

THE LAND IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH CANADIAN FICTION

The Concept of the Land
in French and English Canadian Fiction:
A Comparative Study of Selected Novels

by

Robert Rivière

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to establish parallels between French Canadian and English Prairie fiction. The theme of the land is examined in selected novels from mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries.

Chapter One establishes a historical and cultural background of French Canada and Prairie settlements.

Chapter Two discusses the tradition of "le roman du terroir" in French Canada and its gradual evolution towards a literary genre of universal interest. Since the survival of culture and identity has been so important in French Canada, the fiction is considered in terms of this perspective.

Chapter Three deals with the novel of the land in Prairie fiction. The governing myth of Western Canada has been from the beginning that of the Promised Land, of the New Eden. The effect of the myth on new settlers, as illustrated in the fiction, is emphasized in the first part of the chapter, while the second part concentrates on the problems farmers had to face attempting to readjust the agrarian values of the Promised Land to those of the modern world.

RESUME

Le but de cette thèse est d'établir des parallèles entre la littérature canadienne-française et celle des Prairies canadiennes écrite en langue anglaise. Le thème de la terre est étudié dans des romans écrits au cours de la deuxième partie du dix-neuvième siècle et de la première partie du vingtième.

Le chapitre I établit un panorama historique et culturel du Canada français et du peuplement des Prairies..

Le chapitre II traite de la tradition du "roman du terroir" au Canada français, et de son évolution graduelle vers un genre littéraire d'intérêt universel. Puisque la question de la "survivance" a toujours été très importante au Canada français, les oeuvres sont étudiées sous cet aspect.

Le chapitre III est une étude du roman de la terre dans les Prairies. Le mythe central dans la littérature de l'ouest Canadien a toujours été celui de la Terre Promise, du paradis terrestre. Dans la première moitié du chapitre une attention particulière est portée à l'effet de ce mythe sur le personnage de l'immigrant et plus tard sur celui du fermier. La deuxième partie traite des problèmes auxquels les nouveaux fermiers étaient confrontés en essayant d'ajuster les valeurs agraires de la Terre Promise à celles du monde moderne.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts to draw parallels between French Canadian and Western Canadian fiction in their respective novels of the land. Chapter One develops a historical and cultural background of French Canada and Prairie settlement. The different attitudes of the settlers is considered, and an attempt made to explain the conservatism of French Canadians and the relatively liberal attitude of Prairie settlers in terms of their differing ideologies. Chapter Two traces the evolution of the novel of the land in French Canada. The land as a means of survival and the spiritual values attached to it are stressed, together with the social ideologies of the time. Finally, Chapter Three discusses Prairie fiction and the Western Canadian myth of the Promised Land, with an emphasis on the shift of values caused by the War; following the war, the farmer's ideal relationship with the land became incompatible with the new material values developing as a result of industrialization in the cities.

French and English Canadian literature, until the mid-twentieth century, lacked constructive literary criticism. The literature remained highly idealistic and rather limited thematically. Essentially, the concept of the land in French and English Canadian fiction is the same: the land is part of God's divine order on earth, and must be treated as such. The attitude of the farmer toward the land in French Canada differs from that of the farmer

in Western Canada. In the former, faithfulness to the land is regarded as a means of preserving the race and the culture, whereas in the latter, the land is regarded as a means whereby the farmer may begin a new life that will give him freedom and independence. This belief in the unlimited opportunities offered by the vast unsettled Prairies became exalted into a kind of myth in which the new territories seemed to be the Promised Land to those who made the exodus from Europe or the settled areas of Eastern Canada to start life anew.

French Canada, the cradle of a race, chose to withdraw in order to survive in the hostile post-conquest English world and developed a "garrison mentality."¹ Devout Catholics, French Canadians chose spiritual weapons to fight the intruders, and under the control of the Roman Catholic Church, they remained conservative and insular. The development of French Canada has been arrested by the ideology that one had to be faithful to the land in order to survive. Their literature reflects their withdrawal from the outside world. French Canadian authors were not motivated to produce works which would be intellectually stimulating: "Il ne faut pas oublier que la plupart des écrivains Canadiens du dix-neuvième siècle étaient des hommes d'actions et qu'à leurs yeux la plume était d'abord et avant tout un instrument de survivance nationale."² French Canadian authors were expected by the intellectual elite to propagate the ideology of the land in their works and were therefore limited in their themes. Of course, such a narrow

ideology applied to literature devalued the aesthetic of a literary work of art.

This negative attitude to literature was also found in Western Canada in its early stage of colonization. As E.K. Brown notes: "On the frontier a man is mainly judged by what he can do to bring his immediate environment quickly and visibly under the control of society."³ The Prairie farmer was more concerned with material success than was his French Canadian counterpart for whom farming was more a way of life than a way to success. The observations of J. Adams, a British visitor in Western Canada in 1911, described the West as a land of opportunity, and the effect that it had on the inhabitants:

The many opportunities which the Golden West affords have a tendency to monopolize the energies of the inhabitants to the exclusion of other interests of civilized life. In the eager desire to get rich the aesthetic side generally suffers. Even in the great cities the commercial spirit dominates everything.⁴

The romantic and thematically limited literature which prevailed in both French and English Canada in the nineteenth century was fostered by geographical barriers which favoured a regional literature and, in fact, regionalism is often blamed for having prevented the birth of a valuable Canadian literature:

Regionalist art may be expected to possess certain admirable virtues. One of these is accuracy, not merely accuracy of fact, but accuracy of tone; and throughout our literature there has been a disposition to force the note, to make life appear nobler or gayer or more intense than Canadian life really is in its typical expression.⁵

Brown's assertion that Canadian regionalism is "a disposition to force the note, to make life appear nobler or gayer or more intense than Canadian life really is in its typical expressions," is only partly true. Regional fiction such as that of LaCombe or that of Stead has suffered from a too heavy concern for regional geography. It is inaccurate, however, to claim as Brown does that "In the end . . . regionalist art will fail because it stresses the superficial and the peculiar at the expense, at least, if not to the exclusion, of the fundamental and universal."⁶ Novels such as Hémon's Maria Chapdelaine, Ringuet's Trente Arpents, and Grove's Our Daily Bread and Fruits of the Earth, although regional in character, transcend regional concerns to achieve universal themes. The fact remains, it is true, that until Hémon and Stead, Canadian regional fiction did not go beyond the regional level, and did correspond to Brown's definition of regional fiction. Nevertheless, the problem does not reside in regionalism itself, but rather in social attitudes toward literature. If early Canadian regional fiction made "life appear nobler or gayer or more intense than Canadian life really was in its typical expression," it was because the writer was expected by his society to portray it in that way. Desmond Pacey touches the core of the problem:

The relations between a society and its literature are hypothetical and obscure, and no simple arrangement of cause and effect can be discerned or proven. Perhaps the nearest we can come to a formulation of the relationship is to declare that a state of high excitement within the community, together with some powerful stimulus from outside, is likely to result in the creation of a vivid and vigorous body of writing.⁷

Both French and English Canadian writers were hindered by the rigid social values of their society which they were expected to uphold. The First World War and its aftermath was to create the much needed "state of high excitement within the community," which would "result in the creation of a vivid and vigorous body of writing."

A further factor contributing to the rather limited early development of fiction in Canada was the effect of Puritan ideals. As Sutherland points out, "Canadian Puritanism has evolved in much the same way and has taken much the same form of expression in Protestant English Canada as in Roman Catholic Québec."⁸ As a result of the strict social attitudes that frontierism had imposed on the settlers, Puritan ideals of the time dominated Canadian literature:

If Puritanism operated simply to restrain the arts within the bonds of moral orthodoxy, its effects, though regrettable, would be much less grave than they now are. Puritanism goes beyond the demand for severe morality: it disbelieves in the importance of art. It allows to the artist no function except watering down moral ideas of an orthodox kind into a solution attractive to minds not keen enough to study the ideas in more abstract presentations. At its most liberal Puritanism will tolerate, a little uneasily, the provision through the arts of an innocent passing amusement which is expected to leave no deep trace on character. To popularize orthodox morality and to provide light, clean fun--that is the very limit of what the arts can be allowed to do without alarming the Puritan mind. For the Puritan a life devoted to one of the arts is a life misused: the aesthetic life is not a form of the good life.⁹

The maximum diversion from this objective permitted to writers could be mere ineffectual amusement. That is to say, Puritans actively

discouraged the creative exploration of human problems.

Ultimately, however, even though the social and cultural origins of each group are dissimilar, the fictions they have produced pose similar fundamental problems and resolutions. Both propagate a quasi-religious respect for the land; both illustrate the desire of the farmer to root himself in the land; both show the necessity of raising large families in order to strengthen their hold on the land, and both eventually encounter the problems of financial success and the increasing mechanization of rural life after World War I. It was not until after that war and the Great Depression that followed it, that the illusion that Western Canada was the Promised Land was dispelled; likewise, French Canada did not overcome its inertia until after that war.

To illustrate the French Canadian ideology of the land, La Terre Paternelle, written in 1846 by Joseph-Patrice Lacombe, has been selected because it exemplifies the agriculturist philosophy of the nineteenth century as preached by the clergy and political elite in French Canada. Antoine Gérin-Lajoie's Jean Rivard, published in two parts in 1862 and 1866 respectively, follows the ideology innovated in La Terre Paternelle, but puts the emphasis on the strong nationalistic feelings and values then attached to the land. This novel, glorifying the land and making it a symbol of national survival, was written at the height of the emigration of French Canadian youth to the United States. In this eulogy of the land the author hoped that the youth would open up and settle new land in

the province of Québec and thus help to serve the national cause of "la survivance."

Louis Hémon's Maria Chapdelaine, published in 1914, marked the culmination of the tradition of the novel of the land in French Canada. It showed that the theme of the land in Québec could serve the French Canadian ideology and be at the same time a literary work of art. Although Maria Chapdelaine does not really do justice to French Canadian society of 1914, the novel is worth considering, for its objectivity, limited though it is, is an innovation in French Canadian writing.

Albert Laberge's La Scouine, published in 1917, offers a striking contrast to the ideologies treated in Hémon's Maria Chapdelaine. His pessimistic attitude toward the land reflects the fast changing outlook of the French Canadian writer. Under the influence of European realistic writers of the time, Laberge attacked the prevailing French Canadian romantic illusion about the land.

Finally, to close the study of the theme of the land in French Canadian fiction, Ringuet's Trente Arpents, published in 1938, must be considered. Ringuet was the first realistic author to objectively picture French Canadian rural society. The universal problem of the complex bond that links the farmer to his land, the appearance of modern technology in rural communities, the changing values of these communities, and the emigration of the youth to the cities, are all dealt with in this novel. It is not only a searching

study of French Canadian rural communities in a fast changing world, but it also climactically terminates the tradition of the novel of the land in French Canada. Only after Ringuet's work do writers begin to deal with the alienated French Canadian "habitant" in the city.

Various aspects of Prairie life while the prairies were still a frontier are perhaps best depicted in a general way in Niven's The Flying Years. Published in 1942, Niven's novel, although by no means brilliant, is enlightening for the purpose of this study because it is a portrayal of the fast changing Prairie which within a single life-time was transformed from a buffalo-hunting frontier to an organized and prosperous society. In Niven the Promised Land is described with the enthusiasm of his protagonist, but his use of the myth is forced, and he fails to observe the difficult reality of Prairie life. Salverson's The Viking Heart, published in 1923, gives an account of early pioneer life in which she portrays the Western Canadian myth, but at the same time shows the harsh reality of the immigrant's life on the prairies. In that respect, her novel offers a description of Prairie life which was not found in Niven's The Flying Years.

Robert J.C. Stead's Grain, published in 1926, is central to this study for its perceptive and realistic approach to farm-life on the Prairies. Stead is not so much concerned with the myth of the Promised Land, as with the farmer's conflict between the old values which he cherishes, and the economic and social effects of modern

technology. Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese, published in 1925, has been chosen primarily because of the psychological depth it offers while utilizing landscape imagery and the bond of the farmer with his land. Her themes of man as Prairie interloper, and freedom as illusion, will be taken up not only by F.P. Grove, but also by most contemporary Prairie writers.

Frederick Philip Grove is today considered to have made a major contribution to Prairie fiction. His novels, in addition to dealing with man's loneliness on the Prairie, also touch other themes such as man's relationship to the land, the land as part of the divine order, the immigrant's desire to take roots in the land, and the impact of mechanization on rural communities. Settlers of the Marsh gives an objective view of the effect of the myth of the Promised Land on the individual, and also analyses man's relationship with the land. Our Daily Bread deals with the conflict of generations, the war years, and with the ultimate defeat of man's dream to immortalize himself through his children. Fruits of the Earth concerns what Grove calls the folly of materialism and the disintegration of old rural communities. His novels offer a profound analysis of Prairie life from the pioneer period to modern times, and provide a clear dividing point between Prairie novels that treat the theme of the land, and later ones that treat the city.

NOTES

¹D.G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 9.

²Guy Sylvestre, "Le roman," in ed. Léopold Lamontagne Visages de la civilisation au Canada français, Etudes rassemblées par la Société royale du Canada (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1970), p. 3.

³E.K. Brown, On Canadian Poetry 2nd. ed. rev. (1943; rpt. Ottawa: The Tecumseh Press, 1973), pp. 20-21.

⁴Lewis H. Thomas, "British Visitors' Perceptions of the West 1885-1914," in ed. A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen Prairie Perspectives 2 (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), p. 191.

⁵E.K. Brown, On Canadian Poetry, p. 24.

⁶Ibid., p. 25.

⁷Desmond Pacey, Creative Writing in Canada, 2nd. ed. rev. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1961), p. 35.

⁸Ronald Sutherland, Second Image (Toronto: New Press, 1971), p. 61.

⁹E.K. Brown, On Canadian Poetry, p. 23.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The concept of the land in the fiction of both the Canadian Prairie and French Canada has evolved in much the same way. Yet, a basic variance which is primarily due to social differences in cultural background can be traced in their respective traditions of the novel of the land. Although both French and English Canada were at one time frontier settlements, their attitudes toward the new world differed. While French emigrants came to North America in order to build a New France, and for this reason imported all the social structures of the mother country, pioneers went to Western Canada with the hope of creating a different life in the New World. Unlike French Canadians, they saw the new land as the Promised Land, a land of freedom where they could start anew, free from the social restrictions of their native lands.

The distinguishing mark of French Canada is the degree of social cohesion it possesses—a cohesion largely due to the seigneurial system established in New France. Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church in Québec after the British Conquest was granted social and political power that no other church in Canada had. Hence, religious unity in Québec easily came to identify itself with linguistic and cultural survival as well. It is often claimed by nationalistic historians that the British Conquest was largely responsible for the enclosure of French Canadians within their province. This insularity, of course, cannot be denied. On the other hand however, it might also be argued that the Conquest served only to further reinforce French Canadian isolation.

Even under the French Régime, French Canada, heavily influenced by its autocratic government and conservative clergy, tended to be an uninvolved and closed-in society. This isolation, to a lesser extent, might have been created by the geographical landscape and the psychological impact it had on its inhabitants. French Canada, located in the St. Lawrence Valley, is limited in space and is quite unlike the prairies which present an open unlimited expanse, which has had a psychological impact on the settlers that is clearly illustrated in Prairie fiction. Western farmers had not only immense space, but also believed, unlike French Canadians, in the Western Canadian myth that this land was there to be cultivated and that every inch of it should be used.

The development of a basic pragmatism in Prairie farmers and an essential conservatism in French Canadians necessitates a survey of the historical evolution and preoccupations of each in order to better understand the differing conceptions of the land in their fiction. This chapter is therefore divided into two parts, giving the historical and cultural background of French Canada and of Western Canada respectively.

1. French Canada

The interdependence of French Canadian literature and contemporaneous social realities is of primary importance. French Canadians, feeling politically and economically dominated by the Anglo-Saxon world, have found in their literature means to express their hopes, their aspirations, and their ideals. In Québec, "la littérature a été avant tout un instrument de combat social ou politique, un refuge, une soupape de sûreté."¹ Falardeau's generalization can be verified in the particular

case of the novel. If the French Canadian novel has been centered on the land for over a century, it is because French Canadian society was, until the middle of this century, a rural society totally estranged from the urban milieu.

When dealing with the history of French Canada one must first consider the complete isolation of the early pioneers, and most importantly, the rigid autocracy of the Ancien Régime which suppressed any initiative on the part of French subjects living in New France.

The social organization of the "Province Royale" in North America was based mainly on agrarian social structures. Its society, like its French model, consisted of a complex social and religious hierarchy with the bulk of the population composed of peasants who had to contend not only with wilderness but with the hostility of the Indians. The population was settled along the St. Lawrence River on seigneuries which had been established by the French Government. Under the seigneurial system, early pioneers were allowed a piece of land on a seigneurie which, in turn, was administered by the seigneur in charge who acted as a land promoter to recruit settlers and who was also responsible for the welfare of the new-comers.² As a result of the seigneurial system which prevented outsiders from mixing with French Canadians, the population of New France was much more cohesive than that of Western Canada could have been. Its isolation on the seigneuries and its common religious background contributed to the uniformity of the French Canadians' intellectual and religious development. French Canadians came to be not only linked to one another, but coalesced into a homogeneous entity. The

seigneuries encouraged a "togetherness" and a strong sense of belonging to a community and to a culture. Consequently, instead of stressing their regional particularities they tended more to find for themselves national traits. Their national bond with the land which came to symbolize all of these values was to further isolate them from the rest of the world.

The conquest of New France by England in 1763 brought about drastic changes in the French colony. Following the Treaty of Paris by which Louis XIV ceded New France to England, the nobles and administrators returned to their mother country and were replaced by a British hierarchy. French Canadians found themselves with no political, economic or military support. As Michel Brunet points out, "les Canadiens, privés de l'appui de leur métropole nourricière . . . [étaient] réduits à leurs propres ressources. Celles-ci étaient très limitées."³ Limited their resources were indeed. As with any pioneer society, French Canada had had very few educational opportunities, having to concentrate its efforts on the monumental task of clearing the land. Moreover, the limited intellectual possibilities for the French Canadian habitants were due to an extremely traditional clergy that was eager to maintain a strict control over its followers, as well as to an autocratic government that closely guarded its colony. The works of such philosophers as Rousseau and Voltaire, who would later be partially responsible for the French Revolution, were strictly forbidden in New France. Hence, at the time of the Conquest French Canadians found themselves with no money, no printing press and no literature. All that they had and which they were determined to preserve, was their language, their religion, and their land.

After the Conquest, Canada became an English country. This fact had a major influence on the destiny of the French Canadians who were determined more than they had ever been to retain their possessions. After the Conquest, 65,000 French Canadians,⁴ ruined by the wars and by the conquerors,⁵ deserted by their governing class that had fled to France, would try to survive in what had become an English continent. Since the conquerors had taken control of public administration and the economy, French Canadians had only one resource left: the land. During the entire first half of the nineteenth century, French Canadian society remained a rural society, basically illiterate and conditioned by the labour and rituals of a primitive agriculture." This rural life seems to have been a major factor in the isolation of the French Canadian people, but at the same time it was largely responsible for the preservation and homogeneity of their language and traditions. Largely because of the retention of the seigneurial system, French Canadians were able to maintain their community life as it had been before the conquest and to preserve themselves from outside influence. Their powerful moral and religious unity became the basis for their politics; in order to retain what they had, nothing was to change.

After the return of the French élite to France, the clergy, last representative of French culture in North America, assumed the social and spiritual leadership of their people. The Roman Catholic Church in Québec found itself in a much better position under British rule than it had ever dreamt of under the French Régime.⁶ In order to maintain its power over a conquered country, the conqueror has to use structures which

already exist in that society. One of the most powerful of these forces, the Roman Catholic Church, served as an intermediary between the colony and the new government:

Le conquérant a dû composer avec l'Eglise . . . pour assurer la tranquillité du pays; de cet accord est né le concept d'un peuple soumis et équilibré, chrétien et cultivateur. . . . C'est la mystique de la race prônée au Canada français durant le XIXème siècle et plus ou moins codifiée dans le statu quo de la constitution du Canada.⁷

It was under British rule that the Catholic Church in Québec began to play a major political role. Its authority under the French Régime had been limited. Although the clergy had at first acquired a certain amount of secular power through the Bishops, this power was removed in 1665 by the Intendant who stood second in the political structure of French society.⁸ After the Conquest, realizing its potential power as an intermediary between the French Canadian people and the new government, the Clergy demanded and received the right for the French Canadian to use his own language and to profess his own religion. Granted this constitutional right, it was understood that French Canadians would submit to the ruling authority; they would be "British," but would remain French in culture and Catholic in religion. Loyalty to the British Crown would now be a religious duty. After the strongly anticlerical French Revolution only a few years later the French Canadian clergy severed any links remaining with France:

A regicide France that worshipped the Goddess of Reason could not be a spiritual homeland for the Roman Catholic Church in Canada, and so the possibility of allegiance to France was ended forever.⁹

France was denounced as a "communist" country¹⁰ and the ideal of the

status-ordered society of pre-revolutionary France, then called "Fille aînée de l'Eglise," where one had to be Catholic and French, was applied to Canada.

The Clergy, in order to survive and to fulfill its duty to the British Crown, imposed on its faithful followers strict rules of an austere life to be followed: there was rigid control over books and literature in general, and playing cards and smoking were forbidden in public places.¹¹ This rigidity of the Church, in turn, was a major reason for the survival of the French language and religion in America. Determined to remain French, the peasants of French Canada, with the blessing of their parish priests, devoted themselves to preserving their French heritage. They respected the British authority, but all their energies tended to the preservation of the French heritage. This attitude, of course, was responsible for the extreme conservatism usually associated with French Canada. The ultimate goal of the Clergy was to achieve stability, but the final result was immobility; French Canadian society became a totally enclosed society, suspicious of the least change.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period described as "la revanche du berceau" in French Canada, was a period of unprecedented growth in population, and soon French Canadian families became synonymous with large families. The French Canadian religious faith was largely responsible for this growth in population. The Catholic Church had made it clear to its followers that procreation was the ultimate end of marriage, and that only procreation could ensure the survival of the French language and culture in the New World:

Ce qui fait la force morale du Canada, c'est le clergé catholique. C'est lui qui l'a guidé, discipliné, mené à la lutte sur le terrain spéculaire de la politique. Comme le Canadien possédait l'énergie, il lui a appris la sagesse. Il lui a fait comprendre que, sous peine de disparaître devant l'élément anglo-saxon, il lui fallait avoir beaucoup d'enfants, et sa croyance religieuse aidant, l'a rendu suréminemment fort pour la lutte.¹²

The French Canadians' will to survive and their religious faith encouraged large families, both a national and religious duty imposed on couples by the Church. With almost no immigration the French population increased from approximately 65,000 in 1763 to over 1,600,000 in 1900, and to 4,500,000 in 1927.¹³ It was even thought at one point by English leaders that French Canadians were trying to gain the numeric advantage in Canada by producing children!

Like the Presbyterians, the Methodists, and a host of other religions, the Roman Catholic Church, to avoid being influenced by outside forces, did everything to keep its people inside the Church. Sometimes the means employed to achieve this goal might not always have seemed the best to the observer, but they were nevertheless necessary. D. de Hauranne touches the core of the problem when he says: "On peut dire que l'Eglise catholique au Canada est une institution privilégiée, mais qui n'opprime pas. C'est une sorte d'association libre qui impose d'étroites obligations à ses membres, qui insiste pour qu'ils les remplissent aussi longtemps qu'ils en sont membres. . . ."¹⁴ Protestant churches in Canada also tried to exercise some political power, but their endeavours failed because, as Lapierre notes, "l'autorité spirituelle de ces églises est grandement limitée et il me semble qu'en pratique, elles n'ont pas et n'exercent pas un pouvoir coercitif."¹⁵ These churches

did not have the political and social powers that were given to the Catholic Church in Québec after the Conquest.

Because of its many religious factions the Protestant Church in Western Canada was actually a contributing factor in the lack of social cohesiveness on the prairies. While the Roman Catholic Church had great political, social, and spiritual power in Québec; the Protestant Church was not able to achieve the same power over its followers. The Church in Québec came to be regarded as the symbol of French Canadian values; the Church was more than a mere religious establishment: the Roman Catholic Church in Québec was the state. The motto "one law, one church, one state" could not have been applied in Western Canada. The pragmatic philosophy of the Protestant Church contrasts with the conservatism and spirituality of the Catholic Church in Québec for whom "les valeurs de contemplation sont demeurées supérieures aux valeurs d'actions; la grâce et les vertues chrétiennes sont demeurées dissociées du succès des entreprises terrestres."¹⁶ The conservatism of the Catholic Church in Québec has few affinities with the liberal protestantism of Western religious life.

The Catholic Church has always played an important part in education in Canada. Under the French Régime it had been given "a social mandate from the State for both education and hospitalization."¹⁷ The Church retained this privilege under British rule, and soon colleges of higher learning were created to educate priests. It is from these institutions that the future French Canadian élite emerged who led the legislative assembly, granted in 1791, and who gained even more power by

Confederation in 1867. These political leaders, faithfully following the doctrine of the Church and, aware of its power, concentrated their efforts on indoctrinating their people with the ideal known as "agriculturism" which Michel Brunet humorously defines as being fundamentally 'a philosophy of life which idealizes the past, condemns the present, and is highly suspicious of the future.'¹⁸ This agriculturist propaganda originally had a very praiseworthy intention: to assure the permanence of the French Canadian nationality in North America.

To see the particular orientation of "agriculturist" thought in French Canada one has only to read the famous speech of Georges-Etienne Cartier, one of the most influential men of the time:

La population ne suffit pas à constituer une nationalité; il lui faut encore l'élément territorial. La race, la langue, l'éducation et les mœurs forment ce que j'appelle un élément personnel national. Mais cet élément devra périr s'il n'est pas accompagné de l'élément territorial. L'expérience démontre que, pour le maintien et la permanence de toute nationalité, il faut l'union intime et indissoluble de l'individu avec le sol.

Canadien-français, n'oublions pas que, si nous voulons assurer notre existence nationale, il faut nous cramponner à la terre. Il faut que chacun de nous fasse tout en son pouvoir pour conserver non seulement le sang et la langue de nos ancêtres, mais encore la propriété du sol. . . . Je ne vois pas d'éventualité possible que puisse donner le coup de mort à notre nationalité, tant que nous aurons la pleine possession du sol. Compatriotes, souvenez-vous toujours que notre nationalité ne peut se maintenir qu'à cette condition.¹⁹

This speech, made in 1855, could have served as a prelude to any novel of the land in French Canada. The same ideal towards agriculturism persisted until the early years of the twentieth century when political leaders still claimed that "l'agriculture québécoise fournirait les assises matérielles d'une haute civilisation française et catholique en terre d'Amérique."²⁰ If some voices were heard criticizing, "la

piété qui piétine"²¹ and the immobility of the French Canadian people, they were quickly called to order by the clergy. In 1902 Jules-Paul Tardivel, journalist and politician, recommended to his fellows a way of life which they would follow until the First World War:

Il n'est pas nécessaire que nous possédions l'industrie et l'argent. Nous ne serions plus des Canadiens-français mais des Américains à peu près comme les autres. Notre mission est de posséder la terre et de semer des idées. Nous accrocher au sol, élever des familles nombreuses, entretenir des foyers de vie intellectuelle et spirituelle, tel doit être notre rôle en Amérique.²²

- o This declaration closely parallels the philosophy of agriculturism; anything that had to do with progress, such as the use of machinery on the farms, was considered a threat to that philosophy and would therefore bring the ultimate defeat of French Canadian civilization in America.

The Confederation of Upper Canada, Lower Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1867 further isolated the French Canadians from the rest of Canada, convincing them of their "special position" in the new union. Granted special privileges, French Canadians did not greet Confederation as the birth of a new Canadian nation, but rather as confirming the birth of the French Canadian nation in Québec. La Minerve, the largest circulating newspaper in Québec at that time, described the British North America Act as a protection of the new French Canadian nation:

Telle est, d'ailleurs, la signification que l'on doit attacher à cette constitution. On y voit la reconnaissance de la nationalité canadienne française. Comme nationalité distincte et séparée, nous formons un Etat dans l'Etat, avec pleine jouissance de nos droits, la reconnaissance formelle de notre indépendance nationale.²³

Confederation only strengthened the feeling that Québec was indeed the "cradle of a race" and that Canada was destined to become an English country enclosing a French-speaking province. This special position given to Québec was to have considerable effect on its attitude toward emigration to other parts of Canada.

