed, realism debatably remained the dominant mode in Canadian fiction until the 1970s, and a strong realist "tradition" persists even today. From a literary-historical perspective, then, the temporal boundaries of modern realism are inconvenient: it does not, like some other modernist movements, end suddenly or spectacularly with the arrival of a definitive historical event or rival aesthetic. Instead, like modernism as a general phenomenon, modern realism was exhausted slowly, over many years, and several of its characteristics proved remarkably enduring: as Bradbury and McFarlane write, "the broader view of

Modernism . . . must suggest an extraordinary range of continuities through into present art" ("Name and Nature of Modernism" 52).

Surprisingly, given the neglect of modern realism by our critics, and its near absence from our literary histories, most of its "continuities" are rather obvious. Many of the best-known late twentieth-century Canadian writers have produced major works with prominent "realist" characteristics: Richler, Davies, Atwood, Laurence, Findley, and Munro, among others. Today, more than eight decades after Canadian Bookman announced the arrival of a "new era" in its first manifesto, at least two of the fundamental tenets of modern realism remain prominent in the Canadian literary imagination: psychological realism and an interest in representing a contemporary Canada. As a movement, modern realism came to an "end," but its aesthetic was never abandoned by a disgruntled group of authors who felt it had "failed"; neither was it unseated by a new, competing literary form with combative theories. Instead, it quietly lost its coherence even as the majority of Canada's serious writers continued to produce realist fiction. By 1950, there were no periodicals or little magazines in Canada that showed more than a remote interest in debating the value and shape of the realist aesthetic. The careers of most of the modern realists had drawn to a close before mid-century (Knister, Grove), or they had been directed away from self-conscious experiment with the realist form (MacLennan), or they had simply begun to take realism for granted (Callaghan). There are only a very few scattered, mostly retrospective, critical pieces written on modern realism after 1950, including short sections of Callaghan's That Summer in Paris (1963), and some of MacLennan's essays, both discussed earlier. And the new writers who emerged in the 1950s, even when their styles were predominantly realist, gave no indication that they considered themselves a part of a realist movement. By its very definition, a literary movement

advocates distinct aesthetic assumptions and methods, often in the face of a hegemonic tradition, or in opposition to rival forms and groups. The modern-realist movement was initiated by writers who objected to the dominant romanticism in early twentieth-century Canadian fiction, and they aggressively opposed it with their new methods. Many other rebellious modernist movements were ultimately abandoned because they proved too limited or became unfashionable—Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, Vorticism. But modern realism ceased to be a movement after 1950 because of its very *success*. By mid-century, modern realism had no need of advocacy: it had few opponents on the Canadian literary scene, and was established as the dominant and default mode of serious fiction.

The most dramatic, lasting, and significant aspect of the modern-realist legacy—its near total conquest of serious Canadian fiction by 1950—has been overlooked because it is so apparent. The modern realists have not received the credit they deserve for commanding the most successful and (so far) enduring literary revolution in the nation's history. They also have not received their due for laying the groundwork of both a contemporary Canadian fiction, and the first indisputably world-class achievements by Canadian writers. Instead, they at very best receive muted praise for their "formative" role: as Pacey writes in a passage I cited at the beginning of this study, "[i]f this period deserves remembering at all, it is as the time when a few novelists first seriously tried to come to terms with their Canadian environment, and to find a suitable style" ("Fiction 1920-1940" 168). A recognition that the modern-realist impact on Canadian fiction is far more significant than suggested by Pacey and others is long overdue. But modern realism is not significant solely or even primarily because it changed the national literature and set the stage for a contemporary fiction. Canada's modern realism, in its own right, constitutes a significant branch of the

international collection of movements that makes up literary modernism. The modern realists did more than try "to come to terms with their Canadian environment": their exploration of the cultural conditions and great subjects of modernity was sustained and uncompromising. Like many of their modernist contemporaries, the modern realists did more than try "to find a suitable style": they developed an innovative, experimental, complex, workable, and enduring aesthetic. And it was their *own* aesthetic: they did not imitate or replicate the methods and techniques of foreign writers. Instead, their interest in bringing subjective perspectives into impersonal and objectivist narratives, in rendering complex human psychology within a "realistic" exploration of their contemporary world, led them to insist that a Canadian modernism—a modern realism—had to "happen" in its own way.

The modern-realist movement, and the eclectic *oeuvres* that it comprises, are perhaps the best indication we have that Canada's early twentieth-century "isms"—romanticism, naturalism, realism, modernism—ought to be judged on their own terms, something that the modern realists themselves frequently told us. This certainly does not mean applying looser or kinder "standards of criticism," to reinvoke a phrase from Canadian Bookman. But it does entail an end to at least one persistent critical practice that can be traced back to The Canadian Forum of the 1920s: looking for modern Canadian writers to mimic foreign models, and then either reprobating or making excuses for them when they do not. The fact that modernism and realism "appear" simultaneously and contingently in Canada is only unbecoming or embarrassing if we deny the existence or validity of a Canadian literary tradition that has points of convergence with and divergence from other traditions. Ironically, the quest of many nationalist critics to "validate" Canadian writing by linking it to foreign literatures, or by denying that such comparisons have any value at all, has contributed

to the critical neglect of Canada's own hard-won form of modernism.

It is undoubtedly true that much high-modernist experiment in other countries developed in reaction to and rejection of nineteenth-century realism. The functional and dynamic coexistence of modernism and realism in the minds of Canada's early twentieth-century writers, however, is proof that these aesthetics are not inherently or irreconcilably opposed. The fact that modern realism has gone almost unnoticed until the present may be partly the result of such polarizing and binary thinking. The modern realists demonstrated time and again that they believed the modernist and realist impulses were symbiotic: the incorporation of modernist technique into a larger realist framework could actually *enhance* the "realism" of the text; and the text could effectively become more "modern" when realist methods were employed to ground it in what Lionel Stevenson called "the actual vital spirit of their times, free of outworn conventions and yet avoiding all self-conscious affectation of revolt" ("Is Canadian Poetry Modern?" 196). In this sense, modern realism resembles a more famous, relatively conservative "branch" of modernism that includes writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Joseph Conrad, Jean Rhys, D. H. Lawrence, Albert Camus, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Mann, and Henry James. This international assortment of writers, like their Canadian counterparts, experimented with a form of literary realism. But while they stretched the boundaries of the realist form, to be sure, they stopped short of endorsing the boldest high-modernist techniques and strategies. Despite the comparison, the modern realists are better described as "constructive" modernists than "conservative" modernists. They did not reject high-modernist strategies because they were reactionary. Rather, they applied the revolutionary and experimental spirit of modernism, not to break violently with an established order, but rather to establish their own tradition where they believed one was lacking. They balked at the boldest

modernist methods—extreme fragmentation, dissonant multivocality, the most subjectivist epistemological methods—because they considered them in conflict with the modern-realist conviction that art had to be coherent, clear, and constructive: how else could they establish a modern Canadian fiction rooted in the contemporary world?

The modern realists thus demand that we reexamine some of our general assumptions about Canadian literature. Several critical misreadings of Canadian fiction may derive from our need to explain the proliferation of Canadian realism in the absence of our acknowledgment a modern-realist movement: if realism did not come into being *because of a conscious and modern literary movement*, how else are we to explain its prominence in our literature? Since realism is ubiquitous in Canadian fiction, or at least was during the explosion of nationalist and thematic criticism in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, it is almost impossible to imagine it ever having to fight to emerge, survive, and flourish. It can seem such a given, such an obvious and defining characteristic of our national literature, that it hardly seems worthy of mention. It can appear on the surface, reminiscent of nineteenth-century realism, and be cursorily and summarily dismissed as an imitative and outmoded body of fiction. It can also be perceived as a default aesthetic for writers whom we presume to be carrying out nationalist, regional, or referential projects. But the autonomous and calculated aesthetic of the modern realists indicates that geography, nationalism, and foreign influences are perhaps not the deterministic forces they are sometimes thought to be for our writers. That the modern realists arrived independently at methods similar to those of a whole branch of "conservative" modernists, who were writing in numerous other national contexts, demonstrates their internationalism and relative freedom from such deterministic forces. My discussion of the interdependence of the various subgeneric forms of modern realism—prairie realism, social realism, urban realism—

indicates that our literature is not always productively considered as a collection of regional forms, defined by geographical spaces, and bifurcated along rural and urban lines. Such a regional view of Canadian fiction denies the agency of our authors, leads to thematic interpretations and overriding national theses, and neglects both aesthetic concerns and relevant international influences. Canada's modern writers were referential: this is undeniable: they were "realists" after all. But more often than not, they demonstrated that the "region" is subjected to the creative whim and experiment of the author; the author is not subjected to the creative whim of a personified landscape or region or geographical space. Furthermore, the prominent "themes" of interest to the modern realists had little to do with region: they were the same ones that interested all sorts of modernists. And even then, modern realism is defined primarily, not by its subject matter, but by its modern aesthetic assumptions: art should be innovative and rooted in the contemporary world, the author ought to be extricated from the text, the mimetic reflection and exploration of the workings of the human mind presents a great experimental challenge.

Our neglect of modern realism is reflected, not just in our criticism, but also in our early twentieth-century canon: not only are scandalously few books of the period in print, but the few that are provide a skewed sense of the modern-realist movement as a whole. Most modern-realist works have never been the subject of any significant critical attention. Such oversights will not be rectified as long as we perpetuate the myth that our realists belong to an antique and insignificant chapter in Canadian literary history. Every time another modern-realist title disappears from the New Canadian Library, prevailing conceptions of the period are reinforced, and the "modern-realist canon" becomes less diverse. I am not proposing an uncritical celebration of lost and forgotten fiction: this study has been highly critical of most of the modern realists, their

works, and their techniques. Neither is a massive re-publishing endeavour necessary or probable. But it is time that a few lost modern-realist works saw the light of day. It is also time that Canada's neglected urban and social-realist novels of the period received proportional representation on publishers' lists. There have been a few, small, hopeful signs in recent years. In the early 1990s, J. G. Sime's Our Little Life (1921), Canada's forgotten first urban-realist novel, and Sister Woman (1920), her cycle of short stories on the lives of modern women, were reissued as part of the Early Canadian Women Writers series. In 2000, Bertram Brooker's psychological urban and prairie-realist novel, Think of the Earth (1936), was published in a critical edition edited by Glenn Willmott. These works embody in no small measure three under-acknowledged aspects of the modern-realist aesthetic: psychological emphasis, representation of the urban experience, and an interest in the cultural conditions of modernity.

But more needs to be done. Reprints of Irene Baird's Waste Heritage (1939) and Hugh Garner's Cabbagetown (1950), perhaps the best social-realist novels written in Canada, are long overdue. So, too, is our recognition of the multigeneric modern-realist novels of Edward McCourt—especially Music at the Close (1947), Home Is the Stranger (1950), and The Wooden Sword (1956)—which are some of the most sophisticated pre-contemporary Canadian works. The lost experimental novels by Canada's better-known modern realists also need to be considered by our critics, and perhaps published for the first time: Knister's Group Portrait (c. 1923), and MacLennan's So All Their Praises (1933) and Man Should Rejoice (1937). And a whole host of other writers who demonstrate the diversity of modern-realist fiction, but whose works are less "satisfying" or "significant," deserve at least some representation in our recent literary histories and critical discussions: Douglas Durkin, Christine Van Der Mark, A. M. Stephen, Wilfrid Eggleston, Len Peterson, Gwethalyn Graham, Philip

Child, Hubert Evans, Arthur Stringer. I am not saying that the works of the modern realists rank with the indisputably "great" works of twentieth-century fiction (although in my opinion, Knister's best short stories, Ross's As For Me and My House, Baird's Waste Heritage, and Callaghan's novellas and Such Is My Beloved come close). But many of the flawed but important modern-realist works—Grove's Master of the Mill, Graham's Earth and High Heaven, Van Der Mark's In Due Season, for example—deserve to be in print. And however one judges the literary significance or achievement of individual modern-realist works, it is impossible to deny the modern realists' distinct and hard-won aesthetic, commitment to making Canadian literature better, and participation in the twentieth century's remarkable modernist revolution. The modern-realist movement, with all of its imperfections, deserves to take its rightful place in the Canadian literary history it has profoundly changed, and among the other international modernisms with which it shares a commitment to innovation and experiment, a deep interest in human psychology, and an indefatigable fascination with the cultural conditions of modernity.

