

THE GREAT WAR AND THE CANADIAN NOVEL, 1915-1926

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ABSTRACT

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Until the late 1920's, Canadian war novels portray their subject in romantic terms, and show the war as an opportunity for heroic action, by which ordinary men and women can transcend the limitations of a materialist society. The war is persistently treated as a literary experience, something to be read about rather than directly undergone; one indication of this tendency is the adoption of a rhetoric of chivalry which describes modern combat in the language of knightly romance. Much of this rhetoric can be traced to wartime propaganda, which strongly influenced almost all Canadian war novelists of this period.

A heroic cycle appears in many of these novels. It is characterized by a narrative in which the hero moves from isolation and social inadequacy to material success, which he finally abandons as spiritually frustrating. In combat he finds fulfilment and manhood, but suffers symbolic or actual death. If he returns from the war, it is as a new man, dedicated to creating a new society based on pioneer values.

The hero's isolation from prewar society is seen as a result of his intellectual and moral superiority. He is usually contrasted with a double, who shares many of the hero's traits but

who prefers material success to self-sacrifice in war. The double is often associated with the mechanical world of industry, or the abstract one of finance, while the hero is linked to the pastoral world of ranching or farming.

The heroine, like the hero, is shown in search of an acceptable social role; but her talents and education only make her unhappy until the war compels her return to the roles of nurse and mother. For both hero and heroine, sexuality is equated with violence and the war becomes a sexual surrogate.

The society of prewar Canada is characterized by several images: the wilderness, the broken family, the divided village, and the mongrelized city. With the coming of war, these images are transformed; wilderness becomes frontier, the family is made whole, the village is unified and the city becomes a garrison. Racism is widespread in Canadian war novels; the postwar society is shown as Anglo-Saxon, hierarchical, and autocratic.

Later Canadian war novelists generally reject the heroic vision of war, but exploit it for ironic effect. Though the early novels have been largely forgotten, they have exerted an indirect influence even on writers as modern as Margaret Laurence and Robertson Davies.

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ONE: THE NARCISSUS WORLD

Fifty years ago, Canadian novels about the Great War were international successes, selling tens of thousands of copies. Today those novels, published during the war and its immediate aftermath, form one of the least known and least studied areas in Canadian literature. Of the many Canadian war novels published between 1915 and 1926, only two are still in print: Lucy Maud Montgomery's Rilla of Ingleside and Robert J. C. Stead's Grain. The former is a girls' book, part of the Anne of Green Gables series; the latter is read for its portrayal of Prairie farm life, not for its treatment of the war. Though countless nonfiction books about Canada in the war continue to appear, the original imaginative response of Canadians to the war has been forgotten. A handful of titles receive brief mention in the Literary History of Canada.¹ A recent master's thesis, covering war fiction published up to 1939, treats the early novels patronizingly as "important primarily because of their role as precursors of [more] realistic books"² - realism consisting, evidently, in accurate descriptions of rats in the trenches. Desmond

1 Gordon Roper et al., "The Kinds of Fiction: 1880-1924" in Carl F. Klinck et al., eds., Literary History of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 311.

2 Robert F. Nielsen, "A Barely Perceptible Limp: The First World War in Canadian Fiction (1914-1939)" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Guelph, 1971), p. 8.

Pacey has taken only negative notice of this area, asking: "Why was World War II such a productive period in Canadian literary history, whereas World War I was so barren?"¹ These three sources, only one of them extensive, comprise virtually all the critical commentary on the subject.

The reason for this neglect is simply that the early Canadian war novels and stories were popular works, written to reflect the values of a nation at war. They have dated rapidly, and even in their day were often rejected by more discriminating readers. An American review of Beverley Baxter's story collection The Blower of Bubbles, for example, objected to it as "a loud outburst of jingoism which sounds strangely hollow in these disillusioned times."² Many if not all of these novels were heavily influenced by Allied propaganda, and authors repeatedly strove for effects that could be achieved only with readers sensitized by the latest atrocity story. In addition, the war had brought out some ugly qualities in Canadian society, qualities held up for admiration by wartime novelists; in the cooler atmosphere of the 1920's, few readers wanted to remember that they had once prayed for the extermination of all Germans. Yet the anti-war novels of the late 1920's and 1930's - British and American as well

1 Desmond Pacey, "Areas of Research in Canadian Literature," in Essays in Canadian Criticism 1938-1968 (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969), p. 80.

2 New York Evening Post, December 4, 1920, p. 6.

as Canadian - gained much of their original impact through contrast with earlier novels; having overshadowed their predecessors, works such as A Farewell to Arms or Barometer Rising cannot be fully understood by modern readers.

The early Canadian war novels, therefore, deserve study if only to illuminate later works. As Robert Nielsen observes in his thesis on Canadian fiction of the First World War, "Not only did the early novelists introduce themes which would later be exploited by the realistic writers, but they also provided a picture of the War that the later novelists could react against."¹ This has remained true even of such recent novels as Robertson Davies' Fifth Business, which employs - not wholly ironically - such conventions as the hero's double, the symbolic death and rebirth of the hero, and the heroine as virgin mother, all characteristic of early Canadian war novels, and unlikely to be understood without some knowledge of their original treatment. The period beginning with the war and ending in the mid-1920's is therefore an important one in Canadian literary history.

In his "Conclusion" to the Literary History of Canada, Northrop Frye suggests that the most useful approach to popular literature - especially Canadian - is to treat it as a kind of mythology, though distinct from that of serious literature:

1 Nielsen, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

Literature . . . is conscious mythology: it creates an autonomous world that gives us an imaginative perspective on the actual one. But there is another kind of mythology, one produced by society itself, the object of which is to persuade us to accept existing social values. "Popular" literature, the kind that is read for relaxation and the quieting of the mind, expresses this social mythology.¹

This approach is particularly suitable to a study of Canadian war fiction. The "garrison mentality" of English Canadians, a result of their sensed estrangement from the land, the French Canadians, and the Americans, finds few clearer expressions than in these novels. A general attitude rather than a specific philosophy, the garrison mentality is conservative, authoritarian, and hierarchical. It seeks to preserve or to re-create traditional social institutions, not to invent new ones. Historically, the garrison mentality seems to be a middle-class English-Canadian response to other groups in Canada and the United States. The Great War, however, imposed the need for national and continental unity; English Canada's literary response was a vision of a greater garrison, in which French-Canadians, Americans, workers, and other outsiders were accepted at least partially. The tensions created by this need for unity are reflected in early war fiction, which does indeed try to persuade its readers to accept the "existing social values" of English Canada as the only acceptable values for all Canadians.

Canadian war fiction, as a popular literature, also serves as

¹ Northrop Frye, "Conclusion," in Literary History of Canada, pp. 837-838.

a means to express its society's unspoken desires and anxieties.

Frye again offers useful guidelines:

[W]hat I have called the garrison mentality is highly favourable to the growth of popular literature. . . . The role of romance and melodrama in consolidating a social mythology is also not hard to see. In romance the characters tend to be psychological projections, heroes, heroines, villains, father-figures, comic-relief caricatures. The popular romance operates on Freudian principles, releasing sexual and power fantasies without disturbing the anxieties of the superego. . . . A subliminal sense of the erotic release in romance may have inspired some of the distrust of novels in nineteenth-century pietistic homes. But even those who preferred stories of real life did not want "realism"; that was denounced . . . as nasty, prurient, morbid, and foreign. The garrison mentality is that of its officers; it can tolerate only the conservative idealism of its ruling class, which for Canada means the moral and propertied middle class.¹

The Canadian war novel can scarcely be judged except as romance, which is one reason for its present neglect. Rejecting the "nasty, prurient, morbid, and foreign" concerns of realism, Canadian war writers instead try to present ordinary life in glamorous terms which to modern readers seem contrived and sentimental. By glossing over the unpleasant aspects of life, and upholding conventional morality, war fiction presents a vision of the world as authors and readers wish it were, not as they actually know it. Frye's general description

1 Frye, op. cit., p. 838.

of romance certainly fits the novels of virtually all Canadian writers in the early twentieth century, but the "conservative idealism" of the war writers, at least, is more complex than he implies, and in many cases the "moral and propertied middle class" novelist sees morality and property as mutually exclusive.

Though these novels seem heavily loaded with propaganda, they would be better understood as a side-effect of propaganda. H. C. Peterson's Propaganda for War¹ demonstrates the scope and effectiveness of the British propaganda effort in North America, which was, incidentally, largely directed by Sir Gilbert Parker and Sir Max Aitken, both Canadians; this effort was carried out almost entirely in newspapers and nonfiction books, with some assistance from public lecturers and personal contacts between influential Englishmen and North Americans. Even a novel with sales in the thousands would lack the timeliness and impact of a wire-service news story. But Canadian war novels do indicate the extent to which the educated Canadian public accepted the propaganda aimed at it. The French writer Jacques Ellul has made the important point that

Man can be captured and mobilized only if there is consonance between his own deep social beliefs and those underlying the propaganda directed at him.²

1 H. C. Peterson, Propaganda for War (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939).

2 Jacques Ellul, Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes, tr. Konrad Keller and Jean Lerner (New York: Knopf, 1969), p. 43.