The major event that stimulated the growth and development of a national literature in French Canada was the publication of François-Xavier Garneau's Histoire du Canada in 1845. The literature prior to Garneau's Histoire was insignificant, consisting mostly of stories of adventure which had nothing to do with the realities of everyday life in French Canada. Garneau not only celebrated the glorious episodes of his race, but also shed new light on the subjugation of French Canadians to British rule. His thesis gave French Canadians a feeling of dignity and a new will to survive. During the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century, French Canadian literature was on one hand conditioned by Garneau's nationalistic feelings, and on the other hand by agricultural ideology. A declaration of Abbé Casgrain recommends the kind of literature which should be written in French Canada:

Si, comme il est incontestable, la littérature est le reflet des mœurs, du caractère; des aptitudes, du génie d'une nation; si elle garde aussi l'empreinte des lieux où elle surgit, des aspects de la nature, des sites, des perspectives, des horizons, la nôtre sera grave, méditative, spiritualiste, énergique et persévérante comme nos pionniers d'autrefois . . . chaste et pure comme le manteau virginal de nos longs hivers. . . . Ainsi sa voie est tracée d'avance; elle sera le miroir fidèle de notre petit peuple dans les diverses phases de son existence avec sa foi ardente, ses nobles aspirations, ses élans d'enthousiasme ses traits d'héroïsme. . . . Elle n'aura point ce cachet de réalisme moderne, manifestation de la

pensée impie, matérialiste; mais elle n'aura que plus de vie, de spontanéité. . . . Heureusement que jusqu'à ce jour, notre littérature a compris sa mission, celle de favoriser de saines doctrines, de faire aimer le bien, admirer le beau, connaître le vrai, de moraliser le peuple en ouvrant son âme à tous les nobles sentiments, en murmurant à son oreille, avec les noms chers à ses souvenirs, les actions qui les ont rendus dignes de vivre en couronnant leurs vertus de son auréole, en montrant du doigt les sentiers qui mènent à l'immortalité. Voilà pourquoi nous avons foi en son avenir.²⁴

French Canadian literature was to serve a social and national ideology rather than a literary cause. At the threshold of the twentieth century the novel of the land followed the ideology of the land as preached by the clergy and the élite one hundred years earlier. In a short but profound study Yves Caron states that French Canadian letters have not been able to grow because of the "austere and retrograde" literary critic.²⁵ This assertion can perhaps be best seen in the reception of Laberge's novel, La Scouine, published in 1918. This novel conflicted with all established ideologies and was therefore systematically condemned or ignored by literary critics. The paradoxical goal of the novelist before the First World War was not to write a novel, but rather a fictionalized exhortation to preserve French Canadian culture. All the efforts of the writers were focussed on inculcating respect for ancestral tradition; French Canadians had to remain French Catholics and peasants. The land was the foundation of the nation's survival.

French Canada was not, however, immune to outside influence. The First World War was responsible for the first "révolution tranquille" in Québec. War factories appeared overnight, and men were needed to

work in the cities. This new occupation was particularly appealing to the children of farmers who were assured a "steady" income. With the advent of the war and the disruption of European agriculture, the Canadian farmer became of prime importance. He saw himself as a master who through his productive land could feed the world and make substantial profits for himself. Although not directly related to the war, modern technology made its appearance in the farming communities, thus changing not only the farming methods, but also the farmer's ideals and goals when he realized that his land could be a financial asset to him.

Land in French Canada, both traditionally and legally, could be inherited only by the eldest son of the family. The introduction of modern technology coinciding with a shortage of "new lands" for the farmer's offspring was largely responsible for the change in attitudes of the new generation and for the emigration of the youth to the city where they thought they could live a comfortable and secure life, freed from the demands of the land. Of course, French Canada had had the same problem in the 1850's when it had faced a massive emigration of its youth to the factories of the United States. At that time, however, the clergy with the help of politicians and writers, had eventually been able to persuade young people to go North and open new lands, thus serving the national cause. The situation was different in 1918: communications had improved and French Canada was more vulnerable to outside influences.

The importance of the history of French Canada and the role that the land has played in it is reflected in the literature. As a result, the land in French Canada has symbolized until recently the

survival of the French nationality in an English continent. However, as will be seen in the following chapter, the theme of the land in French Canadian fiction has continued to evolve.

2. Prairie Settlement

There was no government policy before Confederation for settling the prairies. Through Confederation the colonies and Lower and Upper Canada were united and made into provinces, and "the expansion of the new union to include the unorganized territories of the Northwest and the colony of British Columbia."²⁶ The principal reason for unification was that unity had become imperative to stave off the threat of a take-over of these territories by the great westward expansion of the United States. Confederation was interpreted very differently by those immediately concerned by such a union, Québec, Ontario, and the Red River settlers. Both Québec and Ontario, in a desire to increase their political power, saw marked advantages to Confederation. While Québec envisaged the new constitution as a protection of French Canadian rights within Québec,²⁷ and perhaps at the same time an opportunity for expansion, Ontario viewed Confederation as the end of Québec's majority position in government, and also as the beginning of a great westward expansion for Ontario farmers and industrialists. To the Lower Canadian mind, Confederation made Québec a separate country with its own language, its own law and its own religion. To the Upper Canadian mind, Confederation was an avenue to Western Canada which would assure the preservation of Anglo-Saxon power and would therefore guarantee that the West would be English and Protestant.²⁸

No sooner had the British North America Act been signed than a bitter political struggle arose between Québec and Ontario to determine who would take the lead in developing the new territory. The original settlers of Red River, the first prairie colony, established by Lord Selkirk in 1811, did not want to be considered a mere colony of the Dominion, and so they demanded self-government and equality with the other provinces of Canada. As a result of a political compromise, their demands were accepted, and the province of Manitoba was created in 1870. The population of the Red River colony, made up of a large proportion of French-speaking people, demanded and received rights to their own educational system and to their own language. This initiative gave Québec a first victory over Ontario by securing a constitution for the new province which gave equality to the French language and assured the right to denominational schools such as existed in Québec. It then seemed that dualism would remain a reality in Manitoba. However, the new constitution was granted only in principle by the Canadian government. Its immigration policy, although encouraging English immigration, clearly favoured pluralism rather than dualism. As Bruchési says in his Histoire du Canada pour tous (as translated by Petersen), "It was more expensive for an inhabitant of Rivière-du-Loup to go to Alberta than for a Jew from Galicia or a peasant from the Danube."²⁹ The prohibitive cost was not the main reason for the lack of French Canadian immigration to the West. As A.I. Silver notes, French Canada did not consider the new territories as a safe place for the survival of the French language and religion.³⁰ Unlike English settlers who settled individually, French Canadians tended

to settle new lands "en masse" under the leadership of the clergy. Confederation which gave constitutional rights to French Canadians in the province of Québec, certainly did not encourage them to emigrate outside of their province where they would lose those rights. To live outside the province of Québec, a state within a State, was to endanger the French Canadian national identity. The execution of Louis Riel, defender of French rights in Manitoba, only served to reinforce the idea of English hostility toward the French language and religion. Furthermore, the abolition of the official use of French and of the denominational school system in 1890, confirmed French Canadian fears that the French cause was a lost one in Western Canada: ". . . on a voulu faire du Nord-Ouest un pays essentiellement Anglo-saxon de race et de langue, et en bannir tout l'élément français et catholique."³¹

Planned settlement of the prairies could be said to have started in 1872 when the Canadian government passed the Land Act which provided new settlers with "a free homestead on the even numbered sections and a wood-lot."³² The new survey of the homesteads "introduced the American pattern of geometric indifference to natural features or social customs. Its sole virtues were economic . . . it treated land as a commodity to be cut and sold. . . ."³³ This new survey was entirely different from that of seigniorial settlements in Québec which took into account geographical factors. Although the survey did not prevent group settlements, it did encourage and prepare the way for an individualistic and assimilative society while placing immigrants in mixed and diverse settlements in an already predominantly English land.

From the beginning the prairies were viewed as the Land of Promise, the New Eden where one was bound to succeed. Thus, the first dream of the immigrants to the prairies was an economic one. Western Canada was for them a place where they could fulfill their dreams, free of the social restrictions of the Old World. The prairies represented the land of the future, the land of opportunity, the Promised Land:

An atmosphere of crystal, a climate suited above all others to develop the broad shoulder, the tense muscle, and the clear brain, and which will build up the most herculean and robust nation on earth. But above all, Canada is "the hope of the despairing poor of the world, a boundless ocean of land, diversified by rolling hills, by lakes and woods, or swelling into illimitable plain. The haunt of the Indian, the bison, and the antelope, waiting with majestic patience for the flocks and the fields, the schools, the churches, the Christian faith and love of freedom of the coming men."³⁴

While prairie settlements were established for economic and political purposes, French Canadian settlements had been planned to create a new French society in North America. The French colonist who came to the New Land never found himself isolated and could always identify with a community because of the seigneurial system which grouped the settlers close to each other. On June 14 1872, the government created the "implement" for immigration to encourage settlement of the prairies. Agents were placed in major European cities to secure immigrants for the new land, and a "Select Committee of the House of Commons on Immigration and Colonization" was formed to exercise general supervision.³⁵ Significantly, this immigration policy was chaotic in France and very few immigrants were secured from

that country.³⁶ The result of the new immigration policy was nevertheless successful, and seemed to confirm that the Canadian prairie was indeed the land of the future. Immigration expanded west of Winnipeg, and in 1878 the editor of the Saskatchewan Herald reported that:

within the last five years, the settlement of which Prince Albert proves the centre has been making giant strides towards the goal of civilization and agricultural improvement. The buffalo hunter is rapidly giving way to the farmer, and the Indian trader to the merchant.³⁷

Prince Albert, which might be considered the most important settlement west of Winnipeg at this period, was originally composed chiefly of Presbyterians, but later became the centre of an Anglican mission led by the Reverend James Wisbet. In 1880 Bishop Grondin, Roman Catholic Bishop of St. Albert, commented on the progress of Prince Albert. His comments shed light on the contrasting attitudes of French and English Canadians toward the New World:

Le 18 août j'arrivais à Prince Albert, véritable ville anglaise qui s'élève dans son diocèse à 15 ou 20 lieues de St. Laurent de Grondin. Il y a là deux usines à vapeur, j'y ai vu pour la première fois dans ce pays des constructions en briques. L'agglomération n'est pas encore considérable, mais les anglais, écossais et Canadiens anglais qui s'y rencontrent sont tous des Nomades entrepreneurs et décidés à faire fortune.³⁸

The period between 1891 and 1901 opened a new era for Western Canada. The completion of the railway to Vancouver in 1885 brought in a flow of European immigrants, mainly German and Scandinavian, and directed them to new areas of settlement. In retrospect, it is evident that Western Canada could never have been held and perhaps could never have been settled by Canada without a Canadian railway. Although

the number of European immigrants greatly increased in the last decade of the nineteenth century, their influence was not felt. The homestead policy encouraged assimilation of the newly arrived to the "original predominantly homogenous society, whether derived from Eastern Canada, Britain, or the U.S., [who] had already transferred urban institutions and municipal organizations from the older East to the West. . . ."39

A major problem the Immigration Office had to face was the lack of farming experience among the new settlers. Unlike the farmer in Québec whose sole aim was to provide for his family and perhaps to sell a limited surplus to his community, the prairie settler was expected to produce on a large scale to meet the country's needs. Furthermore, his desire to achieve affluence on the land motivated him to reach out for more and more land. Because of the particular nature of the soil and climate in the West new methods of cultivation, especially in the semi-arid region of Calgary, were needed. Experimental farms were established by the government, and the research done on those farms greatly improved the precarious condition of inexperienced farmers.

With improvements in farming methods the decade 1901-1910 was one of progress and prosperity. Between 1897 and 1906 the Canadian government extended railway construction on a large scale by amending no fewer than six times the Dominion Land Act of 1872 with the purpose of assuring rapid settlement⁴⁰. The construction of railways provided new settlers with the means of finding money to support themselves and their families until their farms could be productive.

By providing an assured income the extended railway construction encouraged immigration. The Red Deer land agent reported in 1911:

Considerable railway development took place during the past year, but 1911 promises to be phenomenal in railway construction throughout the district. Construction work on the Alberta Central and Canadian Northern railways west from Red Deer, which was carried on all winter, has given employment to a large number of settlers the winter through. These companies have paid good wages and have purchased all kinds of produce the farmers had to sell, which has made good times generally. . . . Many new towns are springing up, and the older towns are growing rapidly, consequently there is a heavy demand for all kinds of skilled labour. . . .⁴¹

Following the influx of European settlers in the decade 1901-1910 a great tide of immigration flowed in from the United States and from the crowded farms of Ontario. The American immigration totalled 82,995 against 82,323 English Canadians for that decade⁴². The American contribution to the Prairie settlements cannot be ignored; though they were also attracted by the promise of free land and quick wealth, many of them had already had previous farming experience and were well-equipped with the necessary farming machinery. A typical example of the Canadian government propagation of the myth of the Promised Land can be found in an advertisement which appeared in St. Paul, Minnesota: "Buy lands in Saskatchewan. You can leave home after Easter, sow your grain and take in the harvest and come home with your pockets full of money in time for Thanksgiving dinner."⁴³

The thrift and industry of the people and their dedication to their farms greatly helped to make the prairies a prosperous land. Most of the pioneers and settlers of the prairies, although from different origins, shared the common roots of Protestantism, a strong

sense of individual freedom, and the determination to succeed in their new life. They envisioned the prairies as "a great blank sheet in the world's diary"⁴⁴ where they could, like Abe Spaulding in Grove's Fruits of the Earth, write their own history. They soon came to regard the East as the unprogressive part of the country only fit to squeeze money out of the aggressive prairie dwellers for the sake of the do-nothing annuitants and the big interests which ran the railroads⁴⁵. As time passed prairie farmers became involved in social and political matters. Organizations such as The Grain Growers' Grain Company were formed to protect the farmers' interests, and it soon became evident that the inhabitants of Western Canada would have different attitudes from those of Eastern Canada.

The population and economy of the prairies grew at an astonishing rate, and by 1913 the land agent of Red Deer was able to report: "Villages have become towns, and the town of Red Deer has developed into a city."⁴⁶ Between 1881 and 1911 the population of Manitoba rose from 62,000 inhabitants to 461,000 inhabitants.⁴⁷ By the early twentieth century, the growth rate of the prairies attained nearly a million persons per decade for the years 1900-1920.⁴⁸ The farmers enjoyed great prosperity between 1914-1920 when the price of wheat increased from \$1.07 to \$2.21 a bushel.⁴⁹ This great prosperity accelerated the introduction of machinery on the farms, and farmers began to reach out for more and more land in their desire to develop their farms on a major scale to profit from the war and its demands. Of course, the artificial demand created by the war could not last,

and farmers who had extended their holdings, found themselves ruined financially by the Great Depression in 1929.

Since the prairie provinces were, in contrast to French Canada, settled quite late historically, and since their society was not restricted by a powerful social institution such as the Roman Catholic Church in Québec, the novel of the land did not take the same form as it had taken in French Canada. While the ideology of the land in French Canada was survival, the modern and progressive prairies were governed by the myth that the new land was the Promised Land, the New Eden, freed from the old social restrictions. The introduction of modern technology which was heightened by the Great War, had an effect which is reflected in the fiction. The means taken to achieve prosperity shifted from agrarian to technological ones, and brought to the surface many dichotomies which writers such as Grove and Ringuet were to deal with. Although the attitude of the French and English Canadian farmer toward the land changed, the fiction of the two cultures continued to carry many of the same themes. The fundamental relationship between man and the land was questioned, and writers became concerned with themes such as idealism and realism, spiritual and material values, in order to give a vital meaning to a people who had rejected the old values of agrarian life.

NOTES

¹ Jean-Charles Falardeau, Notre société et son roman (Montréal: Editions H.M.H., 1967), p. 48.

² Marcel Trudel, The Seigneurial Regime, The Canadian Historical Association Booklets, No. 6 (Ottawa: Love Printing Service, 1971), p. 3.

³ Michel Brunet, La Présence Anglaise et les Canadiens (Montréal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1964), p. 13.

⁴ Michel Brunet, "La Présence Anglaise à l'époque de la Nouvelle France," in La Présence Anglaise et les Canadiens, p. 34.

⁵ P. A. de Gaspé, Les Anciens Canadiens, quoted in Jean-Charlemagne Bracq, L'évolution du Canada français (Montréal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1927), p. 50.

⁶ Fernand Dumont, "Réflexions sur l'histoire religieuse du Canada français," in ed. Marcel Rioux L'Eglise et le Québec (Montréal: Edition du Jour, 1961), pp. 49-50.

⁷ J.S. Tassé, "La société à travers le roman Canadien français," in Le Roman Canadien-français; Evolution—Témoignages—Bibliographie, Archives des Lettres Canadiennes, Tome III (Montréal: Fides, 1963), p. 155.

⁸ W. J. Eccles, The Government of New France, The Canadian Historical Association Booklets, No. 18 (Ottawa: Love Printing Service, 1968), p. 10.

⁹ John S. Moir, ed., Church and State in Canada 1627-1867 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), p. xvii.

¹⁰ Bracq, L'évolution du Canada français, (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1927), p. 266. Bracq uses the word "communist" in the sense of "non-religious."

¹¹ Ibid., p. 7.

¹² Emile Lonchamp, Pourquoi l'Amérique du Nord n'est pas française?, 2nd. ed. (Paris: Challamel, 1888), pp. 86-87.

¹³ Bracq, L'évolution du Canada français, pp. 5-7.

¹⁴ Duvergier de Hauranne, Huit mois en Amérique, quoted in Bracq, L'évolution du Canada français, p. 262.

¹⁵ Laurier L. Lapierre, "Les relations entre l'Eglise et l'Etat au Canada français," in ed. Marcel Rioux L'Eglise et le Québec, p. 33.

¹⁶ Maurice Tremblay, "Orientations de la pensée sociale," in ed. Mason Wade, Canadian Dualism: Studies of French-English Relations (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 132.

¹⁷ Marcel Trudel, The Seigneurial Regime, p. 6.

¹⁸ Michel Brunet, "Trois dominantes de la pensée canadienne-française: L'agriculturisme, l'anti-étatisme et le Messianisme," in La Présence Anglaise et les Canadiens, op. cit., p. 119.

¹⁹ J.S. Tassé, ed., Discours de Georges-Etienne Cartier, quoted in Michel Brunet, La Présence Anglaise et les Canadiens, pp. 11-12.

²⁰ Brunet, La Présence Anglaise et les Canadiens, p. 159.

²¹ Bracq, L'évolution du Canada français, p. 272.

²² Jules-Paul Tardivel, an article in his magazine La Vérité, 1902; quoted in Michel Brunet, "Trois dominantes de la pensée canadienne-française...", p. 163.

²³ La Minerve, 1 juil. 1867, quoted in A. I. Silver, "French Canada and the Prairie Frontier, 1870-1890," in Canadian Historical Review, L (March, 1969), p. 24.

²⁴ Abbé Raymond Casgrain, "Le Mouvement littéraire au Canada," Le Foyer Canadien, IV, 1866; in Oeuvres Complètes de l'abbé Casgrain, Tome I (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1884), p. 10.

²⁵ Yves Caron, "La critique littéraire," in ed. Léopold Lamontagne, Visages de la civilisation au Canada français (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1970), pp. 74-77.

²⁶ W.L. Morton, "The West and the Nation, 1870-1970," in ed. A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen, Prairie Perspectives 2 (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), p. 8.

²⁷ Cf above pp. 11-12.

²⁸ Frank H. Underhill, The Image of Confederation, The Massey Lectures (Toronto: Hunter Rose, 1970), p. 5.

²⁹ Bruchési, Histoire du Canada pour tous, quoted in William Petersen, Planned Migration: The social determinants of the Dutch-Canadian Movement (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955), pp. 122-123.

³⁰ A. I. Silver, "French Canada and the Prairie Frontier, 1870-1890," in Canadian Historical Review, L (March, 1969), p. 14.

³¹ L'Etendard, "Question nationale du Nord-Ouest," quoted in A.I. Silver, p. 23.

³² A.S. Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, in eds. W.A. Mackintosh and W.L.G. Joerg, Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, II (1938; rpt. Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint, 1974), p. 53.

³³ W.L. Morton, "The West and the Nation, 1870-1970," p. 14.

³⁴D.J. Dooley, "The Canadian Adam," in English Studies in Canada, Association of Canadian University Teachers of English, I, No. 3 (Fall, 1975), p. 345.

³⁵A.S. Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, pp. 53-54.

³⁶William Petersen, Planned Migration; The social determinants of the Dutch-Canadian Movement (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955), p. 122.

³⁷The Saskatchewan Herald, December 16, 1878: Oliver, The Beginning of White Settlement in Northern Saskatchewan, p. 270; quoted in George F.G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1936), p. 183.

³⁸Mgr. Grondin, Journal de voyages, June 13, 1880: Mission des O.M.I., Vol XIX, 1881, p. 270.

³⁹A.S. Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, p. 38.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 288.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 143.

⁴²Ibid., p. 128.

⁴³Ibid., p. 120.

⁴⁴G. MacEwen, Noman, p. 87; quoted in Dooley, op. cit., p. 344.

⁴⁵G.V. Ferguson, "The English Canadian Outlook," ed. Mason Wade Canadian Dualism: Studies of French-English Relations, p. 6.

⁴⁶A.S. Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, p. 143.

⁴⁷Nathan Keyfitz, "Some Demographic Aspects of French-English Relations in Canada," in ed. Mason Wade, Canadian Dualism, p. 132.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹A.S. Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, p. 171.

FRENCH CANADIAN FICTION

In the early part of the nineteenth century, French Canadian literature received little notice. Most of the works produced during that period were highly romantic adventure novels bearing the European influence of the time. However, the publication of Garneau's Histoire du Canada in 1845 was to inspire French Canadians to write of their own land. Garneau gave French Canada a national conscience by writing the first real history of which it could be proud. According to Mgr. Roy, well-known critic of the early twentieth century, when Garneau's friends claimed that French Canadians were a conquered people with no history, he replied: "Eh bien! Notre histoire je vais vous la raconter! Et vous verrez comment nos ancêtres ont été vaincus, et si une pareille défaite n'est pas aussi glorieuse qu'une victoire!"¹ According to Abbé Casgrain, Garneau's Histoire du Canada had a profound effect on French Canadian attitudes toward the land:

Nous n'oublierons jamais l'impression profonde que produisit sur nos jeunes imaginations d'étudiants l'Histoire du Canada de Garneau. . . . Ce fut une révélation pour nous. Ces grandes clartés qui se levaient tout à coup sur un sol vierge, et nous en découvraient les richesses et la puissante végétation, les monuments et les souvenirs, nous ravissaient d'étonnement autant que d'admiration.

Que de fois ne nous sommes-nous pas dit avec transport, à l'aspect des larges perspectives qui s'ouvraient devant nous: Cette terre si belle, si luxuriante, est celle que nous foulons sous nos pieds, c'est le sol de la patrie! Avec quel noble orgueil nous écoutions les divers chants de cette brillante épopée!²

Garneau's Histoire was to make the French Canadian proud of his language, his history, and his religion. Its conclusion was to lead the way for the intellectuals of the time:

Ce peuple [the French Canadians] a grandi de lui-même, sans secours étranger, dans sa foi religieuse et sa nationalité. . . . Depuis la conquête . . . il a fondé toute sa politique sur sa propre conservation. . . . Il n'est pas resserré en lui-même, il a rallié tous ses enfants autour de lui, et a toujours craint de perdre une usage, une pensée, un préjugé de ses pères, malgré les sarcasmes de ceux qui l'entourent. C'est ainsi qu'il a gardé jusqu'à ce jour sa religion, sa langue. . . . Que les Canadiens soient fidèles à eux-mêmes; qu'ils soient sages et persévérants. . . . Pour nous, une partie de notre force vient de nos traditions; ne nous en éloignons ou ne les changeons que graduellement. . . .³

Garneau's insistence that the French Canadian preserve his culture and his tradition had a direct influence on the literature that followed his work. Garneau, in his Oeuvres Complètes, defines the role of the French Canadian writer: "Renonçant aux beaux rêves d'une gloire retentissante il doit se regarder comme amplement récompensé de ses travaux s'il peut contribuer à la conservation, sur la jeune terre de l'Amérique, de la vieille nationalité française."⁴ The writers of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries were to dedicate themselves to this "conservation" in what came to be known as "le roman du terroir" in French Canada. The theme of faithfulness to the land and to one's French origins is ever present in "le roman du terroir" and hence, novels such as Hémon's Maria Chapdelaine which deal primarily with loyalty to the land and to the culture as a means of ensuring French Canadian survival are referred to as "romans de la fidélité." Loyalty to the land and the ideology of the land as survival being so closely related to one another, the terms "roman du terroir" and "roman de la fidélité" are used interchangeably when referring to the novel of the land in French Canada.

One of the first authors to dedicate himself to the theme of "conservation" in French Canada is Patrice Lacombe in his novel La Terre Paternelle published in 1846. Although it cannot be asserted that Garneau's Histoire had a direct influence on Lacombe's novel, the coincidence of the two works appearing simultaneously, was indicative of a new trend in French Canada. The author himself states in the conclusion to his book that he is turning from the romantic tradition of early French Canadian fiction:

Quelques-uns de nos lecteurs auraient peut-être désiré que nous eussions donné un dénouement tragique à notre histoire; ils auraient aimé à voir nos acteurs disparaître violemment de la scène, les uns après les autres, et notre récit se terminer dans le genre terrible, comme un grand nombre de romans du jour. Mais nous les prions de remarquer que nous écrivons dans un pays où les mœurs en général sont pures et simples, et que l'esquisse que nous avons essayé d'en faire eût été invraisemblable et même souverainement ridicule, si elle se fût terminée par des meurtres, des empoisonnements et des suicides.⁵

Numerous elements which would later characterize the novel of the land are used in Lacombe's work: "Les simples plaisirs de la vie rurale y sont contrastés avec la misère des villes; les personnages types du genre font leur entrée en scène: le père de famille, humble et laborieux; le fils intrépide qui part à la recherche de la fortune, la mère fidèle qui attend son retour, le notaire avide du gain. . . ."⁶ Mgr. Roy characterized the French Canadian novel of the time as based upon novels such as Lacombe's La Terre Paternelle: ". . . le roman canadien est un genre littéraire qui, chez-nous, s'est tenu près de la vie canadienne et . . . il a le plus souvent lié sa fonction artistique à la cause même de notre survivance française."⁷ Lacombe and his successors

were to consider it their mission to propagate the motto "la terre, c'est la patrie!"

The plot of Lacombe's novel is in itself simple. It is the story of the Chauvin family who live happily on the land that has been in their family since 1670. However, the youngest son decides to leave the farm in order to work in a fur-trade company. Anxious to keep his older son with him, father Chauvin gives him his land. Then, misfortunes beset them. The eldest son does not respect his contract with his father who decides to move to the city where he loses all his money in unsuccessful transactions. It is at this point in the novel that Chauvin's youngest son, who had left ten years earlier, returns to buy the land back and in doing so, re-unites the family and the land.

The land, in La Terre Paternelle is presented as being the only source of happiness:

La paix, l'union, l'abondance régnaient donc dans cette famille; aucun souci ne venait en altérer le bonheur. Contents de cultiver en paix le champs que leurs ancêtres avaient arrosé de leurs sueurs, ils coulaient des jours tranquilles et sereins. Heureux, oh! trop heureux les habitants des campagnes s'ils connaissaient leur bonheur! (TP p. 43)

The land becomes symbolic of the ancestral traditions; it is "la terre paternelle," the father's land, which is transmitted from generation to generation. It is the all-generous land which, if carefully cultivated, "s'empressait de rendre au centuple ce qu'on avait confié dans son sein" (TP p. 42). Lacombe makes it clear that if the French Canadian farmer leaves his farm he is doomed to experience all the misfortunes that can possibly happen to a person. This is seen when Lacombe gives

his readers a description of the Chauvin family in the city:

Nbs lecteurs nous auront sans doute déjà devancés et leur coeur se sera serré de douleur en reconnaissant dans cette pauvre famille, la famille autrefois si heureuse de Chauvin! (TP p. 87)

Lacombe's theme is made explicit at the end of the novel when the reader is given a description of the Chauvin family upon their return to their land:

Le père Chauvin, sa femme et Marguerite recouvrèrent bientôt, à l'air pur de la campagne, leur santé affaiblie par tant d'années de souffrances et de misères. Cette famille réintégrée dans la terre paternelle, vit renaître dans son sein la joie, l'aisance et le bonheur. (TP p. 118)

To leave no doubt that the city is evil and corrupt, Lacombe contrasts the church in the city with the church in the country. At first Lacombe's comments might seem anti-clerical, but their purpose is to emphasize that all aspects of life are corrupt in the city, even the church. This is seen when Chauvin's eldest son dies and his father goes to the priest to arrange for the funeral:

—Quand sonnerez-vous le glas de mon fils? demanda le père.
 —Tout de suite si vous voulez: combien de cloches?
 Puis avec la volubilité d'un homme qui sait son tarif par coeur: 1 cloche, c'est dix piastres; 2 cloches, c'est vingt piastres, 3 cloches, c'est trente piastres. . . .
 —Ah! mon cher monsieur, interrompit Chauvin, je suis bien pauvre: je ne pourrai jamais payer des sommes comme cela.
 —Quoi! pas seulement une cloche? Mais il faut au moins payer pour une cloche, si vous voulez avoir un service; autrement vous n'en aurez pas, et on portera votre fils au cimetière tout droit. (TP p. 92)

The city is so evil, Lacombe implies, that it even perverts religious values. The contrast between city and country is evident: on one side materialism, on the other Christian values.