Endnotes

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1] Portions of this introduction, along with sections of Chapter One and Chapter Two, have been previously published as "The Beginnings of Modernist Fiction in Canada: Magazines, Manifestos, and Canada's First Modern Realists" in Working Papers of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (2001).

[2] The increasing unavailability of works by the authors I call "modern realists" in this study offers an example of this phenomenon. A list of 58 titles in "The New Canadian Library," printed in a 1960 edition of Morley Callaghan's More Joy In Heaven, includes 20 by the modern realists. "The New Canadian Library List," which appears at the end of a 1975 edition of George Woodcock's The Canadian Novel in the Twentieth Century, reveals a total of 143 titles, including 24 by the modern realists. Currently, McClelland and Stewart's web site lists a total of 120 titles, but only 15 are by the modern realists.

[3] An exact enumeration of volumes of Canadian fiction produced in the first half of the twentieth century would require a massive bibliographical project to ascertain. Gordon Roper contends that "during the years 1880-1920, more than 400 Canadians published over 1,400 volumes of fiction," but exactly how many of these volumes were produced after 1900 is not clear ("New Forces" 275). Donald Stephens counts "more than 750 novels" published between 1920 and 1940 ("Novels in English" 571). Hugo McPherson counts 600 novels and 80 volumes of short fiction produced between 1940 and 1960 ("Fiction 1940-1960" 206). My initial research for this dissertation involved bibliographical research that confirms these general figures, and a reading of approximately 250 of these titles representing a cross-section of the types of fiction produced in Canada between 1900 and 1950.

[4] While this study refutes most of the conclusions that Literary History of Canada

draws about "realism" and "realistic fiction" of the period, this landmark work offers the only near-comprehensive survey of the forms of Canadian fiction of the period. See especially Gordon Roper's "New Forces: New Fiction (1880-1920)," "The Kinds of Fiction (1880-1920)," and "Writers of Fiction (1880-1920)," in Volume One, and Desmond Pacey's "Fiction (1920-1940)" and Hugo McPherson's "Fiction (1940-1960)" in Volume Two.

[5] A precise number of modern-realist writers or works of fiction is impossible to determine. While there are about three dozen "core" modern-realist novels—including Knister's White Narcissus (1929), Grove's Fruits of the Earth (1933), Callaghan's They Shall Inherit the Earth (1935), and MacLennan's Two Solitudes (1945), to name only the most famous works by the most prominent authors—there are several dozen additional novels that, while not wholly "modern-realist," can be counted as part of the movement. These include multi-generic works that blend modern realism with other modes, including romance (e.g. Robert J. C. Stead's The Homesteaders [1916]), satire (e.g. Gilbert Knox's [Madge MacBeth's] The Land of Afternoon [1924]), and propaganda (e.g. Ted Allan's This Time a Better Earth [1939]). There are also, among these peripheral modern-realist works, a number of novels that are significant to the movement mainly because they anticipate later modern-realist works—e.g. Arthur Stringer's prairie trilogy (1915-22)—or demonstrate modern-realist writers working in closely related modes—e.g. MacLennan's unpublished modernist novels, So All Their Praises (1933) and Man Should Rejoice (1937). This study argues that the generic boundaries critics have drawn around the various forms of Canadian realism are misleading and often arbitrary. The relatively "loose" boundaries I draw around modern realism are meant to highlight the connections among the various subgeneric forms of Canadian modern realism.

[6] While a theoretical discussion of modernism and its multi-generic and multi-aesthetic nature is well beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is worth noting that most major modernist theorists are in agreement with my general definition. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane write for example that modernism is "a uniquely international and polyglot body of arts" made up of "interfusing movements and tendencies" (13). Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman, and Olga Taxidou introduce their recent Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents (1998) with an assertion that "Modernism is not a movement. It is a term that masks conflict and upheaval and any number of contradictory positions . . . . Modernism comprises numerous, diverse and contesting, theories and practices which first flourished in a period that knew little of the term as it has now come to be understood" (xvii).

[7] Although the term "high modernism" is a problematic one, I employ it throughout this study because of a need to distinguish between canonical forms of modernist writing, and peripheral forms of modernism, including Canada's modern realism. As Kolocotroni, Goldman, and Taxidou reveal, the term "High Modernism" is in common usage to signify well-known modernist works that employ the well-known technical experiments of modernist fiction: the creation of "Modernism as a movement and critical category occurred in the 1950s . . . The assumptions underlying this construction were . . . that the initial impetus of Modernism was over, and its selective canonised form was thereafter to be known as 'High Modernism'" (xvii). When I use the term "high modernism," then, I mean to evoke the canonized, experimental works of writers such as Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, Stein, Dos Passos, Ford, and others. I employ the term "modernism" more freely to mean the collection of modernist movements and literary forms. Therefore, it is not a contradiction when I argue, at numerous points, that the modern realists developed some of their literary forms and techniques in

contrast to the "high modernists" but remain, nevertheless, "modernists" themselves.

[8] As Lilian F. Furst writes in Realism, citing Kendall Walton, "Realism has recently been described as 'a monster with many heads desperately in need of disentangling' . . . . Broadly speaking, realism denotes an illustrious body of texts which form the core of the latter half of nineteenth-century literature and related arts, and which have both earlier antecedents and later descendants . . . . One of the primary difficulties in dealing with realism is the absence of an organized corpus of theory such as the Romantics, the Naturalists or the Surrealists, for instance, produced in their manifestos" (1). George J. Becker begins his Realism in Modern Literature similarly: "As the critics of nineteenth-century realism never failed to point out, realism in literature has always existed, though (as they neglected to say) almost always in quantity of degree far short of what constitutes a literary movement or mode" (1).

[9] Some examples include David Arnason's The Development of Prairie Realism: Robert J. C. Stead, Douglas Durkin, Martha Ostenso and Frederick Philip Grove (1980), Zhongming Chen's The Politics of Fiction: Social Realism in English-Canadian Novels (1920-55) (1989), Paul Denman's "Beyond Realism: Raymond Knister's White Narcissus" (1978), and Jean Ellen Horton's Romance to Realism: The Western Fiction of Ralph Connor and R. J. C. Stead (1994).

[10] I do not take up the subject of comparison between the literary developments of prose and poetry in the Canadian context. I do suggest, however, that some of the lines of influence traced by critics of Canadian poetry, and some of the well-known debates, including that between the Smith and Sutherland schools, are not easily extrapolated into the area of Canadian prose.

[11] As W. J. Keith writes in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, "English-Canadian fiction [1940-1960]. . . shows few signs of forming a coherent literary pattern.

There is no sense of a national movement, of predominant themes and approaches, of an accepted novelistic technique, or even of a concerted attempt to express Canadian or mid-twentieth-century consciousness" ("Novels in English" 563). T. D. MacLulich uses this citation as a point of departure for his discussion in Between Europe and America: The Canadian Tradition in Fiction (1988). His study affirms the difficulty of drawing temporal and generic boundaries owing to the fact that "it is inevitable that any historical examination of the Canadian tradition in fiction will trace a movement away from the emulation of British writers and towards an increasing awareness of the work being done by American writers" (7).

[12] Kolocotroni, Goldman, and Taxidou offer manifestos of the following competing modernist movements: Futurism, Feminism, Cubism, Imagism, Expressionism, Dada, Vorticism, Eccentricism, Constructivism, Bauhaus, Surrealism, transition, and Anarchism.

[13] See Lecker's Making It Real: The Canonization of English-Canadian Literature (1995). See also essays by Leon Surette, Dermot McCarthy, and Donna Bennett in Lecker's Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value (1991).

[14] In English Canadian Literary Anthologies: An Enumerative Bibliography, Robert Lecker, Colin Hill, and Peter Lipert list three anthologies that pre-date Dewart's. Dewart's is, however, the first Canadian anthology that contains material that is both secular and penned largely by Canadians. It is also the first anthology that tries to offer a representative cross-section of Canadian writing, and positions itself in the context of a national literature. See Chapter 3 of Robert Lecker's Making It Real: The Canonization of English-Canadian Literature.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

[1] As Robert Short writes, in "Dada and Surrealism," "it was the impact of the First

World War which persuaded poets of the younger generation that western culture was mortal and had been touched in its foundations . . . The war confirmed a growing conviction—hardly there in the pre-war Cubists and Futurists—that the West's obsession with technological advance and the over-estimation of reason at the expense of feeling led straight to destructive megalomania . . . . The Dadaists and Surrealists welcomed the destruction of the ivory towers" (293).

[2] In Frederick Philip Grove, Margaret Stobie also offers a dynamic view of the Canadian cultural climate of the 1920s from which the Bookman is excluded. She lists, as evidence of "the creative movement that stirred in Canada throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s," the founding of The Canadian Forum, the formation of the Group of Seven, and the establishment of the C. A. A. (119).

[3] A fascination with the occult is one of the intriguing cultural aspects of the 1920s reflected in the Bookman. As if in keeping with the magazine's promise to stand at the forefront of a visionary "new era," numerous articles on occult subjects appear in the Bookman throughout the 1920s, and occult and spiritualist topics are treated seriously beside other subjects in the magazine. An article in the first issue, January 1919, considered metallurgy and alchemy. An article entitled "More Spiritualism," which appeared in April 1920, commented with interest upon the "stream of books dealing with the subject of psychic research" (45). Lawren Harris wrote in February1924, "The greatest book by a Canadian has just been reprinted . . . . The book is entitled 'Cosmic Consciousness' and was written some forty years ago by Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke" (38). Importantly, some critics, including Leon Surette in The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and the Occult, link modernism, especially in its symbolist phase, to occult influences.

[4] The prefatory "Publisher's Page" that appeared in the first issue of the Bookman

positioned the magazine at the centre of a new movement in Canadian literature and introduced B. K. Sandwell, a journalist and lecturer at McGill University, as an ideal editor for this revolutionary literary project on the basis of his "wide reading and experience," "his brilliant pen," and his status as "one of the best read men in Canada" (1). Sandwell would become one of the founders of the Canadian Authors Association, and an important contributor of informal essays on Canadian culture to Saturday Night, which he edited from 1932-51. Initially, the Bookman was not affiliated with any official organization. After the founding of the C. A. A. in 1921, the Bookman served as its official organ for a brief period from June 1921 to December 1922, after which Sandwell resigned his editorship, and the Bookman and the C. A. A. severed official ties. The size and substance of the magazine remained fairly constant from 1923 to the early 1930s, when all features of the magazine, especially critical articles, rapidly become less frequent and substantial. By the mid 1930s, the Bookman was only a shadow of its former self: as Mulvihill writes, "By the mid 1930's a typical number might consist of little more than a lead article followed by sundry short book notices and perhaps some ads . . . In 1937, frequency became irregular and several numbers simply failed to appear" (57). A brief attempt to restore the magazine to its former glory began in 1938 and continued until lack of support meant the cancellation of the journal after the final issue of October/November 1939. In 1940, what remained of the Bookman merged with the official organ of the C. A. A., to form the Canadian Author and Bookman (1940-92).

[5] J. M. Gibbon, who co-founded the Canadian Authors Association with Stephen Leacock, Pelham Edgar, and B. K. Sandwell in 1921, also served as the organization's first president. While he was responsible for drawing up the constitution of the C. A. A. along with Sandwell, and while this document clearly focuses upon the more trade-

oriented aspects of literature in Canada—of the five key objects of the C. A. A., only one indirectly refers to aesthetics in literature, arguing for "the maintenance of high ideals and practice in the literary profession" (qtd. in Vipond, "Canadian Authors" 68)—Gibbon was also keenly interested in some of the aesthetically-oriented literary debates of the period. Critics, of course, have tended to associate the C. A. A. and Bookman figures with the material concerns while ignoring their aesthetic interests.

[6] E. J. Hathaway's article, "How Canadian Novelists Are Using Canadian Opportunities," which appeared in the Bookman in July 1919, provides a good example of this attitude.

[7] In the December 1925 issue of the Bookman, the "Inside Stuff . . ." page published the following unsigned, short piece under the heading, "Canadian Realism": "Mr. F. W. Hayden, at the December meeting of the Canadian Literature Club, of Toronto, vigorously combatted the contention of two writers in recent issues of *Canadian Bookman* to the effect that Canada had no realistic literature. Mr. Hayden gave chapter and verse to prove his point to the quite apparent satisfaction of the meeting" (194). This article gives some sense of the kind of debates about realism that were going on in less-illustrious literary circles of the day, and reveals that the discussion of realism in the reviews and articles published in literary magazines provoked some response outside of their own editorial pages.