Such a consonance, clearly, was achieved by Allied propagandists, and since they wished to articulate North American social beliefs in order to incite action they found themselves expressing, both in content and in form, the basic myths of the Canadian garrison mentality. Educated middle-class Canadians such as businessmen, clergymen, teachers and writers were most susceptible to such propaganda precisely because their wider knowledge of the world required the unified vision which only propaganda could supply. The experience of propaganda in Canadian war novels is much more deeply felt than the experience of war itself; this fact is of interest not only in itself, but for the light it throws on Canadian intellectual history.

The limits of Canadian war fiction are difficult to define. The prolific Basil King lived in the U.S. and wrote for a North American audience; Charles Yale Harrison was raised in Montreal but born an American; Arthur Beverley Baxter and Beckles Willson settled in England after the war. All Canadian novelists were compelled to write for wider markets than Canada afforded, and to consider the requirements of non-Canadian readers. Baxter's heroes, for example, are more often American or English than Canadian; and Americans and Englishmen sometimes seem to outnumber Canadians even in novels set in Nova Scotia or Alberta.

Nevertheless, certain broad areas of study can be staked out. Novels or personal narratives by native-born Canadians, regardless of later residence, clearly deserve attention. Immigrants to Canada merit

the same consideration, especially since so many who fought in Canadian uniform had been born elsewhere.¹ The case of Coningsby Dawson illustrates the difficulty of drawing sharp distinctions between Canadian and non-Canadian writers. Born and educated in England, Dawson moved with his family to the United States. Before the war, however, the Dawsons lived part of each year in Nelson, B.C., where they owned and managed a large orchard. It was here that Dawson wrote a great deal of his early fiction, and when he enlisted in 1916 it was in the Canadian Artillery, where he saw service for the rest of the war. Though he seems not to have written any war novels, he did publish two collections of letters which reflect his combat experience in Canadian units. These letters offer so many insights into Canadian war fiction that it would be foolish to exclude them on a technicality. Such personal accounts are of value not as history, but as confirmation of values expressed in fiction; in fact, the novels of this period are surprisingly independent of the historical facts of the war.

It might be asked why this study is limited to novels published before 1927 rather than to 1939 or even later. After the publication of Connor's Treading the Winepress in 1925, and Stead's

1 In the First Contingent, for example, 29% of the officers and 65% of other ranks had been born in Great Britain or other parts of the Empire, as noted in Gerald W. L. Nicholson, Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1964), pp. 212-213.

Grain in 1926, almost no Canadian fiction dealing with the war was published until 1929 and 1930, when a number of novels - most notably Generals Die in Bed - signalled the end of pro-war sentiment and a new treatment of war as a degrading and dehumanizing experience. Even the anti-war novels published before 1926 reflect a generally idealistic attitude; their protest is not so much against war as against the disappointing nature of this particular war. Until the late 1920's, Canadian writers consider it as a Great War, transcending ordinary experience and therefore transforming those who take part in it into images of heroic romance. By the 1930's, the war has become merely one particular conflict of interest only because it is relatively recent.

Apart from occasional references to personal and historical accounts, this study relies for the most part on examination and analysis of works by four authors: Charles W. Gordon ("Ralph Connor"), William Benjamin Kind ("Basil King"), Robert J. C. Stead, and Bertrand Sinclair. Their novels make up a large part of Canadian war fiction, and their popular success makes them, for our purposes, the most significant. Other authors such as Arthur Beverley Baxter and Beckles Willson receive considerable attention; still others, such as John Murray Gibbon or Carolyn Cox, are mentioned briefly or not at all since their novels offer little that is not covered in discussion of the first six authors. Since these novels are practically unknown today, extensive quotation is inevitable if the reader is to understand

their general tone.

As novel after novel demonstrates, French- and English-Canadian cultures had little influence on one another during the war years and their aftermath. Since English-Canadian response to the war is expressed in such exclusively Anglo-Saxon terms, it is easy to see why French-Canadians were so little involved in the war. This study is concerned only with English-Canadian novels; but a broader critical comparison of the treatment of war in the two literatures would be well worth having.

It is tempting to adopt a patronizing tone in dealing with these novels. By modern standards they are crude and sentimental, and much in them now seems laughable or loathesome. But they offer unexpected insights into Canada's literature and society; their effect, as Frye has said of all Canadian popular literature, "is that of a murmuring and echoing literary collective unconscious, the rippling of a watery Narcissus world reflecting the imaginative patterns above it."¹ We can scarcely judge Canada's later literature if we are unwilling to approach the "Narcissus world" from which it springs; and if we look into it, we should not be afraid to see ourselves.

1 Frye, Ibid.

TWO: WAR AS LITERARY EXPERIENCE

Few Canadians before 1914 had ever experienced combat. It was something one read about in newspapers; typically, war meant a short, unequal clash between European troops and those of some inferior race, usually nonwhite. According to Carl Berger, the experience of the northwest Rebellion of 1885 "did much to confirm the impression that war was more a manly triumph over the obstacles of nature than massive and indiscriminate slaughter."¹ Canadian participation in the Boer War was reported in similar terms:

contemporary accounts like Canada's Sons on Kopje and Veld (1900) by T. G. Marquis, professor of English literature at Queen's University, stressed the incidents of individual heroism, the rescue of the guns and trials of the march, and often dwelt upon the release of tension in the sunburnt spaces.²

Reinforcing the positive and romantic view of war were the light casualties suffered by the Canadians in South Africa. The Canadian Military Gazette estimated that fewer than 100 - out of a force of 7,368 - suffered death from combat.³ Such experiences, even reported with some objectivity, would tend to encourage a myth of

1 Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 236.

2 Ibid.

3 Canadian Military Gazette XVIII (February 17, 1903), p. 7. Quoted in Berger, op. cit., p. 236.

war as initiation into manhood, and Canadian imperialists were vocal supporters of the "toughness and hardness, conflict and testing"¹ inherent in war.

Another factor contributing to romantic attitudes about war was the tale of future war. For almost half a century before the outbreak of World War I, Europeans and North Americans had been subjected to a steady flow of novels and short stories about fictitious wars between major world powers. Most of these were avowedly propagandistic, and written to support or attack a particular military policy. The British journalist William Le Queux's The Invasion of 1910² was typical; it describes, in minute detail, a German invasion of an unprepared England.

Such tales enjoyed considerable popularity, and a few, chiefly by H. G. Wells, are still read today. Whatever influence they may have had on defence debates of their time, they helped to predispose their readers to regard war in terms of literary convention and to affirm a middle-class social myth. Alex Shell Briscoe's short story "When War Came to Doby," published in Canadian Magazine in January 1915, offers such an affirmation. Briscoe's tale is set in the American West during an invasion by "Orientals." The hero, Biff Stevens, is a radical workingman who at first rejects the thought of fighting for his country. After witnessing the depredations of the

1 Berger, op. cit., p. 236.

2 William LeQueux, The Invasion of 1910 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1906).

"brown devils," however, he joins the U.S. Cavalry - an "erstwhile Universal Worker and follower of the red flag of anarchy"¹ who has transformed himself into a patriotic soldier. War, in other words, will unite society as the middle class wishes it to be united.