To leave the land is not only a personal tragedy such as the Chauvin family suffers, but also a national threat to the survival of the race. Lacombe also inaugurates the tradition of "l'étranger" who is invariably English, and who is always ready to take over the ancestral French Canadian land. When Charles comes back he finds that a "stranger" now owns his father's farm:

"—What business brings you here?"

—Oh! monsieur, pardon, je ne parle pas beaucoup l'anglais; mais, dites-moi . . . non, je ne me trompe pas, c'est bien ici . . . où est mon père, où est ma mère?

"—What do you say? moi pas connaître ce que vous dire."

—Comment, vous ne connaissez pas mon père! Chauvin, cette terre lui appartient, où est-il?

"—No, no, moi non connaître votre père, moi avoir acheté le farm de la sheriff."

—Non, c'est pas possible, c'est mon père qui vous l'a vendue; où demeure-t-il?

"—No, no, goddam, vous pas d'affaire ici, moi avoir une bonne deed de la sheriff." (TP p. 108)

The theme of the stranger and of his ever-present threat to the French Canadian is constant in the novel of the land; to leave the land is to lose it to an outsider.

One of the chief followers of Lacombe is Antoine Gérin-Lajoie who is representative of the minor novelists who imitated him. Although best known for his novels, Gérin-Lajoie was also an accomplished historian. In 1888, his "valuable work"⁸

Dix ans d'Histoire du Canada was published, and as an historian he could not have ignored Garneau's Histoire. It is therefore not surprising to find

that his fiction is more nationalistic than that of his predecessor, Lacombe. His novels, Jean Rivard, le défricheur canadien, and Jean Rivard, économiste, published respectively in 1862 and 1866, reflect an even stronger patriotic feeling and didacticism than is found in Lacombe's La Terre Paternelle. Gérin-Lajoie's novels more fully develop Lacombe's theme. For Gérin-Lajoie, only the possession of the land can guarantee the survival of the race, of its language, and of its religion.

The action of Jean Rivard takes place in 1843 in the small village of Grandpré, north of the St. Lawrence River. Jean Rivard, a young student and the protagonist of the novel, eldest son of a family of twelve children has to interrupt his studies after the death of his father, and must then choose a profession. The curé advises him to become a farmer because of the instability of the other professions. As a result, Jean Rivard becomes a pioneer tiller of the soil. After toiling to clear the forest, Rivard becomes a prosperous cultivator, and other pioneers follow his example. Hence, Jean Rivard becomes an exaltation of the pioneer; the hero goes north to settle new land and in so doing finds happiness and helps propagate the French race in North America.

The story of Jean Rivard could perhaps be classified as belonging to the Horatio Alger tradition of the self-made man. The author has selected a protagonist "né dans une condition modeste qui a su s'élever aux premiers honneurs de son pays."⁹ In this respect, the plot of the novel strongly resembles Grove's Fruits of the Earth.¹⁰ The difference between the two novels lies in their approach. While Grove's

novel is realistic and condemns the folly of materialism, Gérin-Lajoie's is strongly idealistic and nationalistic. For Gérin-Lajoie the only possible way to happiness and self-fulfillment is to settle on new land and to clear ten acres of forest a year (JR I, p. 42). In other words, one had to settle and build new communities on the virgin land to fulfill a national duty and to be happy. Jean Rivard transforms the wild forest into the cultivated land, and success always rewards the tiller. In short, the novel shows the fulfillment of the hero's most fabulous dreams:

Il se crut transporté au milieu d'une immense forêt. Tout à coup, des hommes apparurent, armés de haches, et les arbres tombèrent ça et là sous les coups de la cognée. Bientôt les arbres furent remplacés par les moissons luxuriantes. Puis des vergers, des jardins, des fleurs surgirent comme par enchantement. Le soleil brillait de tout son éclat. Il se crut au milieu du paradis terrestre. En même temps, il lui sembla entendre une voix lui dire: il ne dépend que de toi d'être un jour l'heureux et paisible possesseur de ce domaine. (JR I, p. 23)

The land in Jean Rivard is above all the "new land", the wilderness that must be cleared and then tilled so that it will become prosperous and support new communities. This definition of the land is closely related to the nationalistic thesis of the novel. The clearing of the wilderness is for Gérin-Lajoie a reflection of the ideology of French Canada which J.-C. Falardeau defines as: "La nation canadienne-française doit durer. La permanence de la collectivité ainsi que la permanence d'une mission à accomplir sont affirmées avec insistance."¹¹ One must stay on the land in order to preserve French traditions and improve the economy of French Canada. Gérin-Lajoie's patriotic celebration of the

land is well illustrated when he describes the two flags over Rivardville:

Deux grands drapeaux flottaient aux fenêtres: l'un était le drapeau britannique et l'autre, le drapeau national. Sur ce dernier, étaient inscrits en grosses lettres, d'un côté: religion, patrie, liberté; de l'autre côté: éducation, agriculture, industrie. Ces seuls mots expliquaient toute la politique de Jean Rivard. (JR II, p. 246)

If one does not uphold the motto on each side of the national flag, one does not help the "cause nationale." That is why, to again quote Falardeau, "par cette épopée qui plane au-dessus des événements contemporains, l'auteur veut faire partager à ses lecteurs la vision des vertus et des entreprises agricoles qui dans le passé ont été l'essence même de la grandeur canadienne-française et qui seules pourraient, répétées dans le présent, sauver la nation en leur redonnant une égale grandeur."¹²

The land in Jean Rivard is not only symbolic of national survival, but of national prosperity as well. For the author the land is "ce qui stimulera le commerce et l'industrie et fera du Canada un pays véritablement prospère" (JR II, p. 284). Furthermore, Gérin-Lajoie presents the land as sacred and the farmer as a sort of priest who guards its sanctity:

C'est par un choix initial, délibéré que Jean Rivard entre dans la vie agricole comme on entre en religion: la vocation d'agriculteur est l'alpha et l'oméga de la grandeur morale et de la prospérité matérielle.¹³

The nationalistic thesis of Gérin-Lajoie follows closely, though probably inadvertently, the political ideology preached by Georges-

Etienne Cartier in 1855.¹⁴ In the novel, the land, in addition to giving the protagonist a personal goal in life, also keeps him on the national soil, thus fulfilling the national ideology: "Une voix intérieure lui dit aussi qu'il remplit un devoir sacré envers son pays, envers sa famille, envers lui-même." (JR I, p. 69). Jean Rivard is indeed an exaltation of the land. To emphasize the goodness of the land, and its existence as the only source of happiness and prosperity, Gérin-Lajoie uses, as Lacombe did, the contrast between country life and city life.

The city in Jean Rivard is looked upon as being evil and destructive; according to the priest, curé Leblanc, the urban man is separated from nature and from God:

Dans les grandes villes, voyez-vous, les hommes sont séparés pour ainsi dire de la nature; l'habitude de vivre au milieu de leurs propres ouvrages les éloignent de la pensée de Dieu. S'ils pouvaient comme nous admirer chaque jour les magnificences de la création, ils s'élèveraient malgré eux jusqu'à l'Auteur de toutes choses, et la cupidité, la vanité, l'ambition . . . n'auraient plus autant de prise sur leurs coeurs. (JR I, p. 20)

This image of the city is contrasted with that of the country in an exchange of letters between Jean Rivard and his friend, Charmenil, the unfortunate city-dweller. The energy and self-fulfillment of Jean Rivard on his land is far superior to the difficult and meaningless life of Charmenil. In one of these letters, Charmenil writes: "Si tu savais, mon cher ami, combien de fois je répète le vers de Virgile: 'Heureux, l'homme des champs, s'il savait son bonheur!'" (JR I, p.41).

In another letter, he asks:

Que sommes-nous, en effet, nous hommes du monde . . . à côté de vous, héros de la civilisation, modèles de toutes les vertus, qui ne vivez que pour faire le bien? Nous sommes des nains, et vous êtes des géants! (JR II, p. 216)

Through these letters the reader discovers that the land has a spirituality which is unknown to "la grande majorité des habitants de nos cités, avec leur faste emprunté et leur vie de mensonge" (JR I, p. 60). It is in such novels as Jean Rivard and La Terre Paternelle that the ideology of the land as preached by the clergy and the political elite is at its best. The novel, Jean Rivard, moreover, is utopian in concept. Gérin-Lajoie represents all the ideals of society by the small community of Rivardville. The mayor and the priest symbolize "le pouvoir spirituel et le pouvoir temporel se soutenant l'un par l'autre et se donnant la main" (JR II, p. 166); The outsider (i.e., the English), who is always looked upon with distrust in all the novels of the soil, is openly accepted in Jean Rivard; Irish families have settled in the little French community of Rivardville, but "l'accord le plus parfait n'a cessé de régner entre elles et le reste des habitants" (JR II, p. 253). As Falardeau points out, "l'Anglais étranger et dominateur est absent" in this novel.¹⁵ The Irish families, probably Roman Catholic, are assimilated by the French community. Everything that has to do with hope, ambition, or planning for the future, is central to the novel. Whatever Jean Rivard does, success awaits him. As a result, Gérin-Lajoie might be credited with having written Québec's most idealistic novel of the land. Unlike the novelists of the twentieth century who make their protagonists look back on the past regretfully, the destiny of Jean Rivard is presented under the most optimistic aspects. This optimism, of course, serves Gérin-Lajoie's purpose. In the preface to the novel the author himself

states that his purpose in writing Jean Rivard was not to write a novel:

Le but de l'auteur était de faire connaître la vie et les travaux des défricheurs, et d'encourager notre jeunesse canadienne à se porter vers la carrière agricole, au lieu d'encombrer les professions d'avocat, de notaire, de médecin et les comptoirs des marchands, comme elle le fait de plus en plus, au grand détriment de l'intérêt public et national. . . . L'intention de l'auteur toutefois n'a jamais été de faire un roman. . . .¹⁶

Gérin-Lajoie's sole purpose in writing the novel was to discourage the youth from moving to the city "sans argent, sans amis, sans protecteur et sans expérience de la vie du monde" (JR I, p.34), and to encourage them to follow the example of Jean Rivard who finds happiness and success by clearing the land and who at the same time works for the good of his country. The author's message is best seen in Charmenil's speech to the new deputy of Rivardville, Jean Rivard:

Honneur aux défricheurs! Honneur, mille fois honneur aux vaillants pionniers de la forêt! Ils sont la gloire et la richesse du pays. Qu'ils continuent à porter inscrits sur leur drapeau les mots sacrés: Religion, patrie, liberté et le Canada pourra se glorifier d'avoir dans son sein une race forte et généreuse. . . . (JR II, p. 247)

This optimistic story of a pioneer opening new lands to perpetuate "la race forte et généreuse," is the kind of fiction prescribed by Abbé Casgrain for French Canada: "elle [the fiction] sera le miroir fidèle de notre petit peuple dans les diverses phases de son existence . . . ses élans d'enthousiasme, ses traits d'héroïsme. . . ."¹⁷

Gérard Tougas points out the influence of Gérin-Lajoie's

Jean Rivard on subsequent novels of the land:

L'on ne saurait nier l'influence que Jean Rivard a exercée sur l'évolution du roman canadien. C'est dire que si le métier manquait à Gérin-Lajoie, il eut comme l'intuition de quelques aspects permanents de la psychologie canadienne-

française. La facile opposition qu'il établie entre la vie des champs et celle des villes repose sur un sentiment profond, enraciné chez le canadien-français: entre la nature et lui existe un pacte, commandé par ses origines spirituelles.¹⁸

The realism of later novels such as Maria Chapdelaine that permit a cruel and hostile nature to kill François Paradis is completely absent from novels such as La Terre Paternelle and Jean Rivard, yet, Louis Hémon's message is the same as that of his predecessors, which is best summed up by Jean-Charles Falardeau: "La nation canadienne-française doit durer. La permanence de la collectivité ainsi que la permanence d'une mission à accomplir sont affirmées avec insistance."¹⁹

Louis Hémon, without departing from the tradition of his predecessors, introduced a significant innovation in the tradition of the novel of the land. Although Maria Chapdelaine is an idealization of the land, never before had it been presented in such a realistic and objective manner. The land is described not only as being the "all good," but also as having a dark side; it can kill. The mere fact that Hémon did give an objective and realistic picture of the land no doubt accounts for the violent criticism from French Canadian nationalists upon publication of the novel.²⁰ Literature in French Canada was to serve an ideology and therefore, anything that contravened this ideology was not recommended by literary critics. Gilles Marcotte points out that:

Seul un nouveau venu, formé à l'extérieur de notre couvent national, pouvait se permettre de jouer aussi librement avec les mythes courant de l'époque, exprimer à parts égales la simple grandeur humaine et l'atroce dénuement du colon.²¹

At that time only an outsider, a foreigner, could have presented such

an objective picture of the French Canadian "habitant" by breaking away from the tradition of idealizing the land as encouraged by the French Canadian clergy and élite. Although Hémon's Maria Chapdelaine is written in a realistic style, it nevertheless must be viewed as a part of the tradition of the "roman de la fidélité"; in other words, the land and Maria's loyalty to it, remain a symbol of the French Canadian will to survive.

Louis Hémon, a French émigré to Canada in 1911, completed his novel Maria Chapdelaine: Récit du Canada français in 1913 in Montréal. His knowledge of French Canadian pioneer life arose from his experience as a hired-man on a farm in Péribonka, Québec. This was his first and only novel about French Canada, and it soon became a classic in Canadian literature. Maria Chapdelaine is the story of the Chapdelaine family living in the Lake St. John area of Québec. Maria, the heroine, is the daughter of a pioneer who prefers the challenge of breaking new ground to the relative comfort of settling on a farm in which the land had already been cultivated. After the death of her fiancé, François Paradis, Maria is visited by two suitors. Faced with a decision between her two lovers, one a French Canadian living in the United States and the other her nearest neighbour, she makes the choice expected of a pioneer's daughter and marries her neighbour in order to stay among her people.

The strength of Hémon in this novel is the subtle way in which he presents the image of the land through Maria. It is through Maria's reaction to life, which is reflected in the landscape, that the

reader comes to see a realistic image of the land, and it is in her final decision to remain on the land that the concept French Canadians have of their land emerges. The Chapdelaine family becomes a symbol of the French Canadian people —or at least of one of its most representative aspects: the family of settlers, struggling against the wilderness in order to clear more land. Two distinct pioneer types, two opposite ideals are united in the Chapdelaine couple:

C'était l'éternel malentendu des deux races: les pionniers et les sédentaires, les paysans venus de France qui avaient continué sur le sol nouveau leur idéal d'ordre et de paix immobile, et ces autres paysans, en qui le vaste pays sauvage avait réveillé un atavisme lointain de vagabondage et d'aventure.²²

The first ideal, the race of the tiller, is usually represented by the female character in the novels of the land. In Maria Chapdelaine, the mother, Laura Chapdelaine, who always thinks with regret of the old parishes where the land had already been cleared and cultivated as her "paradis perdu" (MC p.37), represents this ideal. In addition to the mother, there is also Maria who reflects upon her happiness and contentment while visiting her aunt and uncle in a settled community.

An opposite ideal to this distinct type, the race of the pioneer, is represented by both Samuel Chapdelaine and François Paradis. For François Paradis, the thought of cultivating the same piece of land year after year until the end of his life would be unbearable: "gratter toujours le même morceau de terre, d'année en année, et rester là, je n'aurais jamais pu faire ça tout mon 'règne', il m'aurait semblé être attaché comme un animal à un pieu" (MC p. 46). This opposing ideal of the French Canadian as pioneer-adventurer is also taken up in the later novels of the land. For example, Menaud, in

Savard's Menaud Maître Draveur, with his love for the forest and for the mountain, and the transient in Guèvremont's novel Le Survenant, demonstrate the same characteristics as the father in Maria Chapdelaine, as well as sharing the same love for adventure and freedom. The land is to Samuel Chapdelaine what it was to Jean Rivard; it is the "new land," the land where he must first clear the forest and then till the earth. His ideal, unlike that of his wife, is not to settle on a farm and till the same acreage year after year. The land to him is something to conquer; the struggle is an obstinate and never-ending one against the wilderness:

Faire de la terre! C'est la forte expression du pays, qui exprime tout ce qui gît de travail terrible entre la pauvreté du bois sauvage et la fertilité finale des champs labourés et semés. Samuel Chapdelaine en parlait avec une flamme d'enthousiasme et d'entêtement dans les yeux.

C'était sa passion à lui: une passion d'homme fait pour le défrichement plutôt que pour la culture. Cinq fois déjà depuis sa jeunesse il avait pris une concession, bâti une maison, une étable et une grange, taillé en plein bois un bien prospère; et cinq fois il avait vendu ce bien pour s'en aller recommencer plus loin vers le nord, découragé tout à coup, perdant tout intérêt et toute ardeur une fois le premier labeur rude fini, dès que les voisins arrivaient nombreux et que le pays commençait à se peupler et à s'ouvrir. (MC p. 38)

Samuel's primary goal is to conquer the forest, to clear the land and to civilize. Hémon celebrates, as Gérin-Lajoie did, the French Canadian settler and the nationalistic ideology. But unlike Gérin-Lajoie, Hémon does this realistically. This fight against the forest is "Une ouverture sur l'avenir et possède une valeur mystique pour le Canada . . . [elle] met en lumière avec plus de force la lutte entre l'homme et la nature."²³

Although there is a distinction between the two ideals of the pioneer and the ~~filler~~ Miller, both are united in the Chapdelaine couple in their love for the land. Samuel Chapdelaine's goal, the settler's goal, is to clear land. But even if his wife has different ideals, she is one with her husband when it comes to clearing land:

'S'il y a quelque chose, dit la mère Chapdelaine, qui pourrait me consoler de rester si loin dans le bois, c'est de voir mes hommes faire un beau morceau de terre. . . . Un beau morceau de terre qui a été plein de bois et de chicots et de racines et qu'on revoit une quinzaine après nu comme la main, prêt pour la charrue, je suis sûre qu'il ne peut rien y avoir au monde de plus beau et de plus aimable que ça. . . ." (MC p. 60)

French Canada with its wilderness, its rugged terrain, its harsh winters, its brief summers and its changeability was the ideal setting for a novel about the land. In his descriptive passages interwoven with the narrative Hémon personifies the land as an integral character in the novel: "La terre canadienne se débarassa des derniers vestiges de l'hiver avec une sorte de rudess hâtive, comme par crainte de l'autre hiver qui venait déjà" (MC p.53). The Canadian winter, the nightmare of the French Canadian habitant, plays a dominant role throughout the novel; it is always by means of winter that Hémon describes the other seasons and their shortness. Spring, summer, and autumn, are not much more than preludes to this dreadful season:

L'automne... [sic] Il semblait que le printemps ne fût que d'hier. . . . et déjà l'automne était là, annonçant le retour de l'inexorable hiver, le froid, bientôt la neige. . . . Partout l'automne est mélancolique, chargé du regret de ce qui s'en va et la menace de ce qui s'en vient; mais sur le sol canadien, il est plus mélancolique et plus émouvant qu'ailleurs, et pareil à la mort d'un être humain que les

dieux rappellent trop tôt, sans lui donner sa juste part de vie. (MC pp. 104-105)

This bleak description of autumn and the coming of winter cannot be found in the earlier novels of the land. For example, in Jean Rivard, the author deliberately avoids the harshness of the Canadian winters by describing what the characters do inside their home. He purposely avoids showing the reader his characters labouring and sweating in the fields. His world is clearly utopian with nothing to thwart his protagonist's happiness. Hémon, however, does not restrict himself to describing only the hardships of winter. Although winter isolates the Chapdelaine family from the rest of the world, it nevertheless brings them together in a warm house surrounded by the snow and the forest. Here the reader feels a sense of togetherness in the family. Hémon describes the dead scenery which winter brings, but at the same time he grants the season credit for the harmony which prevails in the house:

« La maison devint le centre du monde, et en vérité la seule parcelle du monde où l'on pût vivre, et plus que jamais le grand poêle de fonte fut le centre de la maison. A chaque instant, quelque membre de la famille allait sous l'escalier chercher deux ou trois bûches, de cyprès le matin, d'épinette dans la journée, de bouleau le soir, et les poussait sur les braises encore ardentes. (MC p. 111)

The master of this house, Samuel Chapdelaine, becomes the typical father-image of the French Canadian habitant of the early twentieth century. In this house, cut off from the rest of the world, the father is described as a patriarch surrounded by his family. The Chapdelaine family reflects the typical French Canadian family, the hardship of their lives, their family unity, and their pious resignation.

Although Hémon's concern is to give an objective picture of the Canadian land, he frequently uses images and symbols to foreshadow the action of the novel. The "dark background of the forest" pervades his description of nature and soon becomes a symbol of the dangers the forest hides. The contrasting "white expanse of snow" represents the immobility of the earth and its cold indifference. Sometimes these two symbols are unified so as to give the reader a striking picture of the deadness of the winter scenery and the dangers which are always present. When Maria is reciting her Aves on Christmas Eve the scenery foreshadows her tragedy:

les pieux des clôtures faisaient des barres noires sur le sol blanc baigné de pâle lumière; les troncs des bouleaux qui se détachaient sur la lisière du bois sombre semblaient les squelettes de créatures vivantes que le froid de la terre aurait pénétrées et frappées de mort; mais la nuit glacée était plus solennelle que terrible. (MC p. 121)

The "skeletons of living creatures" anticipates the death of François Paradis who will later become lost in the forest and be frozen to death.

Hémon in his descriptive passages of the land paints an objective picture of it, sometimes terrifying, and yet, having its own beauty; sometimes cruel, sometimes beneficent. Although he presents a realistic description of the land, true to the "roman de la fidélité," it soon becomes evident that he is primarily concerned with Maria and the nature of her loyalty to the land. She quickly becomes a symbol of the will of the French Canadian people to survive in an English continent. Hence, the land in the novel can be observed

on two levels: first, realistically by the author's description of the Lac Saint-Jean countryside, and second, symbolically through Maria's tragedy. The theme of the land is closely interwoven with Maria's tragedy, the seasons being a reflection of her psychological and emotional state. During the first winter of the novel, as she awaits the return of François, she observes the frozen scenery and finds nothing to attract her: ". . . la vie du bois était quelque chose de si lent qu'il eût fallu plus qu'une patience humaine pour attendre et noter un changement" (MC p. 24). With the coming of spring Maria is visited by François, and she is convinced that "depuis le commencement du monde il n'y avait jamais eu de printemps comme ce printemps-là" (MC p. 41). Spring is followed by a rich and fertile summer which precisely reflects the maturing of Maria's and François' love. The acknowledgement of their love and the exchange of their vows takes place on a day of blue sky:

une de ces journées où le ciel éclatant jette un peu de sa couleur claire sur la terre. Le jeune foin, le blé en herbe étaient d'un vert infiniment tendre, émouvant, et même le bois sombre semblait se teinter un peu d'azur. (MC p. 86)

The land at this time reflects Maria's state of mind; it is full of life, of hope, and of beauty, symbolizing Maria's joy and happiness. She has just received from the one she loves the promise that he will return in the following spring and she has promised to wait for his return. Even the dark forest seems to take on a blue colour. The land as seen here through Maria's eyes, will take on a quite different aspect for her after the tragic death of her suitor, François Paradis. This dark forest is soon to reveal itself as the agent of his death.

The first part of the novel strongly supports the earlier themes of the novel of the land. Through Maria's eyes the land is idealized as both good and fertile. Up to the second winter Maria had not consciously been aware of the land; she had merely been looking at it from one perspective. After François' death in the forest she becomes aware for the first time of the cruelty and coldness of the land she inhabits:

Vu du seuil, le monde figé dans son sommeil blanc semblait plein d'une rare sérénité; mais dès que Maria fut hors de l'abri des murs, le froid descendit sur elle comme un couperet, et la lisière lointaine du bois se rapprocha soudain sombre façade derrière laquelle cent secrets tragiques, enfouis, appelaient et se lamentaient comme des voix. (MC p. 143)

This description of Maria face to face with nature illustrates the simultaneous evolution of Maria's destiny with that of the land. While she had previously described the land as a symbol of joy and happiness, she now perceives it a symbol of death and solitude:

De la tristesse pesait sur le sol livide; les sapins et les cyprès n'avaient pas l'air d'arbres vivants, et les bouleaux dénudés semblaient douter du printemps. Maria sortit du traîneau en frissonnant et n'accorda qu'une attention distraite aux jappements de Chien. . . . Le monde lui paraissait curieusement vide. . . . (MC p. 156)

She now observes the land "éprouvant un sentiment nouveau fait d'un peu de crainte et d'un peu de haine pour la campagne déserte, le bois sombre, le froid, la neige, toutes ces choses parmi lesquelles elle avait toujours vécu et qui l'avaient blessée" (MC p. 157).

With the exposure of the two aspects of the land in Maria's eyes, that is, the good and fertile land reflecting her love for François, and the harsh and hostile land responsible for his cruel

death, the classic opposition of rural and urban life, traditional to novels of the land, is introduced into the novel. The détermination of the French Canadian to survive is elicited not only by the two images of the land in Maria's eyes, but also through her choice of husband. However, what is new in Hémon's portrayal is that the city is objectively compared to the country. Unlike his predecessors, he does not show the city as evil; he is aware that it may have many advantages over the country. This failure to adhere to conventions may be due to the fact that Hémon was not Canadian and therefore was not aiming, as all French Canadian writers at that time were, to create a "national literature," a literature that would apply itself "à chanter le pays, son passé héroïque, sa grande nature, ses mœurs paisibles."²⁴

Following François' death, Maria finds herself with two suitors: Lorenzo Surprenant and Eutrope Gagnon. Using these two characters, Hémon contrasts the hardships of living on the land with the comforts of city life. Lorenzo who sold his farm and moved to the United States, tries to persuade Maria to marry him, and points out to her the numerous disadvantages of living on the land:

l'été qui commence trop tard et qui finit trop tôt,
l'hiver qui mange sept mois de l'année sans profit, la
sécheresse et la pluie qui viennent toujours mal à point. . . .
Dans les villes on se moque de ces choses-là; mais
ici vous n'avez pas de défense contre elles et elles vous
font mal; sans compter le grand froid, les mauvais
chemins. . . . C'est de la misère, de la misère, de
la misère du commencement à la fin. (MC pp. 167-168)

Lorenzo can offer Maria a life with some future, a life that she could enjoy: ". . . vous verrez qu'il n'y a pas un garçon dans le pays avec

qui vous pourriez faire un règne comme vous ferez avec moi, parce que si vous me mariez, nous vivrions comme du monde, au lieu de vous tuer à soigner des animaux et à gratter la terre dans des places désolées" (MC p. 179).

Eutrope Gagnon, however, also wants to marry Maria, but his proposition is far less appealing:

Je ne suis pas riche, bien sûr; mais j'ai deux lots à moi, tout payés, et vous savez que c'est de la bonne terre. Je vais travailler dessus tout le printemps, dessoucher le grand morceau en bas du cran, faire de bonnes clôtures, et quand mai viendra j'en aurai grand prêt à être semé. Je sèmerai cent trente minots, Maria . . . cent trente minots de blé, d'orge et d'avoine, sans compter un arpent de "gaudriole" pour les animaux. . . . Et pendant l'été, avant les foins, et puis entre les foins et la moisson, ça serait le bon temps pour élever une belle petite maison chaude et solide, toute en épinette rouge. J'ai le bois tout prêt. . . . (MC p. 182)

All that Maria can expect by marrying Eutrope is a life of toil and hard work on the farm, a life like her mother's. With Eutrope her life would be clear, a continuity of her present life:

. . . devenir sa femme et continuer la vie d'à présent, dans une autre maison de bois, sur une autre terre demi-déchiffrée. . . . Faire le ménage et l'ordinaire, tirer les vaches, nettoyer l'étable quand l'homme serait absent, travailler dans les champs peut-être, parce qu'ils ne seraient que deux et qu'elle était forte. Passer les veillées au rouet ou à radoubler de vieux vêtements. . . . (MC p. 183)

Eutrope typifies the typical French Canadian habitant whose only ambition is to settle new lands, build himself a house and have children. Lorenzo, however, can offer Maria a more comfortable life in the city. Maria's dilemma between her two suitors takes the form of the choice she has to make between staying on the land with Eutrope, or leaving for the city with Lorenzo.