[8] Although Knister wrote "Canadian Letter" for This Quarter, this essay remained unpublished until 1976, when Paul Stevens included it in The First Day of Spring: Stories and Other Prose, along with other unpublished works by Knister. The exact date of composition of Knister's essay is not known for certain, yet Stevens speculates in the "Introduction" to his edition of Knister's work that it was probably written in 1923.

[9] Knister, in his anthology entitled Canadian Short Stories (1928), would lash out at the

magazine fiction of the day, referring to "the barren nature of much of the multitudinous flotsam of periodical literature and best-sellers" (xiii). In a letter accompanying the manuscript of an unpublished novel, Turning Loam, which Knister submitted to Hodder and Stoughton in 1925, he would write bitterly: "I know that our magazines are averse from any intrinsic integrity in art" (Knister to Editorial Department, Hodder and Stoughton, 26 Sep. 1925). In an appendix to the anthology entitled "List of Canadian Short Stories in Books and Magazines," a partial bibliography of short fiction in Canada, Knister includes very few of the many Forum stories of the period. None of the Forum stories listed in the bibliography, including Knister's own "The Strawstack," appear in the anthology.

[10] Gordon's opinions are among the first expressions of the "native" impulse in literature that John Sutherland, in First Statement and in the preface to Other Canadians, is credited with endorsing. While many of the young poets of the Forum would declare themselves in opposition to the so-called native tradition, over the next few years critics in the Forum would echo Gordon's opinions on realism, this time in discussions of Canadian prose. The literary-historical emphasis upon the native / cosmopolitan debate, like the critical focus on the debate about literary value that went on between the Forum and Bookman in the 1920s, has served in many ways to eclipse a fundamental agreement on aesthetic issues pertaining to realism among contributors to both camps, in both magazines.

[11] Two unsigned Forum reviews of Virginia Woolf's work published in the mid-twenties offer examples of this phenomenon. One review would call Mrs. Dalloway (1925) an "extremely irritating and ineffective book . . . . [Woolf's] sense of discrimination and proportion would appear to be inadequate to the task at hand" (318). A similarly baffled reviewer of To the Lighthouse (1927) remarks that "Mrs. Woolf has avoided all the

pitfalls and overcome all the difficulties of the extremely modern methods . . . which in other hands so often become absurd and irritating" (350). The attitude expressed in these reviews is the same as John Hurley's in "Mr. Elliott's [sic] Wasteland," published in the Bookman, and discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

[1] That fact that many of the experimental techniques of modern realism were first tried by Knister is not always obvious as many of his works were not published until long after they were written. In order to give Knister his due as an innovator, and to provide some sense of when the various modern-realist techniques first appeared, I have made an effort to date Knister's work in this chapter. Unfortunately, his unpublished work is often difficult to date accurately. When possible, I have relied upon Bonnie O'Halloran's "Chronological History of Raymond Knister" and Marcus Waddington's "Raymond Knister: A Biographical Note" to determine precise dates of composition. When these sources are inconclusive, or in dispute, I have provided an endnote for clarification. My archival research for this chapter has allowed me to date conclusively some of the works that Knister's critics have not previously been able to date. The various unpublished sources treated in this chapter are from three special collections: The Raymond Knister Papers (Queen's University, Kingston), The Raymond Knister Collection (McMaster University, Hamilton), and The Raymond Knister Collection (Victoria College, University of Toronto). Full citations of these sources are provided in my bibliography.

[2] The Midland was published in Iowa City from 1915-1933. After trying unsuccessfully to publish "The One Thing" in conservative Canadian periodicals, Knister sent the story to The Midland, and it was accepted by editor John T. Frederick, and published in January 1922. Knister would also publish two later stories in The Midland: "Mist Green

Oats" in August-September 1922, and "The Loading" in January 1924. In October 1923, Knister accepted an invitation to become associate editor of The Midland, a post which he held until the summer of 1924, before returning to Canada in October 1924 via Chicago (Waddington 179-81).

[3] This Quarter was edited by an American expatriate in Paris, Ernest Walsh, with whom Knister carried on a brief but important correspondence, discussed later in this chapter. Knister was appointed Canadian correspondent to the magazine in Spring 1925. Two of Knister's short stories appeared in the experimental modernist magazine: "Elaine" in the Spring 1925 issue, and "The Fate of Mrs. Lucier" in Summer 1925. The latter issue also included the Knister poem, "A Row of Horse Stalls" (Waddington 182).

[4] Anne Burke presents revealing correspondence between Knister and Smith in "Some Annotated Letters of A. J. M. Smith and Raymond Knister." A letter from Smith to Knister, dated 12 February 1927, for example, reveals that Smith viewed Knister as a significantly modern writer: "I am writing to you to express my admiration of your stories and poems in This Quarter and to ask you if you would be interested in the starting of a Canadian literary journal that should represent a break from English tradition and the complacent inanities of the Canadian Authors Association . . . . If we could get a group together and publish, say, a quarterly on fairly cheap paper I think we might do something towards hastening the advent of the long-awaited Canadian renascence: yourself, Morley Callaghan, E. J. Pratt, Merrill Dennison [sic], Fred Jacob are the names that suggest themselves to me" (116).

[5] See Chapter 1, note 8.

[6] Maria Chapedelaine, a realist novel set in rural Lac St-Jean, was written by the French-born writer, Louis Hémon, and first published in French in 1914. It appeared in English translation in 1921. Knister wrote a review of W. H. Blake's translation of the

novel for The Border Cities Star (Windsor), which appeared on 18 November 1922, praising its realist properties.

[7] O'Halloran dates the composition of "Canadian Literature: A General Impression" between 1920 and 1923. It appeared in print for the first time in the special Knister issue of the Journal of Canadian Fiction in 1975.

[8] O'Halloran dates the composition of "Canadian Literati" to 1929. It appeared in print for the first time in the special Knister issue of the Journal of Canadian Fiction in 1975.

[9] Knister's play, The Loading, (not to be confused with his short story of the same name) appears on his list of books read between Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, and Yeats's The Player Queen.

[10] Knister's many sketches offer realistic anecdotes of rural life in Ontario. About 25 of Knister's sketches appeared in his lifetime, most of them in the Toronto Star Weekly. Among the more memorable sketches are "Christmas at Corncob Corners" (1925), "I Get Tattooed" (1926), "Hump's Colts Make the Old Town Hump" (1926), "Mrs. Plethwick Was a Citizen" (1927), and "I Buy a Dog – Almost" (1927). A complete list of Knister's published sketches appears in my bibliography.

[11] Knister's first published story appeared in The Midland in January 1922, but a number of his posthumously published stories were written before "The One Thing," perhaps beginning as early as 1920. O'Halloran suggests that a number of stories, difficult to date precisely, were written between 1920 and 1923. These stories include "Eric Mirth or the Larger I," "Group Portrait" (which Knister would later rewrite as a novel), "Out of Luck," and "Lights." Waddington's version adds "The Loading" to this list.

[12] Neither Waddington nor O'Halloran have dated "Horace the Haymow."

[13] Waddington places the composition of "Indian Summer" in December 1921.

O'Halloran's chronology does not mention it.

[14] Knister wrote "Dissecting the 'T. B. M.'" [Tired Business Man] as a response to an earlier Saturday Night article entitled "Why Be True to Life," in which S. Laycock writes, "It is a curious form of relaxation to go home after a day's monotonous grind and read an account of someone else's monotonous grind . . ." (qtd. in "Dissecting" 5). Knister's article defends fiction that offers the "truth about life," and is one of his most revealing manifestos on realism (32).

[15] Some of Knister's critics have identified the importance of understanding Knister's unconventional realism. Stevens remarks upon Knister's broad definition of realism that includes more than the surface reality, likening him to some early modernist writers: "Knister is not merely a direct realist; he had read too much Anderson, James, and Chekhov to rely on simple realistic detail . . ." ("Introduction" xvii). Less specifically, Denham suggests that "Realism is not an adequate category to describe either of Knister's novels" ("Beyond Realism" 70).

[16] "Eric Mirth of the Larger I" was probably written between 1920 and 1923 (see note 11). The novella, "Innocent Man," describes a night spent in prison by a wrongfully accused man. Both O'Halloran and Waddington date its composition to 1928. "Hackman's Night" is a story set in Chicago that draws upon Knister's experiences as a cab driver in Chicago in 1924, a job he held briefly between the end of his associate editorship at The Midland in the summer of that year, and his return to Canada in October. Waddington and O'Halloran both date the composition of "Hackman's Night" to 1929.

[17] Knister's known short stories written in the first person are "Banking Hours," "Grapes," "Eric Mirth or the Larger I," and "The First Day of Spring." None of these stories was published in Knister's lifetime.

[18] O'Halloran and Waddington agree that "Grapes" was composed in 1922.

[19] Waddington's chronology claims that Knister wrote "The First Day of Spring" in the winter of 1924-25. O'Halloran does not date it.

[20] Neither O'Halloran nor Waddington mention "Banking Hours" in their Knister chronologies. The version of this story cited in this chapter is from The Raymond Knister Collection at McMaster University. This manuscript of the story, apparently sent out for publication, has Knister's Iowa address at the top of the first page, along with a word count: "3,600 words." This would date the draft between 1922 and 1924, though the story may have been written earlier. The same manuscript has been lightly edited in Knister's handwriting, and in the same pen the address has been changed to reflect his move to Toronto. This would suggest that these revisions were carried out in 1928 or 1929, and that Knister felt the story had some enduring value.

[21] Centre of consciousness is a term defined by Maurice Beebe as part of his discussion of Henry James in Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce. Centre of consciousness is less experimental than stream of consciousness as a narrative form as it involves a shift of tone and point of view, but does not attempt to step outside of the central narrative, and does not involve a mimetic representation of the direction and flow of consciousness in a character's mind. The narrative voice in a centre-of-consciousness passage, usually third-person omniscient, abandons a degree of impersonality and speaks from the point of view of a particular character. This technique is sometimes called "free indirect discourse," though I prefer the first term because it draws attention to the psychological aims of this device.

[22] According to O'Halloran, "Group Portrait" was first drafted as a short story between 1920 and 1923, and the novel version was completed in October 1923. She reveals

that Knister revised the novel and retitled it Soil in Smoke in 1931-32. This revised version of the novel is in the Victoria College, University of Toronto archives. Waddington agrees with O'Halloran's dating of the first novel draft, but claims that the short story version was originally written under the title "The Old Gestures," in February 1922, and rewritten as the short story "Group Portrait" in the summer or fall of the same year. Waddington's account makes no mention of Soil in Smoke. The 1923 novel-length version is cited in this study.

[23] As Waddington points out, Livesay, in her scandalously unfair introduction to The Collected Poems of Raymond Knister entitled "Raymond Knister: A Memoir," "assumes that 'Via Faust' is autobiographical and therefore directly applicable to Knister's personal life" (190). Livesay's "Memoir," drawing on evidence from this novel plan, strongly intimates that Knister committed suicide, an assertion that has been convincingly rebutted by Givens.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1] In keeping with my introductory assertion that Canadian modern realism is perhaps most appropriately viewed as one of the numerous movements that comprise the larger phenomenon known as literary modernism, I am borrowing two conceptions of early twentieth-century literary history from two seminal critical texts on literary modernism. The first conception, of modernism as a "genealogy," is Michael H. Levenson's, articulated in A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine, 1908-1922. His exploration of English modernism through a series of ideas and phases, beginning with the late Victorians—Arnold, Huxley, and Pater—and closing with the work of T. S. Eliot, has provided a useful structural model for my earlier discussion of the realist impulse in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Canadian thought, and the evolution of these impulses into the revolutionary literary manifestos found in

Canadian literary magazines of the 1920s, and the first sustained modern-realist achievements in the *oeuvre* of Raymond Knister. Chapter Three and Chapter Five explore the major concurrent forms of modern realism—prairie realism, urban realism, social realism—that developed in Canada between 1920 and 1950. These forms, although closely related and aesthetically similar, possess important individual characteristics and literary aims. My atomistic approach to these forms of modern realism is not meant to draw attention away from their common literary origins and aims. Rather, I am offering a kind of Canadian modern-realist "matrix," not unlike that proposed for Anglo-American modernism in Schwartz's The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth-Century Thought (3).