Fiction uses journalistic devices to reinforce itself in the tale of future war. Le Queux's Invasion of 1910 gains much of its impact through presentation of "eyewitness" reports, the texts of proclamations by the German invaders, and detailed descriptions of battles in the style of the conventional military history. Journalism, on the other hand, takes on the dramatic power of fiction once Canada enters the war. Both in novels and nonfiction memoirs, we find repeated mention of a need for news which approaches addiction. Louis Keene, a Canadian artist who saw combat, observes that as the war approached "we grew restless, and even went in to the depot to get our papers so that we could have the news sooner."² With the declaration of war, reading the news becomes an emotional act of patriotism: we learn that "soldiers with civilians crowded before the bulletin boards singing the national anthems with great enthusiasm."³ Canon Frederick George Scott, Senior Chaplain of the First Canadian Division, Canadian Expeditionary Force, begins his

1 Alex Shell Briscoe, "When War Came to Doby," Canadian Magazine XLIV, No. 3 (January 1915), p. 211.

2 Louis Keene, Crumps: The Plain Story of a Canadian Who Went (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), p. 1

3 Ibid., pp. 3-4.

reminiscences of the war by describing how he "went down to a newspaper office in Quebec to stand amidst the crowd and watch the bulletins which were posted up every now and then, and to hear the news of the war."¹

Similar passages occur in most of the novels of the period. Ralph Connor's The Major shows an idyllic holiday ending grimly when news of war between Britain and Germany is posted on a railway-station bulletin board.² In Bertrand Sinclair's The Inverted Pyramid, a similar idyll ends with newspaper accounts of the early weeks of the war:

They sat side by side in the autumn sunshine, reading of places drenched with blood - Liège, Louvain, Charleroi, Mons, Cambrai, Namur. The battle of the Marne was over. The prolonged battle of the Aisne was at its height. Rod had commandeered every paper in the camp. Page by page, column by column, they coned that incredible account, piecing it out by inference, filling the terrible gaps by vivid conjecture.³

It is clear that the author is relying for his effect on the emotions associated with the places mentioned; these associations, for a Canadian reader, could have been made only through news accounts or casualty lists. Perhaps the most interesting example of the power of

1 Canon Frederick George Scott, The Great War as I Saw It, 2d ed. (Vancouver: Clarke & Stewart, 1934), p. 15.

2 Ralph Connor [Charles W. Gordon], The Major (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), p. 313.

3 Bertrand W. Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid (Boston: Little, Brown, 1924), p. 177.

journalism occurs in Connor's Treading the Winepress, and consists of a dialogue between Charley Hopps, an American reporter, and his editor, who bears the interesting name of Martyrson. Hopps describes the Canadian preparations for war in exalted terms:

"I have been up North in that country where men have forgotten what it means to give their souls and bodies to the making of money I have seen men standing in long lines fighting for a chance to die for something that makes money look like mud"1

When Martyrson ventures the opinion that "a little spanking won't do England any harm," Hopps is enraged:

"A little spanking," cried Charley. "Have you read the story of that retreat from Mons? No, you haven't, I can see that, or you wouldn't be sitting there looking at me as you are. And what of France and Belgium? Have you seen the reports of the German method? My God, Martyrson! What sort of a man are you?"2

The crucial experience, then, is to "read the story," to "see the reports," rather than to take part in the retreat or to suffer the "German method" in person. Detachment from direct experience is one of the most common themes in Canadian war fiction, and no doubt the need to rely on news reports contributed to this sense of detachment.

Actual warfare is seldom dealt with in Canadian war novels.

Even when combat is portrayed, literary conventions, not direct

1 Ralph Connor, Treading the Winepress (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1925), p. 198.

2 Ibid., pp. 199-200.

experience, dictate the way it must be presented. In Captain S. N. Dancey's The Faith of a Belgian, the first Canadian war novel, the author asserts in a preface that "all incidents involved in this story, are founded in actual happenings,"¹ but he uses virtually every cliché of military romance. During an early encounter between the Germans and the Belgian troops commanded by the hero, Lt. Joseph Vandebroeck, a "mitrailleuse" is described as "pouring death and destruction into the enemy's ranks. [T]he enemy, caught thus in a trap, were mowed down as seasoned hay will fall before the reaper."² When Vandebroeck leads his men in a charge,

Once or twice a German bullet almost trapped him, but the diligence and watchfulness of his men about him precluded that possibility. On one occasion a young Belgian trooper valiantly threw himself in front of his gallant leader and fell with the ball that had been destined for the officer.³

The use of the archaism "ball" for "bullet" is not just to avoid repetition; to readers raised on military romances of bygone battles, the term would seem appropriate. On another occasion, after numberless adventures, Vandebroeck rallies his men during an artillery barrage:

1 Capt. S. N. Dancey, The Faith of a Belgian: A Romance of the Great War (Ottawa: Dadson-Merrill, 1916), preface.

2 Ibid., p. 32.

3 Ibid., p. 33.

Joseph ran in and out amongst his men, encouraging them and inspiring them by his heroic example. . . . Joseph was twice struck by flying pieces of shrapnel, but he pressed on. His indomitable [sic] pluck was bearing him up. A shell burst immediately behind him, but he fell flat on the ground and the flying death passed over him. It was a perfect hell of chaos and confusion, but through the din of battle rang the clear, bell-like voice of the young Belgian commander.¹

Such passages might make us doubt whether Captain Dancey ever saw actual combat; and suspicion deepens on discovering that the "207th Os. Bn., C.E.F." to which he supposedly belongs is unlisted in the Index of Canadian Forces in Nicholson's Canadian Expeditionary Force: 1914-1919.² But it seems more likely that Dancey merely disguised the name of his battalion. Certainly the Canadian novelists whose war records can be documented are equally romantic in their treatment of combat.

Arthur Beverley Baxter, a far more competent writer than Dancey, uses many of the same stock images in The Parts Men Play, a novel which, despite Baxter's personal war experience, is almost totally concerned with the English home front. One of the novel's few combat passages shows a struggle between German and American forces that might have come straight out of Dancey:

1 Dancey, op. cit., p. 314.

2 Nicholson, Canadian Expeditionary Force: 1914-1919, pp. 613-617.

Van Derwater rallied his men, directed the defence, and time after time organised or led counter-attacks which restored their position. His voice rose sonorously above everything. Hearing it, and seeing his powerful figure oblivious to the bullets which stung the air all about him, his men yelled that they could never be beaten so long as he led them.

. . . Once, when the Huns had penetrated the road, one of their officers levelled a revolver on [Dick Durwent], but discharged the bullet into the ground as the butt of Mathews's rifle was brought smashing on his wrist.¹

Baxter's mention of the commander's voice, and the soldiers' loyalty to their commander, are very close to Dancey. The second paragraph describes the rescue of a young aristocrat by his faithful retainer, a more elaborate version of the young Belgian trooper saving Vandebroek.

Charles W. Gordon, better known as Ralph Connor, served through much of the war as chaplain for the 43rd Cameron Highlanders of Canada.² Though Connor sometimes describes combat, in The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, he prefers to relate anecdotes showing how fond the men are of their chaplain, Barry Dunbar. When he does deal with combat, Connor usually falls back on journalism; the following passage, for example, could come untouched from a correspondent's

¹ Arthur Beverley Baxter, The Parts Men Play (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1920), p. 405.

² See his Postscript to Adventure: The Autobiography of Ralph Connor (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1938), pp. 201-284 for his description of his war service. It is notable that he makes no mention of any of his war novels.

dispatch:

That night the battalion was relieved. Worn, spent, but with spirit unbroken, they crawled out from under that matted mass of tangled trunks, sending out their wounded before them, and leaving their buried dead behind them, to hold with other Canadian dead the line which from St. Julien, by Hooge, Sanctuary Wood, and Maple Copse, and Mount Sorel, and Hill 60, and on to St. Eloi, guards the way to Ypres and to the sea. To Canada every foot of her great domain, from sea to sea, is dear, but while time shall last Canada will hold dear as her own that bloodsoaked sacred soil which her dead battalions hold for Honour, Faith and Freedom.¹

On occasion, however, Connor adopts a more vivid rhetoric. Thus, when Barry first sees artillery operating in the open rather than from cover, he exclaims:

"Guns? And in the open! And on a hill! And wheel to wheel! . . . Thank the good Lord I have lived to see this day"

. . . The full chorus was on. For two hours the barrage raged, and the din was such that they had to shout in each other's ears to be heard. The hilltops were ringed with darting tongues of red flame as though belched out by a thousand fabled dragons. It was as if the air above was filled with millions of invisible demons, whining, moaning, barking, shrieking in a fury of venomous hate, while at regular intervals came the express train roar of the twelve, fifteen and sixteen-inch guns.²

It seems clear that Connor is not entirely comfortable using a rhetoric of dragons and demons, and is glad to find a familiar

1 Ralph Connor, *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1919), pp. 285-286.

2 Ibid., pp. 326-327.

express train by the end of the passage. But it seems equally clear that the conventions of romance demand dragons and demons.

Perhaps the most striking case of the triumph of convention over experience can be found in A Romance of the Halifax Disaster, by Lt. Col. F. McKelvey Bell.¹ Written within a few weeks of the explosion, by an officer who lived through it and who took an active part in relief efforts, it is scarcely more than a short story. But it has been fleshed out with numerous photographs of the devastation and early reconstruction, a section of factual material, and long lists giving descriptions of several hundred dead, both identified and unidentified. These sections of the book are extraordinarily moving in their simplicity, but Bell apparently feels they are insufficient for his purpose, which is to help raise funds for relief. He therefore subordinates his factual material to an insipid novella whose interest lies chiefly in the efficiency with which it employs most of the conventions of war romance. We are shown a threatened idyll, in which the hero and heroine go canoeing through a sylvan paradise while discussing the threat of war. Separated by his enlistment and embarkation, they are reunited in the aftermath of the disaster. By coincidence, the explosion occurs on the day the heroine is to marry a wealthy lumber merchant whom she does not love; he is providentially killed, freeing her to marry the wounded hero, who has passively survived the explosion in a Halifax hospital.