The opposition of land and city develops very naturally in the novel. Maria is more attracted by the city and Lorenzo than she is by the land and Eutrope. Of course, her reaction is in opposition to the ideology of traditional novels of the land in which the land is always portrayed as the only source of happiness and a determining factor for French Canadian survival. But in this case Maria's hesitations are a natural response to the land which has killed the only one she loved. She now sees the forest as an enemy, and the clearing of the land as a continual and meaningless fight against nature:

Le bois. . . . Toujours le bois, impénétrable, hostile, plein de secrets sinistres, fermé autour d'eux comme une poigne cruelle qu'il faudrait desserrer peu à peu, peu à peu, année par année, gagnant quelques arpents chaque fois au printemps et à l'automne, année par année, à travers toute une longue vie terne et dure. Non, elle ne voulait pas vivre comme cela. (MC pp. 183-184)

In Maria's psychological state, her logical choice would be Lorenzo and emigration to the United States. The land has become a hostile and cruel element to her, and Eutrope has nothing to offer her except a harsh and difficult life on the farm. The unexpected death of her mother, however, followed by her father's narrative of his life with her, causes Maria to reconsider her decision. Laura Chapdelaine had been a devoted wife and mother, she had worked hard, faithfully following her husband wherever he decided to go, and she had been happy. Now dead, she becomes a symbol of the courageous pioneer wife: "Dès le seuil de la mort, sa mère semblait prendre un aspect auguste et singulier, et voici que les qualités familières, humbles, qui l'avaient fait aimer de son vivant, disparaissaient derrière d'autres vertus presque héroïques" (MC p. 231). Maria feels that she too could live a life like her mother

had lived: "Vivre ainsi, dans ce pays, comme sa mère avait vécu, et puis mourir et laisser derrière soi un homme chagriné et le souvenir des vertus essentielles de sa race, elle sentait qu'elle serait capable de cela" (MC p. 233). Although Maria is touched to hear about her mother's heroic life, she nevertheless still wonders why she should stay and toil on the land when she, unlike her mother, has the alternative of an easy and comfortable life in the United States if she marries Lorenzo Surprenant. It is at this point that Maria hears the three voices urging and persuading her to stay on the land. These voices are neither supernatural nor miraculous: "chacun de nous en entend de semblables lorsqu'il s'isole et se recueille assez pour laisser loin derrière lui le tumulte mesquin de la vie journalière" (MC p. 234).

The first voice invokes the charms of the land she wishes to escape, reminding her that even if winter seems cruel, it also brings "l'intimité de la maison close et au-dehors, avec la monotonie et le silence de la neige amoncelée, la paix, une grande paix. . . ." (MC p. 236). Maria then contrasts the life in the city to the life on the land:

Dans les villes il y aurait des merveilles dont Lorenzo Surprenant avait parlé, et ces autres merveilles qu'elle imaginait elle-même confusément: les larges rues illuminées, les magasins magnifiques, la vie facile, presque sans labeur, emplie de petits plaisirs. Mais peut-être se lassait-on de ce vertige à la longue, et les soirs où l'on ne désirait rien que le repos et tranquillité, où retrouver la quiétude des champs et des bois, la caresse de la première brise fraîche, venant du nord-ouest après le coucher du soleil, et la paix infinie de la campagne s'endormant tout entière dans le silence? (MC pp. 236-237)

While Maria does not remain indifferent to the first voice which evokes

the beauty of the land, she remains nevertheless attracted by the city. But the land in French Canada is not something valued for its mere beauty. While she is still hésitant, she hears the second voice, which associates the myth of the race with the land: "'Là-bas c'était l'étranger: des gens d'une autre race parlant d'autre chose dans une autre langue, chantant d'autres chansons. . . Ici. . .'" (MC p. 237).

The land here becomes symbolic of the French heritage; to leave it is to betray all the values attached to it.

Added to this, a third voice is heard; it is the voice of duty, the voice of the French Canadian race: "Alors une troisième voix plus grande que les autres s'éleva dans le silence: la voix du pays de Québec, qui était à moitié un chant de femme et à moitié un sermon de prêtre" (MC p. 239). This third voice, half woman, half priest, symbolizes the submissive and religious attitude of the French Canadian people. It is the voice urging fidelity and loyalty to the race and to the nation:

"Nous sommes venus il y a trois cent ans, et nous sommes restés. . . . Nous avons apporté d'outre-mer nos prières et nos chansons: elles sont toujours les mêmes. Nous avons apporté dans nos poitrines le coeur des hommes de notre pays, vaillant et vif, aussi prompt à la pitié qu'au rire, le coeur le plus humain de tous les coeurs humains: il n'a pas changé." (MC p. 240)

This voice comes from Maria's French ancestors and convinces her to be a "testimony," to remain among her people: "C'est pourquoi il faut rester dans la province où nos pères sont restés, et vivre comme ils ont vécu, pour obéir au commandement inexprimé qui s'est formé dans leurs coeurs, qui a passé dans les nôtres et que nous devons trans-

mettre à notre tour à de nombreux enfants: Au pays de Québec rien ne doit mourir et rien ne doit changer" (MC p. 241).

This third voice is the most significant one; the land is symbolic of the survival of French Canada, of the French language, and of the Catholic religion. Maria submits herself to this voice as she had previously submitted herself to God when François had died. She becomes aware of her duty to stay on the land in order to perpetuate the French Canadian race in Québec and in North America.

To conclude, the ultimate meaning of the land in Hémon's novel is survival, ~~the~~ "survivance." The motto of French Canada is "Je me souviens," and Maria symbolizes that motto; she remembers her race and does not forget that generations have suffered for three hundred years to perpetuate this race "qui ne sait pas mourir." It must however be noted that although Maria submits herself and sacrifices her life for the survival of the race, her submission is not total:

A travers les heures de la nuit Maria resta immobile, les mains croisées dans son giron, patiente et sans amertume, mais songeant avec un peu de regret pathétique aux merveilles lointaines qu'elle ne connaîtrait jamais et aussi, aux souvenirs tristes du pays où il lui était commandé de vivre; à la flamme chaude qui n'avait caressé son cœur que pour s'éloigner sans retour, et aux grands bois emplis de neige d'où les garçons téméraires ne reviennent pas. (MC pp. 242-243)

Maria marries Eutrope Gagnon, although she does not love him; François Paradis, her "lost paradise," with whom she could have been happy, is dead. She remains on the land, not because she likes it, but because it is a symbol, a symbol of her French roots, of her language, and of her religion. In this last passage, Maria is seen as a stoic character, with neither hope nor love. This ending certainly does not correspond to the ideologies of nineteenth century French Canada expressed in

novels such as Gérin-Lajoie's Jean Rivard where the future belongs to French Canadians. The value that Hémon gives to the land is nevertheless applicable to the social structures and ideologies of French Canada at the time of its publication. The fact that Maria was so strongly tempted to leave the land foreshadows the disintegration of French Canadian rural society which will be analyzed in Ringuet's Trente Arpents. Only Maria's sense of duty is responsible for her remaining on the land. The French Canadian youth thirty years later will not be willing and will not want to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their race, their religion, or their country.

In striking contrast to Hémon's Maria Chapdelaine, which is the culmination of all French Canadian values attached to the land, is Albert Laberge's La Scouine which attacked Hémon's thesis in damning terms. La Scouine, published in 1917, only three years after Maria Chapdelaine, has been called by some critics the first "realistic" novel in French Canada. One must however use the term realistic in a broad sense when applying it to La Scouine. Laberge himself said that he wrote "pour dire ce que je ressens . . . et aussi pour reproduire des images de la vie."²⁵ Laberge described a French Canadian farming community as he subjectively saw it rather than as it really was. La Scouine, upon its publication, was consciously and systematically ignored by literary critics because it did not conform to the traditional novel of the land, and especially because of the violent protests of the highly influential ecclesiastic authorities in French Canada. Mgr.

Bruchési, after the publication of one chapter of La Scouine in La Semaine, a weekly newspaper, commented on it in the following strain:

C'est de l'ignoble pornographie, et nous nous demandons ce que l'on se propose en mettant des élucubrations de ce genre sous les yeux des lecteurs. C'en est trop, il faut couper le mal dans sa racine.²⁶

Gilles Marcotte evaluates La Scouine in the context of the French Canadian tradition of the novel of the land:

La noirceur de l'oeuvre de Laberge, sa hargne, étaient peut-être appelées dialectiquement par l'enfer de bons sentiments dans lequel était plongé le roman canadien-français dans la première moitié du vingtième siècle. Au bleu ciel d'une idéalisation terrienne sans rapport avec la réalité, devait répondre le noir absolu. Albert Laberge nous a donné l'envers du mythe de la terre.²⁷

La Scouine refutes everything that the land stood for in the previous fiction; it is the antithesis of Lacombe's La Terre Paternelle. This antagonism, in itself, is the cause of the unpopularity of Laberge: "il semble certain que Laberge a voulu réagir trop rigidelement contre le roman à l'eau de rose qu'avaient pratiqué ses prédécesseurs."²⁸ It is not until 1960, more than forty six years after its publication, that La Scouine and its author are mentioned in literary criticism."²⁹

At a time when the farmer's life was exalted in French Canadian fiction, Laberge wrote his novel which was a "noircissement systématique"³⁰ of both the land and the farmer. La Scouine is composed of a series of sketches ostensibly describing, but in fact degrading rural life. The selfishness of the people and the extreme poverty of

of the land are described in only the most pessimistic terms. The heroine of the novel, Paulima, nicknamed "la Scouine," is far from being the ideal female protagonist repeatedly described in the traditional novel of the novel; she is ugly, selfish and cruel. The land itself is described as being a harsh land, completely indifferent to its people, and barely supplying their daily bread; and yet, it remains central to the novel.

The land, source of wealth and happiness in La Terre Paternelle, the land, fulfillment of all the French Canadian ideals in Maria Chapdelaine, offers a striking contrast in La Scouine where it is "empestée d'une odeur de charogne":

Du sein des campagnes verdoyantes et des champs en fleurs, la puanteur s'élevait écoeurante, insupportable. Elle asseillait les passants sur les routes et semblait vouloir empoisonner les légers nuages blancs qui glissaient là-haut. C'était à croire que la région était devenue un immense charnier, un amoncellement de pourriture et de corruption.³¹

The peasant himself is a slave to the cruel land; he is described working on his land as:

Un homme à la barbe inculte, la figure mangée par la petite vérole, fauchait, pieds nus, la maigre récolte. . . . Les longues journées de labeur et la fatalité l'avaient courbé, et il se déhanchait à chaque effort . . . il s'arrêta pour aiguïser sa faux. . . . Le froid grincement ressemblait à une plainte douloureuse et jamais entendue. . . . C'était la Chanson de la Faux, une chanson qui disait le rude travail de tous les jours, les continuelles privations, les soucis pour conserver la terre ingrate, l'avenir incertain, la vieillesse lamentable . . . puis . . . la mort, pauvre et nu comme en naissant, et le même lot de misères laissé en héritage aux enfants sortis du sang, qui perpétueront la race des éternels exploités de la glèbe. (LS p. 79)

No novelist in Québec had ever described the land so harshly. Louis Hémon had previously made the point that the land demanded a great deal

from the farmer; but also suggested that his efforts were rewarded.

In Laberge's novel, "la race qui ne sait pas mourir," has been replaced by "la race des éternels exploités de la glèbe." The land, which is the only source of income to the peasants, offers only mere material survival. Of course, Laberge's land does not differ from the land portrayed by other writers, but for them, this materialistic aspect had been put aside for the nobler purposes of glorifying the land and propagating the ideal of spiritual and material survival in French Canada. In Laberge's novel, the only purpose of the farmer is to subsist. Hence, Deschamps is presented as a poor farmer "acharné à la tâche, et voulant acquérir de beaux deniers pour ses enfants" (LS p. 6).

In striking contrast to the romantic picture of Samuel Chapdelaine and his sons clearing land, Laberge, far from idealizing the peasant, presents him as an animal working blindly: "Dans la grande chaleur, les hommes et les chevaux dégageaient une forte odeur de sueurs, un puissant relent d'animalité" (LS p. 66). To emphasize the poverty and the harsh lives of the peasants, Laberge repeatedly uses the leitmotif of the hard and sour dark bread, "le pain noir marqué d'une croix," silently eaten at meals: "Et chacun mastiquait gravement le pain sûr et amer, lourd comme du sable, que Deschamps avait marqué d'une croix" (LS p. 4). The hard and sour bread is repeatedly mentioned to emphasize the difficulty, monotony and bitterness of the peasant's life which is his lot on earth. The bread marked with a cross by the father before it is eaten, suggests that man must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

Laberge's world is the fallen world, the world we read of in Genesis:

"cursed is the ground for thy sake. . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,"till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. . . . Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken" (Genesis 3:18-23).

Family suppers in Laberge's novel are described as silent and gloomy, and are far from the ideal typical family suppers as portrayed in Hémond's protagonists who after a day's work eat heartily. Unlike the joyful evening following the day's work in the Chapdelaine household, the evening rest in the Deschamps family is described in the most pessimistic manner: "Un grand silence régnait, ce silence triste et froid qui suit les journées de dur labeur" (LS p. 1). Gérin-Lajoie was also aware of this fatigue of the farmer after a day's work, but he refused to admit it: "Mais ne croyons pas aux apparences, jamais Jean Rivard n'a été plus heureux; son corps est harassé, mais son âme jouit, son esprit se complaît dans ces fatigues corporelles" (JR I, p.69).

Another device of Laberge to denigrate the land is that of presenting its people both physically and morally in a degenerated state. The Deschamps family while eating their soup are described in animalistic terms: "Deschamps tenait son bol de soupe à la hauteur de la bouche pour aller plus vite. Comme lui, les autres lappaient rapidement" (LS p. 3). The wife and mother who is usually given special treatment in the novel of the land, in this one is physically unattractive with her "goître semblable à un battant de cloche qui lui retombait

ballant sur la poitrine" (LS p. 21). The birth of her twins is described in the most pejorative terms such that when the children return home after the birth, they see "Une marre de sang à l'endroit où d'ordinaire, on jetait les eaux sales. La mère Lecomte était en train de préparer le dîner. Elle leur apprend qu'ils avaient deux petites soeurs nouvelles" (LS p.5). The mother, so lively and hopeful in Maria Chapdelaine at the end of a day's work, is here described as hopeless and exhausted: "Les pieds de Mâço en ses continuels va et vient, pesaient plus lourdement, traînaient comme ceux des vieux mendiants à la fin de la journée" (LS p. 4). Paulima, the heroine of the novel, is described in vulgar and gross terms: "Paulima pissait au lit. . . . Au matin, sa chemise et ses draps étaient tout mouillés. . . . A l'école, à cause de l'odeur qu'elle répandait, ses camarades avaient donné à Paulima le surnom de Scouine. . . ." (LS p. 12). These descriptions emphasize Laberge's dreary view of the peasant world and at the same time suggest that the land is responsible for the selfishness and cruelty of the peasant.

The peasant, a slave to the land, is forced to evaluate every action as a function of the land in terms of the few pennies to be earned. Hence, he is presented as being totally devoid of any feelings of love, of friendship, or of pity. When Raclor's father is dying, Raclor reflects: "Si l'vieux pouvait mourrir vendredi . . . on l'enterrerait dimanche, et y aurait pas de temps perdu" (LS p. 120). Instead of uniting peasants in solidarity the land separates them by forcing them to be totally self-centered for the purpose of survival.

Hence, Deschamps, "âpre au gain et peu scrupuleux . . . avait parfois des difficultés avec ses voisins et alors, il cognait" (LS p. 6). The peasant, in his struggle for survival on the land, is totally indifferent to what might happen to his neighbour, his brother, or even his own parents. This is illustrated in one of the most vivid and cruel scenes of the novel where Tofile slowly murders his two idiot brothers by refusing to give them food and by making them work on the land under the hot sun. One of them dies of sunstroke, and Tofile finds him in the barn, "immobile . . . sale, boueux, le corps en demi-cercle" (LS pp. 97-98). The peasant is so totally dependent on the land that he is incapable of showing any tenderness even toward his kin. This is best seen when Tofile passively buries one of his idiot brothers:

D'un effort, comme il eût fait d'un sac d'avoine, il chargea le cercueil sur son épaule et le porta à la tombe qu'il venait de creuser. Il le glissa dans le trou béant. L'eau rejaillit, inondant le fossoyeur d'occasion. Tofile lança un juron ignoble. Ce fut là son adieu à son frère. (LS pp. 100-101)

The brotherly love so often an integral part of the previous novels of the land is totally absent in Laberge's work.

Laberge shows his peasant lacking in concern for his fellow in order to better illustrate his total submission to the cruel and harsh land. This enslavement, however, also serves another of Laberge's purposes, that of denouncing the system of values traditionally attached to the land in French Canada. La Scouine is a total negation of all the ideals associated with the myth of the survival of the French Canadian family living happily on a rich and generous land, united by a common bond to their land, their language, their past, and their God.

The respect for ancestral traditions which is always represented by the transmission of the father's land to the next generation is completely ignored in La Scouine. Towards the end of the novel the Deschamps' farm is sold, and no mention is made of the "continuity" of the family on the land. The family itself is devoid of all the characteristics that are usually attached to it in the novel of the land. In novels of the land since La Scouine the family will never be idealized as it has been in the previous fiction. But never will it be presented as cold-heartedly either. Laberge's cruelty is perhaps best illustrated in the shocking scene where Deschamps's sons, Raclor and Tifa, in a fit of rage and jealousy, decide to destroy their father's orchard:

Vomissant une litanie d'horrible blasphèmes, Tifa, le bras levé, s'avança sur son père. . . . Tragique, menaçante, Mâco se jeta en avant de son marie; Touche pas à ton père. Mais Tifa la bouscula, la rejeta en arrière, et la vieille femme alla heurter de la tête la façade de pierre. Brandissant un fer à repasser, la Scouine se porta à la recousse, mais Tifa la saisit à la gorge et ne la lâcha que râlant et à demi étranglée. Usé par plus d'un demi siècle de rudes travaux pour acquérir de la terre et encore de la terre pour ses enfants, l'estomac délabré par le pain sur et amer, le vieux Deschamps, si vigoureux autrefois, qui connaît sur tout le monde et à tout propos, invalide maintenant, restait là sans bouger, répétant: Malheur . . . malheur. (LS p. 112)

This vicious family fight is far from the ideal of the family as presented by Hémon and Lacombe! The land that was a Garden of Eden in Lacombe has become in Laberge a hell on earth. While destroying the orchard, Raclor is about to eat an apple that has fallen on the ground, "mais il la jeta immédiatement loin de lui, car elle était rongée par

les vers" (LS p. 113). The world of Laberge is indeed the fallen world; the snake inhabits this French Canadian Eden. Religion, which has always been an ideal attached to the land, is degraded; the church is compared to a funeral home (LS p. 8), and the description of the pupils praying has a bitter mocking tone:

Les élèves agenouillés au hasard, mangeaient les réponses des litanies.

De sa petite voix grêle, l'institutrice lançait les invocations, et les enfants répondaient:

—Ra p'nobix, ra p'nobix, ra p'nobis.

C'était une fuite, un galop furieux:

—Ra p'nobis, ra p'nobis, ra p'nobis.

Au Souvenez-vous, on respira un peu. (LS p. 8)

This perception of prayer as a mindless and meaningless repetition of words differs strikingly from the devout Aves of Maria Chapdelaine. Even writers following Laberge, such as Ringuet and Guèvremont, describe with sincerity the piety of their peasants. Laberge is the only novelist in the tradition of the novel of the land to ridicule religion.

In the final chapters of the novel, after having given a dark and depressing picture of the land, Laberge goes from one extreme to the other and gives his reader an almost idealistic picture of farm-life. On the day Mâço, Charlot and la Scouine are moving to the village, Mâço observes the farmers working in their fields:

A chaque ferme, les cultivateurs vaquaient à leur travaux. Son habit accroché à un picux de la clôture, Frem Quarante-Sous labourait son champ. Le soc luisant fendait le sol, et l'on respirait une bonne odeur de terre fraîche et de gazon. Les sillons s'alignaient droits et réguliers pour les semailles futures. Tout le monde travaillait. Seuls, la Scouine, Mâço et Charlot s'en allaient. . . . (LS pp. 125-126)

This description is highly unlike Laberge and at first seems to be a complete contradiction of the image of the land presented by him

thus far. The reader becomes even more puzzled when he discovers that Charlot, living with his mother and sister in a small house, "voisine de l'hospice, à côté du cimetière" (LS p. 123), finds life intolerable away from the land. He remembers the time when he lived on the farm, and when "après le dur travail, avant d'aller se coucher dans le vieux sofa jaune, il soupaît de pain sur et amer, marqué d'une croix" (LS p. 134):

. . . le temps où il était réellement un homme, le temps où il travaillait. . . . (LS p. 131)
 . . . il serait satisfait de charroyer de l'engrais. . . .
 Quel rêve! Sa voiture comble, il jèterait une poignée de paille sèche pour s'assoir. . . il s'en irait conduire la charge au champ et sentirait sous lui la tièdèur de la fumure qui engraissera la terre. Quelle bonne senteur aussi! (LS p. 130)

How can Charlot look back on this period of his life as the happiest one? Throughout the novel Laberge has given a joyless and depressing picture of the land, and it seems that through Charlot, he wants to illustratè the paradoxical bond between the peasant and the land. What at first seems an eulogy of the land is in fact the essence of the peasant's tragedy; unhappy on his land, he cannot find happiness away from it. In other words, the only thing that will free him from his addiction is death. When Deschamps dies, Laberge reflects that "Il avait fini de manger le pain sur et amer marqué d'une croix" (LS p. 122). Laberge is not the first novelist to say that to leave the land is to be unhappy. Lacombe, in La Terre Paternelle, had dealt with this theme in detail with the Chauvin family. But the Chauvins, unlike the tragic and miserable peasants in La Scouine, were really happy on their land. The final irony of Laberge is that although the farmer's life on the land might be a cross to bear, his life can have no other meaning.

Laberge has understood the ultimate tragedy of the farmer's bondage to his land; his attachment to it deadens his sensibilities; he cannot distinguish his life from his work, his freedom from his slavery. What he conceives to be freedom is in fact slavery--slavery to the land and to the seasons. He denies his own individuality to better serve the land. When the peasant wants to break away from the daily routine which the land has imposed on him, when he wants to take this "little rest at the village" which he thinks he rightly deserves, he finds that this is impossible. Work on the land is the only life he knows, and when away from the land, he finds himself "sans but, sans occupation; en se demandant comment il pourra bien tuer le temps" (LS p. 133). Charles "a renoncé à la terre pour aller goûter le repos, la vie facile, et il n'a trouvé que l'ennui, un ennui mortel, dévorant. Il ne vit pas; il attend la mort" (LS pp. 133-134). Charles' fate like Moisan's and many of Grove's protagonists', illustrates the ultimate tragedy of the farmer: slave to the land, having devoted his entire life to it, the peasant cannot live away from it without suffering. Only death can free the farmer from his bondage to the land.

Ringuet's Trente Arpents, published in 1938, marked a definite divergence from the century-old tradition of the French/Canadian novel of the land. Trente Arpents deals with the disintegration of farming communities and family ties in French Canada, and is at the same time, a microcosm of the more universal problem of man's complex bond with the land. As Lacombe had done in La Terre Paternelle, Ringuet makes the land, the farmer's thirty acres, the heroine of his

novel. Unlike his predecessors, Ringuet neither idealizes nor denigrates the land nor the farmer's world which he is analyzing: "contrairement à la majorité de ses prédécesseurs, il ne concevait pas le roman comme un simple 'prétexte' à faire revivre le passé et à s'y réfugier, mais comme une oeuvre d'art à réaliser."³² Ringuet in his novel challenges, at least by implication, the assumption that the farmer really possesses his land and that nothing but spiritual bonds are responsible for his attachment to it. The fertility of the land and the living it provides must also be given some credit for his loyalty to it.

In Trente Arpents Ringuet objectively observes the complex link which unites the peasant to his land, and draws his own conclusions. After his youthful pride in owning the land, and his gratification in his growing family, Euchariste Moisan gradually passes into old age, alone and disenchanted with the land and his family. While the first sections of the novel, "Spring" and "Summer," deal with the myth of possession, describing Euchariste living in harmony with the land, the later sections, "Autumn" and "Winter," are less optimistic, showing the aging Euchariste as a misfit, rejected by his family and incapable of adapting to the changing values of the next generation. Hence, Ringuet deals simultaneously with two important themes: the universal problem of man's relationship with the land, and the conflict of the old and new generations. Other themes such as the introduction of modern technology on the farm, the growing American influence in French Canada, and the changing attitude of the French Canadian toward the

land also concern him. The tragic destiny of Euchariste Moisan is the lot of the Canadian farmer of the 1920's and 1930's faced with the invasion of modern technology, the weakening of family ties, and the disintegration of rural life. Through Moisan's story Ringuet hints at the need of a social organization for the protection of agriculture, and to counteract the effects of the growing American influence in French Canada. On a more universal level, Moisan's tragedy is that of every farmer who is raised to love and respect the land, and who slowly takes possession of it only to discover, too late, that his possession is not only temporary but illusory.

The land in Trente Arpents is

La vieille terre des Moisan, riche et grasse, généreuse au travail, lentement façonnée autrefois, des milliers et des milliers d'années auparavant, jusqu'à ce que le fleuve amoidri quittât son ancienne rive, le coteau, là-bas, après avoir patiemment et des siècles durant étalé couche par couche ses lourdes alluvions.³³

The land is not only the old Moisan property, but it is also the "eternal land" which Moisan possesses for but a moment in time. The generosity and fertility of the land accounts for the farmer's attachment to it. Lacombe and Gérin-Lajoie had already alluded to this generosity of the land, but because they were so preoccupied with the social ideology of the land, they underemphasized the fact that it was also a practical source of living for the farmer. The same may be said of Hémon and Savard who almost ignored the complex link between man and the land in order to put greater emphasis on the land's role in national ideology. Labergé, a realist writer, was too concerned with demonstrating the dark side of the farmer's life to allow himself to objectively

consider the generosity of the land.

In Trente Arpents the land does not grant its favours without asking for something in return. If from year to year it gives itself and its wealth to man, it also demands his total submission to its austere and harsh laws. Moisan, like John Elliot in Grove's Our Daily Bread, bows to the land, "Et cela suivant l'ordre établi depuis les millénaires, depuis que l'homme abdiquant la liberté que lui permettait une vie de chasse et de pêche, a accepté le joug des saisons et soumis sa vie au rythme annuel de la terre à laquelle il est désormais accouplé" (TA p. 78). Moisan represents the tiller type of the French Canadian settler. Unlike François Paradis and Samuel Chapdelaine in Hémon's novel, he has given up his freedom to be forever tied to the land. The most essential law that the land imposes on man is that he must conform to the ~~the rhythm~~ of nature. Thus, Moisan's life is told over four seasons; unworked the land is a wilderness, worked it can support him. Following the ideal of the land as a part of God's divine order on earth, it is man's duty to till the ground from which he was taken and to make it fruitful. Hence, man and the land become one in their interdependence. This is particularly true in the case of Euchariste who was a true farmer: "Car ainsi qu'à tous les vrais paysants, sa terre lui suffisait comme il tachait, à tout prix, de suffire à sa terre: Entre eux seuls il pouvait y avoir réelle communion et contact réel" (TA p. 212). This ideal relationship between man and the land, however, changes as Moisan gradually resorts to modern technology to cultivate it. Although the land rewards man's efforts with its generosity, Ringet emphasizes the fact that the farmer has to give fully of himself, his sensibility, and his freedom in order to satisfy it. Working on the

farm is the sole activity of Moisan and he submits his life to it:

"Chaque année ramenait la succession des travaux majeurs: labour puis moisson; l'effort et la rétribution; le premier ardu, presque douloureux, et la seconde, tout aussi pénible; achetées des mêmes sueurs et du même renoncement" (TA pp. 130-131).

Moisan's enslavement to the land causes him to live according to its laws. His relationship with it is so close that Ringuet describes his physical traits in terms of the land: ". . . le front; comme un pré lourd, labouré par les soucis, les inquiétudes et les sueurs; la peau terreuse et semblable de grain aux mottes brisées par la herse avec, au bout des bras épais, les noeuds durs des doigts" (TA p. 168). Work on the land is Moisan's primary concern, and his family, the human need for love, are secondary considerations. When thinking about his future wife, he sees her only in terms of what she would add to his farm:

Certes, il ne la paraît point d'irréel et ne lui tissait pas une robe de madone; l'idée qu'il s'en faisait n'avait rien de romanesque. Au contraire, il savait fort bien ce qu'elle pourrait lui donner: forte et râblée, pas regardante à l'ouvrage, elle saurait à la fois conduire la maison et l'aider aux champs à l'époque de la moisson. De visage avenant, bien tournée de sa personne, elle lui donnerait des gars solides après des plaisirs auxquels il pensait sans honte ni hâte exagérée. (TA p. 39)

The anticipations of Euchariste might at first be interpreted as selfish, but that was the way the farmer chose his wife; she was evaluated primarily in terms of the children she could give him, and the work she could perform on the farm. The main quality of Maria Chapdelaine was that she was strong and sturdy; such a girl would be the ideal wife for a farmer as she could give birth to healthy children and also

assist in the work on the land.

Although still mourning the recent death of his Uncle Ephrem, Moisan, with the priest's approval, marries Phonsine because it is his religious and national duty to marry and have children for the survival of French Canada, and also because a woman is necessary to assist her husband on the farm. Moisan's marriage takes place in the "slack" period between seed-time and harvest so as not to interrupt work on the farm. The real marriage, "les espousailles" Ringuet calls it, is between Euchariste and the land. Moisan's wife will be a mere helper to him in serving the land. It is through his wife and the children she will bear him that he can take root in the land and thus achieve his patriarchal dream.