[2] It is interesting, for example, to note the neglect of numerous prairie writers who do not fit the stereotypical role, but who enjoyed significant literary fame in their day. R. Ross Annett, an author of relatively slight but well-crafted and widely-read humorous prairie short stories, is a case in point. In the 1930s and 40s, Annett published over 70 pieces of short fiction in major magazines with wide circulations in Canada and the United States, including The Saturday Evening Post, Family Herald, Maclean's, and The Atlantic Monthly. In the introduction to Especially Babe (1978), a collection of Annett's stories published in The Saturday Evening Post between 1939 and 1942, Rudy Wiebe reports that Annett once remarked, "I personally doubt if any other Canadian writer had the readership I had at the time. The Post had a weekly circulation of six million" (13). In spite of Annett's wide readership, I have not come across an analysis of his writing in any other critical work on prairie fiction.

[3] See note 11.

[4] Only two other western Canadian prose works, both by Frederick Niven, were reviewed in the Forum in its first decade: W. S. M. reviewed Wild Honey (1927) in May

1927, and Canada West (1929) was reviewed by Richard de Brisay in May 1930. The first of these works is an autobiographical rendering of "the writer's experiences as a semi-hobo" (252). The second is an "illustrated handboo[k] for the information and entertainment of travellers and emigrants . . ." (298). These reviews were slightly more positive than those of Grove's and Stead's work. Curiously, Niven is a far more traditional writer than either Grove or Stead, and his fictional works set in the west—most notably The Flying Years (1935), Mine Inheritance (1940), and The Transplanted (1944)—have much more in common with nineteenth-century European realism than they do with the works of the modern realists.

[5] The Canadian Forum's very few articles on Canadian fiction in the 1920s say almost nothing about prairie writing. I do not discuss the articles that *do* mention prairie writing at length as they are generally unrevealing of the magazine's attitude toward the genre. A generally dismissive and patronizing tone is, however, easily detectable in most of these articles, including R. Graham's "Shakespeare on the Prairie" (July 1928), and C. R. Fay's "The Spirit of the Prairie" (January 1929). The only Forum article of the 1920s to take a generally positive view of prairie writing was Austin Bothwell's "The Literary Resources of Saskatchewan" (November 1923), which nevertheless concedes that "there is no province in Canada that has contributed less to the thought of the Dominion . . ." (51). Bothwell concludes, however, that Saskatchewan "offers the richest vein of gold for the prospecting novelist" (51). And it is also worth noting that Bothwell was a much more frequent contributor to the Bookman than to the Forum.

[6] In "Frederick Philip Grove, 1879-1948," I have provided a summary of the biographical controversy surrounding Grove: "Douglas O. Spettigue's second monograph on Grove, *FPG: The European Years* (1973), revealed major factual inaccuracies in Grove's account of his life and had a dramatic effect on the critical

reception of his work. Spettigue's research, originally begun in an effort to date Grove's early writings, revealed 'Frederick Philip Grove' to be a thinly-disguised pseudonym for Felix Paul Greve, and uncovered a European youth, not of opulence and promise, but of poverty, deception, and bad debts that eventually resulted in Grove's imprisonment for fraud in 1903. Disputing Grove's claim that he had emigrated in 1892 and had spent twenty years travelling through North America, Spettigue revealed that, following his release from a German prison in 1904, Grove moved to France where he worked furiously as a translator of English to German in a futile attempt to pay his debts, and, in 1909, faked his suicide and fled to America to escape his creditors. Despite Grove's fictionalization of his early life, the second half of *In Search of Myself*, describing Canadian society's indifference to his career as a writer, is considered to offer a relatively faithful account of his later years" (407).

[7] In support of his claims, McCourt notes the founding of the Fort MacLeod Literary and Historical Society in 1884, and the creation of the Regina Literary and Music society in 1885 (5).

[8] A third prairie realist, Nellie McClung, best-known for her social activism, is also the author of two autobiographical volumes, Clearing In the West (1936) and The Stream Runs Fast (1945). These works, however, offer relatively little discussion of her literary endeavours, emphasizing instead her remarkable activities as a suffrage and temperance activist, and are not discussed here.

[9] One of the most relevant of Eggleston's literary connections, as far as modern realism is concerned, emerges from his discussion of Knister in Literary Friends. Eggleston reveals that he was aware of Knister's experimental work published in The Midland in the early 1920s and states that "Mist-Green Oats" was the story that "impressed" him "most" (25). See Chapter Two for a discussion of Knister's story and

of his contribution to The Midland.

[10] While there are numerous prairie novels with realistic elements that predate Stead's first novel, The Bail Jumper (1914)—including Ralph Connor's Black Rock: A Tale of the Selkirks (1898) and McClung's Sowing Seeds In Danny (1908)—and while Stead does not become a full-blown prairie realist until the middle of his career, debatably with the publication of The Smoking Flax (1924), he is nevertheless the first prairie writer to work deliberately and persistently towards the realization of a realist aesthetic in his writing.

[11] Many lesser-known works of prairie fiction were reviewed in the Bookman during the 1920s. These include Stringer's The Prairie Mother (1920), Luke Allan's Blue Pete: Half Breed (1921), Durkin's The Lobstick Trail (1922), Ethel Chapman's God's Green Country (1922), Salverson's The Viking Heart (1923), Stead's The Smoking Flax (1924), John Herries McCulloch's The Men of Kildonan (1926), T. R. Elliott's Hugh Layal (1927), and Ethel Kirk Grayson's Willow Smoke (1928), among many others. Works of prairie fiction, and prairie authors themselves, are also discussed in many of the Bookman's articles and manifestos on realism, discussed in Chapter One.

[12] I do not discuss these minor articles at length as they are of questionable value to an over-all discussion of the realist impulse in prairie writing. Nevertheless, they do reinforce the notion that prairie writers, even in the first-decade of Canada's new modern realism, were connected to a larger literary community. Kathleen K. Bowker's "Robert Stead: An Interview" details some of Stead's literary involvement with several Canadian newspapers. Other articles, including "Literature As a National Asset," and "Third Annual Convention, C. A. A.: Address By the President," present the words of Stead spoken in his official role as president of the C. A. A., addressing a national audience and calling for new forms of writing in Canada. In "An Interview with Nellie

McClung," C. I. D. demonstrates McClung's links to other Canadian writers of the period, including Laura Goodman Salverson. "A Cup of Tea with Nellie McClung," by A. Ermatinge Fraser, reads like a popular fan-magazine piece in its discussion of McClung's literary connections and an afternoon spent with McClung during the 1928 Calgary C. A. A. convention. A biographical sketch initialled W. K. outlining the since disproved narrative of Grove's life (see note 6) appeared in April 1925, indicating a growing interest in Grove, who himself had become an occasional contributor to the Bookman by the mid-1920s. Grove's addresses are mentioned in articles such as "Philip Grove at the Empire Club," that describe his extensive author tour for the Canadian Club: "in the twelve months since beginning his nationwide tour, Mr. Grove delivered 412 addresses, sometimes making three or four in one day" (68). Despite the indications of a literary community that these and other articles provide, it is important to note that the tone of many of these pieces indicates that their authors are perhaps trying hard to *create* a literary community in the very act of suggesting that one exists. This excerpt, from "Only On the Threshold Says F. P. Grove," is typical of the kind of pedestrian discussion found in most of these articles: "F. P. Grove" was a "dinner-gues[t] of the Saskatchewan Branch, Canadian Authors' Association, at a Regina café one June night. The steak was done just right, the melons were rosily luscious, the moon was at the full, and the head of the House of Grove was in excellent humour . . . . The little company was set thinking seriously by Mr. Grove's statement that culturally the people on this continent are only at the threshold of life" (223).

[13] The Master of the Mill, set in western Ontario, does not conform to the most rigid definitions of prairie realism. Nevertheless, its many thematic similarities to Grove's four prairie novels, and its evocation of the symbol of the mill that refines prairie grain, more than warrant its discussion here. The case of The Master of the Mill draws

attention to the arbitrary generic boundaries of prairie realism, discussed in my introduction to this chapter, that segregate it from the rest of Canadian modern realism solely on the basis of its particular choice of setting.

[14] Grove's modern interest in machinery has been noted by Stobie: "Grove was fascinated with machinery, whether threshing machine, milking machine, or mill machine . . . some of the most effective and genuinely interesting passages are those describing machines and the detail of their working" (Frederick Philip Grove 174). See also Kenneth C. Dewar's "Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in Frederick Philip Grove's Writing" (1986).

[15] Lysenko's novel again draws attention to the modern concerns of prairie writers and the propensity of critics to ignore works that are not easily reconciled with their limited thematic readings of prairie realism. By her own admission in an "Author's Foreword," Lysenko offers a grand-scale treatment of both the traditional lives of the "Ukrainian immigrant settlers" and the way that these people have to "lear[n] to conform, to yield much of their peasant tradition, since there was little they could interpose against the robot uniformity of industrialization" (ix).

[16] Although Stead's early novels are often critiqued for their lack of "realism" and their implausible plots, Dry Water went unpublished in Stead's day because it was, in effect, too realistic. As Prem Varma recounts in the "Introduction" to Dry Water published in 1983 by Tecumseh Press, McClelland and Stewart declined to publish the novel in 1935, and requested that Stead put more action into the slow-moving narrative. He refused and argued that "[i]t may be granted at once that DRY WATER is not an 'action' story. It was not designed to be, but I do not admit for that reason that it is lacking in interest. It is a character story . . . portrayed against an authentic background" (xi). Varma also suggests that Stead failed to publish his novel initially

because "the depression had hit the book industry" (x).

[17] For a discussion of similar issues in Grove's work, see John Ming Chen's "Re-Reading Grove: The Influence of Socialist Ideology on the Writer and The Master of the Mill" (1995).

[18] Stobie draws links between the publication of Settlers of the Marsh and numerous articles published in Canadian periodicals in 1926 debating the moral propriety of the modern novel in Canada, including a condemnation of "trashy and prurient" fiction in the Manitoba Free Press (Frederick Philip Grove 111). Stobie also reveals that, in spite of such views as these, the often-repeated rumour that Grove's novel was banned is false.

[19] A few critics have discussed sexuality in the prairie-realist novel. See Irene Gammel's Sexualizing Power in Naturalism: Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove (1994), Dick Harrison's "Grove's Treatment of Sex: Platonic Love in The Yoke of Life" (1978), and W. J. Keith's "Images of Transgression: The Threat of Sexuality in W. O. Mitchell's Fiction" (1997).

[20] For critical discussions of gender in prairie realism see Isobel MacKenna's "As They Really Were: Women in the Novels of Grove" (1976), Lorraine McMullen's "Women in Grove's Novels" (1974), Elizabeth Potvin's "'The Eternal Feminine' and the Clothing Motif in Grove's Fiction" (1987), Helen Buss's "Who Are You, Mrs. Bentley? Feminist Revision and Sinclair Ross's As For Me and My House" (1991), and Terry Goldie's "W. O. Mitchell and the Pursuit of the Homosocial Ideal" (1997).

[21] The Bookman's emphasis upon accurate representation of regional setting is reflected in two articles written by Austin Bothwell for the magazine about American author Sinclair Lewis, and his novel entitled Mantrap (1926). In the first article, "Sinclair Lewis Goes Into the Wilderness" (Aug. 1924), Bothwell is excited to remark that Lewis

is about to make a foray into the northern prairie that will surely result in a "big story," and he goes on to offer a catalogue of many of the natural sights Lewis will encounter (177). In the second article, "Sinclair Lewis Misinterprets Northern Saskatchewan" (June 1926), Bothwell loses his enthusiasm for the project when he can barely detect a "real" Saskatchewan in Lewis's finished product: "Is *Mantrap* . . . meant for a novel that shall tear away the Curwood veils of romance and present in stark reality life as it is in the solitudes of Northern Canada? . . . . He saw enough of the physical features of the country to justify him in imagining the rest of it. Pass that!" (183).

[22] For a definition of "centre of consciousness," see Chapter 2, note 21.

[23] McClung's technique is also used liberally in two later novels discussed elsewhere in this chapter Ostenso's Wild Geese (1925), and Grove's The Settlers of the Marsh (1925).

[24] My paper "As For Me and My Blueprint: Sinclair Ross's Secret Debt to Arthur Stringer" details the relation between As For Me and My House and Stringer's prairie trilogy. It will be delivered at the "The Canadian Modernists Meet" symposium at the University of Ottawa in May 2003.