¹ Lt. Col. F. McKelvey Bell, A.D.M.S., A Romance of the Halifax Disaster (Halifax: Royal Print & Litho, 1918).

In The Major, as in several other novels, the personal account of war serves as a form of literary experience. Larry Gwynne, the novel's hero, quits his job to enlist after receiving a telegram informing him of the death of his English brother-in-law in combat. Returning to Calgary from the United States, he enters officers' training. From one of his sisters he hears the details of the death of his brother-in-law. Nora Gwynne speaks of her widowed sister, Kathleen Romayne:

". . . She is at it day and night. They made her President of the Women's War Association, and she is - Well, it is quite beyond words. I can't talk about it, that's all." Nora's voice grew unsteady and she took refuge in silence. After a few moments she went on: "And she has had the most beautiful letter from Jack's colonel. It was on the Big Retreat from Mons that he was killed at the great fight at Landrecies. You know about that, Larry?"

"No, never heard anything; I know really nothing about that retreat," said Larry. *

"Well, we have had letters about it. It must have been great. Oh, it will be a glorious tale some day. They began the fight, only seventy-five thousand of the British - think of it! with two hundred guns against four hundred thousand Germans with six hundred guns. . . . They fought all Saturday. They began the retreat on Saturday night, fought again Sunday, marched Sunday night, they fought Monday and marched Monday night, fought Tuesday and marched Tuesday night. . . . Wednesday night one corps came to Landrecies. At half-past nine they were all asleep in billets. At ten o'clock a perfectly fresh

army of the enemy, field guns backing them up behind, machine guns in front, bore down the streets into the village. But those wonderful Coldstreams and Grenadiers and Highlanders just filled the streets and every machine gun fired into the enemy masses, smashed the attack and then they went at them with the bayonet and flung them back. . . . It was in the last bayonet charge, when leading his men, that Jack was killed."

"My God!" cried Larry. "What a death!"¹

Nora's story is interesting for several reasons. It is a personal account of the colonel's "beautiful letter," itself a personal account. The greatest significance of the retreat, to Nora, is that "it will be a glorious tale some day," implying that mundane details still mar the battle's literary beauty. And though Jack may have suffered "a great death," Kathleen's heroic widowhood is evidently more sublime since it compels Nora to abdicate the role of the storyteller: "It is quite beyond words. I can't talk about it, that's all." This abdication is not unusual, and always indicates some supreme experience.

The atrocity story, rather than the story of battle, usually provokes the strongest responses from the characters in the Canadian war novel. In Beckles Willson's Redemption, the hero's sister energetically disseminates such stories through the newspaper which she edits:

1 Connor, The Major, pp. 367-368.

No tale was too wild, too improbable that Effie Vant came across in the English and American newspapers, not to be promptly copied. One recalls them now with a smile. What a brutal, bloodthirsty fellow the German of those days was, how "ruthless" - ah me, how ruthless! He made war in the true old Iroquois spirit. He went out of his way, this simple, rather stupid, industrious blond Michael, to cut the breasts off shrinking women, to brain nursing infants, or, if they were a little older, sever their hands at the wrist Small wonder that the youthful editress of the Clarion quoted with righteously indignant approval the saying attributed to a great English soldier: "The only good German is a dead German."¹

One result of Effie's work is that four young English boys on a nearby farm try to quit rather than continue working under their German supervisor, whom they call "a 'Un spy." Their employer, Sir Hugh Campion, remonstrates with them:

"A Hun spy? Golzmann a spy? Now, look here, you know. You lads have been reading sensational newspapers. My manager here is as loyal as you are - as I am. He's entirely, heart and soul, with us and against Germany."

"It's all very well to talk like that, Sir 'Ugh. But the Clarion's edited by a young lady and she's tellin' us the truth about the Germans. She shows 'em up fair But we don't think you knows what these 'Uns are. They're all swine an' baby-killers. We ought to be fighting Germans instead of working alongside of 'em."²

1 [Henry] Beckles Willson, Redemption (New York: Putnam, 1924), p. 283.

2 Ibid., p. 286.

Two weeks later, a mob attacks Golzmann's house, wrecks his car and tractor, and injures his sister. Fittingly enough, Effie Vant does not witness this counter-actrocity, but hears of it; she repents forthwith.

In Robert J. C. Stead's The Cow Puncher, German atrocities serve to justify and even compel Dave Elden's enlistment. As a poor, illiterate cowboy he had been able to shatter six bottles with six shots from his revolver; now, as a soldier, he must use that old skill. His wife Irene tells him:

". . . what a man you are in uniform! I think I see you smashing heads instead of bottles! Six out of six, Dave! It's awful, but you must do it. Already we know what has happened in Belgium!¹

Atrocity stories also inspire Jo Burge, in Stead's novel Grain, to wish for Gander Stake's enlistment:

when the papers began to glare with reports of atrocities in Belgium, she wanted the heroic in Gander to well up and send him rushing to arms, to the defence of womankind, to the defence of Josephine Burge! Gander's heroism did nothing so spectacular.²

The ironic tone of the discussion of propaganda in Redemption and Grain may stem from their authors' having been well taken in by the atrocity stories they now smile at. Willson had seen combat at Ypres in 1915, and the following year had published a short, breathless

1 Robert J. C. Stead, The Cow Puncher (Toronto: Musson, 1918), p. 336.

2 Robert J. C. Stead, Grain (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969), p. 106. Originally published by George H. Doran, 1926.

book describing his experiences; it is full of references to the "sacred soil" of Ypres, upon which Canadian officers consistently died "with their face to the foe."¹ Stead had published quantities of jingoistic verse during the war and as the passage quoted from The Cow Puncher makes clear, was willing to invoke atrocities as serious justification for the war even as late as 1918. By the middle 1920's, a certain amount of cynicism is permissible in treating propaganda, but neither Willson nor Stead repudiates the war itself. For example, Willson's hero, Greg Vant, is disgusted with staff politics but not with combat:

the intrigues and vacillation of purpose,
the jealousies, the political interference,
. . . the deadly toadyism towards
insufferable opportunists. . . . What an
atmosphere! No wonder honest, proud-
spirited young soldiers preferred the
trenches, where they could at least hold
their heads up, morally, and where gas-
masks afforded protection!²

And Willson specifically contrasts the moral degradation of the propagandists with the idealism of Canadian troops:

Nothing can be conceived more
humiliating than the position into which
the press had fallen [They were]
simple agents of official propaganda,
narrators of belated or doubtful history,
retailers of gossip, concoctors of
agreeable and often exciting anecdote.

1 [Henry] Beckles Willson, In the Ypres Salient: The Story of a Fortnight's Fighting (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1916).

2 Willson, Redemption, p. 388.

These men, several of them gifted, clear-visioned, intensely patriotic, found themselves an organised department of the Army. It was not merely that they were not permitted to tell the truth, but they were forced to be the conduit for the clumsy lies of others.¹

The Canadian Corps seems infinitely more admirable to Vant:

What had previously affected him as crudity, naivety, primitive zeal in his own Corps, now appeared to him as shining virtue. Here men still talked, even in their messes, not cynically, airily, but as men who were in deadly earnest, who had a definite purpose, whose hearts still nourished resolves, whose whole minds were set on achieving victory, who chafed under the foolish formalities imposed from Whitehall, who cursed the prevalent indecision.²

The idealism which propaganda has inspired is, for Willson, still valid even after the propaganda has been discredited. Similarly, in Grain, Stead demonstrates that Gander Stake's refusal to succumb to propaganda is a fatal decision which costs him not only the girl he loves, but also the land which is all he knows. About to leave the farm for a job in the city, he contemplates himself:

"You haven't made much of it, Gander, have you?" he demanded bitterly. "Not very much of it. You wouldn't take discipline - I think that's what they call it, that 'Form fours' stuff -

1 Willson, Redemption, p. 390.

2 Ibid., pp. 391-392.

and here you are Here you are."
Then, with a bitter jest at himself,
"And where are you!"¹

Even if they now believe the atrocity stories are untrue these two authors still uphold the view of the war as a morally justified and necessary conflict.

Of all the novels of this period, Bertrand Sinclair's Burned Bridges presents the most interesting use of the atrocity story. Its use is worth examining in some detail, for it gives us an indication of the extent to which Allied propaganda influenced even one of the most radical of the Canadian war novelists. Wesley Thompson, a prosperous Vancouver car dealer, scarcely comprehends the war in Europe: it is "something akin to a bad dream recalled at midday, an unreal sort of thing,"² and "like an earthquake in Japan, a reported famine in India."³ Sophie Carr, with whom Wes is in love, is far more responsive than Wes to propaganda despite her rationalist, agnostic upbringing. Significantly, a spoken personal account, rather than written propaganda, most affects her:

"I went to a Belgian Relief Fund
lecture in the Granada ballroom this
afternoon A Belgian woman -
a refugee - spoke in broken English.