Shortly before the expected birth of his first child, Moisan, much like John Elliot in Grove's Our Daily Bread, becomes fully aware of how important the birth of this child is to him:

Une étrange sensation de bien-être avait envahi Euchariste. Il se sentait raffermi, confirmé, en même temps que subitement mûri. Lui qui, à peine quelques mois auparavant, n'était que le neveu recueilli sur la terre d'un autre, il se savait devenu, de par la magie de cette procréation, le maître de cette terre où il était hier étranger; le tuteur en quelque sorte de ces trente arpents de terre dont par un mystère bizarre, il était à la fois serf et suzerain. (TA p. 71)

It is through his children that he is able to forge a solid link between the present and the future, between himself and the land. When his wife dies in child-birth, after the thirteenth child, she had fulfilled her function, and Moisan reflects that it was indeed fortunate that her death had occurred between seed-time and harvest. His lack of

sensibility is presented as "natural", he remains faithful to his only real wife, the land.

In his analysis of the French Canadian farmer's subjection to the land, Ringuet also observes the consequences of this enslavement, not only for the individual farmer, but also for French Canadian society as a whole. This is perhaps best illustrated in a scene in which Willie Daviau, who had freed himself of the land's tyranny to become an electoral agent in Montréal, discusses politics with other farmers:

—Dis donc! Toé, Willie, qui es ben plus connaissant que nous autres...

—...Tu pourrais p't'êt' ben m'expliquer pourquoi qu'c'est jamais des habitants qui sont députés? Y a des avocats, des docteurs, des notaires, des commis voyageurs, mais jamais d'habitants? . . . Ça empêche pas que si y avait plus d'habitants et moins de chicaniers à Québec, i' pourraient parler de temps en temps de la terre, pi de ceusses comme nous autres qu's'échignent dessus. . . ."

Les autres acquiesçaient, un murmure courant dans toute la pièce. . . .

—Bon, une supposition, continua Daviau. Le comté t'envoie à Québec leur conter tout ça. Qui c'est qui va s'occuper de ta terre?

Tous se turent, bâillonnés. Ils n'avaient pas pensé à cela. Ils avaient momentanément oublié leur servage. . . . Sans l'homme la terre n'est point féconde et c'est ce besoin qu'elle a de lui qui le lie à la terre, qui le fait prisonnier de trente arpents de glèbe. (TA pp. 95-96-97)

The farmer is too busy and preoccupied with his farm to actually participate in politics. The French Canadian farm is " . . . un îlot d'humanité dans l'archipel des fermes voisines. C'était là son univers restreint, cette motte de terre et son peloton de vie humaine liés l'un à l'autre par une impérieuse gravitation" (TA p. 213).

Consequently, farmers must remain on their land if they are to keep their traditions and to survive as a race. They form, as do their farms, a small French island surrounded by an English ocean. Ringuet, however, objectively describes the farmer's reaction to Daviau who is now prosperous in the city: they envy him. They even forget for a moment their bond to the land and are reminded by Daviau that they are not free to do as they wish.

The isolation of French Canadian rural communities is further illustrated by their reaction to the war. This isolation, however, is not, as Sutherland suggests, typical only of French Canada; the land imposes the same rules universally, and as a result rural communities all share common traits.³⁴ Like John Elliot who does not think it good to "meddle in the European wars," French Canadian farmers react similarly:

Rivés au sol laurentien, le seul qu'ils connussent, sans contact depuis cent cinquante ans avec le monde lointain de l'Europe, les gens paisibles du Québec ne se sentaient intéressés en rien par la Grande Folie de l'Europe. (TA p. 196)

All that French Canadian farmers asked, as did their English counterparts, was to be left alone and in peace to cultivate their land. Euchariste Moisan, like John Elliot, knows that "you can't fool the land." He tells his son: "Laisse-toé mener par la terre, mon gars, elle te mènera p'têt' pas ben loin; mais en tout'cas, tu sais ous'que tu vas" (TA p. 188), especially when he sees the price of his crop go up. Farmers became interested in the "Great European Madness" only when they saw a monetary advantage in it. Thus, when the priest asked his

followers to pray for peace, they did so " . . . d'une voix faible, avec l'espoir enfantin que le Ciel pourrait bien ainsi ne pas les entendre ou du moins se rendre compte qu'ils ne tenaient pas tant que cela à voir exaucer leur prière" (TA p. 183). However, the war further convinced Euchariste Moisan of the stability and importance of the land and the farmer:

De la guerre, la terre n'avait point pâti. En Europe, les corps de deux générations avaient fumé les champs. Au pays de Québec, le paysan avait semé, récolté et vendu pour nourrir les autres paysans, là-bas occupés au carnage. Le terrien était devenu par le cours des choses plus qu'un simple rouage de la machine économique: comme jamais, le nourricier était roi. (TA p. 229)

The land had not suffered from the wars in Europe, and moreover the farmer's role had become of prime importance in the world, for only he could provide food for Europe. Euchariste envies the people living in the city. He complains about the hard work on the land, and then he finds it much easier to say with sincerity that the land, after all, is good. Work in the city might be easy and relatively well-paid, but it only lasts for a while; then comes unemployment... while "la terre, ça, ça ne manque jamais" (TA p. 156).

Moisan at the beginning of the novel is described as a "progressive farmer" and this has led Albert Legrand to claim that he, "in his small ways, has all the greed, the pride, and the lust of the new 'economic man'."⁵⁵ Progress in itself is not undesirable for Euchariste who had earlier said: ". . . faut être de son temps. Si on veut garder son monde sur la terre, faut aller de l'avant. Le temps d'la faucille est fini. Le temps aussi où on semait seulement du foin et du grain. C'est pour ça que j'ai commencé mon affaire de

poules. Si y en a un chez nous qui veut s'en occuper, y a gros à gagner. En tout cas, si y a un petit moyen, mes garçons, j'vas les garder chez nous" (TA p. 137). Although Moisan wants to make money and wants to be progressive, it is made clear that he wants more than anything else to keep his children on the land and to keep farming communities intact. Euchariste already belongs to a new world in economic terms, but he is still an "old-timer" when seen against the land and tradition. He wants to benefit from the modern technology that has been introduced in rural communities, but at the same time wants to preserve the traditional values attached to the land. To a certain extent, he still believes, as did Jean Rivard, that "L'agriculteur qui vit de son travail peut dire avec raison qu'il ne connaît que Dieu pour son maître."³⁶

Hence, the inevitable conflict that had occurred between himself and his uncle is re-enacted with his own son Etienne who, in turn, has different notions of "progress" and who cannot accept nor understand his father's more conservative ideas. When arguing with Etienne whose wish is to bring new implements to the farm, old Moisan replies: "—Ecoule, mon gars . . . le progrès, moé, j'sus pour ça tout le monde le sait. J'ai eu le premier centrifuge de la paroisse et je me suis quasiment battu avec mon oncle Ephrem pour acheter une lieuse. Mais il y a des choses qui sont pas nécessaires. J'en ai rencontré un qui en avait un tracteur à gazoline et y a tout ruiné sa terre avec" (TA pp. 180-181).

Euchariste's reason for his rejection of progress in the end is similar to John Elliot's. It is the age-old conflict between generations. The old methods of working the farm have changed, and he realizes that ". . . chaque innovation semblait . . . séparer l'homme

d'avec le sol, diminuer ce contact bienfaisant qui faisait les êtres robustes et la terre fertile et amicale. Le moteur était survenu qui supplantait les chevaux et dont le pétrole ruinait les pâturages" (TA p. 252)

The modern generation broke that important spiritual link which united the farmer to his land; those who stay on the land will use modern technology to cultivate it. Moïsan, like John Elliot and Abe Spalding, has already begun to break this "healthy contact" between man and the land. He too has accelerated the process to which he is inherently opposed.

The new generation in Trente Arpents represents a new way of life, and the death of homogeneous rural French Canadian communities. Ringuet, unlike his predecessors, does not try to denigrate the city nor to idealize country life. Rather, he observes the subtle beginning of a change taking place in the way of life in rural communities. Following her husband's death, Maxime Auger opens a store in her house, and the local farmers begin to buy products that they had previously made for themselves:

Graduellement, son commerce augmentait. Petit à petit, les paysannes cessaient de tisser et de filer, les paysans de confectionner leurs lourdes bottes, et remplaçaient tout cela par l'article de la ville, presque aussi solide, plus élégant et surtout moins coûteux. . . . l'une après l'autre, les ménagères étaient devenues ses chalandes, sans que les hommes se fussent trop plaints, le pain livré trois fois la semaine étant plus frais et dans bien des cas meilleur. (TA pp. 79-80)

Ringuet remains objective: he does not criticize, he does not judge; he merely observes that it was sometimes less expensive for farmers to buy their boots from Maxime Auger's store, and often more convenient

for women to buy fresh bread three times a week than to make it themselves, in which case it was not always so fresh.

The changes taking place in the small rural communities are also seen in the games the youth play in the communities:

On avait formé au village une équipe de baseball où tous les termes employés étaient naturellement anglais; et tous les dimanches après-midi on entendait l'arbitre, incapable par ailleurs de dire bonjour en anglais, hurler des "strike two," des "ball one" et des "safe" d'une voix glorieuse. (TA p. 255)

Every change brought into the rural communities is also an invasion of the American way of life, which had thus far been kept out of the enclosed French Canadian communities:

Constamment il venait à la bouche d'Etienne et de ceux de sa génération des mots anglais que leur apportaient les gens de la ville. Les visiteurs de passage, les journaux eux-mêmes et surtout les catalogues-réclames des bazars de Toronto, l'arcis de termes étrangers dont s'emparait avidement, faute de mieux, la langue appauvrie des campagnards comme des citadins. (TA p. 255)

The appearance of the car was largely responsible for the changing attitudes of the youth:

On était loin des dimanches d'autrefois, des après-midi douces et un peu mornes passées sur la véranda. L'automobile était venue qui avait changé tout cela. Chaque remise en abritait maintenant une: chez les paysans modestes, quelque tacot ramassé dans les parcs d'occasions. . . . Et chaque dimanche de la belle saison la famille s'entassait dans le baquet, le fils aîné tout raide au volant; et l'on passait d'une paroisse à l'autre, comme autrefois on allait chez le voisin. (TA pp. 255-256)

Rural communities and their inhabitants were no longer immune to outside influence; the car facilitated communications between villages, and more especially between villages and cities.

Moreover, the numerous desertions of the land by the

youth implies the disintegration of the small farming community. To explain the phenomenon of the emigration of the youth to the cities, Ringuet takes up the same problem that was dealt with in Jean Rivard. In each French Canadian family the land is indivisible and goes by right and tradition to the eldest son of the family. Whereas the youth in Jean-Rivard had gone north to open new lands, the majority of the young people in Trente Arpents emigrate to the city:

Il ne passait pas d'année qu'on n'apprît le départ d'un jeune homme, parfois d'une famille entière, qui s'en allait retrouver des cousins dans les villes de la Nouvelle-Angleterre où les filatures et les usines étaient insatiables de bras.

Comment en eût-il pu être autrement? Dans chaque maisonnée les enfants naissaient nombreux . . . et chaque terre ne pouvait être qu'à un seul des fils, le plus souvent à l'aîné. (TA p. 136)

Ringuet does not see the farmer's attachment to his land as a patriotic one:

La quiétude de la vie terrienne, la douceur du travail des champs, l'enchantement des horizons larges et libres, Napoléon Moisan n'y tenait pas le moins du monde, car il n'en savait rien. Pas plus d'ailleurs que ses frères et sœurs . . . qu'Etienne, qui pourtant restait et entendait rester; qu'Euchariste, le père, qui tout doucement commençait à s'en aller. A qui leur eût demandé s'ils aimaient la terre, c'est-à-dire l'ensemble des champs planes où bêtes et gens sont semés de façon éparsée par un semeur au geste large, s'ils aimaient ce ciel libre au-dessus de leur tête; et les vents, et la neige, et la pluie . . . à celui-là, ils n'eussent répondu que par un regard étonné. Car ce qu'aimait Euchariste, c'était non la terre, mais sa terre. . . . (TA p. 247)

What farmers care about is not the land, but their land; in other words, Ringuet implies, their patriotic feelings are limited to the love of their particular farms, but it is this individual love for one's farm

that comprises the power of French Canada.

Ringuet neither idealizes Moisan's love for the land, nor does he condemn the new generation which for the most part is indifferent to the land: "Tout au plus sentaient-ils . . . un attachement qui n'était que de la défiance instinctive envers l'inconnu des ailleurs. Ils resteraient là où était leur pain de demain. . . . Mais l'exode ne pouvait leur répugner s'il les conduisait vers une certitude égale, fut-elle étrangère et lointaine" (TA p. 247). The commercial values of the post-war world are largely responsible for the break-up of the centuries-old rural world. Even tightly-knit French Canadian families are affected. One after another the Moisan children leave their father's farm and their society to make lives of their own in the city or in the United States:

La table avait perdu un à un ses hôtes familiers. . . . Alphonsine était partie, qui l'avait garnie d'une couronne de nouveaux venus. Puis Oguinase, puis l'engagé Albert, puis Etienne, puis Malvina, puis Eva, puis Lucinda, puis enfin Ephrem. Le père, suivant l'usage, s'asseyait au haut bout, face à la route; mais sur les bancs de part et d'autre, il ne restait qu'Orpha et Marie-Louise et, le soir, pas toujours, Napoléon. . . . (TA p. 209)

The land and traditional values of family life are of little concern to them. Euchariste's daughter, Lucinda, who left the land to work in factories like so many other girls, illustrates the reversal of values brought by the war: "Elle avait grandi en joliesse mais sans ces calmes et doux yeux de brebis que l'on voit souvent aux filles de la terre; braves devant le travail et les maternités, mais craintives et timides devant l'étranger" (TA p. 189). Far from being the typical

girl usually described in the traditional novel of the land, Lucinda wears brightly coloured clothes and dresses like "une dame, de soie artificielle" (TA p. 190). It is even implied in the novel that she becomes a prostitute in the city; a life far from that of the idealized Maria Chapdelaine. Euchariste's son Ephrem knows that he will never possess the Moisan farm and that is the principal reason for his leaving for the United States: "J'su' pourtant pas pour m'échigner sur la terre qu'est pour un autre" (TA p. 182). To try to prevent him from emigrating to the United States, Moisan uses arguments which echo those of Lacombe and Gérin-Lajoie:

Tais-toé! j'peux pas craire que c'est toé qui parle de même. T'étais pourtant là, au printemps, quand Monseigneur est venu dans la paroisse. Qu'est-ce qu'i a dit, Nonseigneur? I' a dit que c'était nous autres, les habitants, qu'étaient les vrais Canayens, les vrais hommes. I' a dit qu'un homme qu'aime la terre, c'est quasiment comme aimer le Bon Dieu qui L'a faite et qu'en prend soin quand les hommes le méritent... (TA pp. 156-157)

Moisan was never presented as a particularly religious man, but he believes that to work on the land is to serve God. As Sutherland notes, the purpose of life for Euchariste Moisan and John Elliot "is not the pursuit of comfort and happiness according to one's lights, but to fit into the design conditioned by the land, to fit into the divine order."³⁷ Moisan had never been opposed to progress, but now that he sees his children leaving him and forgetting the values attached to the land and to the family, he reverts to the days when he was a young and successful farmer. The only reason he favoured progress then was to keep his children on the farm. Unlike Maria

Chapdelaine, however, the new generation in Trente Arpents is deaf to the ancestral voice of Québec; they do not want to ignore progress and to remain isolated from the rest of the world. If something better can be found away from the land, even outside French Canada, they do not hesitate to leave for the city where they are assured "three dollars a day."

The desertion of the land would not be a crime in itself if the young generation would remain in Québec and keep their ancestral traditions. What demoralizes Moisan most is the emigration of one of his own sons to the United States:

Un Moisan désertait le sol, le pays de Québec et tout ce qui était leur depuis toujours, pour s'en aller vers l'exil total; vers un travail qui ne serait pas celui de la terre; vers des gens qui parleraient un jargon étranger; vers des villes lointaines où l'on ne connaît plus les lois ni du ciel des hommes, ni du ciel de Dieu. Cela lui cuisait plus que tout au monde. (TA p. 204)

By moving to White Falls and by marrying an Irish girl who does not speak French and who gives him only two children, Ephrem denies not only the land, but also the demands of his very race, language, and religion.

It is the old timers who best illustrate the radical opposition between the past and the present:

—Les autres, c'est pas des hommes, disaient les vieux, mont le père Badouche. De mon temps, on pensait pas à s'en aller aux États. On montait dans les terres neuves, on plein bois debout, avec un cheval et une hache; et au bout de deux ans, il y avait de quoi pour toute une maisonnée. A c't'heure, les jeunesses pensent pus qu'à s'en aller chez les Bastonnais, pendant qu'il y a par icitte d'la belle et bonne terre à rien faire. (TA p. 137)

Euchariste's own father had gone to settle new lands, and Euchariste,

now himself an old-timer, still believes in this ideal.' It is now evident, however, that this old ideal of settling new land is incompatible with the modern industrial world which offers the farm youth a regular salary and an exciting and comfortable life in the city.

Euchariste Moisan, who symbolizes the old traditional values, cannot accept, as John Elliot could not, his children's ideas, not even those of his son Etienne who is a true farmer and who will eventually succeed him. Yet, he himself had pleaded with his Uncle Ephrem to use modern methods on the farm. The conflict between father and son is intensified by the rapid introduction on the farm of technology with which old Euchariste is unable to cope. Even though Etienne, representative of the new generation of farmers goes on tilling the land, he rejects the traditional values attached to it in French Canada. He wants to "free" himself from the authority of the land by using modern technology. But he still is a true farmer who, like Euchariste, devotes his entire life to its cycles. Although the new methods he adopts are for his personal welfare, he also wants to better serve the land, his master. Etienne's love for the land is the same as that of his father: "Soumis aux choses, il était un vrai paysan pour qui de plus en plus la terre était tout, plus que les siens, plus que soi-même" (TA p. 135). Etienne only wants to follow the modern trend which has reached the rural communities. Moisan, now an aged farmer, cannot believe that the land is failing him, and he persists in going on as in the old days. Etienne, now adult,

wants to take possession of the land, this old Moisan land that he would soon inherit by right. The farm is everything to Etienne, and even though Euchariste might think that his son is trying to dispossess him, Etienne's first thought is for the land:

En vérité, Etienne ne songeait pas qu'il ne s'agissait de rien moins que de déposséder son père; c'est à la terre qu'il pensait, refaisant après tant d'années le raisonnement qu'avait fait autrefois Euchariste à propos de l'oncle Ephrem. (TA p. 244)

Overcome with doubts about the many changes which Etienne initiated on the farm, and realizing his incapacity to satisfy the land, Euchariste reluctantly accepts the fact that he must "give" himself and his farm to his son in order to assure the continuity of the thirty acres. Ringuet implies that this sacrifice had been inevitable from the beginning:

Les temps avaient bien changé; et plus il avançait en âge, plus l'ère ancienne se paraît de douceur et de charme. Il commençait à dire à son tour: "Dans le bon temps," s'imaginant naïvement que le monde avait été jeune et verdoyant quand lui-même était jeune et vert; et de même, prêtant son déclin et son inquiétude aux années qui le voyaient caduc et mélancolique; sans se rendre compte jamais qu'il en avait été ainsi avant lui pour son oncle et, plus avant, pour le père de son oncle; tout comme il en serait dans cinquante pour ses fils et, dans cent ans, pour les enfants de ses enfants. (TA p. 253)

Like Niels Lindstedt in Grove's Settlers of the Marsh who "clung to the land" to find some meaning in life, so does Moisan who is now old and isolated from his children. Having lived for the land, having given himself without reservation to it, Moisan expects that the land will be his salvation:

Il ne lui restait que la terre; mais la terre était immuable et insensible, sans tendresse comme sans compassion. Il eût voulu sentir en elle une alliée contre les gens et les choses ennemies; or il la trouvait prête à multiplier le grain du méchant homme . . . tout autant que le sien; prête à remplir la nouvelle grange, la grange d'Etienne, des mêmes largesses dont elle avait si longtemps rempli l'ancienne. (TA p. 240)

The death of Uncle Ephrem at the beginning of the novel, when he was old and incapable of serving the land, stresses this cruel indifference of the land towards its serf. Euchariste had observed "la terre patiente, indifférente à la mort de celui qu'elle a nourri si longtemps et qui va descendre en elle" (TA p. 60). Louis Hémon had earlier observed this indifference of the land towards man's fortunes, but for Maria Chapdelaine the land remained symbolic of the old ideals of the French Canadian race. Ringuet, however, suggests the universal tragedy of the farmer who makes the land and its natural cycles his "wife," his sole purpose in life. Like Uncle Ephrem, who died "sur sa terre, poitrine contre poitrine, sur sa terre qui n'avait pas consenti au divorce" (TA p. 58), Euchariste will never be able to live away from his land because he has lived his whole life in contact with it, and has adopted its rhythm. Once "les espousailles" are made with the land, the farmer is forever bound to it. Exiled in White Falls, Moisan realizes that he has lost everything; divorced from the land, nothing has any importance for him: "En lui toute vigueur avait disparu maintenant qu'il n'avait plus contact avec la glèbe. . . . Que lui resterait-il désormais? Que de vivre inutile" (TA p. 235).

Euchariste Moisan suffers not only his children rejecting the authority of the land, but also their denial of the fundamental values which had thus far preserved the farming communities in French Canada. This denial is dramatically shown when he, exiled to the United States, is compared with other French Canadians who have now become Franco-Americans. Euchariste represents those who remain faithful to the land, to the past, and to the race; the other French Canadians are those who have lost touch with their past:

Les autres parlaient du Québec un peu comme on parle d'un parent éloigné dont on apprend avec plaisir des nouvelles mais qu'on ne se dérangerait pas pour aller voir; qui est trop peu quelqu'un pour qu'on en puisse tirer fierté. (TA p. 293)

Moisan is the only one among those city people to miss his land and province. Yet, Euchariste now has the kind of job for which he once envied Willie Daviau: "Une belle job pas fatigante. . . . Tout ce que vous aruez à faire ça sera de loafer en fumant vo' pipe" (TA p. 313). But he is not happy; work for him is to work the land:

travailler la terre, travailler avec la terre. C'était conduire les chevaux à travers les champs. . . . Lui qui n'avait jamais appartenu à personne qu'à la terre . . . qui était son univers et sa vie. . . . (TA p. 314)

Euchariste has made the land and its cycles central to his living, and away from them, he finds it impossible to live. He now sees work on the land as the ideal way of living. When his son Ephrem is "laid off" from his work in a lamp factory, it reinforces Euchariste's belief that the land guarantees a security which the city cannot offer; in the city there is unemployment and economic depression, but the land always provides for the farmer: "Su' la terre, y a pas de

dépression. . . ." (TA p. 322). However, the letters he receives from his son Etienne refute his belief:

La terre faillait aux siens, la terre éternelle
et maternelle ne nourrissait plus ses fils.
Voilà donc ce qui en était du jour d'aujourd'hui.
Sûrement la terre produisait bien encore de quoi
manger . . . mais on avait voulu améliorer,
moderniser. . . .

Toute la crise actuelle n'était-elle pas le plus beau
démenti à cette fausse idée de "progrès." Pour lui,
Euchariste, la voie était claire: . . . le retour au
mode sain d'autrefois; renoncer aux mécaniques et
vivre sur les trente arpents de terre en ne leur
demandant que ce qu'ils pouvaient donner. (TA p. 323)

For Euchariste the land does not provide for her children because the new farming methods have separated the farmer from his healthy and spiritual link with the land. The new generation is not willing to be left behind and wants to take advantage of modern technology. Further, only a return to the old ways will make the land generous and fruitful as it had been when he was farming it. But the old ways cannot be restored; French Canadian rural communities will never be as they were before. Ringuet, however, ends his novel on a "positive" note. The stability of life on the land, and the uncertainty of life in the city is emphasized: "Des hommes différents . . . une terre toujours la même" (TA p. 328). Although French Canadian rural communities will never be what they were, the master-slave relationship between man and the land will always be the same.

Ringuet in his treatment of the land breaks sharply with the previous tradition of the "roman du terroir" in French Canada. Through

Moisan's story he was able to capture the way of life in rural communities at the threshold of a new era. Like Grove, he manages to record the effect of the war and post-war years on rural communities. Life is accelerated and made shallow by the introduction of machines such as motor cars and tractors. Moreover, the inevitable conflict between generations is intensified; Moisan's children, like John Elliot's, totally reject the values of their father; none of them want to be subject to the austere laws of the land. However, Moisan's tragedy is more complete than Elliot's. Both are victims of a new technological world in which they are out of place, and both see the disintegration of their small rural community. For Moisan and for Elliot this means that they cannot achieve their patriarchal dream, but for Moisan, it is also, and most importantly, the dying-out of his race. He sees his children becoming anglicized, and his grandchildren unable to speak French. The tragedy of Euchariste Moisan signifies the death of "la campagne dépositaire de toutes les vertues poétiques, patriotiques et religieuses, [qui] assuraient le salut de la patrie dans le temps et celui de ses citoyens dans l'éternité."³⁸

The land, until recently, has always been important in French Canadian fiction. The tradition of the novel of the land idealized the land and made it a symbol of happiness and self-fulfillment, as well as a symbol of national prosperity and survival. This ideology, it has been noted, is central to novels such as Lacombe's La Terre Paternelle and Gérin-Lajoie's Jean Rivard.

Laberge's novel, La Scouine, indicated a new trend in

the French Canadian novel of the land. The ideology attached to the land in earlier novels was strongly attacked in La Scouine which is as pessimistic as previous novels had been optimistic. Ringuet, in Trente Arpents, although pessimistic too, established a balance between the two extremes by objectively portraying the peasant's life and his relationship to the land on the threshold of a new era. Ringuet has his protagonist, Euchariste Moisan, believe that "la terre c'est la patrie!" but at the same time observes his petty selfishness and egotism. Trente Arpents ends the tradition of the novel of the land in dignity. Never before had the land and the farmer's life been given such a profound and enlightening analysis.

NOTES

¹Mgr. Camille Roy, Histoire de la littérature canadienne (Québec: Imprimerie de l'Action sociale, 1930), p. 35.

²Abbé H.R. Casgrain, Oeuvres Complètes de l'abbé H.R. Casgrain (Montréal: Beauchemin et Valois, 1884), I, p. 35.

³F.-A. Garneau, Histoire du Canada depuis sa découverte jusqu'à nos jours, 5th. ed. (Paris: Alcan, 1913); quoted in Ian F. Fraser, The Spirit of French Canada (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 13.

⁴Abbé Casgrain, Oeuvres Complètes, p. 42.

⁵Patrice Lacombe, La Terre Paternelle, Intro. André Vanasse (1850; rpt. Montréal: Hurtubise H.M.H., 1972), pp. 117-118. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title TP in parenthesis immediately following the quote.

⁶David-M. Hayne, "Les origines du roman canadien-français," in Le Roman Canadien-français; Evolution—Témoignages—Bibliographie, Archives des Lettres Canadiennes, III (Montréal: Fides, 1971), p. 13.

⁷Mgr. Camille Roy, Histoire de la littérature canadienne (Québec: Imprimerie de l'Action sociale, 1930), p. 46.

⁸Mgr. Camille Roy, French-Canadian Literature (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook, & Company, 1913), p. 457.

⁹Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, Jean Rivard, I; II (1952; rpt. Montréal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1953), I, p. 13. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title JR in parenthesis immediately following the quote.

¹⁰See Chapter III of this thesis, pp. 143-155.

¹¹J.-C. Falardeau, Notre société et son roman (Montréal: Editions H.M.H., 1967), p. 23.

¹²Ibid., p. 32.

¹³J.-C. Falardeau, "Thèmes sociaux et idéologiques dans quelques romans canadien-français du dix-neuvième siècle," in France et Canada français du seizième au vingtième siècle, Colloque de Québec, 10-12 octobre 1963, p. 265.

¹⁴See above p. 20

¹⁵J.-C. Falardeau, Notre société et son roman, p. 23.

¹⁶Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, "Preface to Jean Rivard."

¹⁷See above, pp. 22-23.

¹⁸ Gérard Tougas, Histoire de la littérature canadienne-française (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964), p. 36.

¹⁹ J.-C. Falardeau, Notre société et son roman, p. 33.

²⁰ Margaret K. Zieman, "Origins of Maria Chapdelaine," Canadian Literature No. 20 (Spring, 1964), pp. 41-43.

²¹ Gilles Marcotte, Une littérature qui se fait (Montréal: Les Éditions H.M.H., 1968), p. 19.

²² Louis Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine (1914; rpt. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1954), p. 47. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title MC in parenthesis immediately following the quote.

²³ Allan McAndrew, Louis Hémon: Sa vie et son Oeuvre (Paris: Jouve et Cie, 1936), p. 220.