[25] Although there is clearly a naturalistic influence in Grove's writing, especially in the two prairie novels discussed in this section, "naturalism" is a notoriously tricky term in Grove studies. In Chapter Four, I explore the naturalistic properties of Grove's fiction in more detail, and reveal that they only partially account for the deterministic force present in most of his novels.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

[1] For biographical details that explain Grove's use of a pseudonym, see Chapter 3, note 6. Before emigrating and fabricating a new identity, Grove published two romantic German novels, Fanny Essler (1905) and Maurermeister Ihles Haus [The Master

Mason's House] (1906). Both of these novels, following Spettigue's revelations, were translated into English and published in Canada, the former in 1984, the latter in 1976. In addition to Grove's works published in his lifetime, a collection of many of his short stories, edited by Desmond Pacey, was published in 1971, Tales from the Margin: The Selected Stories of Frederick Philip Grove. Pacey also edited The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove, published in 1976.

[2] The numerous unpublished archival materials discussed in this chapter are, unless otherwise specified, from the Frederick Philip Grove Collection at the Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba. In my in-text references, I provide only the titles and pages numbers of the materials I discuss. Full citations of these archival sources, including box and folder numbers, are provided in my bibliography.

[3] Grove wrote three essays entitled "The Novel," all of which receive consideration in this section. Despite their identical titles, these essays are not multiple drafts of the same work; each stands alone, and offers its own insights into Grove's thoughts on the genre. In order to distinguish among these three essays in my discussion, I have numbered them [1], [2], and [3]. "The Novel [1]," is the published essay that appears in Grove's 1929 collection of essays, It Needs to Be Said. "The Novel [2]," is a manuscript that appears in box 20, folder 21 of the Frederick Philip Grove Collection. "The Novel [3]," is a manuscript from box 20, folder 22 of the same archival source. While it is impossible to date precisely these latter two unpublished sources, their rhetoric indicates that they were delivered, or meant to be delivered, as public addresses. Various references in these drafts to works of fiction and well-known facts of Grove's life almost certainly indicate that these addresses were written for his Canadian Club lecture tour in 1928-29. None of these versions of "The Novel" ought to be confused with another address discussed in this chapter, also probably written in

1928 or 1929, entitled "The Technique of the Novel."

[4] The significance of the concept of a "Great Tradition" in Grove's thought has not been generally acknowledged by critics. It is important to note, however, that this subject has been the concern of one major study of Grove, Frederick Philip Grove and the Great Tradition, a doctoral thesis written by Enn Raudsepp for McGill University in 1977. I do not draw substantially upon Raudsepp's work, as he places his emphasis largely upon a biographical reading of Grove's encounter with literary tradition and reveals relatively little about Grove's concept of literary realism. Interestingly, while Grove discusses a "Great Tradition" in his 1929 essay discussed in this chapter, "Literary Criticism," F. R. Leavis's famous The Great Tradition was not published until the year of Grove's death, 1948.

[5] The fact that Grove borrowed many of the novels he read from friends through the mail means that his letters provide an indication of the breadth of his reading of modern and traditional works. The following pieces of correspondence offer just a few examples. In a letter to Richard Crouch dated 24 November 1934, Grove thanks his friend for the loan of numerous works by " Marx," "Scott," "Gide," "Plato," and T. S. "Eliot." On 13 January 1935, Grove again wrote to Crouch, asking to borrow a copy of D. H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterly's Lover. On 12 November 1937, Grove wrote to Crouch thanking him for the loan of two novels by Virginia Woolf, and one book by Gertrude Stein (Pacey's editorial notes speculate that the Woolf novels were probably The Waves [1931] and The Years [1937], and that the Stein book was possibly one the three she had published in the 1930s), remarking that "I am very glad to see what sort of things these women do. Neither seems to me of any fundamental importance, such as attaches to Joyce or Lawrence, let me say" (322).

[6] Between 1929 and 1931, Grove and Knister exchanged numerous letters. Most of

these discussed Grove's editorial hand in the attempts to publish two of Knister's works, "The Fate of Mrs. Lucier" (first published in This Quarter, 1925) and the novel My Star Predominant (1934), although they offer some important insights into both men's ideas of Canadian writing of the period. Grove was associate editor of Canadian Nation, published by the association of Canadian Clubs, for a brief period in 1929 during which two issues of the little magazine were published. Grove was instrumental in seeing that Knister's experimental short story discussed in Chapter One, "The Fate of Mrs. Lucier," appeared in the May-June 1929 issue, as his letter to Knister of 21 March 1929 reveals. On 14 April 1929, Grove wrote to Knister to rebut his negative review of Settlers of the Marsh (1925) that had appeared in the Ontario Library Review in 1928; the letter clearly reveals that Knister's review had rattled Grove, with its suggestions that Settlers "[i]n some instances is downright awkward and childish, as when every few pages we are shown the depravity of the 'fallen woman' the hero has married by the fact that she plasters her face with powder" (qtd. in The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove 266). On 15 November 1929, Grove again wrote to Knister, revealing that the two shared some important modern-realist assumptions on Canadian literature: "I don't care one particle about any indigenous setting. So long as the work turned out by any Canadian writer is worth its salt, it will be Canadian, no matter whether it deals with Canada or China." The same letter revealed that Grove had read and approved of Knister's White Narcissus (1929), and sought affirmation of his own "tragic" view of human existence in the works of other authors: "I might say that I have recently read, with much interest, your book *White Narcissus*. May I be absolutely and brutally frank? I was greatly struck with the development of the unique situation and its tragic possibilities." For a fuller discussion of this letter in the context of Knister's work, see Chapter Two. The most intense exchange of letters between the two men occurred

in 1930-31; these letters discussed the promised publication of and payment for Knister's My Star Predominant by Graphic Publishers. Grove was a president and editor of Ariston Press, a subsidiary of Graphic, in 1930-31, and in 1930, Knister's novel won first place in the Graphic sponsored Canadian New Novel Contest, which offered a prize of $2,500. Due to financial problems at the press, Knister only received $1,500, and My Star Predominant was not published until 1934, by Ryerson Press. Proof that Knister and Grove developed a friendship is found in Grove's letter of 26 July 1931: "Won't you and Mrs. Knister, including the baby, run down (or is it up?) here next Saturday . . . early and spend the day and Sunday? We'd have a few common acquaintances in on Sat night . . . This is what i can offer; we give you the little sleeping house by yourselves, with two comfortable beds; and we'd show you this district and have a chat."

[7] Only three of Grove's books of fiction are narrated in the first person: his autobiography, In Search of Myself (1946), his allegorical novel, Consider Her Ways (1947), written in the first-person plural from the perspective of an ant colony, and his autobiographical novel A Search For America (1927). While the latter of these three works was originally considered to be a fairly straightforward autobiographical work, describing his itinerant life in the years following his emigration from Europe, Spettigue's revelations (see Chapter 3, note 6) led to the reexamination of Grove's life story and showed A Search For America to be almost entirely fictional. While Grove's protagonist, Phil Branden, immigrates to North America in the mid-1890s, it is now generally believed that Grove left Europe in 1909, and fabricated the story of a decade and a half spent wandering, or perhaps based it loosely upon his unaccounted for years between 1909 and his documented arrival in Manitoba in 1912. Grove's only other examples of first-person narration are found in some of his short stories, including

"Saturday Night at the Crossroads," "The Extra Man," and "The Boat," collected in Tales From the Margin (1971). The first two of these stories were unpublished in Grove's lifetime; the latter first appeared in the Winnipeg Tribune Magazine in 1926. In addition to these examples, a few of Grove's many unpublished short story manuscripts found in the Frederick Philip Grove Collection are written in the first person, including "The Finder," "Going After the Cows," "Honey Ants," "The Mystery of the Pond," and "Our Betters."

[8] As The Seasons was never published, only approximate dates of its composition can be provided. Grove's first mention of this novel appears in his letter to W. J. Alexander of 12 March 1938. At that time, Grove had recently begun work on the book, then titled Democracy. The project is mentioned in numerous of Grove's letters over the next few years, and the final letter that indicates that he was still working on it was sent to Lorne Pierce, dated 5 June 1941. In a letter to Desmond Pacey of 28 February 1945, Grove reveals that he had abandoned work on the novel sometime between 1941 and 1945. In providing a list of his unpublished works for Pacey, Grove set about looking through his old drafts, and remarks that "There is also a 4-vol novel: 'The Seasons' (Ontario) which I have not yet run across."

[9] The 1944 publication date of The Master of the Mill is misleading. In a letter to Lorne Pierce of 24 May 1939, Grove reveals that he had completed a draft of the novel as early as 1933: "Under pressure of financial difficulties I offered it, in 1933, in an unfinished or bungled state." Even then, Grove reveals that he had been at work on the novel for "four or five years."

[10] The Seasons was left unfinished at the time of Grove's death in 1948 (see note 8). The surviving typescript of 469 pages is divided into three sections named after seasons of the year. The first two sections, "Summer" and "Fall," exist in their entirety.

At the time of his death, Grove had only finished a draft of the first two sections, and a first chapter of section three, "Winter."

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

[1] The generic boundaries of Canada's urban and social realism are not clear cut. About two dozen novels have urban settings, engage large social concerns and issues, and accord almost entirely with the aesthetics of modern realism. Beyond this, there are approximately ten propaganda novels of the period, including the works of Claudius Gregory (see note 12), Hilda Glynn-Ward (see note 5), and Dyson Carter. There are also a number of texts of the period that, while essentially satires of topical subjects, employ a largely realistic narrative, and display many of the properties of the modern-realist novel: Madge Macbeth's The Land of Afternoon (1924) and The Kinder Bees (1935), Fred Jacob's Peevee (1928), Magnus Pyke's Go West, Young Man, Go West (1930), Leslie Bishop's The Paper Kingdom (1936), and Francis Pollock's Jupiter Eight (1936). A number of other works vaguely employ the urban and social-realist form: Philip Child's Mr. Ames Against Time (1949) is an action novel set in a cityscape; Beaumont Cornell's Lantern Marsh is a realistic novel set in rural and urban Ontario; two of Margaret Duley's novels are about Newfoundland society (Cold Pastoral [1939], and Highway to Valour [1939]); and there are a variety of novels of the period that engage social issues with a predominantly romantic emphasis, including Duley's The Eyes of the Gull (1936), and Thomas Raddall's The Nymph and the Lamp (1950).

[2] All three relevant chapters in Literary History of Canada, for example, play down the significance of urban and social realism. Pacey, in"Fiction 1920-1940," mentions two urban realists briefly under the heading "Some Minor Realists": J. G. Sime and Philip Child (193-97). Except for Callaghan, whose work constitutes the only significant "urban counterpart of Grove's rural realism," Pacey considers all other urban and social

realists propagandists. Hugo McPherson's "Fiction 1940-1960" mentions a handful of these works, but does not perceive a distinct body of urban or social-realist fiction; even F. W. Watt's "Literature of Protest" mentions only two relevant novelists, Callaghan and Baird.

[3] Garner's Cabbagetown first appeared in an abridged form in 1950. The full version of the novel was not published until 1968; I discuss this latter version in this study. Two sources reveal that the roots of Garner's project go back much further than 1950, however. A sketch by Garner, entitled "Cabbagetown," appeared in The Canadian Forum in June 1936; this piece is a factual account of the lives of people in the working-class Toronto neighbourhood, and is similar in style to sketches published in New Frontier around the same time (see note 18). Garner revealed in a 1969 interview with Allen Anderson that he began writing the novel more than four years before it was published: "on January 1, 1946, I began to write a book called *Cabbagetown*" (24).

[4] The "war novel" constitutes a minor sub-genre of modern-realist fiction in its own right. Most of these novels, however, intersect with the two major generic categories of modern realism discussed in this study: prairie realism and urban / social realism. Durkin's The Magpie (1923), Stead's Grain (1926), and McCourt's Music at the Close (1947) are examples of prairie novels also prominently concerned with the war experience. Evans's The New Front Line (1927) and Child's God's Sparrows (1937) are comparable urban-realist examples. There are also a number of modern-realist war novels that do not fit into either category, including Charles Yale Harrison's Generals Die in Bed (1930), Ted Allan's This Time a Better Earth (1939), and Irene Baird's He Rides the Sky (1941).

[5] Glynn-Ward's The Writing on the Wall (1921) is essentially a right-wing propaganda novel. While the style is superficially realist, its lack of artistry and didacticism make it

more stylistically typical of the leftist propaganda writings of the 1930s, discussed later in this chapter, than of modern realism. Glynn-Ward was also a contributor to the Canadian Bookman in the 1920s: her article, "A Plea for Purity" appeared in the March 1924 issue and lashed out at the "foetid breath of decadence" and the "dopish ravings of the modern sex writers" that she believed characterized the new movement called "realism" in Canadian writing (64). Thankfully, Glynn-Ward, as both a writer and a critic, is the exception to the rule.