1 Stead, Grain, p. 206.

2 Bertrand W. Sinclair, Burned Bridges (New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1919), p. 216.

3 Ibid., p. 218.

The things she told. It was horrible.
I wonder if they could be true?"¹

Her father "judicially" and correctly labels the Belgian woman's talk as propaganda: "We're being systematically stimulated to ardent support of the war in men and money through the press and public speaking, through every available avenue that clever minds can devise."² Sophie is not impressed:

"I know," Sophie said absently. "But this woman's story - she wasn't one of your glib platform spouters, flag-waving and calling the Germans names. She just talked, groping now and then for the right word. And if a tithe of what she told is true - well, she made me wish I were a man."

. . . for a moment Thompson felt acutely uncomfortable without knowing why. . . .

"Of course I know that in any large army there is bound to be a certain percentage of abnormals who will be up to all sorts of deviltry whenever they find themselves free of direct restraint," she said. . . . "But this Belgian woman's account puts a different face on things Her story gave me an impression of ordered barbarity, of systematic terrorizing by the foulest means imaginable. The sort of things the papers have been publishing - and worse."

Sophie, like several other Sinclair characters, is willing to accept

1 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, p. 221.

2 Ibid., p.

3 Ibid., pp. 221-222.

war rhetoric as long as it is presented in a seemingly unrheterical way. Wes Thompson's discomfort is typical of those whose intellect or conscience resist the call to arms.

But what is most interesting about this passage is that it plagiarizes a major British propaganda piece, the Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages, better known as the Bryce Report, in which Lord Bryce observes that in "every large army there must be a proportion of men of criminal instincts whose worst passions are unleashed by the immunity which the conditions of warfare afford."¹ No doubt similar sentiments were frequently expressed in newspapers, magazines, and public speeches; but the closeness of the paraphrase indicates that Sinclair has read the Bryce Report very carefully indeed. This is borne out by a later passage describing the turning point in Wes's attitude towards the war. Despite his his continued prosperity, he has grown increasingly unhappy because of Sophie's coolness; she has thrown herself into war work and has little time for him. One day, however, Wes overhears a "returned man" give a tongue-lashing to an overeager, and unblooded, recruiting sergeant. Later, Wes meets the man again, and asks him about the war. The veteran is reluctant to talk about it at first. Then Wes asks him:

¹ Quoted in H. C. Peterson, Propaganda for War: The Campaign Against American Neutrality, 1914-1917 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), p. 51.

"Did you ever see, personally, any of those atrocities that have been laid to the Germans in Belgium?"

"Well, I don't know," the man replied. "The papers have printed a lot of stuff. Mind you, over there you hear about a lot of things you never see. The only thing I saw was children with their hands hacked off at the wrist."

"Good God," Thompson uttered. "You actually saw that with your own eyes."

"Sure," the man responded. "Nine of 'em in one village. . . . Maybe they just wanted to put the fear of God in their hearts. A pal of mine in Flanders told me of a woman - in a place they took by a night raid - she had her breast slashed open. She said a Boche officer did it with his sword."

. . . in Thompson these calmly recounted horrors worked profound distress. His imagination became immediately shot with sinister pictures. All these things which he had read and doubted, which had left him unmoved, now took on a terrible reality.

. . . Those little children, shorn of their hands - so that they could never lift a sword against Germany - cried aloud to him. They held up their bloody stumps for him to see.¹

One suspects that Sinclair's returned soldier saw service with the 207th Os. Bn., since his carefully understated account closely follows the fictions which the Bryce report presented as the truth. As H. C. Peterson points out, "The cutting of women's breasts

1 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, pp. 249-251.

seemed to be the most popular of the sadistic touches"¹ in the report's atrocity stories, but the report also found room for at least one version of the amputated-hands story.² Ironically, the origin of this atrocity story was an incident in Africa; Peterson explains that "the Belgians rather than the Germans did the mutilating."³

Those who have been deceived by propaganda are often reluctant to admit it. M. B. Clint, as late as 1934, still clung to her belief in the stories which had impelled her and many other nurses to volunteer their services: "Detailed accounts of the atrocities of the German army (which we are now asked by certain voices not to believe!) were fresh and recent"⁴ In the case of Canadian war novelists, a notable convention is employed to conceal a disillusionment which cannot yet be openly stated - and, paradoxically, the same convention is used by those who still support the war. For despite the intensity of the literary experience which propels the hero into combat, he usually returns from war virtually struck dumb. The hero of Robert J. C. Stead's Dennison Grant is an example. Just back from France, Grant sits down to dinner with civilian friends eager to hear of his experiences. They are disappointed:

1 Peterson, Propaganda for War, p. 56.

2 Ibid., p. 57.

3 Ibid., p. 60.

4 M. B. Clint, Our Bit: Memoirs of War Service by a Canadian Nursing Sister (Montreal: Barwick, 1934), p. 20.

At the table their talk dribbled out into thin channels. It was as though there were at hand a great reservoir of thought, of experience, of deep gropings into the very wellsprings of life, which none of them dared to tap lest it should rush out and overwhelm them. They seemed in some strange awe of its presence, and spoke, when they spoke at all, of trivial things. Grant proved uncommunicative, and perhaps, in a sense, disappointing. He preferred to forget both the glories and the horrors of war; when he drew on his experience at all it was to relate some humorous incident. . . . He was conscious of a restraint which hedged him about and hampered every mental deployment.¹

As a man who had attained commercial success and international fame through his pro-war poems and novels, Stead is not about to reject the war out of hand; yet he clearly senses that it would be wise for Grant to maintain a portentous silence.

Frank Melbury, the hero of Basil King's pro-war novel The City of Comrades, finds it just as difficult as Dennison Grant to express his response to the war:

of that I can say nothing. I don't know why - but I cannot. Day and night I think of what I saw and heard and did in those two years, but some other language must be coined before I can begin to speak of it.

In this I am not singular; it is a rule to which I know few, if any, exceptions. I have heard returned soldiers on the lecture platform, telling part of the truth, and nothing but, but never the whole truth nor the most vital truth. I

¹ Robert J. C. Stead, Dennison Grant (Toronto: Musson, 1920), p. 261.

have talked with some of them when the lectures were over, and a flare in the eye has said, "This is for public consumption; but you and I know that the realities are not to be put into words."¹

Nonetheless, it is Melbury's intended mission to become just such a lecturing returned soldier - a mission he at first finds impossible. Rather than blame the war, however, he explains his spiritual paralysis as the result of finding himself in a New York at peace:

My consecration was gone. . . . I was determined to enjoy. The resolve came over me with the first glimpse of New York. . . . It may have been the demand of the flesh for compensation. That which had not merely been denied, but brutalized and broken, rose with the appetite of a starving beast.²

Not until America declares war can Melbury bring himself to become a full-time propagandist, but he tells us no more of that activity than he does of his combat experiences. Instead, the novel's climactic speech is put in the mouth of Andrew Christian, the saintly leader of the "Down and Out Club," who persuades a number of pacifists to take up arms. Melbury records Christian's eloquence, but not his own.

Clergy and business are similarly eloquent in Douglas Durkin's The Magpie, but Durkin does not approve of their motives. Gilbert Nason, a prosperous Winnipeg businessman, is disturbed by the

1 Basil King [William Benjamin King], The City of Comrades (New York: Harper, 1919), pp. 227-228.

2 Ibid., p. 314.

spectre of labour unrest in postwar Canada, and tries to recruit Craig Forrester, a returned soldier, for right-wing political activity. Speaking of labour agitators, Nason remarks that:

"These fellows have been lambasting the crowds in Victoria Park with sermons on treason and anarchy and revolution. They know how to work up sentiment, I'll say that for them. But we'll have to work up sentiment on the other side. We've got to talk more and we've got to talk louder."