²⁴ Yves Caron, "La Critique littéraire," in ed. Léopold Lamontagne Visages de la civilisation au Canada français (Laval: Presses de l'Université de Laval, 1970), p. 78.

²⁵ Albert Laberge, Le Dernier Souper, p. 8; quoted in Gérard Bessette, Anthologie d'Albert Laberge (Montréal: Le cercle du livre de France, 1972), p. xiv.

²⁶ La Vérité, 29ième année, no. 4, August 7, 1909, p. 27; quoted in Jacques Brunet, Albert Laberge, sa vie et son oeuvre (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1969), pp. 22-23.

²⁷ Gilles Marcotte, Les Bonnes Rencontres (Montréal: Hurtubise, H.M.H., 1971), pp. 135-136.

²⁸ Gérard Bessette, Anthologie d'Albert Laberge, p. x.

²⁹ Gérard Tougas, Histoire de la littérature canadienne-française, p. 52.

³⁰ Gérard Bessette, p. x.

³¹ Albert Laberge, La Scouine (1917; rpt. Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Actuelle, 1972), p. 35. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title LS in parenthesis immediately following the quote.

³² Jacques Cotnam, Introduction to Trente Arpents (Montréal: Fides, 1938), p. 22.

³³ Philippe Panneton (pseud. Ringuet), Trente Arpents (Montréal: Fides, 1938), p. 39. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title TA in parenthesis immediately following the quote.

³⁴ Ronald Sutherland, Second Image (Toronto: New Press, 1971), p. 10.

³⁵ Albert Legrand, "Introduction to Thirty Acres," trans. Felix and Derothea Walter (1940; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. xiii.

³⁶ Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, Jean Rivard, I, p. 21.

³⁷ Ronald Sutherland, Second Image, p. 9.

³⁸ Albert Legrand, "Une parole enfin libérée," in Maintenant 15 septembre 1967, p. 270; quoted by Jacques Cotnam, "Introduction to Trente Arpents," p. 18.

PRAIRIE FICTION

Since the prairies were settled late in the nineteenth century, Prairie fiction reflects different social concerns from those of French Canadian fiction: "The West of . . . the writer is essentially a progressive extension of civilized forms—of metropolitan culture, laws, art, myth, the city, the traveller—all in tension with western reality of space, environment, primitiveness, and materialism."¹ Immigrants of various origins were transplanted from the Old World to the new land, eager to take root, believing that they could indeed achieve success in the New World. The dichotomy between the Old World and the new is further emphasized in fiction by the introduction of modern farming machinery which almost coincided with the settlement of the prairies and which forced new immigrants to readjust their values accordingly. Hence, Prairie fiction reflects a greater concern with the dichotomy of modern technology and man's relationship to the land than does French Canadian fiction.

Both Laura Salverson's novel, The Viking Heart, and Frederick Niven's The Flying Years, published in 1923 and 1942 respectively, attempt to tell in fiction the story of the Canadian West from early pioneer settlements to the twentieth century.

Although neither Salverson nor Niven are concerned with the land per se, their account of the coming of the pioneers to the prairies incidentally tells us something of the immigrant's state of mind before his arrival in Canada, and something of the economic conditions prevailing in the Old World at the time. The Flying Years spans the course of prairie development from the 1850's to the 1900's. It is the story of a young Scot who, with his parents, settled in the Canadian West near Winnipeg. Soon after their arrival, Angus Munro's parents die, and he is left alone. Travelling farther west, he meets Sam Douglas, a fellow immigrant Scotsman who was in the country to make money and with whom Angus keeps contact throughout the novel. During his voyages, he meets and marries a young Indian girl, and later goes to Scotland with his friend Douglas who wants to raise money to help establish the Western Transport Company, his current project. This scheme having failed, Douglas returns to the Canadian West, but Angus, however, upon the receipt of a letter informing him that his wife has died, decides to remain in Scotland, and finds himself a position as a clerk in a bookstore, but just over a year later, leaves his job and returns to the prairies. Subsequently, he marries a white girl who bears a son who will later be killed in the First World War. The novel ends with Angus Munroe as an aged man reminiscing about the "flying years" of his life, and about the rapid growth of the prairies which, within a period of less than sixty years, developed from a wilderness to a fully settled territory.

Niven's novel "is a document rather than a novel", which

describes with admirable fidelity the development of the West and some of the types who assisted in that development."² The Flying Years illustrates the incredible speed at which the prairie developed. In the space of a single life time, it transformed itself from a savage wilderness, from buffalo hunting, to a settled and a prosperous agricultural land. The novel unveils the primary steps in the settling of the new frontier. Sam Douglas is typical of the pioneer entrepreneurs that Isabella Valency Crawford calls "smooth-coated men with eager eyes."³ He came to the prairie to build a new world, to create a new society out of the wilderness, and to make his fortune: "I'm thinking of the future, I'm planning big."

Do you know what I'm here for? . . . I'll tell you. . . . This country is going to open up—to develop. What have we seen so far? Buffaloes by the hundred. . . . But consider how the buffalo are being killed off. They are no' just for the sustenance of the Indians now. The trade that has sprung up in their robes as they call these pelts . . . is going to exterminate them; and the railroad builders down in the States are feeding the navvies on buffalo meat. Mark my words. Man, man, my mind is of the kind that is aye just a jump ahead--maybe two jumps. There's going to be cattle grazing on these buffalo pastures before long.⁴

He is followed by the permanent agricultural settler whose only hopes for the future reside in the new land. Both types of settler, although emigrating with different aims, share similar attitudes toward the new land: it is the land of freedom, the land of opportunity where one can make his dreams come true.

Angus and his family typify the new agricultural settlers who, under social and economic pressures are forced from

their homelands. They envisage Canada as a land of plenty, a place where they can start a new life:

Folk ate well in the Canadas by all accounts, never there, as in Scotland, on the edge of starvation. A man could kill his deer without by your leave of any, and there were crops other than of poor oats and potatoes. There was even a sugar tree! Now, there was a land for you! Think on it! Yes, there was a lot of talk of "the Canadas" before they were, indeed, started on their way thither. (FY p. 11)

Canada offered new settlers the opportunity to free themselves from exploiting landlords by granting them free lands on which they would have a chance to begin a new life and yet remain loyal to their homeland which would become for them what Niven calls "a kingdom of the mind" (FY p. 14), a place they could look back to for spiritual and intellectual stimulation. The new life, a new future, was to be found in Canada: "That's just it, [I] would like to live in my own land, but I am becoming unfitted for it by reason of knowing this one. . . . I realize more clearly that I could never stay there. They are too conservative over there" (FY p. 90). The prairie is the "liberal land," the land free of the social inhibitions and restrictions of the old world.

Niven's most vivid and poetic description of the Western landscape is illustrated through Angus' reaction to the sight of the Rocky mountains:

Something happened to him beyond his power to express; something happened, wordless, like music. As though the blue of the sky had run and thickened roughly at the base, there lay the ranges, low in contrast with the height of that space of blue but—he aware of how far off they were—majestic in their serene extent. They dropped away to south, they dropped away to north, as into a quiet eternity. . . . But he could not stay

there all day, his spirit and the sighing of the wind in the grass blending as sky and mountains blend in that section of storm on the ranges. (FY p. 31)

Angus, like other expatriates from his poverty-stricken homeland, found the Prairie to be a land of plenty, figuratively, a land of milk and honey, the Promised Land, perhaps even a New Jerusalem:

For Angus one of the great pleasures in the change from Loch Brendan was in the food. One never had to say here, "If that's my dinner I've had it!" They were not limited to potatoes and them, perhaps, none too good because of a wet season. Fine trout could be fished, and all round about they could shoot the prairie chickens. . . . When Ian was reading the Scriptures aloud one night and came to the words Shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore, they meant to Angus the new land. (FY p. 18)

Douglas though not seeing it in quite these terms, sees it as a land of opportunity, a land to be exploited and developed:

I was just thinking that some day all these plains will be what they call smiling farms! Look at how the land has been manured through ages by the buffalo. Look at the grand, growing soil, man. It's too good for cattle, I'm thinking, a grand country like this. And when that day comes an insurance against damage to crops by hail—the way they have marine insurance and life insurance—would be a good thing. (FY p. 55)

The prairie is the land of the future, the land of hope where all dreams are permissible. Douglas' vision of the future, however, is more than "smiling farms"; he is thinking of "big money," of selling things such as coal to the farmers.

The contrast between the Old World and its limited opportunities and the New World and the scope and freedom it offered the young is illustrated by Angus' realization after his return to Canada that a life of servitude such as the one he had lived working as a clerk in Edinburgh, is no life for him:

The Ettrick establishment must have been to him even more tedious than he knew, for all the while he was relishing his new life not only for itself but for the escape it gave him from all that may best be symbolized as the Wee Black Book. (FY p. 94)

Angus could not accept the rigidity of the establishment in the Old World and the pettiness of the "Wee Black Book" in which was recorded his transgressions against the rules of his employer. Western Canada represents a different world to which he returns to get "a cleansing from the Ettrick establishment" (FY p. 69). The Prairie is a world where "there had always been a spell for him in that curve of sky over the space to west, as if with a still small voice it called him" (FY p. 26). The new land in The Flying Years is indeed the progressive land, the land of the future, and Scotland, the old world is relegated to being the "kingdom of the mind."

Salverson's The Viking Heart, like Niven's The Flying Years, is about early pioneer life on the prairies. The Viking Heart is the story of the Halsson's who, after a volcanic eruption and the death of their only son, are forced to leave their home in Iceland. Under the influence of Canadian propaganda to encourage Europeans to immigrate to Canada, the Halssons immigrate and suffer the hardships all new immigrants had to endure. However, their eldest daughter, Borga, escapes these hardships when she is employed by a successful settler near Winnipeg. She marries Bjorn Lindal, and together they raise a family and prosper on the land. Towards the end of the novel their only son, Thor, is killed in the war. Conveniently, and tritely, their grandson who is born soon after their loss bears the same name,

thus continuing their son's life. The novel ends on an optimistic note and the reader is assured that the Lindals will live happily ever after.

Despite the melodramatic elements in the novel, Salverson does present a genuine account of prairie development. The immigrant's poverty in Europe, his forced emigration, his disillusionment upon arrival, and his determination to succeed in the new country, are described convincingly. At the opening of the novel, Carl, Halsson's son, like Angus in Niven's novel, is demonstrably enthusiastic about what he has heard about Canada:

You should have seen the excitement! It seems there is so much work in this country, there aren't half enough people to do it. And the wages! A fortune in a year or two, some say. . . . And the things they raise! Corn and garden truck! . . . think of it, papa, and us here in this burned-out country with only patches of green here and field after field of lava and basalt.⁵

According to Salverson, prospective immigrants were in fact lured to Canada by such misleading propaganda. In her autobiography, Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter, Halsson encounters "an immigration agent who was enthusiastically selling Canada to Icelanders":

"Think of it!" said the gentleman. "Over there, any able-bodied man can instantly find lucrative employment in the city, or, better still, take advantage of the generous homesteading grant, which makes him the owner of a tract of land of such fertility as is undreamed of in barren Iceland. As to the other avenues of wealth—well!" Here the agent laughed significantly. He really didn't dare enlarge upon the possibilities . . . for no one would believe him.⁶

By such means are myths created! This land of milk and honey presumably offered unlimited opportunities to the immigrant, and

was particularly appealing to those who faced near starvation in their homeland:

So unproductive were the fisheries that large numbers of people were rendered destitute and were on the verge of starvation. It was with relief and a high hope before them that these people listened to fabulous stories of the Great Canadian West and fell victims to the exaggerated promises held forth. (VH p. 22)

To the oppressed people of Iceland this new land did indeed seem to be the Promised Land, a New Eden.

According to Salverson, however, the fabled land fell far short of its promise. Although the journey of the immigrants down the river to their destination is described in a romantic tone, their arrival at the "immigration sheds" and their welcome there was no entry into Eden:

"We got to get rid of this bunch," he [the immigration agent] grumbled, "before the rest get here."
 . . . Borga sat between her mother and her little sister on a grimy bench against a grimy wall. About them tobacco smoke and stale air swirled in snake-like wreaths. Children cried and called for bread. Men and women rushed about nervously with the terrible, tense energy of caged animals. . . . Altogether the place was hideous, humid with the heat and the indescribable odor of humanity. (VH p. 32)

The immigrant could do nothing about such conditions "being conscious that beggars may not be choosers" (VH p. 31). What immigrants had conceived as their New Jerusalem, "the new heaven and the new earth . . . where all was peace and blessing and 'where that High One, who is over all will make his home to watch and ward his children. . . ." (VH p. 39), proved to be a desolate and harsh land where one would have to strive for mere survival. The new

settlement

. . . Looked very little like a New Jerusalem to Einar and Gudrun, when, in company with several other families, they sought in vain a dry spot on which to make a temporary home. After wandering hopelessly . . . Einar found, half-hidden in a clump of spruce, a deserted hut—a frame of logs without roof or doors, containing three feet of water in place of a floor and innocent of windows.

The nights were getting bitterly cold. . . . So, into this shelter of logs Einar thought it best to bring his unfortunate family until something better could be built. He piled logs and brushwood together and made of them a sort of raft in the hut upon which he laid the family's supply of bedding. . . . (VII p. 40)

Even after they were settled in whatever huts they were able to build, they were always under the threat of "the ever recurring epidemics of measles, chicken-pox, scarlet fever, and bronchial pneumonia. . . ." (Conf. p. 49). Their isolation and the harshness of the climate often made it difficult for medical aid to reach them.

It is interesting to note the similarities between Borga's parents in The Viking Heart and Maria's parents in Maria Chapdelaine. Borga's mother, like Maria's mother, is a hard-working and devoted wife and mother. Both women are strong and capable, and both are faithful and devoted women who follow their husbands wherever they went. In this respect Borga's mother is much like Salverson's own mother:

When I was a baby she [Salverson's mother] had followed papa to Minnesota where they were no sooner settled and the owners of a neat little house, than the wanderlust struck again. This time it was the sheep ranch in Dakota that lured my poor father. . . . Once again she had followed without complaint. . . . (Conf. p. 194)

Borga's father, like Maria's father, is a restless pioneer who, once his land is cleared, continuously moves to unsettled areas to

begin again. They both represent the adventurous type produced by the frontier, which contrasts with the tiller type as represented, by Borga's mother, Mother Chapdelaine, Euchariste Moisan, John Elliot, and Abe Spalding.

Salverson's The Viking Heart and Hémon's Maria Chapdelaine ". . . have much in common. Both create the same illusion of reality; both are suffused with a kind of idyllic charm which tends to soften harsh outlines. . . ." ⁷ Both novels, although idealistic in tone, nevertheless render an account of what pioneer life was like in French and English Canada. Hémon, however, must be credited with being more objective in his description of pioneer life. His novel has a sustained realism not found in The Viking Heart. However, The Viking Heart, when compared to the French Canadian fiction preceding Maria Chapdelaine, can be considered objective and realistic.

Robert J.C. Stead's Grain gave a new direction to Canadian prairie fiction. Although Stead had written many novels before Grain, none approximated the realistic approach he adopted in this novel:

It is possible that for years before he started on the manuscript of Grain he had determined to try his hand at a novel of permanent value, and because the farm life of his boyhood was the life he knew most intimately, it was a novel in this setting that he had in mind. . . . Grain, then, is significant not only for what it is in itself but for the act of courage that it involved. It meant Stead's turning his back on the easy success he had already achieved and venturing on something more satisfying to him personally, in which no success—critical or popular—was guaranteed. ⁸

Stead's greatest contribution in Grain was his intimate knowledge of the farm and his willingness to believe that farm life contained

elements which could produce interesting and serious fiction "of permanent value." The novel differs significantly from previous prairie fiction.

There is in Stead's novel a sense of reality and authenticity new to prairie fiction, and for that reason one would almost be tempted to classify him as the first realist of prairie fiction. However, to use Ricou's expression, his realism "remains in the realm of decorous realism."⁹ Although Stead's novel is not didactic as the early French Canadian novels of the land were, his style often reminds us of early idealistic writers such as Lacombe and Gérin-Lajoie. In his poem "The Prairie" Stead depicts the land as being the all-generous and fertile mother:

Where wide as the plan of creation
The Prairies stretch'ever away
And beckon a broad invitation
To fly to their bosom and stay;
The prairie-fire smell in the gloaming—
The water-wet wind in the spring—
An empire untrod for the roaming—
Ah! this is a life for a king!¹⁰

Grain deals with pioneer life in Western Canada. It is the story of Gander Stake and his family living in a prairie community of the 1890's. It records the changing patterns of prairie life, the introduction of modern technology on the farm, and the impact of the war in prairie farming communities. The changing attitudes of the new generation and the weakening of family ties is illustrated by Jackie who leaves the land to move to the city. His attitude is similar to Ephrem Moisan in Ringuet's Trente Arpents when he says:

"Dad, I'm doing a man's work and I think I ought to get a man's pay. . . . I ain't no kicker, but I could get thirty dollars workin' on any other farm 'round here, and not work any harder, either."¹¹

He too will not stay on the land if he can find something better in the city. After a sexual adventure with Cal's sister, from which a son is born, he does not hesitate to abandon his responsibilities, and leaves it to Cal to take care of the child. Minnie too turns her back on the farm: "I'm fed up," she announced one night after milking her eight cows as usual. "I'm through. There must be something in life besides cows, and I'm going out to find it" (Grain pp. 134-135); she refuses to toil around the farm as her mother did. She later marries Cal, a university graduate, who plans to earn a living "by writing for magazines" (Grain p. 188). Gander represents the segment of the young generation that remains faithful to the land. He reacts strongly to his sister's and her husband's way of living; he reflects that ". . . although the whole country was a-rush with seeding operations, they [Cal and Minnie] lived in a disgracefully leisurely fashion, remaining in bed until seven in the morning and spending hours sitting by the lake or rambling through the trees on the little estate. There were times, it is true, when he found them at work—Cal dictating and Minnie pounding her typewriter, but these were rare occasions; mostly they seemed to have nothing to do" (Grain pp. 188-189).

The subtle infiltration of modern technology in farming communities is also witnessed in Grain. Rather than protesting against this new technology, Jackson Stake takes full advantage of it,

and sees it as "a world of great activity and accomplishment."¹²

After he had established himself, he welcomed modern machinery to make other improvements on his farm, and to extend his farming:

. . . Jackson enlarged his stables and barns; abandoned the twenty-acre field idea to the broad measures of the west, and now farmed his land by quarter-sections; abandoned the fourteen-inch single-furrow walking plough for two-and three-furrow sulky gangs; abandoned the broadcast seeder the disc drill, and the six-foot binder for the eight; abandoned the grain sack for the bulk system of handling wheat; abandoned the old horse-power threshers whose metallic crescendo sang through the frosty autumn morning of the 1880's for the steam and gasoline of the twentieth century. (Grain p. 41)

Jackson Stake's attitude is representative of the opening prairie for he is "but one unit in a hundred thousand" (Grain p. 41).

In spite of his factual realism Stead often tends to picture the land idealistically. As a child, Gander believed "that all the fruits of the field were given to man for his subsistence" (Grain p. 23). . . That Stead is much like Gander in his view of the land is hinted at by A.T. Elder in a discussion of Stead's realism:

Although Stead has been praised by all his critics for his realism . . . it is a limited realism. The details are accurate, but carefully selected, and despite occasional references to the hardship of life on the prairies, the privations of the settlers are submerged in a generally buoyant tone.¹³

Although the land is basically benevolent in Grain, there is no suggestion that it is overflowing with milk and honey. The author seems to imply that when obeyed the land brings ultimate reward, but not without struggle. In the threshing operation the result is "chaff and straw and dirt,—and some grain!" (Grain p. 103). Minnie

sees this as symbolic of the life of the farmer:

"I have often thought life is like a thresher,
pouring out its cloud of straw and chaff and dust,
and a little grain. A little hard, yellow, golden
grain, that has in it the essence of life, Gander!"

(Grain, p. 204)

The grain is what is most important and worthwhile but it is not
gleaned easily or without waste. The ultimate reward may be gained
only imperfectly or after hardship, but the vision of it lessens the
importance of the harsher side of the struggle.

The growing impact of modern technology on the farm
can be seen in Gander who "was a farmer born and bred" (Grain p. 40),
and whose "instincts were rooted deep in the soil" (Grain p. 79),
but who also "loved his engine and delighted in its company" (Grain
p. 98). As a boy on the farm, Gander had a sense of being at home
in his environment; skating on the lake, his figure was "a pathetic
suggestion of loneliness. . . . Yet, Gander was not lonely; never
in all his days on the farm and the prairie did Gander know the
pang of loneliness. This was his native environment; he was no more
lonely on these prairies than is the coyote or the badger" (Grain p. 56).
Gander's pride in and admiration for the machine is responsible for
his gradually becoming out of harmony with the land. Like Euchariste
Moisan, he is caught between two worlds, two sets of values. Like
Moisan, he at first enthusiastically accepts modern technology on the
farm, but realizing simultaneously that his acceptance alters the
ideal relationship of man and the land. As Ricou argues, "the
reflection, in Grain, of the growing mechanization of prairie

agriculture points to the curious irony that as man gains increasing control over his physical environment through technology, he becomes, in the pages of fiction, increasingly out of harmony with the land."¹⁴

The advent of the First World War heightened Gander's conflict with modern technology and was responsible for his eventual departure from the land. His reaction to the news of the war mirrors that of farmers both on the Prairies and in Québec:

In all this it is not to be granted that Gander was essentially less patriotic than other young men who responded to the call. . . . After all, the war was away in Belgium or some such place, which was in Europe or Asia or some such place. Gander was not very sure of his geography, but of this much he was sure, that the Atlantic ocean lay between, and the British Navy ruled the Atlantic ocean, so what was there to worry about? (Grain p. 106)

Gander, like John Elliot, Abe Spalding and Euchariste Moisan, does not feel concerned about the war. However, the war and its impact force him to re-evaluate his life and to adjust to new values.

His conflict with Jo Burge, who wants him to enlist, reflects the internal conflict he has to face with the growing influence of modern technology on the farm. Gander's love for Jo has been equated throughout the novel with his love for machinery: "If the thought of Jo Burge could make [his] heart quicken its beat, so too could the prospect of firing a steam engine" (Grain p. 98). Gander's first love, however, is for the machine, and running one gives him a thrill that Jo Burge can not match: "Jo Burge? This—this power—this mighty thing that sprang at his touch—this was life!" (Grain

p. 101). With the war, his relationship with Jo, as his relationship with the land, became "too ill-defined to admit of very clear thinking" (Grain p. 104). Gander had not seen a rival in Dick, a neighbouring farmer who is going to marry Jo, as he had not seen a rival in the machinery which is responsible for his ultimately leaving the land.

After Jo is married, Gander realizes that "Jo had been his, but had slipped away" (Grain p. 142). In order to escape an impossible relationship with Jo, whom he still loves, Gander escapes to the city. Although Gander is a farmer "born and bred," his increasing pride in farm technology is the cause for his being out of harmony with the land. He remains faithful to the land, but his bond with it, like his relationship with Jo, has become impossible, and he moves to the city to work as a mechanic in a garage.

Robert Stead gives a relatively good analysis of the farmer's problems in a fast changing world, but his novel in the final analysis lacks the psychological depth which characterizes Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese.

Wild Geese is the story of Caleb Gare, a malevolent figure of tyranny and greed who dominates his wife and children with the knowledge of his wife's bastard child, Mark Jordan. The only redeeming character in the novel is the young school teacher who lives in the Gare household. The novel ends on an optimistic note with the death of Caleb Gare and the freeing of his wife and children from his domination. Although Ostenso and Stead are both writing about similar aspects of prairie life, they do so from two different points of view or concepts of reality. The chief characters in both

novels are the members of farm families, and Caleb Gare is just as materially successful at farming as Jackson Stake.

At the opening of the novel, Ostenso takes much the same view of the land and of the farmer's world as Laberge had taken in La Scouine. She establishes Caleb Gare as "—a spiritual counterpart of the land, as harsh, as demanding, as tyrannical as the very soil from which he drew his existence."¹⁵ Lind Archer, the school teacher, rightly "felt that the rigid routine of the farm was imposed by Caleb to keep anything out of the ordinary from happening" (WG p. 34). Just as the land obliges the farmer to adjust his life to her cycle of the seasons, Caleb Gare subjects his family to his will: "Caleb was the clock by which the family slept, woke, ate, and moved" (WG p. 56). The Gare family, "living only for the earth, and the product of the soil," are described as being "meagre and warped" (WG p. 224), like Laberge's farmer in La Scouine, and in both novels the land is equally harsh and demanding.

Lind Archer senses the negative force which works through the land:

And then in a moment, she was overwhelmed by her helplessness against the intangible thing that held them [the Gares] there, slaves to the land. It extended farther back than Caleb, this power, although it worked through him. (WG p. 38)

Somehow the land destroys the people who live on it. Mark Jordan says:

Think of the difference there would be in the outward characters of these people if the land didn't sap all their passion and sentiment. (WG p. 78)

And Lind Archer echoes his statement: "There's no feeling left after

the toil and the livestock have taken their share" (WG p. 78)

There is little sense of joy in the labour that was found in Grain. Work seems meaningless and deadening:

Work did not destroy the loneliness; work was only a fog in which they moved so that they might not see the loneliness of each other.

Days came when the loam was black and rich with rain. Judith and Martin, being the strongest of the workers under Caleb Gare, carried the soil's heaviest burden. Judith mounted the seeder and wove like a great dumb shuttle back and forth, across the rough tapestry of the land. In the adjacent field Martin worked with the bowed, unquestioning resignation of an old unfruitful man. (WG p. 33)

The rewards of the land are not appreciated, and the joys of the seasons are not felt. As Fusi Aronson says:

Here the spirit feels only what the land can bring to the mouth. In the spring we know only that there is coming a winter. (WG p. 31)

Ostenso, however, is more objective than Laberge had been in La Scouine. Although through Caleb Gare and his family she presents the farmer's world in all its selfishness and greed, she balances it with more "normal" families, such as the Bjarnasson's who are happy and who form a united family. Their household is the extreme opposite of the Gare's:

Like a welcome, its western windows were aflame with light from a red sun. . . . The immaculate kitchen had a warm, good smell, like cinnamon. The floor was white as bread. On it were round, braided rag mats of bright, clear colours. (WG p. 44)

Similarly, in some instances not connected with Caleb, the land is portrayed as not being harsh and cruel. If the work on the Gare farm is soul-destroying, it is not because of the land, but rather because of

Caleb who makes it so. Martin wonders why Caleb will not take on extra help at haying time: "It was his idea, apparently, to blind them all with work—an extra man would give them time for thinking, and dreaming" (WG p. 142). What killed Fusi Aronson's brother was not the blizzard, which is part of the cruelty of nature, but the fact that Caleb refused to give him shelter. The rain storm toward the end of the novel is made even more frightening because of Caleb's attitude towards it. Judith says:

There's goin' to be either a cyclone or hail, or both—and he thinks that by his not letting it come, it won't come. So he leaves the lambs in the pasture. (WG p. 130)

Caleb represents "the force which attracted man to the West, the desire of each individual to become self-supporting on the land he owns himself."¹⁶ Like many farmers who had immigrated to the West, Caleb is aware of the "unlimited opportunities" offered by the prairies, and he begins to see himself as the Master of his universe:

Caleb felt a glow of satisfaction as he stood there on the ridge peering out over his land until the last light had gone. He could hold all this, and more—add to it year after year—and to his herd of pure-bred Holsteins and his drove of horses—raise more sheep—experiment with turkey and goose for the winter markets in the south— (WG p. 19)

In his obsession, Caleb is unaware of and indifferent to his surroundings; the land and its produce become his only God:

While he was raptly considering the tender field of flax—now in blue flower—Amelia did not exist to him. There was a transcendent power in this blue field of flax that lifted a man above the petty artifices of birth, life, and death. It was more exacting, even, than an invisible God. It demanded not only the good in him, but the evil, and the indifference. (WG p. 119)

The land for Caleb Gare, as for Euchariste Moisan, becomes more important than anything else. He is just as much a slave to it as his family are slaves to him. He sees the fruits of the earth, his field of flax, rather than the land itself, as a divinity: "Articles on its cultivation had become to him the Word of God" (WG p. 101).

The folly of submitting to Caleb can be seen by Ellen and her relationship with him. Ellen does exactly what she is told to do simply because Caleb tells her to:

The contorted sense of loyalty that had been inbred in Ellen had overrun every other instinct like a choking tangle of weeds. She reasoned only as Caleb had taught her to reason, in terms of advantage to the land and to him. (WG p. 72)

Her suffering which is the result of her instinctive obedience is presented as meaningless, and it only makes her bitter, resentful, and incapable of feeling joy. Her poor eye-sight is symbolic of her 'blindness':

Ellen wore silver-rimmed glasses that were not originally prescribed for her. As a result the pupils of her eyes were always dilated and strained, the lids reddish and moist. (WG p. 12)

Ellen does not see the world clearly and by wearing distorting spectacles because Caleb will not provide her with proper glasses, her myopia is aggravated rather than alleviated. In this way Ostenso indicates the folly of submitting to Caleb, and in doing so implies that Caleb does not live in harmony with the land.