[6] The short runs of the two leftist magazines of the 1930s—Masses lasted two years, New Frontier only nineteen months—are the best evidence of their financial problems, which are also alluded to in some of the desperate pleas for renewed subscriptions and apologies for missed issues found in their pages. Even the established Canadian Forum nearly collapsed in the 1930s: as Michiel Horn writes, "Good things seldom last: during 1934 the financial roof fell in. J. M. Dent & Sons decided it was too costly to continue their support, and the *Forum* now entered a lean period in which it reached the edge of extinction" (38).

[7] The Bookman, despite its dramatic decline, did manage a few comments on modern realism in the 1930s, rejecting the leftist notion that realism ought to be ideologically grounded. One article that typifies the kind of generally apolitical approach the Bookman takes to realism of the decade is Raymond Davis's "A Plea for a Canadian Short Story," which appeared in September 1935 and advocated a neutrality in modern-realist fiction: "The modern short story is generally divided into two classes: the proletarian and the so-called 'neutral' story. The proletarian . . . is incredibly biased, so that its propaganda interest overshadows the theme . . . The neutral story has a longer history, and was possibly at its best with Chekhov . . ." (1). But such comments were few and far between, and the voice of the Bookman after 1932 was easily drowned out

by the louder ones of its opponents. For a more detailed account of the decline of the Canadian Bookman see Chapter 1, note 4.

[8] The Forum of the 1930s had little to say on the subject of realism in writing, and nothing matching the intensity of the statements found in Masses and New Frontier. The Forum appeared almost to forget about literature entirely in the 1930s, after publishing numerous landmark articles on Canadian writing, mostly poetry, in the previous decade. While the Forum published no major critical statements on Canadian fiction in the 1930s, there is evidence that a number of Forum contributors agreed implicitly with the views published in Masses and New Frontier with regards to the need for Canadian writing to engage contemporary issues. F. R. Scott's "New Poems for Old: II. The Revival of Poetry," which appeared in the June 1931 number, suggested that this was the very impulse behind modernist poetry in Canada: "The modernist kicked poetry rather rudely out into the street to seek among the haunts and habits of living men for the stuff from which a vital and humane art might be created. The role of the imagination diminished: that of observation increased . . . modernist poetry in general deals with a solid world and faces the truth in a way that has startled people unaccustomed to find in a poem anything but dreams and imaginings" (337).

[9] I am indebted to Dean Irvine for drawing my attention to Masses and New Frontier, and for his many insights during our long and convivial discussions on Canadian leftist magazine culture. In "Invitation to Silence: Livesay and Magazine Culture of the Left, 1932-37," the first chapter of his dissertation written at McGill University, Little Histories: Modernist and Leftist Women Poets and Magazine Editors in Canada, 1926-56 (2001), Irvine offers the fullest and most incisive discussion of Masses and New Frontier to date.

[10] The editors, writing in "One Year of Masses," which appeared in the magazine in

May-June 1933, made it clear that they saw themselves as taking an active part in making a new literature in Canada but realized that they had limited material means to do so: "During the past year, it has been seen that there exists no small number of very competent writers among the ranks of the left wing movement, and also that such a magazine as this, taking part in every possible fight of the working class so far as its limited space will allow, can and does find a place for itself in the working man's home" (4). And the editors of New Frontier made it clear in their opening "Editorial" that they saw their endeavour in a similar light: "Never before in the history of this country has there been so much need for clear thinking and unity of action on the part of Canadian writers . . . It is the hope of the editors of NEW FRONTIER that the ominous forces of reaction will be opposed by a drawing together of the forces for progress . . . . If NEW FRONTIER is able to assist their progress in any way we will feel we have more than justified our existence" (3).

[11] Specific discussions of *Canadian* fiction were almost non-existent in the two magazines. The only such articles to appear in Masses were L. F. Edwards's "Authorship and Canadiana" (April 1932), which denigrated Canadian literature as a whole, and a scathing critique of Nellie McClung's work (June 1932), also by Edwards. New Frontier also published two slight articles: a luke-warm review of Bernard J. Farmer's Go West, Young Man and Leslie Gordon Barnard's Jancis in April 1936, and a polite review of Callaghan's Now That April's Here in October 1936.

[12] Gregory is also the author of two other novels of social propaganda: Valerie Hathaway (1933), a didactic and abstruse work about political utopianism, and Solomon Levi (1935), a vociferous attack on Nazism. Pacey provides brief summaries of these works in "Fiction 1920-1940." To this list of propaganda novels, Pacey adds Durkin's The Magpie (1923), Stephen's The Gleaming Archway (1929), Baird's Waste

Heritage (1939), and Ted Allan's This Time a Better Earth (1939). None of these latter four novels, however, can rightfully be called propagandist: as I have argued elsewhere, Durkin, Stephen, and Baird, all offer modern-realist explorations of urban Canada. Allan's novel is clearly leftist in its sympathies, but it is largely a dramatic and descriptive novel about the Spanish Civil War. The tendency of some critics to consider propagandist any novel that explores politics of the 1930s has been limiting to our critical conceptions of the period in general.

[13] These substantial articles, which look at the works of Jules Romains, Eugène Dabit, André Malraux, and Louis-Ferdinand Céline, generally, drew attention to the social relevance of these authors, and implied that a similar approach was lacking in Canadian fiction of the period.

[14] A full discussion of drama in the leftist magazine of the period would require considerable space, but the following quick survey provides a sense of the scope of the leftist-magazine interest in drama that might be contrasted to a relatively slight interest in fiction (see note 11): David A. Hogg's "Theatre of Actualities," in the first Masses (April 1932), praised the role of "Workers' Theatre" in Canada (3); Andrew Gillespie Cowan's "Red Theatre" appeared in Masses in June 1932 and stated that "The need for a workers' theatre to-day cannot be stressed too much. The working class movement demands a cultural expression that will bring to the masses in a most graphic form the propaganda of revolt" (3). A review of "Deported: A One Act Play" by Workers' Experimental Theatre, signed L. L., revealed that "realism" to the leftists often had little to do with reflecting life: "The play itself was extremely realistic . . . The sharp contrast between the innocent gayety [sic] of the family and the brutal machinations of the law was excellent dramatic material" (13). A number of other agit-prop plays were reviewed during Masses' run, and the magazine published examples of contemporary

agit-prop theatre, including "Theatre—Our Weapon," credited to the British Workers' Theatre Movement, which appeared in December 1932. Numerous other articles reviewing, advocating, and covering leftist theatre in and beyond Canada also appeared in Masses. The "New York Letter" column that appeared in New Frontier with some regularity often made reference to agit-prop theatre productions then being performed in many of the smaller New York venues. In the June 1936 issue, New Frontier announced the "New Theatre Groups of Canada" "Play Contest" which was seeking "plays which reflect the life and problems of the Canadian people" ("Play Contest" 25)—Morley Callaghan was one of the three judges. In February 1937, it was announced in "Play Contest" that "Miss Mary Reynolds of Vancouver" had won the contest with her entry, And the Anwer Is . . ., but "In the opinion of the judges, there was no play which merited the second prize of fifty dollars" (6); Reynolds's play, an agit-prop piece, appeared in the March 1937 issue along with a critical article surveying the submissions: "The Canadian Contest Plays," by Jocelyn Moore. Numerous other pieces on drama also appeared in New Frontier.

[15] It is not my intention to denigrate the leftist short fiction of the period as a whole, or to suggest that propaganda was the sole aim of the stories published in Masses and New Frontier. While they published some dreadful stories—including Leonard Spier's "Dream of the Air Meter," in which the narrator discovers that evil capitalists have begun forcing people to wear air meters that cut off the flow of oxygen to the lungs if nickels are not inserted at regular intervals (fortunately he awakens to learn it was only a dream)—a few of the better stories of the period also made it into their pages, including Thomas Murtha's "Sharp Awakening" (New Frontier May 1936), A. M. Klein's "Friends, Romans, Hungrymen" (New Frontier April 1936), and Dorothy Livesay's "Case Supervisor" (New Frontier July 1936). My discussion attempts to point out some of the

contrasting concerns and techniques of socialist and modern realism, not to make a case for overriding literary value.

[16] A number of articles published in Masses and New Frontier highlighted this distinction between socialist and bourgeois realism: "Our Credentials," the opening editorial of Masses (April 1932), called for a new realistic literature in opposition to the "barren fields of Canadian bourgeois culture," which "propagates those ideas which are most acceptable to capitalism" (1); T. Richardson's "In Defence of Pure Art" appeared in Masses in July-August 1932 and created an opposition between "socialist realism" and "modernism . . . the dead culture of an effete civilization" (4); Jack Lind's "A Significant Turn in Soviet Literature" (Masses March-April 1933) directed "bourgeois" Canadian writers to employ the socialist realism he detected in Russian writing; D. L. and C. R. P., in "Brief History of Canadian Art," published in the May-June 1933 Masses, drew the same distinction between modes of realism in the visual arts; numerous other articles and letters published in Masses also drew this distinction implicitly. A legion of articles with very similar conclusions appeared in New Frontier, including Eric Duthie's "Gathering Strength" (April 1936), Sybil M. Gordan's "Man Alive in the Novel" (April 1937), Margaret Fairley's "Books" (May 1937), and Edwin Berry Burgum's "The Outlook for the Novel" (September 1937), among others.

[17] Watt's article incorrectly attributes Livesay's sketch to the April 1936 issue of New Frontier.

[18] The best sketches of the period were published in New Frontier, including Livesay's and Barry Mather's "It Is Wonderful!" (September 1936), Bernard Rawlinson's "Cornwall: The Diary of a Strike" (October 1936), William E. Kon's "Boom Town into Company Town: The Story of Sudbury" (November 1936), J. J. McGeer's "Vancouver Underground" (November 1936), and Ted Allan's "Blood for Spanish Democracy"

(February 1937).

[19] Even relatively moderate leftist writers of the period expressed similar views. As Leo Kennedy, a polite socialist, wrote of Canadian poetry in the June 1936 issue of New Frontier, "Canadian poets have never been seriously accepted as interpreters of Canadian *life* . . . . the function of poetry is to interpret the contemporary scene faithfully; *to interpret especially the progressive forces in modern life which alone stand for cultural survival* . . . middle class poets better hustle down from the twenty-fifth floor of their steam-heated, janitor-serviced Ivory Tower, and stand on the pavement" (21).

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

[1] While a modern realism remains at the heart of Callaghan's aesthetic until the end of his career, I consider only those of his works (8 novels, 3 novellas, and dozens of short stories) that fall roughly into my period of concern, from Strange Fugitive (1928) to The Loved and the Lost (1951). When I use the general terms "Callaghan's novels" or "Callaghan's fiction" in this chapter, I am referring only to his works published between 1928 and 1951. Callaghan also produced an additional six novels between 1951 and 1990: The Many Colored Coat (1960), A Passion In Rome (1961), A Fine and Private Place (1975), Close to the Sun Again (1977), A Time For Judas (1983), and A Wild Old Man On the Road (1988).

[2] Callaghan's critics have frequently compared his writing to Hemingway's, almost from the beginning of his career, and Callaghan himself has occasionally acknowledged this influence, albeit with ambivalence. Harry Salpeter, in 1928, likened Callaghan's early work to Hemingway's, as did Ruth Suckow in her review of Knister's anthology, Canadian Short Stories (1928), which included Callaghan's "Last Spring They Came Over." Douglas Bush, in 1929, was critical of Callaghan, considering him an imitator of the Hemingway style. In a 1931 article, "A Note On Modernism," Sir Charles G. D.