To this, Forrester replies:

"Don't you think, Mr. Nason, . . . that the world wants to be quiet for a little while now? Don't you think we've had just about enough loud talking for a while?"¹

The most extreme case of postwar aphasia affects Rod Norquay, the hero of Bertrand Sinclair's The Inverted Pyramid. We have already seen how indebted Sinclair is in 1919 to British propaganda; but five years later, he seems thoroughly disillusioned. Sinclair says that Rod "did not respond so readily as some to the propaganda already loosed so effectively"² in the early weeks of the war, but his postwar reaction has all the bitterness of the idealist betrayed:

"God damn the war - and the makers!
. . . they go on threatening and haranguing
and wrangling over coal and iron and oil
and indemnities, as if that was what we

1 Douglas Durkin, The Magpie (Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923), pp. 33-34.

2 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, p. 179.

fought for. If it had been - I wonder if it was? When I feel that it was I have to curse. . . . I'm sick of all the saccharine tosh I hear about the war."¹

Rod's response is, of course, purely verbal - "I have to curse." But shortly after this outburst, he suffers a kind of heart attack, supposedly the result of suppressing his true feelings while in combat:

. . . by some supreme effort of a body dying if not already dead he twisted himself sidewise, set his feet on the floor, hauled himself erect by a bedpost. . . . No pulse, scarcely a breath; speechless. He could not utter a sound.²

By an act of will, Rod drives his failing body out of the room, and by stamping down a flight of stairs he manages to "pop-start" himself, so to speak.

Both pro- and anti-war novelists see war as a literary experience, and as transcending ordinary life. If the highest, most intense experiences in life are verbal, then to be struck dumb is to be struck dead. The war is a war of words; the soldier-propagandist takes precedence over the soldier-combatant; the mute soldier, then, is a consistent and even organic development of the vision of war as literary experience.

An essential component of the vision of war as literary experience is the belief that it is a game, played by amateurs,

1 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, pp. 195-196.

2 Ibid., p. 199.

governed by knightly rules, and described in what might be called "chivalric" rhetoric. Carl Berger in The Sense of Power says the Canadian imperialists' view of war "bore a closer resemblance to the deeds chronicled by Sir Walter Scott than the realities to come."¹ Such an attitude can be fairly said to be shared by virtually all Canadian writers of this period. Sir Max Aitken, not yet Lord Beaverbrook, approvingly quotes General Alderson's advice to the Canadian troops as they were about to enter the trenches for the first time:

"Young and brave men enjoy taking risks.
But a soldier who takes unnecessary
risks through levity, is not playing the
game."²

Similarly, Coningsby Dawson could write home, after two weeks at the front, that "Things move quickly in this game, and it is a game - one which brings out both the best and the worst qualities in a man."³ Even after two years in combat, Dawson could exclaim:

What an unsportsmanly crowd the Germans
are! I think more than anything else it
will be their lack of fair play that we
shall hold against them when war is ended.⁴

1 Berger, The Sense of Power, p. 236.

2 Sir Max Aitken, Canada in Flanders: The Official Story of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton, 1916), p. 30.

3 Lt. Coningsby Dawson, Carry On: Letters in War-Time (New York: John Lane, 1917), pp. 44-45.

4 Lt. Coningsby Dawson, Living Bayonets (New York: John Lane, 1919), pp. 135-136.

And speaking of the greater mobility which the Canadian artillery enjoyed in the summer of 1918, Dawson ventures to hope that

before many months are out, the dreams of every gunner along the Western Front will have come true and we shall be firing at the enemy over open sights and coming into action on the gallop. It will be far more sporting and exciting.¹

Lt. S. A. Rutledge, in a collection of letters and vignettes entitled Pen Pictures From the Trenches, also uses the game metaphor in speaking of those at home who are exploiting the war for their own political or economic advantage: "We see where injustice lies - we know the game is not played fairly in some quarters, but the soldier is here to 'carry on.'"²

That war is a game best played by amateurs is clearly stated by most of these same writers. Aitken emphasizes that the "superb troops who, in the first battle of Ypres, broke and drove before them the flower of the Prussian Guards," were officered by "lawyers, college professors, business men, and real estate agents, ready with cool self-confidence to do battle against an organisation in which the study of military science is the exclusive pursuit of laborious lives."³ We may note in passing that he lists exclusively middle-

1 Lt. Coningsby Dawson, Living Bayonets, p. 160.

2 Lt. S. A. Rutledge, Pen Pictures From the Trenches (Toronto: William Briggs, 1918), p. 123.

3 Aitken, Canada in Flanders, pp. 47-48.

class occupations. On paper, World War I is fought by Canadian businessmen and intellectuals, with some assistance by the working-class other ranks.

Dawson, however, draws no distinctions between his values and those of the private soldiers; all are amateurs together:

I'm not a professional soldier. I think in saying that I've laid my finger on the entire reason for the splendour of our troops - that they're not professional soldiers, but civilian idealists. Your professional soldier isn't particularly keen on death - his game is to live that he may fight another day. Our game is to fight and fight and fight so long as we have an ounce of strength left.¹

Despite the anonymous carnage of trench warfare, most personal accounts are filled with stories of individual heroism; Dawson expresses the accepted attitude when he observes that, "One's curiously egotistic - I feel, if only I were out there, that with my little bit of extra help everything would go well."² This belief in the importance of the individual is essential to any philosophy of heroic warfare, and we should not be surprised when we find, in the midst of the first great war of technology, a widespread adoption of chivalric rhetoric. An army of civilian idealists, of college professors and real estate agents, would of course have no real military tradition by which it could both inspire and judge itself;

1 Dawson, Living Bayonets, p. 52.

2 Ibid., p. 97.

a synthetic rhetoric, springing from chivalric romances such as those of Scott, seems to have been an inevitable result. Dawson can assert, in January 1918, that "Nothing can be more chivalrous than the opportunities which lie before us."¹ Six months later, he observes that "Amongst our fighting men, women actually hold the place which was allotted to them by the idealists in troubadour times."² Aitken tries to recount the exploits of the Princess Patricia's Light Infantry "in the baldest language, and without attempting any artifice in rhetoric," but nevertheless lapses into chivalric rhetoric at the outset: "every member of the Battalion resolved, as simply and as finely as the knights of mediaeval days, that he would justify the belief in its future so proudly expressed by the lady whose name he was honoured to bear."³

Probably the simplest and crudest use of chivalric imagery appears in Helen Stirling's A Soldier of the King, a children's book rather than a novel. The central character is a boy named Charlie Russell who dreams of growing up to be a soldier but who falls ill and at length dies. We are told that Charlie's two favorite pictures, hanging above his sickbed, are of Christ and Sir Galahad; beneath the knight's portrait is the phrase, "'When I'm big I'll be a soldier.'"⁴

1 Dawson, Living Bayonets, p. 77.

2 Ibid., p. 158.

3 Aitken, Canada in Flanders, pp. 160, 145.

4 Helen Stirling, A Soldier of the King (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1915), p. 50.

Ralph Connor's rather self-conscious rhetoric describing the "fabled dragons" of the artillery has already been mentioned; but the most noteworthy example of such imagery occurs in Basil King's The City of Comrades. Frank Melbury, lamed and blinded in one eye, is returning to America on an armed liner; also on board is Regina Barry, now a nurse, whom Frank had loved before the war. Everyone on board is aware of the threat of submarine attack, but not much alarmed:

By the end of 1916 Atlantic travelers had come to take the submarine for granted, just as the statesmen of Plantagenet and Tudor times took the headsman's block as one of the natural risks of going into politics.¹

There follows an extended description of an encounter with a U-boat in which medieval imagery is repeatedly employed; King seems to find nothing incongruous in comparing the passive, helpless passengers with active and heroic figures from the romantic past. Thus, when the U-boat surfaces, Melbury and Regina "forget each other" to contemplate "the most baleful and fascinating monster in the world."

For it was as a monster, baleful, and fascinating, that we regarded her. She was not a thing planned by men's brains and built in a shipyard. She was an abnormal, unscrupulous, venomous water beast, with a special enmity toward man. She had about her the horror of the trackless, the deep, the solitary, the lonesome, the devilish It was

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 241.

like Saint George's first sight of the dragon that wasted men and cities, and called forth his hatred and his sword.¹

In the course of the battle, Melbury and Regina return to their rather aimless conversation about their prewar misunderstanding; Melbury sees himself playing Paolo to her Francesca. And when she brings him a life preserver, Melbury says: "She helped me as a medieval lady might have helped her lord to buckle on a sword."² Of course Melbury cannot be expected to dispatch a "water beast" with a life preserver, so he contents himself with the consolations of passive observation of the battle: "Viewed as a spectacle, there was a terrific beauty in it all."³ The battle breaks off inconclusively, and the submarine's fate is unknown, but King seems to believe he has presented us with the modern equivalent of knightly combat.

In The Inverted Pyramid, Bertrand Sinclair rejects chivalric rhetoric in favor of a more distinctively Canadian nostalgia; in keeping with his revulsion against pro-war propaganda, this nostalgia is both a critique of Canadian society and a blueprint for rebuilding it. Rod Norquay, the youngest son of an old British Columbia family, finds himself at an impasse. His grandfather lives in dreams of his youth; his father, a frozen aristocrat, maintains the family enterprises in prosperous stagnation. Rod's oldest brother, Grove,

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 249.