Ironically, only Judith, who is very much a part of the land will not submit to Caleb's will: "she recognized in herself an alien spirit, a violent being of dark impulses, in no way related

to the life about her" (WG p. 90). This is perhaps best illustrated in a scene where she "took off all her clothing and lay flat on the damp ground with the waxy feeling of new, sunless vegetation under her":

Oh, how knowing the bare earth was, as if it might have a heart and a mind hidden here in the woods. The fields that Caleb had tilled had no tenderness, she knew. But here was something forbiddenly beautiful, secret as one's own body. And there was something beyond this. She could feel it in the freeness of the air, in the depth of the earth. (WG p. 53)

Judith rejects the authority of the land and flees to the city with her lover Sven. Sven too rejects the land and has a different concept of work on the farm: "Farming is my idea of nothing to do, on a place like ours, anyway. Had a real job in town—brick layin'. Good money. I'll just get me to sell the place and go back. . . ." (WG p. 94).

Caleb, in his own way, remains faithful to the land. He had shown his spiritual alliance with the harsh land when he had reflected that Judith "would have to be broken. She owed him something --owed the soil something" (WG p. 21).

Caleb's desire to dominate everything and everybody, is however responsible for his ultimate downfall and death. Talking to Malcolm, Ellen's suitor, Caleb says:

"We all get fooled sometime or other, eh, Malcolm?
All get fooled sometime! Heh-heh!"
There seemed to be some special ironical
significance in his laughter. (WG pp. 134-135)

Caleb himself gets fooled into believing that he can be an absolute master of the land and of his family. He, like most of Grove's

protagonists, is responsible for the withdrawal and isolation of each member of the family. It is through this isolation of each member of the family that the reader becomes aware of the "unmeasurable Alone surrounding each soul" (WG p. 47). This theme of loneliness, suggests S.G. Mullins,¹⁷ is central to the novel through other characters who are not subject to Caleb's tyranny. Lind, the school teacher who is the only note of brightness in the Gare household, is also in search of freedom and happiness, symbolized by the wild geese. She hears "the trailing clangour of the wild geese. Their cry smote upon the heart like the loneliness of the universe . . . a magnificent seeking through solitude--an endless quest" (WG p. 47). Mark Jordan, her lover, also feels lonely, with a "cold feeling of belonging nowhere" (WG p. 49), and he too sees the wild geese as a sign of hope and freedom: "'Wild geese,' he said aloud. 'They sound as if they know something about being alone'" (WG p. 49).

Taken in the context of prairie fiction and of the Western Canadian myth, the search for freedom characterizes the hopes of immigrants who came to the prairies to start anew. The first impression of Borga and her family in The Viking Heart is to notice that "There was a wild freedom about the untrammelled prairie, romance and loneliness in the wide sweep of sky" (VII p. 36). Similarly, the characters in Wild Geese seek for the same freedom: "here was the prairie, spare as an empty platter. . . . The sky above it all was blue and tremendous, a vast country for proud birds that were ever on the wing, seeking, seeking" (WG p. 112).

Caleb in his selfishness and passion for the land will

never be able to achieve—or even to realize—any kind of freedom. His only interest, like that of Abe Spalding "is entirely in his outbuildings, his land, his crops, his stock, and in the adding of field to field and farm to farm in his insatiable craving to extend his ownership."¹⁸

At the end of the novel, Caleb dies in a fire that destroys his field of flax. As Mark Jordan observes, "'The only thing he cared for claimed him in the end'" (WG p. 239). Caleb "had given his soul to the flax... [sic] well, it would go with him. . . . The earth was closing ice-cold, tight, tight about his body... [sic] but the flax would go with him....[sic]" (WG p. 237). Caleb's cruel fate is reminiscent of many other protagonists of the novel of the land "who seek nothing more than material wants" and who therefore remain slaves to the land.¹⁹ Euchariste Moisan also devoted his life to the land and is ultimately defeated. He too had his barn destroyed by fire thus losing a year's harvest that he had stored in his selfish desire to make quick money.

Caleb Gare, like many of Grove's protagonists, ignores the more important elements of life, such as love and understanding, to devote his whole life to the land, to make his mark on the prairie. His attempt to dominate the land and the world outside himself, is the ultimate tragedy of the novel. Hence, the moral lesson of Wild Geese is that selfishness and greed is responsible for the farmer's ultimate defeat by the land, his family and himself.

Grove consciously set himself the task of expressing the

life of the prairie in fictional form. Although he claimed that his first aim was to describe "the age-old conflict between human desire and the stubborn resistance of nature,"²⁰ he also succeeded in showing that the materialism of the farmer is inimical to man's ideal relationship with the land, his fellow man, and God.

Grove's first published novel, Settlers of the Marsh, is set in the framework of a pioneer settlement in the West. Although the land is not central to the novel, it "is still more than mere background." The author's description of the land often reflects Niels' emotional state, and it is through Niels' tragedy that the reader comes to a true understanding of the land and of the complexities of human relationships. This treatment of human affairs in terms of the land is also found in Hémon's Maria Chapdelaine as the author describes Maria's tragedy. Niels has many affinities with Samuel Chapdelaine for both are bound to the land not for material reasons, but rather for spiritual and emotional ones. Niels' vision of the land is stated through a conversation with his friend Lars Nelson:

"I'll tell you, I like the work. I'd pay to be allowed to do it. Land I've cleared is more my own than land I've bought."

Niels understood. This was his own thought exactly, his own unexpressed, inexpressible thought. . . .

They walked in silence, swinging along in great vigorous strides. The last few words had filled them with the exhilaration of a confession of faith. High above, far ahead stood an ideal; towards that ideal they walked.²¹

Niels' vision is similar to Jean Rivard's in Gérin-Lajoie's novel. The prairie is the land which will assure his personal happiness and fulfill his highest ideals. While most prairie pioneers "think more

of their machinery than of their houses; more of their farms than of their lives," Niels dreams of "a house of which the farm is a part, the place where what is needed in the house is grown" (SM p. 94).

Niels' attitude, however, is not typical of all prairie pioneers. Niels' best friend, Nelson, who at first feels the same emotional affinity with the land, soon becomes materialistic. He is typical of the immigrant who rejects the old values attached to the land in order to devote his life to achieve material success and prosperity. He realizes that the land can offer him much more in material value than his mere daily bread and he wants to take advantage of it. This causes what Ricou calls a "shift of values" which is inevitable "when the farmer's inarticulate, almost religious bond to the land is broken by a gradual awareness that his land represents a financial asset, potential wealth beyond the mere means to a livelihood."²² This favouring of the industrial society over agrarian life is characteristic of numerous immigrants whose only reason for coming to the new world was the promise of quick wealth. Nelson marries Olga, and the reader sees little of their marital life, suggesting that the marriage is somewhat superficial. When Ellen's father dies, the only thing Nelson has to say is that "there'll be a pretty good farm to sell. . . ." (SM p. 63). When he and his wife visit Niels on Christmas eve, Lars Nelson again shows his materialistic bent when he comments on Niels' stables: "Gosh . . . If this Gormouse hasn't got ten head of horses! He beats me on that. Six's all I have. But I've got cattle. No end of cattle. . . . Grain's a side issue with me. I'm the cattle man."

I prefer a crop that'll walk to town on its own feet" (SM p. 144).

Nelson wishes to make quick money and has lost the "feeling" for the land. He even ignores the precarious financial situation of his in-laws because he is too busy with his own farm. Niels, however, always finds time to help others.

Nevertheless, Niels also believes that the prairie is a land of hope and promise and opportunity:

In this country, life and success did not, as they had always seemed to do in Sweden, demand some mysterious powers inherent in the individual. It was merely a question of persevering and hewing straight to the line. Life was simplified. (SM p. 45)

It is an ideal world especially for the young: "In this country there was a way out for him who was young and strong" (SM p. 39). Niels' mistake, and the cause of his tragedy, is to reduce his new life to the one goal of tilling the land at the expense of his human relationships. He, like Abe Spalding, will have to discover that there is much more to life than fulfilling his own ambitions.

For Niels material success is of secondary importance:

"What did it matter whether a person had a little more or less wealth? A strong, healthy body was his; with that he could make a living anywhere. . . ." (SM p. 45). Although Niels does succeed in building up a farm, he still has not reached his ultimate goal:

Yet, material success was not enough. . . . The picture which he saw, of himself and a woman in a cosy room, with the homely light of a lamp shed over their shoulders, while the winter winds stalked and howled outside and while from above the pitter-patter of children's feet sounded down, took more and more definite form. . . . (SM p. 45)

His goal is to put down roots in the land, and the only way he can do this is first to become a successful farmer, and then to marry and to have children: "He himself might be forever a stranger in this country; so far he saw it against the background of Sweden. But if he had children, they would be rooted here. . . . He might become rooted himself through them. . . ." (SM p. 45). Niels exemplifies the immigrant who feels alien in a strange country; his dearest wish is to become part of it, part of this land.

Two women present themselves as possible partners for Niels: Ellen Amundsen and Mrs. Vogel. Ellen is the one who could become the proper kind of wife to Niels, the perfect mate who could sanctify his physical desires by helping him to raise a family. She is the ideal wife for a pioneer farmer: strong, not afraid to work, she can become a substitute for the "hired man." The role of the farmer's wife is similar in all the novels of the land: she is there to work, to be faithful to her husband, and to produce children. The necessity for hard labour, and for children to help on the farm, makes it imperative that the woman who is the wife of a farmer be a mother and a good worker rather than a romantic or sexual companion. It is not surprising to see that John Elliot's wife, after a devoted life dies of a cancer of the uterus, and Moisan's wife dies while giving birth. Mrs. Vogel, however, does not have any of the qualities that characterizes a farmer's wife: she would be only a toy to Niels, an object to satisfy his physical desires.

Niels, in spite of his ignorance of Mrs. Vogel's past life,

knows only too well which woman he should choose. Ellen is the one he pictures in the cosy house he has just built. He thinks of Mrs. Vogel in a completely different way. She is not the kind who could ever be a mother and a help-mate:

But whenever he had been dreaming of her and his thought then reverted to Ellen, he felt guilty; he felt defiled as if he had given in to sin. Her appeal was to something in him which was lower, which was not worthy of the man who had seen Ellen.... /sic/ Though he could not have told what that something in him which was lower really meant.... /sic/ (SM p. 46)

Ellen would be the ideal wife, but shocked and disgusted by her mother's forced sexual submission to her husband, she rejects Niels' proposal of marriage. In his frustration and weakness, Niels allows Mrs. Vogel to seduce him, and because of his moral principles, he assumes that he must marry her. Immediately after the marriage, which is doomed to failure, Niels thinks: "Already this marriage seemed to him almost an indecency" (SM p. 189). It is at this point that the land begins to play a prominent role in the novel. Niels, tormented by his mistake in marrying Mrs. Vogel, begins to "cling to the landscape as something abiding, something to steady him" (SM p. 55).

The land, the landscape, becomes increasingly important to Niels as his marriage to Clara Vogel disintegrates. The land begins to replace his wife. At first, he retreats to the land in order to avoid thinking. Regardless of "what his worries, his thoughts, his suspicions might be, the farm demanded his work, and he gave it" (SM p. 135). In order to avoid his wife he works from morning to night, and sometimes

"he caught himself dreading that look in her face: he turned back and went to the granary instead of the house" (SM p. 141). He increasingly becomes a stranger in the house and to his wife: "He and Bobby were 'batching it' in the shack, living as once they had lived in the house" (SM p. 159). Niels had "thought out and laid down a plan, he must go on along the demarcated line and carry out that plan even though circumstances might have arisen which made it absurd" (SM p. 152). Such a resolution of course is impractical and impossible to keep, for he must learn to accept man's condition on earth and to compromise with his wife and with the land.

It is interesting to note that Niels' dream of escape, when he sees himself "trapped" in his marriage, is similar to the actual life of Samuel Chapdelaine:

A new dream rose: a longing to leave and to go to the very margin of civilisation, there to clear a new place: and when it was cleared and people began to settle about it, to move on once more, again to the very edge of pioneerdom, and to start it all over anew....[sic] That way his enormous strength would still have a meaning. . . . But, of course, it was only the dream of the slave who dreams of freedom....[sic] (SM p. 119)

Like Samuel Chapdelaine, Niels could leave and settle new lands, but in his case it can only be a dream; he has already sacrificed his freedom to the land and cannot escape.

He will have to learn, as Maria Chapdelaine did, that one cannot go against nature and against life, but must instead accept its conditions. When he learns from Mrs. Dahlbeck that he has married "the district whore," his despair and his mental state are reflected in the landscape as he runs through his field: "Behind him were other sloughs, swampy hollows, their soil churned up, trodden and trampled

by wandering cattle into little hillocks tufted with grass, hardened by drying, with muddy holes in between where the feet of the heavy beasts had sunk deep" (SM p. 183). Niels' life has fallen into chaos but the land is indifferent to human concerns. The same indifference of the natural world is seen in Maria Chapdelaine where the heroine had to come to terms with the land. In addition, the chaotic layout of Niels' farm becomes an image of his tragedy, a tragedy caused by his obstinacy in following his original plan, regardless of other people. While he blindly runs on his farm, he is stopped by a fence: "Once more he was stopped by a fence . . . again the fact filtered through the defence of his own mind that the fence was his. . . ." (SM p. 183). Niels, in his obstinate flight from life and from the land is responsible for his own tragedy. He has isolated himself from people by his stubbornness and has built the fence which now makes him prisoner on his own farm. As his wife Clara puts it: "'You have made your own bed. You must lie in it'" (SM p. 158). The inevitable happens; Niels is incapable of communicating with his wife, and in a fit of rage kills her. Like John Elliot and Abe Spalding, he failed in his human relationships. He is forced to come to terms with himself, with his own reality, and in the end, with his frailty as a mere human in face of the land.

However, "the final note /in the novel/ . . . is not a note of tragedy but of redemption and renewal."²³ Niels' return and his renewed contact with Ellen illustrates that he has become aware of himself and of others. His eventual marriage to her ends the

novel in a positive way. Unlike Maria Chapdelaine, Niels does not accept his destiny with passive resignation. He realizes that life and the land, can sometimes be capricious and indifferent to man's condition, but defying it is to no avail. He realizes that it is not the end in itself that is important, but the continual struggle that is necessary in life. The ending of the novel is positive; Niels is determined to start a new life with Ellen and to work with the land.

In Our Daily Bread and Fruits of the Earth Grove turns to the problem of authority, and more specifically to the material goal attendant on the pioneer task. Grove questions the values of those who come to the prairies merely to exploit the land for their own material gains. As a young man, John Elliot had been caught by "The spirit of this new west . . . craving vast and ever vaster spaces,"²⁴ by the unlimited opportunities the prairies had offered him. His attitude had been similar to that of Abe Spalding, but unlike Spalding, Elliot knows that "You can't fool the land" (ODB p. 4), and he farms it to earn his daily bread rather than in the hope of making quick money. Like Neils, he works with the land and becomes a successful farmer in doing so. Herein lies the paradox: even though Elliot works with the land, he is doomed to failure. As Sutherland notes, in both Grove's Our Daily Bread and Ringuet's Trente Arpents, "one finds the same thematic ideas of the land and the divine order although both novels also introduce the beginning of the dissolution of the old order."²⁵ Like Euchariste Moisan and Abe Spalding, Elliot lives in a district fast approaching the stage of urbanization, a

process which he has accelerated by his desire to achieve his own goal, and to which he is inherently opposed. Like Ringuet, Grové dramatizes the conflict between generations by contrasting the pre-war generation and that which came to maturity during or immediately after the First World War.²⁶

John Elliot, at the opening of Our Daily Bread, has found much of his life meaningful and feels that he has more or less managed to come to terms with the land. He has concentrated on farming, growing the daily bread for himself and his family, which it has been his duty and privilege to raise: "Far more important to him than his dreams of economic prosperity had been his one great dream of family life" (ODB p. 6). Elliot expresses his patriarchal attitude toward the notion of the family in Old Testament imagery:

His old dream, that of raising a large family honourably, had been replaced, slowly and imperceptibly, by a new one: that of seeing his children settled about him as the children of the patriarchs of Israel were settled about their fathers. (ODB p. 7)

Elliot's relationship with the land is also a symbol of his relationship with God;

Empires rose and fell: kings and high priests strove with each other: wars were fought: ripples on the sea of life. Underneath, deep down, that life itself went on as it had gone on in Abraham's time: the land was tilled to grow our daily bread. And this life, the life of the vast majority of men on earth, was the essential life of all mankind. The city with its multifarious activities was nothing but a bubble on that sea.

He was proud of belonging to the hidden ground-mass of the race which carried on essential tasks, no matter under what form of government, no matter under what conditions of climate and soil: he had lived and multiplied; he had grown, created, not acquired his and his children's daily bread: he had served God. (ODB p. 190)

Like Euchariste Moisan, John Elliot sees the land as part of God's divine order on earth, and his own lifetime as but a minute in time

compared to the eternal earth. Although Elliot never admits openly that he had an economic dream, it is often implied. However, his "economic dream," like that of Moisan, is of a higher order than that of his children who increasingly consider the land a commercial business.

Unlike his son John, Elliot does not see the land as real-estate to be bought and sold. His dream is oriented toward his patriarchal view of the family. Accordingly, he works with the land, knowing that man cannot use it as he wishes, and he refuses to take advantage of it in the hope of making quick money as his children do. Moreover, he is aware that if he bows before its force and authority, he will be rewarded accordingly. As a farmer who has devoted his whole life to the land, Elliot is successful and feels that because of his proper relationship with the land and with God, he is allowed to be fruitful and to multiply, to realize his dream of family life:

That single purpose had coordinated all things for him, had justified them, had seemed to transform his whole life with all its ramifications into a single, organic whole with a clear and unmistakable meaning. In that purpose he and his wife had been one; and so they had been fruitful and had multiplied. It was the children's duty to conform, to become like them; and, therefore, to obey them in all things, so as to multiply the seed themselves one day; so as not to let the strand thus created perish. To live honourably, to till the land, and to hand on life from generation to generation: that was man's duty; that, to him, in spite of all doubts, had meant and still meant serving God. Doubt had existed only as to details: it had never gnawed at the root of the fundamentals. (ODB p. 189)

John Elliot believes, as did Euchariste Moisan, that to love the land is to love God. Elliot, however, is guilty of the same flaw as Niels: he simplifies life at the expense of his human relationships,

and refuses to compromise. His patriarchal dream gave his life "a clear and unmistakable meaning," and it was now the duty of his children to conform and to accept his beliefs and his authority.

In his role as patriarch, Elliot has been a stern father and husband:

Since, in that dim past, he had always, either before or after, justified his every action, at the stern tribunal of his puritanical conscience, by a reference to the ultimate welfare of his family, he was now, in retrospection, able to discount the part which temper and natural disposition had undoubtedly played in his conduct. (ODB p. 188)

Of course, Elliot's actions are dictated by "the ultimate welfare of his family," but, ironically, in the process of building his dynasty, he becomes completely estranged from his children. All the Elliot children are afraid of their father and seem unable to associate with him: "Yes, we are afraid of you. We, your children. You've been a stern father to us when we were still at home. . . ." (ODB p. 288). Pre-occupied with his patriarchal dream, John Elliot ignored his family for the better part of his life, and became so removed from them that his authority and ideas had little influence on his children. Grove hints that the barrier existing between Elliot and his children is a result of his lifetime devotion to the land and because he has ignored his children's need for love and understanding. On the contrary, Mrs. Elliot who would always " . . . rule her household serenely without seeming herself to count for anything in her scheme of life" (ODB p. 10), is closer to her children:

Many trifles flitted up before his mind, examples of how she had been able to exact obedience from the children, by a word, a look, a smile, when all he could extract from them, by commands which were the

result of careful thinking, was an evasion of his orders or a concealment of their wishes and of the actions which conformed to their desires. (ODB p. 11)

Elliot's wife by her love and understanding keeps the family together. When she dies, the family falls apart. The children reject their father's view of authority both in relation to the land and to the family. Their lives are meaningless and Elliot interprets their actions:

He had failed in the achievement of the second dream of his life. Half the purpose of his whole existence was gone. His children were scattered over two provinces of this country; they had freed themselves of the paternal rule; they were rebels in the house of their father: their aims were not what his aims had been. Their lives were evil; their lives were chaos; and through their lives, his own was chaos. (ODB p. 191)

The fact that Elliot feels justified in what he has done illustrates that he sees the land as part of the divine order. His single purpose in life has been to work in order to achieve his patriarchal dream: to put down roots in the land, and to live through his children. John Elliot had "never doubt[ed] that one day his oldest son would be there [on the farm]: an Elliot of the Elliots of Sidgeby, his son, John Elliot the third!" (ODB p. 378). Elliot feels that he has done what he conceives to be God's work, and when death comes, he reflects, it will be welcome:

Death! . . . Afraid? No. There was a door, black and mysterious. What was behind? A forking of the paths. Which path would be his? Had he done what he must do? Was there anything left to be done? No, nothing. It did not matter how he died. What mattered was how he had lived. . . . (ODB p. 358)

Elliot feels that his work is a justification of whatever he may have done wrong in his life—if anything. It is through his hard work

that he was able "to multiply the seed of his life" (ODB p. 358) and hence, fulfill his duty to God: "to live honourably, to till the land, and to hand on life from generation to generation; that was man's duty" (ODB p. 189).

Even if John Elliot has lived according to God's law, his patriarchal dream is ultimately doomed to fail. This failure, however, is not wholly caused by his children as at first may appear; the failure originates in the very nature of the dream itself. John Elliot, striving to achieve his dream, has failed to realize that he could not control his children and force them to adopt his way of living. Observing his daughter Cathleen developing photographic prints, he becomes aware that the process the print undergoes before one can see the final product, the picture, is similar to the development and growth of his children:

Correct them? How can you correct what you do not know? Blame them? The picture on the blank sheet appeared because the hidden chemistry of the underlying state had been influenced in some incomprehensible way. Only that appeared which was already invisibly traced in its layers. There was something uncanny about it. We can but become what we are
....[sic] (ODB p. 135)

Grove is much concerned with the conflict of generations. John Elliot has failed to realize that his children would become individuals wanting to live their own lives. Like Moses, he never reaches the Promised Land because "he [is] human; he [has] the human flaw of egotism."²⁷ Although Elliot's concern is to earn his and his family's daily bread respectably, his primary goal is to continue himself through his children. His vision of

procreation is similar to that of Euchariste Moisan:

To him, John Elliot, his children, still unborn, had seemed to be a re-birth, a re-creation of himself. In them, his ideas and ideals would be multiplied; they would convert that of his dreams into reality which he himself might fall short of realizing to the full. (ODB p. 9)

John Elliot, like Euchariste Moisan and Abe Spalding, egotistically wants his children to be like himself, to continue what he has started. He has devoted his whole life to achieving his patriarchal dream, to fulfilling his material goal, and now that he sees his children with different notions of progress, he reverts to the old ideals of self-sufficiency on the farm. He is caught between two worlds. Like Moisan, he is willing to change as long as the old ways of doing things are not endangered. Unlike his children, he cannot think of money solely in terms of dollars and cents:

A granary full of grain; a barn full of stock, with a loft lined with fodder, sheaves or hay: such was his idea of wealth . . . a mere money income seemed very insecure to John Elliot. (ODB p. 78)

Monetary values are meaningless to John Elliot; he believes in the self-sufficiency that the fruits of the earth brings him. His children, however, strive for financial success. Grove's admitted purpose in writing about pioneer life was to show the folly of materialism and its ultimate failure before the forces of life.²⁸ Grove analyzes this materialistic tendency of the prairie pioneer, but fails to be entirely consistent in the reasons he gives for the failure of John Elliot.

The collapse of the old order is already anticipated in the first chapter of the book, When John Elliot thinks back on

his youth, he reflects:

And even his own dream--of a farm of his own, a wife, and many children--had been no more than a continuation of the practice of his parents. With them, it had been an instinct followed blindly; with him it had become a conscious vision. He had always felt himself to be continuous with his ancestors. (ODB p. 12)

Like Gander Stake in Grain, John Elliot had never dreamt of rebelling against his parents. However, the Elliot children rebel against their father to adopt what Grove calls "the American religion." Just as Elliot had rebelled against his parents, though not consciously so, his children openly reject his authority and ideas, thus showing that "the continuity of the tradition was broken" (ODB p. 309). It is interesting to note here that Maria Chapdelaine's duty to remain on the land as well as Moisan's patriarchal dream had also been a "conscious vision." The rebellion of John Elliot's children illustrates the changing values of the farming communities in Canada after the First World War. As in Trente Arpents, the introduction of machines, such as the motor and the tractor, changed the whole way of life for the farmer. John Elliot's children, in much the same way as those of Euchariste Moisan, leave him to live lives of their own, lives in which he has little part. The daughters marry either city men or poor farmers. Some of the sons leave farming for work in the city. His eldest son modernizes his farming methods so that farming is no longer the simple, self-contained business it had been for John Elliot.

Elliot's son-in-law, Woodrow, attempts to explain the reasons for the youth deserting the land:

"The trouble, to my mind, is this," Woodrow said. "I agree that there are already, in our towns, on our farms, plenty of young men growing up for whom there is, at the present stage of development, practically no work in the country. As the free homestead land is being exhausted, it becomes increasingly difficult to find farms for them. Land has to be bought and is high in price. They do not want to go into outlying districts. They are spoiled by their early environment of comparative comfort. (ODB pp. 179-180)

Like the youth of French Canada, the new generation in Western Canada is not willing to go and settle new lands. As a youth, Elliot, like Abe Spalding, had left his home in Ontario to settle on new land as Moisan's father had left his community to go north. The growing towns and villages now offer the youth work in factories, a relatively easy and secure life which cannot be found on the farm. Their notion of progress differs from that of the previous generation. For John Elliot, "Farmers don't make progress. They make a living" (ODB p. 168). Herein lies the conflict. The new generation wants more than to make a living; they want "cash money" earned as easily as possible: "The spirit of the times is to hunt the most pleasure while dodging hard work" (ODB p. 177). Like the young generation in Ringue's Trente Arpents, the youth in Our Daily Bread do not want to be left behind in the modern world. They too want their share. Elliot believes that "On the farm, money values are irrelevant" (ODB p. 227), and John Elliot Jr. illustrates the new values: "We want to make money like everybody else" (ODB p. 210).

The materialistic values of the new generation are perhaps best illustrated by Elliot's son-in-law, Fred. Fred represents the new generation and the meaning that the Western Canadian myth of

success has taken. Like Niels, John Elliot and Abe Spalding, Fred "had vision; the future was his" (ODB p. 19); he too believes that the prairie is a land which can fulfill his highest dreams. His "vision" is different from that of the old timers who loved and respected the land. His vision, like that of Sam Douglas in The Flying Years, is purely economic: "'This is a game which one must understand, the greatest game on earth, making money!'" (ODB pp. 17-18). He represents the new economic man, the entrepreneur type who "would be a millionaire before he was done" (ODB p. 17). He has the new spirit of the fast growing little prairie towns that "with mushroom speed" . . . had sprung from the prairie" (ODB p. 17).

John Elliot Jr. shares the commercial spirit with his brother-in-law. He characterizes the new attitudes of the farmer toward the land. His definition of "daily bread" is to be financially successful. The old gods, as in Ringuet's Trente Arpents, are dead. As he puts it: ". . . there are farmers and farmers. My father's one kind, I am the other" (ODB p. 50). He marries a stenographer who is unfit for farm work and who gives him only three children. As Mary, one of Elliot's daughters, had earlier pointed out to her mother: "There are ways and means /of preventing pregnancy/. . . . You can eat your cake and have it, too" (ODB p. 24). The older generation, as portrayed in Trente Arpents and Our Daily Bread, had had a similar conception of family life: the first reaction of Mrs. Elliot when she sees that her daughter has not had children for over three years is to assume that her husband must be impotent. The reaction

of Moisan when he sees his cousin Walter with only two children is to ask if his wife is "sick." The new generation has rejected the old values of marriage and of family life. Sex and marriage in themselves are no longer for procreation. Elliot's daughter, Margaret, "had professed her intention never to marry" (ODB p. 57), and she later becomes a university professor. Henrietta is an extreme example of the new attitudes towards marriage; when Peter offers to marry her, she answers: ". . . if you still want me, you can have me; provided you can pay the price" (ODB p. 62). Like Clara Vogel, Henrietta cannot or is not willing to live the life of a farmer's wife. She wants to be assured that her married life will not be a bleak and harsh one like her mother's, and hence she "drives a bargain" with her future husband:

"If I marry, I shall consider the arrangements as a matter of business. I want to make sure of certain comforts and luxuries before I take the plunge." (ODB p. 62)
 ". . . I ask you to promise me three hundred dollars a year, the money to be mine, never to be asked for, never to be enquired about, how it is spent and what for." (ODB p. 64)

She has only two children, and she is determined that they will be professionals, "engineers and bankers," rather than farmers. Her husband tries to escape from her and from the house by working, and he eventually works himself to death: "You might call it a case of suicide. Others will call it a case of murder!" (ODB p. 337).