Roberts compared A Strange Fugitive (1928) favourably with Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises (1926). Joseph Warren Beach's The Twentieth Century Novel: Studies In Technique (1932) found minor differences between the works of the two writers. More recent critics have also noted the influence of Hemingway on Callaghan from a variety of perspectives, including Conron (1967), Sutherland (1972), Marshall (1976), Ellenwood (1980), and many others. John Metcalf's "Winner Take All" (1993) provides a spirited refutation of the Hemingway influence, cited in the main body of this chapter. T. D. MacLulich (1981) suggests that the influence of other American writers on Callaghan needs attention: "Callaghan's debt to Hemingway has been stressed to such an extent that his indebtedness to other American writers, such as Sherwood Anderson, has never been adequately explored" (11). Gary Boire notes the impact of other non-American writers on Callaghan, who he argues "was influenced by the thematic and stylistic innovations of the major European 'realists.' He has declared a temperamental sympathy with Leo Tolstoy and Gustav Flaubert; from Emile Zola he derived an early influence in naturalism" (85). Boire also notes Callaghan's literary debts to Chekhov, de Maupassant, and Mansfield. For his part, Callaghan has consistently praised Hemingway's work but been eager to distance himself from suggestions that Hemingway was an important influence on him. Certainly his descriptions of Hemingway's work sound a lot like his comments on his own aesthetic: "His work was just a series of long paragraphs, little vignettes. They were so polished they were like epigrams, each paragraph so vivid, clean and intense that the scene he was depicting seemed to dance before my eyes . . . I knew I was getting a glimpse of the work of a great writer" (That Summer In Paris 29). Callaghan has also suggested that he may have had a literary influence on his famous friend: "For some years Hemingway had been my only writer friend and reader. Now suddenly the reviewers

were hitting me on the head in Hemingway's name. Nor could I expect Hemingway to send up smoke signals explaining that three years ago he had read as many of my stories as I had of his" (That Summer In Paris 64). And Russell Brown, in 1993, continues to keep the subject open to debate, with his comments on the conflicting motivations behind Callaghan's comments on Hemingway: "Callaghan often protests . . . against the way that his work was associated with Hemingway's, both at the beginning of his career and since. There has always been some doubleness in these protests, for they remind us that his work *has* been compared to the writing of one of the great prose stylists, even while they create an image of Callaghan as a writer of such integrity that he has resisted this flattery and gone his own way" (91-92).

[3] For a definition of this term and a discussion of it in the general context of modern realism, see Chapter 5.

[4] Callaghan's first published short story, "A Girl With Ambition," appeared in This Quarter 1.2 in the Autumn-Winter 1925-26 issue. That same issue included pieces by a number of well-known prose experimentalists, including Joyce, Pound, Stein, and Hemingway. "A Wedding Dress" appeared in This Quarter 1.3 (1927) and "Now That April's Here" in issue 2.2 (1929). Two of Raymond Knister's short stories appeared in earlier issues of the magazine (see Chapter 2, note 3). Callaghan's "Last Spring They Came Over" and "A Country Passion" both appeared in transition, issues 3 (June 1927) and 12 (March 1928), respectively. "Ancient Lineage" was published in The Exile 3 (Spring 1928). Other journals and magazines that published Callaghan's work in the 1920s include The Canadian Nation, The American Caravan, Scribner's Magazine, and The New Yorker. For more detailed information on Callaghan's publishing chronology, see Latham's "A Callaghan Log," and Kendle's "Morley Callaghan: An Annotated Bibliography."

[5] In the 1920s and 30s, Callaghan placed fiction in the following magazines and journals: The New Yorker, The Exile (New York), Harper's Bazaar (New York), Saturday Night (Toronto), Esquire (New York), transition (Paris), This Quarter (Paris), Household Magazine (Topeka), Scribner's Magazine (New York), North American Review (Boston), American Mercury (Garden City, NY), Common Sense (New York), Redbook (New York), The Atlantic (Boston), Story (New York), and Toronto Star Weekly.

[6] In spite of these apt comparisons, I am not aware of any direct statement made by Callaghan that indicates his affinity with or indebtedness to the Imagists.

[7] Goetel's novel was initially published in Polish in 1926 as Z dnia na dzień. The version reviewed by Callaghan was translated by W. Cooper and published in 1931.

[8] Callaghan was a part time journalist for the Toronto Daily Star between 1923 and 1926. His first publication, a journalistic piece entitled "A Windy Corner at Yonge-Albert," appeared in Toronto Star Weekly, 6 August 1921. Even after Callaghan became a successful writer, he continued to produce journalistic articles, with some regularity, and for a wide variety of publications, almost until the end of his career. His most sustained period of journalistic writing was between 1940 and 1948, when he produced a monthly column for a news magazine entitled New World, published in Toronto. These articles were on a wide variety of subjects but had little to do with literature, as a sampling of their titles suggests: "Guerilla Warfare In Hockey" (March 1940), "Even If You Can't Ski" (March 1941), "Women and Wrestlers" (February 1942), "Our Puritan Cities" (September 1943), "The Democratic Voice" (June 1944), "Why Don't Canadians Laugh?" (June 1945), "True Love Blooms In Hollywood" (June 1946), "Maybe We're All Making Too Much of a Fuss These Days About Our Teen-Agers and Their Problems?" (July 1947), and "Which Comes First: Love or Money?" (February-

March 1948). Judith Kendle in "Callaghan As Columnist, 1940-48" offers a good summary of the range and style of these articles, concluding that they have relevance to his literary career: "they frequently illuminate . . . the unfathomable ironies and puzzling ambiguities of the author's fictional world. Moreover, they reflect a greater range of moods and styles than is usually associated with his work" (7).

[9] I am borrowing the phrase "illusion of simplicity" from John Metcalf, who uses it in "Winner Take All" (1993). Metcalf, however, uses the term to indicate what he believes is *lacking* in Callaghan's work relative to Hemingway: "What [Callaghan] didn't grasp was that 'the best and simplest way' wasn't, in Hemingway's case, simple at all. Hemingway's writing has the *illusion* of simplicity; Callaghan's *was simple*" (118).

[10] The term "hard-boiled" was first used to describe Callaghan's style by Cleveland B. Chase in an often-cited 1928 review of Strange Fugitive for The New York Times Book Review.

[11] Although Callaghan and Knister never became friends, they were acquaintances and their relationship was somewhat complex. Knister clearly admired Callaghan, and in 1929 he revealed in his "Canadian Literati" (see Chapter 2) that he believed Callaghan to be the finest living Canadian prose writer. Callaghan was less unequivocal in his praise of Knister. In "Looking At Native Prose" (1928), he singled out Knister for praise, and counted him, with himself, among the most experimental of the new writers in Canada. In a 1957 interview with Robert Weaver, he suggested that he and Knister had a common approach to writing that made them stand apart from other Canadian writers: "Knister and I were certainly isolated . . . . there were no writers we were in sympathy with" (7). In That Summer In Paris (1963), Callaghan again remarked on Knister's experimentalism, but, perhaps in an attempt to elevate himself above his early contemporaries, he resorted to some rather tasteless personal attacks on Knister:

"people with Paris connections began to walk in on me. One day a shy, prematurely balding man with a bad stutter, named Raymond Knister, came into the bookstore. A countryman of mine who had actually written in *This Quarter!* . . . . Unbelievably he knew what was going on in Paris, London and New York . . . . This Raymond Knister was a strange man. Sometimes I wanted to punch him in the nose. He had a kind of suspiciousness I couldn't cope with. Having told me that he had never been paid any money for his poems in *This Quarter*, he then decided the editor could have sent the small check to me to pass on to him . . . . It was a fantastic summer anyway" (56-57). A letter written by Knister's daughter (Imogen Givens) to Callaghan, dated 18 February 1980, reveals that she visited Callaghan in November 1975 to hear his recollections of her father. In the letter, Givens expresses anger at Dorothy Livesay for using Knister's "death as propaganda." Givens closes her letter by thanking Callaghan and his wife for helping her with her research on her father, and she asks Callaghan for his opinion of her article "Raymond Knister: Man or Myth?" which appeared in Essays on Canadian Writing 16 (1979-80).

[12] Callaghan and Grove were never friends, but they met, were aware of each other's work, and they expressed mixed opinions of each other. Callaghan saw Grove as "the best" of the older generation of Canadian writers, and offered mitigated praise of his work in "Looking At Canadian Prose" (1928): "Frederick Philip Grove . . . has great importance to Canada because he is . . . one of the few writers the land has produced who try to face it with honesty and sincerity. Young men will come much later and write much better than he does, but they will be indebted to him, a kind of Canadian Dreiser" (3). Grove's second letter to his wife of 15 February 1929 reveals that he had borrowed a copy of Callaghan's first novel, Strange Fugitive, from an acquaintance, although he does not comment on the book. In an 18 December 1937 letter addressed

"My dear Mr. Callaghan," Grove writes "I met you some 8 or 9 years ago in Toronto. I had not, at the time, read anything of yours except for one or two short stories . . . . Last Wednesday [I] picked up your novel 'They Shall Inherit the Earth.' May I say I think it a beautiful book?" Grove goes on to offer some rather pedestrian comments on the work, including praise of its "evocation of landscape," before inviting Callaghan and his "wife and family if there is one" to visit him in Simcoe, Ontario. Whether Callaghan ever visited is not known, but Grove complained in a 1 April 1940 letter to Lorne Pierce that "[p]eople like Callaghan or de la Roche have gone out of their way *not* to meet me. It is simple charity not to talk about them" (383). In a 1957 interview with Robert Weaver, Callaghan was dismissive of Grove's writing: "I only met Grove three or four times, and—oh, we'd better not go into the subject of Grove. Grove is something that university professors like going into with a kind of painful lack of insight becoming to the craft. Let's leave it at that . . . . Grove should have been more isolated. The fact is that he had a fantastic ego . . . in his isolation, his ego was able to flower in the strangest way, and he was able to believe the strangest dreams" (8-9). Afterword: in a petty and strangely appropriate 6 September 1962 letter, Grove's son Leonard wrote to Callaghan complaining that he had expressed doubt on the CBC about the elder Grove's "account of having typed certain material three times over so that a worn typewriter ribbon would produce a legible impression." To rebut Callaghan, the younger Grove revealed that his perfectly typed letter had "been produced by three separate strokes of the key."

[13] While Callaghan, as I have argued, was eager to distance himself from Canadian writing of the period, or at least to avoid being viewed by critics solely as a Canadian writer, he apparently believed that young Canadian writers ought to follow his lead, and he describes his own writing in terms that are synonymous with his descriptions of the

new Canadian writing. As he wrote in "An Ocean Away," in 1964, "I had become aware that the language I wanted to write, a North American language which I lived by, has rhythms and nuances and twists and turns quite alien to English speech . . . . I had decided that language of feeling and perception, and even direct observation had to be the language of the people I wrote about, who did not belong in the English social structure at all" (17).

[14] Between 1928 and 1967, Callaghan also published reviews in New York Herald Tribune Books, The Canadian Forum, Book Week, The Spectator (London), The Telegram (Toronto), and The Washington Post Book World.

[15] While Callaghan's review of Finnegan's Wake is unenthusiastic, he was clearly an admirer of Joyce's work. In Chapter 17 of That Summer In Paris, Callaghan fawningly recounts an evening spent at the Joyce apartment in Paris that was partly spoiled by an overly talkative Robert McAlmon.

[16] The Callaghan novels to generate the most critical attention are the urban and social-realist ones that have been published as part of McClelland and Stewart's New Canadian Library series: More Joy In Heaven, Such Is My Beloved, and They Shall Inherit the Earth. The early urban-realist novel, Strange Fugitive, has also been widely discussed. By contrast, his psycho-dramatic second and third novels It's Never Over and A Broken Journey have received very little attention. His two novellas, An Autumn Penitent and In His Own Country, are his most psychologically intense, and they have also received correspondingly little attention.

[17] The first section of A Native Argosy, "American Made," comprises fourteen short stories, all set in Canada. As Conron writes, "[f]or Callaghan, 'American' means North American—above the Mason-Dixon Line. Eleven of the tales . . . are set in a city with streets recognizably Torontonian . . . and the remaining three take place in small

Ontario communities" (Morley Callaghan [1966] 29).

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

[1] I do not mean to imply that all of these critics are in agreement about all aspects of MacLennan's writing. Instead, I suggest that, despite their divergent opinions on numerous issues, they agree in a general sense about his crucial role in the development of Canadian fiction. And, while the precise nature of MacLennan's contribution to Canadian fiction is not usually defined by his enthusiasts, they often mention his serious approach to the Canadian subject, his "realism," and his central place in the contemporary Canadian literary scene. A few critics have challenged this consensus, most notably Robert H. Cockburn in his 1970 book, The Novels of Hugh MacLennan. As Donald Cameron writes in his "foreword" to Cockburn's book, "To some of us MacLennan has mattered very much, because he has tried to express our sense of a country we love, a country which we feel could well become, as one of MacLennan's characters puts it, priceless to mankind. For others [like Cockburn], it is faintly dishonest not to say that anyone with a mature interest in fiction must distinguish between aesthetic satisfaction and a romantic possibility" (7).

[2] Robert H. Cockburn is the most important exception to this rule. His 1970 book (see note 1) offers an almost systematic denigration of MacLennan's style and technique. His critique of Barometer Rising is representative of those he offers of all of the early published novels in MacLennan's *oeuvre*: "In this novel, MacLennan is writing about three different things: the characters; Canada's quest for self-knowledge; and Halifax and its explosion of December 1917. The success of *Barometer Rising* as a work of art rests upon the author's skill in fusing these three aspects; unfortunately, he fails, and harmony and credibility are, to a large extent, sacrificed" (29).