2 Ibid., p. 239.

3 Ibid., pp. 249-250.

is a sensuous cad who has abandoned productive work in order to build up a financial empire; the other, Phil, is a cheerful nonentity who can run the family's day-to-day business and wants nothing more. When Rod considers becoming a writer, in order to produce an "Iliad of the pioneers," Sinclair makes an ironic use of medieval allusions:

Unless he voluntarily embarked upon a voyage toward some material port, he would never have to buckle on armor and joust for dollars in the commercial tourney. But . . . he might do these adventuring progenitors a service by making them live again for their descendants - a generation, Rod held, deprived of romance and bold enterprise, limited and circumscribed and in danger of stifling spiritually in the midst of a material plenty.¹

Clearly, Rod would be perfectly happy to "buckle on armor" for a better reason than mere gain, but in a materialist society, there is no better reason. With college behind him, Rod finds nothing worth trying, and explains his dilemma to his sweetheart, Mary Thorn:

"It's like a football game against a third-rate team. No fun in a walkaway I couldn't get much kick out of making two dollars grow where only one flourished. Can't you show me a windmill or two, Mary?" he ended whimsically. "I'll mount Rosinante and knock 'em over."²

A return to the past, however tempting, seems beyond Rod's power; his planned novel of the pioneers is never completed. When

1 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, p. 80.

2 Ibid., p. 82.

Rod uses chivalric rhetoric, or the game metaphor, he does so with a kind of wistfulness; such conceits cannot disguise the hopelessly anti-romantic quality of modern life.

Closely associated with the use of chivalric rhetoric is the treatment of the war as crusade, as redemptive action, and as human evolution in action. So intertwined are these concepts that they must be examined together. Imperialist thought sees the British Empire as a secular instrument of divine providence; defence of the Empire is therefore a religious act. Since making money distracts the hero from the spiritual purposes of life, the demands of war offer him an opportunity to redeem himself by giving up both property and the status based on it. To many writers, it seems inevitable that when millions of men undergo the ennobling ordeal of combat, whole nations are thereby ennobled and carried to a higher plane of morality. Sir Gilbert Parker could assert that "This world-war is a purgatorial passage through which mankind is moving into a new existence."¹ Many Canadian war novelists express this idea in just the same religious terms; interestingly, they also employ Parker's metaphor of the "credit-balance"² in totting up the debits and credits which the war has brought.

Basil King's Frank Melbury is perhaps the most articulate

1 Gilbert Parker, The World in the Crucible: An Account of the Origins & Conduct of the Great War (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1915), p. 380.

2 Ibid., p. 393.

exponent of war as crusade, redemption, and evolution, and he echoes Parker's rhetoric:

I had gone away one man and I was coming back another. My old self had not only been melted down in the crucible, but it had been stamped with a new image and superscription. It was of a new value and a new currency, and, I think I may venture to add, of that new coinage minted in the civil strife of mankind.¹

Parker uses similar images not only in the title of his book, but in numerous passages; for example: "We are eliminating the dross from the true metal; and we may take heart in seeing how great is the proportion of the gold to the dross."²

As Melbury and Regina Barry sail across the Atlantic, they discuss the war, and he asks her why she wants to propagandize for America's entry into what she knows is a holocaust. She explains that the war is also an uplifting moral process:

"Because it's sublime. Because I've seen for myself that the people who take part in it are raised to levels they never knew it was possible to reach."³

Melbury repeats this view in an argument with an anti-war physician in New York:

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 216.

2 Parker, The World in the Crucible, p. 380.

3 King, The City of Comrades, p. 283.

"Now we've got it - with all its horror, but also with all its compensations."

"Compensations for the lives it has ruined?"

"In the lives it has saved - yes. You'll never get its meaning unless you see it as a great regenerative process . . . We're regenerated by courage and honor and sacrifice and the sense that every man gets - every Tommy, every poilu, every bluejacket - that he personally is essential to man's big fight in his struggle upward. . . . It makes one believe in an intelligence compelling the race toward good, however much we may be determined to go the other way."¹

Andrew Christian, addressing the alcoholics he has reclaimed in the "Down and Out Club," echoes Melbury's belief in the "struggle upward":

"A better world has to come out of this - a juster world - a happier world - a cleaner world. And in that reconstruction we Americans have the chance to take the lead because we're doing it of our own accord. Every other country has some ax to grind; we have none. We've none except just to be in the big movement of all mankind upward and forward."²

To Beckles Willson, in Redemption, such sentiments seem too grandiose; his hero, Gregory Vant, is willing to settle for an

1 King, The City of Comrades, pp. 326-327.

2 Ibid., p. 389. See also Dawson, Living Bayonets, p. 221, for an echo of this view of war. But in The High Heart (New York: Harper, 1917), p. 353, King calls the Canadians the only combatants with "nothing to gain that mortal eyes could see."

unredeemed world and a Canada which has survived the war with fewer moral scars than Europe. At the novel's close, Vant and his French-Canadian friend Emile Lanctot are lying wounded in an English hospital. The Armistice is near; Vant broods on the nature of the peace to come:

"And what is it we're going back to, you and I? Is it to be the same old vulgar materialism, the same selfish scramble for wealth, the same old party politics, the same bigotry and crudity? Canada has redeemed herself in the eyes of the world, but her crusading spirit is exhausted. . . . Lanctot, we must give Europe up. . . . The pot has not been boiling these years for nothing and the scum has come to the top . . . I don't suppose we ourselves will wholly escape. We will again be invaded by mongrel hordes, alien in thought and speech; we will have labour troubles, bloody riots, economic unrest. But it will be a better country than Europe. We must set our jaws firmly and hold fast. It will all come right in the end - but in the meantime we must abandon quixotism and cultivate our garden."¹

Willson, like King, employs a metaphor used by Sir Gilbert Parker - the boiling pot - though Parker's "scum" is composed of pacifists, profiteers, and slackers,² while Willson's is composed of "Slavs and Celts, Babus and Egyptians making a bonfire of our precious heritage" ³ Nevertheless, Willson seems confident of some

1 Willson, Redemption, pp. 398-399.

2 Parker, The World in the Crucible, p. 393.

3 Willson, op. cit., p. 399.

kind of positive social evolution in Canada.

It is, of course, "vulgar materialism" from which hero and heroine are redeemed by the war. Frank Melbury enlists after Regina Barry learns that he is an ex-alcoholic and that he once tried to burglarize the Barry household. Vera Warrington, the heroine of A Romance of the Halifax Disaster, is rescued from a prosperous, loveless marriage by the explosion. Larry Gwynne, in The Major, abandons a promising business career when to continue it would mean to abandon honour. Bertrand Sinclair's heroes, notably Wes Thompson and Robert Hollister, liquidate their holdings before enlisting, and suffer considerable losses as a result. Austin Selwyn, the pacifist propagandist of Beverley Baxter's The Parts Men Play, repudiates the money he has made through the sale of anti-war articles to German agents. Almost alone among such high-minded heroes is Basil King's Larry Strangways in The High Heart. At the outset of war, Strangways induces the novel's heroine, Alix Adare, to invest all her savings in munitions stocks, as he has done. "I don't want just to make money out of it," he tells her, "'but, since money's to be made - since we can't help making it - I want you to be in on it.'"¹ His subsequent enlistment in the Princess Pats, and loss of an arm in combat, apparently justify his financial acumen.

King is perhaps more concerned than most Canadian novelists with the evolutionary impact of the war on the nations engaged in it,

1 King, The High Heart, p. 357.

and foresees "the spiritualization of France, and the consecration of the British Empire, and the coming of a new manhood to the United States."¹ For King, such improvements are urgently needed. In The City of Comrades, Andrew Christian tells his ex-alcoholics that

"In proportion as the individual cleanses himself from the national sin the national sin is wiped out. So it's by Englishmen and Englishwomen that England will renew itself -"

. . . "What's England's national sin?"

. . . "I should say England's national vice - the vice that's been eating the heart out of her body, and the spirit out of her heat - is sensuality."

"What's the matter with France?"

". . . France has been corroded through and through with sordidness

". . . Italy, Tony? Haven't you got to get rid of your superstition, and all the degrading things superstition brings with it? . . ."

"Have we got a national error in the United States?"

. . . "Dishonesty!"²

Much of the Canadian literary response to the war shows an implicit identification of sexuality and violence. This identification is obvious, of course, in the atrocity stories of raped virgins and slashed breasts, but it appears even in peacetime settings. Northrop

1 King, The High Heart, p. 418.

2 King, The City of Comrades, pp. 390-391.

Frye suggests that "The popular romance operates on Freudian principles, releasing sexual and power fantasies without disturbing the anxieties of the superego."¹ Freudian or not, such principles can be found in Canadian war novels. They may not reflect a distinctively Canadian attitude towards sexuality - Stanley Cooperman's World War I and the American Novel² shows a very similar attitude in American writers - but they do reflect a problem which deeply concerns many Canadian novelists in this period. In the work of Connor, Stead, King, and Sinclair, peacetime society is sexually repressive; the war's violence permits an acceptable sexual release.