Elliot cannot understand the new generation:

What was wrong with the younger generation? They were "high-fliers." They looked to the externals and wanted to outdo each other in expense. (ODB p. 81)

The shift of values was largely due to the war and to its aftermath,

"the 'boom'— the fictitious prosperity of western Canada in which many a prudent man lost his head" (ODB p. 240) and to the rapid introduction of modern technology which coincided with the war. The new attitude of the farmer is portrayed in John Elliot Jr. for whom "Farming's becoming an industry. The chief problem is one of finance" (ODB p. 210). John Elliot Jr., in his selfish hope to make quick money and in the excitement of high prices for flax due to the war, wants to gamble with the land. He looks upon farming as "more or less a financial game" (ODB p. 108). He buys land to grow flax on "that costs close to sixty dollars an acre," and has "a debt of eighteen thousand dollars on the land. And besides, [he] owes four or five thousand on the lumber. . . ." (ODB p. 249). John Elliot Jr. strives for material success, and like most people of his generation lives beyond his means. Grove denounces this materialistic attitude in his definition of "Americanism":

. . . the reorientation of the minds of immigrants, immigrants coming from the countries of Europe where unfortunately economic pressure has become so great as to infringe upon spiritual freedom —it means, I say, the reorientation of these minds towards a religion, if we may call it such, whose god is a jealous god because he denies the human soul the soil in which it can grow according to laws of its own, his name being a Standard of Living; towards a law which bows before economic obesity; toward aims which exhaust themselves in sensual enjoyment and the so-called conquest of nature.²⁹

Grove considers the permeation of this materialistic attitude "as a shallowing of ancient standards, as a re-orientation of men's minds and desires, from things spiritual, towards things material and economic."³⁰ The new attitudes of the "American religion" are

portrayed in John Elliot's children who reject the old values of family life and work on the farm. All of them are much concerned about "maintaining a decent "standard of living" and in achieving material success. This concern with a standard of living is further exemplified by his daughter Cathleen who has also rejected her father's values to marry a university professor with whom she has only one child. They too, like the rest of the Elliot children, want to live beyond their means. They throw themselves "into a continual round of calls and social activities" (ODB p. 170), devoting their lives to keeping up appearances:

We have to have servants because other people in our position have them. Having servants, we must live as we do because we must live up to their idea of a household like this. Nobody is socially quite as exacting as servants. (ODB pp. 171-172)

This, to John Elliot, and to Grove, "beats everything I've heard!" (ODB p. 172). And yet, they are not happy. For John Elliot, the only way they can find freedom and happiness is on the land. His radical opposition to the new values and attitudes of the youth echoes that of Euchariste Moisan:

"Young people," John Elliot said angrily, "won't listen these days. We used to do as our fathers did before us. We profited from their experience. But today! All lessons are lost on them. No use talking! World's gone crazy! (ODB p. 250)

John Elliot's tragedy is the failure to hold his family together, the defeat of his plan to create a patriarchal community. Having devoted his entire life to this dream, his task of building a prosperous farm defeats itself in the end. It is only when he realizes

the absurdity of materialism and the impossibility of his dream that, "for the first time in his life he thought of poverty with affection" (ODB p. 173) because it was then, when he was striving to achieve this goal, that his life slipped away, unlived. Like Euchariste Moisan, Elliot in his old age realizes his incapacity to satisfy the land: "He began to play with the idea of moving to town and of renting the farm" (ODB p. 266). Because he made the land his only reason for living, Elliot, like Moisan and like Charles in La Scouine, is unable to live away from it. Elliot's failure to keep his children around him drives him to a miserable and lonely life on his farm. He makes one final attempt to reassemble his family, but it leads only to further alienate himself and his children. Like Moisan, he visits his children, but cannot understand their way of living. His children have not followed his way; he refuses to compromise with them, and so he is defeated. A complete stranger to them, the most that he can receive is "a kiss of indifference" (ODB p. 284) from his daughter Gladys. Left alone by his children, Elliot turns back to the land; only the land, his team-mate, can be of comfort to him. After many days of wandering he returns home to die in a ruined house, symbolic of his own physical and mental state. In much the same way, Uncle Ephrem in Trente Arpents had died "poitrine contre poitrine sur la terre qui n'avait pas consentit au divorce."

Abe Spalding's story, like that of John Elliot, involves the pursuit of a patriarchal dream, but Grove puts such emphasis on Abe's means to attain his goal that the novel becomes

a direct criticism of materialism. In the "Author's Note" to Fruits of the Earth, Grove explains the genesis of Abe's story. It came to him essentially from "certain hints dropped by a real-estate dealer . . . regarding the history of a certain farm." "This farm," Grove tells us:

was such so as to suggest a race of giants who had founded it; but on inquiry I found that it was held by tenants who tilled a bare ten per cent of its acreage. In a barn built for half a hundred horses they kept a team of two sorry nags; and they inhabited no more than two or three rooms of the outwardly palatial house.³¹

The novel deals with the determination of Abe Spalding to conquer the prairie: "He was here to conquer. Conquer he would!" (FE p. 25); but his ambition is doomed to failure from the beginning, for Nature will not let man impose his will upon her.

Abe Spalding, like John Elliot and Euchariste Moisan, wants to establish a good farm, raise a family and pass the farm on to them. Grove, however, has done two significant things with the character of Abe which he failed to do with John Elliot. First, he has made Abe a tragic figure in the Shakespearian sense, that is, his failure comes at least partly from a flaw within himself and his awareness of this flaw. Abe, although resenting it at first, has deliberately chosen the world of technology to achieve his goal:

Yet sooner or later he must come to that: he would have to run the farm like a factory; that was the modern trend. . . . (FE p. 41)

John Elliot is more pathetic, tragic in the Greek sense, because he never doubts that he is right and because the consequences of his

actions are out of all proportion to any wrong that he has done. At times he seems to be more a victim of circumstances than a man who has caused his own downfall. Secondly, Grove shows that Abe's problems are intensified by the very nature of his occupation. Being a pioneer whose dream is to "build up a civilization to come," Abe is more likely to convert to the "American religion" in order to achieve his goal. However, there is no direct indication of any relationship between John Elliot's failure and his occupation. Abe Spalding's means of achieving a prosperous farm is described in detail from the beginning when he takes up his homestead. Fruits of the Earth, Grove says, "was never intended to figure as a novel. I meant it to be taken as a piece of pioneer history."³² Although Abe's story cannot be said to be that of a typical pioneer, it can nevertheless be considered as a microcosmic account of a typical prairie farmer who had come on the prairie to "conquer."

Abe's stated philosophy after he has achieved material success is similar to John Elliot's:

He began to have glimpses of the truth that his dream of economic success involved another dream: that of a family life on the great estate which he was building up. (FE p. 50)

He tells his wife that this patriarchal dream is what makes his work meaningful:

"I am making it [the prairie] into a country fit to live in. That is my task. The task of a pioneer. . . . You said you didn't know what the work was for. That's it. To build up a place any man can be proud of, a place to leave to my children for them to be proud of." (FE p. 48)

Abe does not succeed in keeping his children with him on the farm. He too fails to realize the second part of his dream ("To build up a place . . . to leave my children"). When he offers the farm to his son, Jim, the latter replies: "If I cared for a farm, I'd take up a homestead myself, to build a place of my own" (FE p. 222). Abe reflects: "That was the way he had felt himself" (FE p. 222). However, Grove gives another equally important reason for the collapse of Abe's dream —his obsession with material success.

Grove does not suggest that Abe's failure lies entirely within the nature of his occupation. In his selfish determination to achieve wealth, he does not have the proper attitude towards the land. He relies too heavily on his own ability:

But this immense and utter loneliness merely aroused him to protest and contradiction: he would change this prairie, would impose himself upon it, would conquer its spirit! (FE p. 23)

In this respect, Abe is more like Caleb Gare than John Elliot who knows that "you can't fool the land." Abe, who "had deliberately chosen the material world for the arena of his struggles" (FE p. 18), is too obsessed by power, too eager for success and too materialistic. He sees the immense prairie as a potential source of wealth which he can exploit: "he must have more land! He must get to a point where he farmed on a large scale which would double his net income from a decreasing margin of profit. . . . To him, farming was an industry, not an occupation" (FE p. 51). Abe shares the belief with Niels and John Elliot that success in the New Land is possible for anyone who works toward this goal. His means to achieve his

dream, however, drastically differ from those of Niels and Elliot who, living in an earlier period, "may have been merely less tempted" (ODB p. 29) by modern technology and monetary values. It is evident that when Grove wrote Fruits of the Earth he wanted to make Abe a symbol of the new spirit which, in It Needs to be Said, he describes as a "materialistic, mechanistic, almost brutal spirit, which tries either to ignore deeper problems or to solve them by the power of force or gold."³³ When Nicoll tries to speak of the philosophical problem of death, Abe shies away: "He had a definite aim in life: to be the most successful farmer of a district yet to be created; he was a materialist and felt uncomfortable when facing fundamentals" (FE p. 40)

Abe Spalding is characteristic of the frontier man who tries to reshape the wilderness to fit his needs. He becomes a slave to the land by working with an almost savage determination to achieve success, until finally he discovers that his end has defeated itself. The amount of work required from Abe in order to be a successful and prosperous farmer forces him to ignore his family and to lose sight of the necessity for love and understanding in the world. Abe, like John Elliot, is so absorbed in his farming that he never gets to know his children, and he becomes totally estranged from them:

Abe was aware of the fact that between her /his daughter Marion/ and her mother there was often a pleasant and lively exchange of words; but when he entered, a silence fell. With a pang Abe realized that, in the eyes of the girl, he lived as a sort of doom personified, as a law from the verdict of which there is no appeal. That misconception put him on the defensive; he justified himself to himself. But as a matter of fact he felt far from certain that what he did was the right thing to do. (FE p. 200)

Abe is a stranger to his children and, like Elliot's children, it

is to their mother that his children go for understanding and love. Like John Elliot, Abe "justified himself to himself," but unlike Elliot, he "felt far from certain that what he did was the right thing to do."

In his effort to achieve his goal Abe becomes a self-centered, selfish, and calculating man. When Nicoll implies that Abe wants his neighbours to fail so that he can buy their farms, Abe counters: "I'll tell you why I need neighbours. Because I need roads; because I need cross-ditches and other improvements. And as the kids grow up, I'll need a school. That's why I need neighbours" (FE p. 37). Abe looks at everything from a selfish and utilitarian point of view. Grove feels that his desire to impose himself on the land is wrong and even makes him vaguely aware of it:

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 in the conformation of the ground; the trees he wanted he had planted where he wanted them. But when Nicoll spoke as he had done, Abe felt something uncanny in that landscape. Nicoll's words impressed him as though they were the utterance of that very landscape itself; as though Nicoll were the true son of the prairie, and he, Abe, a mere interloper. (FE p. 40)

But Abe is too preoccupied by his material success; the prairies have offered him a "clear proposition" and he is determined to achieve his goal: "Abe was a slave to the soil; till he had satisfied that soil which he himself had endowed with the power of enslaving him, he must postpone all other things. . . ." (FE p. 100)

Abe's materialism is representative of the same

lack of faith that John Elliot saw in his children. Stanley, one of Abe's neighbours, points out his basic mistake:

"You know, Spalding. . . . When I look at you, I see myself as I used to be. I thought I could force things. I've learned to trust in the Lord. That's what's wrong with us all; we have lost our faith. You are going to have that crop or to lose it; and if you're to lose it, nothing that you can do will save it for you." (FE p. 100)

Illustrating his self-reliance and his determination to succeed, Abe answers: "But it may be that God helps them that help themselves" (FE p. 100). Abe's work-ethic is good in itself, but in his desire to achieve his material goal, he has forgotten the most important things in life. He evaluates his life in terms of success and material possessions rather than in terms of human relationships.

In fact, he seems to adhere to what Grove calls "the peculiarly American philosophy of life that to have is more important than to be or to do; in fact that to be is dependent on to have."³⁴

Abe is overly materialistic and he learns too late that an all-consuming concern with material things is futile. He builds a huge house which his family no longer requires. He provides it with every possible modern convenience only to find that time-saving gadgets serve merely to complicate life. In the economic sense there is nothing more to do:

He might go on making money; what for? Material aspirations meant nothing. He had the house; and he found no pleasure in it. For fifteen years he had dreamed of what he would do when he had it; now it seemed useless. (FE p. 139)

Once he has achieved his material goal, it is too late to establish

a positive relationship with his wife and family: ". . . and he reaped what he sowed, namely silence" (FE p. 149). His materialism explains his obsession with decay, and he finally learns his lesson:

It was five years since the house had been built. Five years only! Yet already little sand grains embedded in the mortar were crumbling away; already the edges of the bricks were being rounded by a process of weathering. When he bent and looked closely at the ground, near the wall, he saw a thin layer of red dust mixed with those sand grains. The weathering process would go on and on. . . . The moment a work of man was finished, nature set to work to take it down again. . . . And so with everything, with his machines, his fields, his pool; they were all on the way of being levelled to the soil again. . . . Abe looked about and seemed to see for the first time. (FE p. 134)

Abe fails in his relationship with the land and his family partly because of his occupation and partly because of his pride and egotism.

Abe's failure is heightened by the war and its aftermath. As in Our Daily Bread, Grove manages to record the effect of the war and post-war years on rural communities and on their inhabitants. The new generation in Fruits of the Earth systematically rejects the old belief in values toward the land and toward the family. Typical of the young generation, "Bill Stanley and the third Nicoll boy, Stan, made no secret of it that if they returned from the wars, they had no intention of going back to the farm" (FE p. 141). This reversal of values, as already mentioned, was largely due to the introduction of modern technology and industrialization, and to the subsequent growth of the cities, where young people thought they could live a relatively comfortable life: "In the city and in construction

camps a man could earn three or four dollars a day" (FE p. 141). Young farmers' sons "had taken the infection of the age and refused to work at home except for wages" (FE p. 213). The new way of life, the complete rejection of traditional values, is perhaps best illustrated by the young men who had returned from the war, and whose "professed intention was to show the older people post-war life" (FE p. 213). They sponsor dances in the old school which attract "undesirable elements from town and city" (FE p. 212) in the district which had been thus far preserved from outside influences.

Attitudes toward sex and marriage have changed; men who had returned from the war viewed sex and marriage in a quite different way from the older generation. As McCrae puts it: "These things /sex and marriage/, mean nothing" (FE p. 251). Frances herself did not resist McCrae's seduction and when her mother learned that she was pregnant, Frances "had stood pale but defiant" (FE p. 238). Her attitude is in many ways similar to Moisan's daughter, Lucinda, who also rejects the old values to go to the city. As Abe puts it, "It isn't as it used to be. We are more dependent on the town" (FE p. 191).

At this point in the novel, Abe's life has lost all purpose and meaning. He realizes that "the use of machinery might 'pay' in a money sense /but/ it did not pay in terms of human life" (FE p. 132). Having lost his reputation in the district, Abe must step down from his "shining height" (FE p. 261) as Mrs. Grappentin puts it. Like John Elliot, Abe's mind gradually turns from the material things in life to the essentials and the fundamentals. He gropes for some

justification for his life:

For many years Abe had not milked by lantern light. That he did so now, carried him back through the years to a time when he had been filled with ambition; when yard and barns as they were had existed only in dreams. He had been happy then; all his wishes had been of a realizable kind; he had lived in a future which he desired; that future had come disappointingly. Youth and the ardent urge; age and poignant regret: where was the life in between? Peace and happiness? He sought them in the past. In the present were only exhaustion and weariness: weariness even unto death.../sic/ (FE p. 236)

Abe reverts to the old ways and realizes that he has wasted his life achieving his dream which is now meaningless to him. As he becomes increasingly aware of his mistake, so does he become aware of the landscape which he had previously ignored, too preoccupied with extracting wealth from the land: "Man passes, they say; his work remains. Does it? It seemed vain in the face of the composure of this prairie" (FE p. 262). Abe realizes the transiency of man's work compared to the eternal and indifferent prairie, and he becomes aware of the futility and folly of his material dream:

. . . now that he was becoming conscious of this landscape at last, and of its significance, /he/ could at first hardly understand that he, of all men, should have chosen this district to settle in, though it suited him well enough now. But even that became clear. He had looked down at his feet; had seen nothing but the furrow; had considered the prairie only as a page to write the story of his life upon. His vision had been bounded by the lines of his farm; his farm had been floated on that prairie as the shipwright floats a vessel on the sea, looking not so much at the waves which are to batter it as at the fittings which secure the comfort of those within. But such a vessel may be engulfed by such a sea. (FE p. 138)

Abe now recognizes that "the wind-break surrounding his yard seemed

to be a rampart which, without knowing it, he had erected to keep out a hostile world" (FE p. 138). All his life Abe has lived for himself and he now becomes aware that this cannot be done and this is not what he had intended. He must now try to involve himself with his family and community. Although he had violently protested, against the new school system, Abe cannot retreat from the world and live only for himself. Like Niels, he must accept reality. As Grove himself points out, "All great endeavour, great ambition, great love, great pride, great thought, disturb the placid order of the flow of events. That order is restored when failure is accepted and when it is seen and acknowledged that life proceeds by compromises only."³⁵ For Abe, this realization means accepting a lesser place in life than that to which he had aspired:

True resignation meant accepting one's destiny; to him, it meant accepting the burden of leadership; and the moment he saw that, he felt at one with the district, . . . with Ruth in her sorrow, and strangely, with himself; for here was something to do once more: the gang would vanish into thin air. He had lived to himself and had had to learn that it could not be done..../sic/
(FE p. 264)

For Abe Spalding, "compromise" signifies, as it does for Maria Chapdelaine and Niels Lindstedt, an acceptance of fate, making the most of what is left of his life. Abe's failure is not much different from that of John Elliot. Although he achieves a certain consolation in community involvement, the reader is left with the image of Abe and his wife living in their great decaying house, deserted by their children.

Themes such as the vastness of the Prairie, its unlimited opportunities, its rich and generous soil, and the future it offered to immigrants, have always been central to Prairie fiction. The Western Canadian myth of the Promised Land was at first rather heavily and mechanically employed in Niven's The Flying Years, and it seemed that the prairies did indeed live up to the immigrant's expectations. Salverson, though ^{emphasizing} the success of the immigrants on the prairies, perceived certain deficiencies in the so-called "Promised Land," particularly the reception of the immigrant in the new world.

Stead's Grain dealt with the conflicts resulting from progress in farming communities. Progress, in itself a necessary prerequisite to financial success, was at first readily accepted by prairie pioneers. Stead, the first prairie novelist to analyze the nature of progress, suggests in his novel that even if progress led to success, it did not necessarily lead to happiness. His conclusion that man although "free" to direct his own life, must realize that life requires some form of control. This point is perhaps best illustrated by Gander who would not take orders from officers in the army yet finally saw the necessity of self-discipline.

Although Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese deals primarily with Caleb Gare's tyranny over his wife and children, it nevertheless offers a profound psychological insight into the myth of freedom in Western Canada. The freedom immigrants expected to find on the prairies, Ostenso suggests, was but an illusion. Almost every

character in Wild Geese is propelled by the "wild freedom about the untrammelled prairie," but none are really free. The wild geese, which are the central image of the novel, represent the "endless quest" for freedom, an illusion created by the untamed Prairie.

Frederick Philip Grove's three novels, Settlers of the Marsh, Our Daily Bread, and Fruits of the Earth, developed a new perspective in Prairie fiction. In his treatment of Prairie life, Grove has captured the old rural communities at the threshold of a new era and has at the same time portrayed the complex link uniting man and the land. He, however, is more concerned with the human relationships of his characters than with Nature. He denounces the folly of materialism and its ultimate failure before the eternal Prairie which eventually levels everything. In his attempt to record the "age-old conflict between human desire and the stubborn resistance of nature," Grove has succeeded. The three protagonists of the novels considered above all illustrate Grove's definition of tragedy: "To have greatly tried and to have failed; to have greatly wished and to be denied; to have greatly longed for purity and to be sullied; to have greatly craved for life and to receive death: all that is the common lot of greatness upon earth."³⁶

NOTES

¹Anthony W. Rasporich, Henry C. Klassen, eds., "Introduction," in Prairie Perspectives 2 (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), p. 7.

²Edward A. McCourt, The Canadian West in Fiction (1949; rev. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1970), p. 46.

³Isabella Valancy Crawford, "Malcolm's Katie," in ed. David Sinclair, Nineteenth Century Narrative Poems, NCL 08 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), p. 167.

⁴Frederick Niven, The Flying Years, NCL 102 (1942; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 28. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title FY in parenthesis immediately following the quote.

⁵Laura Salverson, The Viking Heart, NCL 116 (1947; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), pp. 13-14. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title VH in parenthesis immediately following the quote.

⁶Laura Salverson, Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1949), pp. 90-91. All further references to this work are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title Conf. in parenthesis immediately following the quote.

⁷McCourt, The Canadian West in Fiction, p. 54.

⁸Thomas Saunders, "Introduction," Robert J.C. Stead Grain, NCL 36 (1926; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), p. viii

⁹Laurence Ricou, Vertical Man/Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1973), p. 21.

¹⁰Robert Stead, The Empire Builders and Other Poems (Toronto: William Briggs, 1910); quoted in Ricou, Vertical Man/Horizontal World, p. 20.

¹¹Robert Stead, Grain, NCL 36 (1926; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), p. 40. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated immediately following the quote.

¹²Ricou, op. cit., p. 37.

¹³A.T. Elder, "Western Panorama: Settings and Themes in Robert J.C. Stead," Canadian Literature, No. 17 (Summer, 1963), p. 48.

¹⁴Ricou, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁵Martha Ostenso, Wild Geese, NCL 18 (1925; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 33. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title WG in parenthesis immediately following the quote.

- ¹⁶ Ricou, Vertical Man/Horizontal World, p. 76.
- ¹⁷ S.G. Mullins, "Some Remarks on the Theme in Martha Ostenso's Wild Geese," Culture, No. 23 (December, 1962), p. 360.
- ¹⁸ W.B. MacLellan, "Real 'Canadian Literature,'" Dalhousie Review, No. 6 (April, 1926), p. 21.
- ¹⁹ S.G. Mullins, *op. cit.*, p. 362.
- ²⁰ M.G. Parks, "Introduction," F.P. Grove Fruits of the Earth, NCL 49 (1933; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), p. viii.
- ²¹ Frederick Philip Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, NCL 50 (1925; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), p. 36. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title SM in parenthesis immediately following the quote.
- ²² Ricou, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- ²³ Saunders, "Introduction," F.P. Grove Settlers of the Marsh, p. ix.
- ²⁴ Frederick Philip Grove, Our Daily Bread, NCL 114 (1928; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), p. 4. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title ODB in parenthesis immediately following the quote.
- ²⁵ Ronald Sutherland, Second Image (Toronto: New Press, 1971), p. 6.
- ²⁶ Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1945), p. 49.
- ²⁷ S.E. McMullin, "Grove and the Promised Land," in ed. George Woodcock The Canadian Novel of the Twentieth Century, NCL 115 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), p. 32.
- ²⁸ Frederick Philip Grove, It Needs to be Said (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), p. 87.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143.
- ³¹ Frederick Philip Grove, Fruits of the Earth, NCL 49 (1933; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), "Author's Note," p. xiv. All further references to this novel are to this edition, and will be indicated by the abbreviated title FE in parenthesis immediately following the quote.
- ³² Parks, "Introduction," Fruits of the Earth, p. viii.
- ³³ Frederick P. Grove, It Needs to be Said, p. 6.

³⁴ Frederick P. Grove, 'In Search of Myself (Toronto: Macmillan, 1946), p. 452.

³⁵ F.P. Grove, It Needs to be Said, p. 87. . .

³⁶ Ibid., p. 87.

CONCLUSION

Through a study of the novel of the land in French and English Canadian literature the reader is given an insight into rural communities and their difficult transition from the old agrarian life to a modern technological one. While Lacombe, Gérin-Lajoie, Hémond, Laberge, Salverson, Niven, and to a certain extent, Stead, describe an agrarian society untouched by the outside world, Ringuet and Grove analyze the same society on the threshold of a new era dominated by the products of urban industrialization. It is only natural that French and English Canada have much to share in their fiction since both faced the same crisis during the same period of time. Ringuet and Grove take up many of the same themes; while Ringuet analyzed the disintegration of rural communities in Québec and reacted strongly against it, Grove protested that the old ideal values of agrarian life on the Prairies were being lost under the onslaught of new material values.

French Canada was a cohesive and enclosed society. This cohesiveness was partly due to the French seigneurial régime established in New France, and partly due to the English Conquest of Canada in 1763. The Conquest had lasting effects on the French inhabitants of Canada who, determined to remain French and Catholic, further isolated themselves on their land around their parish priest. After the conquest the Church became a dominant power in French Canada, since the conquerors, in need of an intermediary

between themselves and their new subjects, granted special privileges to the Church which no other churches had, or were ever to have. The Church used its social and political power to indoctrinate its followers in the ideology of the land, that is, they were enjoined to remain on the land in order to assure the survival of the French Canadian race in North America. To cultivate the land in French Canada became not only a national duty, but a spiritual one as well.

Prairie settlements, unlike those of French Canada, were from the beginning pluralistic. Although the first immigrants there were predominantly English, the later ones immigrated from many countries of Europe. The promise of free land encouraged people from diverse backgrounds to settle on the Prairies, and these settlers became the strongly individualistic and pragmatic farmers invariably observed in Prairie fiction. The basic legal condition for free ownership of land was that all the land was to be worked. Thus, although the Prairie farmer regarded the land as a part of God's divine order to produce his "daily bread," the land had to be fully cultivated in order to meet the requirements of society as determined by the Canadian Government, a policy that was quite unlike the practice of farming "trente arpents" found in French Canada. Like French Canadian fiction, early Prairie fiction was idealistic. Perhaps the reason why it became so quickly realistic is that the Prairie was settled so late in time. Nevertheless, the French and the English Canadian novel of the land faced the same crisis

simultaneously as agricultural industrialization was rapidly imposed by a rapidly growing population.

The ideology of "la survivance" in French Canada began with the publication of Garneau's Histoire du Canada which gave French Canadians a history to be proud of. Subsequently, the novel became a mere eulogy of the land until the French writer, Louis Hémon, first described objectively the land and the farmer. The First World War and its aftermath introduced a new phase in the development of the novel in French Canada. The traditional system of values could no longer apply to the new urban society, and as noted in the Introduction of this thesis, Pacey argues that a society cannot have a real literature as long as it has not experienced a "clash," an internal conflict. Ringuet's Trente Arpents clearly illustrates the "clash": never could a novel of such profound insight have been produced without serious internal conflicts within, the enclosed French Canadian rural communities.

Prairie farmers had to face the same problem, the same shift of values after the First World War. Like French Canadian fiction, Prairie fiction formed at first a very romantic and mimetic literature, only developing into a more profound one as it attempted to deal with the serious problems introduced by the invasion of technology and materialism into rural communities, producing finally the more complex and philosophic works of Frederick Philip Grove.

The conflicts resultant from the introduction of modern technology in the small rural communities are best illustrated in the members of the older generation such as Euchariste Moisan,

John Elliot, and most clearly Abe Spalding. All of them are successful in establishing a prosperous farm to leave their children. But all of them are defeated because their children have rejected their values toward the land and toward family life.

All the members of the younger generation wish to share in the new material world and all reject the old system of values. Yet, they are not happy; Ephrem, who has moved to the United States, is unemployed; the Elliot children, like Abe Spalding's, strive to outdo one another in order to satisfy the expectations of a post-war standard of living. Although some succeed, they do not find their achievements meaningful now that the ability to earn one's "daily bread" is no longer a reliable yardstick to measure one's worth. Even though some members of the new generation, such as Gander Stake in Stead's Grain, do not become overtly materialistic, new technology forces them to re-adjust their values, to search for some meaning in life.

The shift in world and social values brought about by the First World War ended the traditional rural community in Canada. The old values comprised a pattern in which man had his place in God's divine order, a concept still adhered to by the simple rural farmer. Because the land was a part of the divine order, the farmer saw his role as issuing directly from God; he cultivated the land unquestioningly; his life had a meaning found in the traditional values he religiously observed. The post-war generation, however,

rejected the old values without finding new ones to replace them. Oriented toward financial profit, or transplanted to the city, members of this generation were unable to find what they were looking for. They could not, as their fathers had done, "cling" to the land, because the land could no longer satisfy their ambitions and desires. As the old generation had striven to root itself in the land, in the battle against the wilderness, the new generation struggled desperately to find meaning.

The land in both fictions had at first represented the traditional system of values. The aftermath of the War and the appearance of modern technology in rural communities introduced new materialistic values which opposed the old ones, and, thus, the ultimate evolution of French Canadian and Prairie fiction has resulted in novels similar in theme, philosophy and purpose.

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