[3] The vast majority of MacLennan criticism was published in the 1960s, 70s, and early

1980s, including eight books and dozens of articles. Since 1985, there have been no single-author book-length studies of MacLennan (although Christl Verduyn's Dear Marian, Dear Hugh: The MacLennan-Engel Correspondence appeared in 1995), and there has been only one full-length article on MacLennan published in a Canadian journal. The most important recent work on MacLennan is Frank M. Tierney's 1994 contribution to the Reappraisals: Canadian Writers Series, comprising a selection of short articles on various aspects of MacLennan's work. Tierney's "Introduction" confirms the waning critical interest in MacLennan: "Since the publication of *Two Solitudes* in 1945, Hugh MacLennan has been generally accepted as one of Canada's premier novelists. This status was reinforced at the Calgary Conference of the Canadian novel in 1978, which reaffirmed the prominent position of MacLennan's works in the history of Canadian literature. Recent studies, however, raise questions about the Canadian literary tradition and suggest the need for a reappraisal of MacLennan's status" (1). Unfortunately, Tierney's critical anthology does not come to terms with MacLennan's problematic realism, and the conclusions it draws about MacLennan's modernist affinities are misleading (see note 7).

[4] I consider only MacLennan's six novels that fall into my general period of concern: So All Their Praises (1933), A Man Should Rejoice (1937), Barometer Rising (1941), Two Solitudes (1945), The Precipice (1948), and Each Man's Son (1951). When I use the general terms "MacLennan's novels" or "MacLennan's fiction" in this chapter, I am referring only to these early novels. After 1951, MacLennan produced three novels: The Watch That Ends the Night (1959), Return of the Sphinx (1967), and Voices in Time (1980).

[5] See Chapter 4, note 9.

[6] Most of MacLennan's major critics identify his traditional approach to writing and

realism. Buitenhuis remarks on his "eighteenth and nineteenth century technique which was valid so long as society was based on a set of common assumptions and values, and asserts that "the critic must ask what the consequences [of traditional influences] have been for MacLennan's art" (17). Woodcock suggests that "MacLennan seems . . . almost a throwback to the tweedy English novelists of Georgian days . . . in his ability to write well in [an] almost obsolete form . . ." (Hugh MacLennan 29). Lucas identifies MacLennan's "realism that does create an illusion of reality" but concedes that it is old-fashioned and "hardly harsh enough . . . to the modern reader" (16-17).

[7] Zichy's article refutes some assertions that MacLennan's adoption of a first-person narrator in The Watch That Ends the Night (1959) represented a move towards modernism in his writing: "MacLennan is a writer of didactic romance, whose practice cannot be squared with that of European and American realism, much less with the modernist aesthetic that succeeded realism and reacted against it" (174). While this assertion is not essentially untrue, Zichy's lack of awareness of MacLennan's early modernist novels leads him to false conclusions about the motivations for MacLennan's rejection of modernism, discussed later in this chapter: "MacLennan never understood that modernist experimentation in technique was not mere aestheticism" (177).

[8] For an account of the circumstances surrounding the composition of MacLennan's unpublished novels, see Elspeth's Cameron's biography, Hugh MacLennan: A Writer's Life (1981).

[9] In this novel, Fitzgerald punctuates the long, realist portions of his narrative with symbolic, dramatic dialogues. The first of these, "A Flash-Back in Paradise," is a dialogue between two symbolic characters, Beauty, and The Voice. Their discussion provides a larger context for Fitzgerald's main narrative, and draws attention to his critique of American culture:

BEAUTY: (*Her lips scarcely stirring, her eyes turned, as always, inward upon herself*) Whither shall I journey now?

THE VOICE: To a new country—a land you have never seen before.

BEAUTY: (*Petulantly*) I loathe breaking into these new civilizations. How long a stay this time?

THE VOICE: Fifteen years.

BEAUTY: And what's the name of the place?

THE VOICE: It is the most opulent, most gorgeous land on earth—a land whose wisest are but little wiser than its dullest . . . . (28)

[10] MacLennan's unpublished novels have been available to researchers in the McGill archives since 1967. The first book-length studies of his work were published in 1969. Failing to research MacLennan's modernist novels, his critics have taken his misleading remarks about them at face value. One of MacLennan's most often-cited passages appears in "The Dictionary Says . . .," an essay published in Thirty and Three in 1954. Here, MacLennan not only downplays the seriousness of his work on So All Their Praises, but fails to mention his early affinity with modernist experiment. Even more misleadingly, he mentions his early writerly endeavours in the context of a general *critique* of modernism: "During those Princeton years I spent late hours after my academic day was over working on a novel which was never published, always pretending I was doing something else. I was determined to learn how to be a professional writer and if I had told them [his English friends at University] I was writing . . . they would have tried to force me to accept their own lofty standards. They would have made me ashamed of pedestrian methods of learning composition and structure which I knew must be mastered before I could escape into the open waters of individual style. They believed sincerely that Hemingway had sold out when he shook free from

Gertrude Stein's little coterie in Paris . . ." (165).

[11] MacLennan taught English courses at McGill University from 1951 until the 1980s. His voluminous notes for his modern fiction courses are part of The Hugh MacLennan Papers in the archives at McGill University. These notes offer a fascinating repository of MacLennan's attitudes to the writing of numerous prominent twentieth-century novelists, including Joyce, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Lawrence, Faulkner, Conrad, Waugh, Fitzgerald, Flaubert, and Huxley, among many others. In the course of discussing various elements of fiction, including "Dialogue," "Plot," "Characterization," and "Time in the Novel," MacLennan offers some unconventional definitions that are highly revealing of his own literary techniques. These lecture notes are difficult to date precisely. Most of them are typed and very substantially revised with handwritten comments. Some pages have been edited in several different colours of ink, suggesting that they represent MacLennan's evolving thoughts over his decades-long teaching career. MacLennan has not dated the original typescripts, but his handwritten additions are usually dated. One initially undated page of typed lecture notes on Joyce, for example, was subsequently amended in December 1966, November 1968, November 1975, October 1978, and October 1980. MacLennan's adamant and often defensive remarks in his notes offer further evidence that the critical assumption of his indifference to literary technique is fallacious. Future reevaluations of MacLennan's literary methods might draw fruitfully upon these lecture notes which until now have been almost entirely disregarded by critics.

[12] MacLennan also offered muted praise of other early twentieth-century writers whose styles were not essentially experimental. Many of these evaluations were offered in his Montreal Star columns of the early 1960s called "A Writer's Diary." In 1963, he wrote that D. H. Lawrence "was a profound artist, certainly, but the intensity of his feelings,

together with his neurotic petulance, spoils the symmetry of most of what he wrote" ("Most Alive Writer of Twentieth Century" 4). Also in 1963, he wrote that "[i]n the 1930s, the deepest of all the writers who touched revolutionary themes was André Malraux, an artistic genius" ("Contemporary Events and Malraux's Novel" 4). In an 1962 piece, he favourably contrasted Arthur Koestler with Joyce and Proust: "Koestler is almost never studied in literature courses although his work ranks with the best of our age. 'Poor Koestler,' a professor said to me. 'His language is adequate, but it cannot compare with Joyce's and Proust's in quality'" ("New Phenomenon in Literature" 4).

[13] MacLennan and Graham were friends. As E. Cameron writes in her biography, "Hugh and Dorothy knew 'Gwen' Graham; they had met her at the Canadian Authors' Association meetings in Montreal and Toronto and shared with her the common purpose of Canadian writers in difficult times" (183). But, as Cameron reveals, MacLennan did not always approve of Graham's writing: "As he saw it, she was following a track similar to that of Morley Callaghan who, by setting his stories in Toronto but with no details that would emphasize the fact, was attempting to give an impression of any large urban centre in the world" (184).

[14] In "Changing Values in Fiction," MacLennan divides the American writers into two further schools of realism based upon their "points of view," although he concludes that their literary techniques are essentially the same: Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner are the "romantic realists" and Lewis, Farrel, and Dos Passos are the "naturalistic realists."

[15] Interestingly, while MacLennan critiqued modernist writers who experimented in order to represent subjective states, he was less willing to condemn the experiments of modernist writers who sought, like him, broad, sweeping, socio-historical commentary.

The portrait of Joseph Conrad he presented to his McGill undergraduates is almost autobiographical: "he tackled head-on what Arnold Toynbee was to call the most important social development of our century—the impact of European and American colonialism . . . . he became a ~~romantic realist~~ total realist" (Lecture Notes n. pag.). Although critical of William Faulkner's epistemological techniques, MacLennan praised his historical emphasis: "FAULKNER NEVER EVEN THOUGHT OF ABANDONING ONE OF THE BASIC ROLES OF GOOD FICTION–THE ROOTING OF THE STORY IN A METICULOUSLY UNDERSTOOD SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL BACKGROUND. This is something that the post-war age likes to overlook under the illusion that history has become irrelevant in an age of cybernetics. Nothing can possibly be more false than this, as recent developments in the science of biology have proved, showing that ALL LIFE IS INTERCONNECTED . . ." (Lecture Notes n. pag.). And, of course, Dos Passos, whose "orchestrated reportage" is briefly compared to that of the modern realists in Chapter Five, intrigued MacLennan: "What made him [Dos Passos] interesting was the method he adopted, his own vision of a new kind of Universal novel in the naturalist vein, together with a specific and original technique—he is the most technological novelist we have in the century—and this was necessary for a man who tried to write a novel in which Society itself is the hero, and the individual characters are regarded as mere human examples of Society . . ." (Lecture Notes n. pag.).

[16] A decade and a half before MacLennan wrote "Back to Tolstoy," in a 1941 letter to a Mrs. Ogilvie in which he responds to an article she wrote on Virginia Woolf, he expresses his anxiety about authorial effacement in an earlier form. In this letter, he reveals that he has thought a lot about the problem of impersonality in modern fiction, and while he does not yet advocate the full-blown didacticism that he finds desirable in "Back to Tolstoy," he nevertheless concludes that an authorial presence is both

unavoidable and desirable: "The elimination of the author—rather an unusual and brilliant way of putting it—is a technical question which has always interested me vitally in my own work. For essentially it is a paradox. The author cannot be eliminated entirely . . . . The book is an expression of his personality or it is nothing" (MacLennan to Ogilvie, 9 Sep. 1941).

[17] Cockburn sums up the critical reaction to MacLennan's didactic impulse concisely in The Novels of Hugh MacLennan: "Virtually every critic of MacLennan has blamed him for the preponderance, and/or unsuitability, of sociological and historical data in his novels. I shall do the same" (25). In the "Introduction" to his critical anthology, Goetsch arrives at a similar conclusion: "While it is true that some reviewers have tended to laud enthusiastically whatever MacLennan chose to do, the majority of critics have time and again voiced reservations—especially against his unashamed didacticism . . ." (2).

[18] Although MacLennan's critics have often remarked upon his technical and stylistic conservatism, relatively few have shed light on his conservative moral and social opinions. In fact, it is generally assumed by his critics that his sympathies lie to the left of the political spectrum. Numerous critics have remarked upon the social-realist properties of his novels, and it is true that he at least pays lip-service to leftist causes in much of his writing. The unpublished Man Should Rejoice (1937) can be read as an almost Marxist indictment of capitalist society. While it is not my intention in this chapter to offer an analysis of MacLennan's politics, I suggest that his social realism is more a product of his general interest in social, historical, and political matters than a genuine sympathy with leftist causes. Interestingly, the arch-conservative American novelist, Ayn Rand, responded to a letter from MacLennan discussing socialism and Barometer Rising in 1944. In the letter, she thanks MacLennan for first writing to her, and then remarks: "The thing that did not seem to fit the rest of Barometer Rising was

the final sequence where you reverted to the 'and so he solved his personal problems by losing himself in unselfish service' pattern. That didn't ring true . . . . When I finished your book, my guess about the author was: here's a brilliant writer, with the natural talent and instincts of an individualist, who felt he had to apologize for himself by sticking in some 'social significance' at the end of his book . . . . I thought: here's something the author doesn't really believe . . . . Do you think it is a mere coincidence that all the Fascist leaders are ex-socialists? . . . . I hate to see another talent choked, twisted, ruined and turned upon itself by the Toohey philosophy" (Rand to MacLennan, 19 Mar. 1944).

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