Ralph Connor's The Major offers several examples of the identification of sexuality and violence, and suggests that sex is acceptable only when the male is treated as a passive victim; if he offers violence against the female, he commits the worst of crimes. Two incidents in Kathleen Gwynne's life illustrate this. When Jack Romaine, a British officer, tries to tell Kathleen of his love for her, she nervously puts him off. They are bird-hunting; in her haste to change the subject, Kathleen runs toward their dog, trips, and accidentally shoots Romaine as he tries to catch her. As she treats him for his serious wound, she calls him "Jack" instead of "Mr. Romaine," then "Jack, dear." After "slipping behind him," she

1 Northrop Frye, "Conclusion," in Literary History of Canada, p. 838.

2 Stanley Cooperman, World War I and the American Novel (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967). See especially his discussion of Willa Cather's One of Ours, pp. 129-137.

removes her petticoat and tears it into bandages. Romyne passes out and Connor tells us of Kathleen's feelings as she kneels over him:

In the agony and terror of the moment as in a flash of light her heart stood suddenly wide open to her, and the thing that for the past months had lain hidden within her deeper than her consciousness, a secret joy and pain, leaped strong and full into the open, and she knew that this man who lay bleeding and ghastly before her was dearer to her than her own life. The sudden rush of this consciousness sweeping like a flood over her soul broke down and carried away the barrier of her maidenly reserve. Leaning over him in a passion of self-abandonment, she breathed, "Oh, Jack, dear, dear Jack." As he lay there white and still, into her love there came a maternal tender yearning of pity. She lifted his head in her arm and murmured brokenly, "Oh, my love, my dear love." She kissed him on his white lips.¹

Kathleen's frightened evasion of Jack's declaration, disguised as eagerness for the hunt, causes the accident; and Jack in shock, helpless and bloody, inspires feelings which Jack in health does not. The leap from maiden to mother is a short one, with only the most perfunctory "passion of self-abandonment" in between.

Significantly, violence as prelude to love is acceptable only if the man is the victim. When Kathleen is very nearly injured in a riding mishap, Ernest Switzer, a young German who loves her, tries to take advantage:

1 Connor, The Major, p. 194.

"My God, Kathleen!" he cried. "You are hurt? You might have been killed." His eyes burned like two blazing lights, his voice was husky, his face white. Suddenly crushing her to him, he kissed her on the cheek and again on her lips.

This approach fails miserably:

"You love me," she said, her voice low and quivering with a passionate scorn, "and you treat me so?"¹

A similar but more violent scene appears in Stead's Dennison Grant. Zen, the lovely daughter of an Alberta rancher, is approached by a brutish cowboy named Drazk. Their encounter begins with each on horseback; using her whip and spurs, Zen unhorses her assailant, but both fall into a stream. Feigning surrender, Zen fools Drazk into dropping his guard, and then nearly strangles him with a leather thong:

She saw his eyes grow round and big and horrified; saw his mouth open and refuse to close; heard strange little gurgles and chokings. But she did not let go.

"When you insulted me this morning I promised to settle with you; I did not expect to have the chance so soon."

Drazk disappears underwater and Zen swims to shore, where she reflects on what has happened:

"He got what was coming to him," she said to herself presently. She admitted no regret. On the contrary, her inborn

1 Connor, The Major, pp. 126-127.

self-confidence, her assurance that she could take care of herself under any circumstances, seemed to be strengthened by the experience.¹

She is, however, much relieved to learn, years later, that Drazk has survived, enlisted in the Canadian Army, and sends her greetings from France.

In the civilian society portrayed in Canadian war novels, sex is permissible only in a context of violence; it follows, therefore, that war must allow sexual fulfilment. Certainly the war does not seem to separate as many lovers as it unites. Frank Melbury and Regina Barry, as a modern Paolo and Francesca, share the passive excitement of a naval battle. Similarly, Barry Dunbar marries a young girl in the Volunteer Aid Detachment, Phyllis Vincent, after distinguishing himself in combat; Larry Strangways marries Alix Adare and takes her to England with him; Irene Elden follows her husband Dave to England after a brief estrangement, meets him purely by chance, and returns, reconciled, to Alberta. War is so much a family affair that Bertrand Sinclair attacks the war in The Hidden Places partly for what it has done to servicemen's wives. Thus Myra Hollister tells her estranged husband what it was like in wartime London:

"I longed for you. Then I began to resent your complete absorption by the war machine. Then you got dim. . . . There were thousands like me in London.

1 Stead, Dennison Grant, pp. 107-108.

The war took our men - but took no account of us. We were untrained. There were no jobs to occupy our hands - none we could put our hearts into - none that could be gotten without influence."¹

Myra's kind of honesty is rare, however, even in Sinclair's work. Ordinarily, wartime married life is portrayed as idyllic at best and irksome at worst. Barry and Phyllis Dunbar honeymoon in Scotland before he returns to the front and a hero's death; Rod and Mary Norquay spend the first years of the war in a London flat, from which, in effect, he commutes to combat.

What is suggested by such treatment is that war sanctions the proper kind of marriage and destroys lesser relationships. Gander Stake loses Jo Burge because he rejects the war. Myra Hollister's weak character costs her her husband and eventually her life. In Redemption, Emile Lanctot and Joan Campion are at first strongly anti-war; they are also lovers. Though they are eventually converted to support of the war, Joan dies giving birth to his illegitimate son, clearly a judgment on her radicalism.

One of the closest identifications of sex and war - war, moreover, as verbal experience - occurs in Isabel Ecclestone Mackay's Mist of Morning, the bulk of which deals with prewar German intrigue in Canada. At the novel's end, with the German spies foiled, David Greig and his fiancée Rosme Selwyn stand at a window, arms

¹ Bertrand W. Sinclair, The Hidden Places (Boston: Little, Brown, 1922), p. 216.

around one another. A newsboy hurries by below, shouting the news of the invasion of Belgium. The effect on David is dramatic, if unconsciously comic:

Rosme felt her lover stiffen beside her. It seemed that his face grew older while she looked. . . .

"It means War, Rosme."

"But not England? Not - us?"

He did not answer. Instead he drew her closer. There was no slackening in his arm now, no far away look in his eyes which sought her own. He kissed her lovely, rumpled hair

And they were happy. For though War might find them to-morrow, to-day they had found Love.¹

If Freudian principles operate at all in the popular romance, they are operating here.

A widespread conviction underlies all the attitudes discussed so far: war as verbal experience, as expressed through literary convention, as chivalrous game, as crusade. It is the conviction, held by almost all the writers of this period, that war is an alien, unreal experience with no connection to everyday life in Canada. It is, in Alix Adare's words, "not only distant, [but] phantom-like."² One of the most convincing indications of this attitude can be found

1 Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, Mist of Morning (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1919), p. 407.

2 King, The High Heart, p. 373.

in the narrative structure of many Canadian war novels. It is striking to see, in novel after novel, the ^eruption of the war into narratives which are unprepared for it. In effect, an ordinary novel about a man struggling to achieve business success is stopped in mid-plot and converted into a vision of spiritual exaltation. In the works of Ralph Connor, Basil King, Bertrand Sinclair, Robert J. C. Stead, Frances Beynon, Laura Goodman Salverson, and others, the war usually fractures the narrative. Chapter XVI in The City of Comrades ends with Frank Melbury's repeating the "senseless" syllables "Gavrilo Prinzip! Gavrilo Prinzip! Gavrilo Prinzip!"¹ Chapter XVII opens two years later, as Melbury is invalided home, and we learn of his war experiences through a series of flashbacks. A similar break occurs in Dennison Grant. At the peak of an unwanted business success Grant dissolves his firm when war is declared. Stead then jumps four years, to Grant's return from combat. Sinclair's The Inverted Pyramid shows the war's onset as an inexplicable, unexpected interruption to Rod Norquay's career. Aleta Dey, by Frances Beynon, begins as a fairly realistic novel of the women's suffrage movement and breaks halfway through; the remainder is a melodramatic account of the heroine's war-inspired alienation and martyrdom.

In some cases we can explain this narrative break as the result of poor craftsmanship. But where it occurs in the work of competent journeymen such as King, Sinclair, and the later Stead,

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 213.

the narrative break holds thematic significance. Stanley Cooperman's discussion of Willa Cather's One of Ours, an American novel, provides some useful insights, for One of Ours displays a similar fracture - or seeming fracture - between its peacetime and wartime narratives. Cooperman demonstrates that no real break exists in the narrative - that the hero's fulfilment in war is the natural outcome of the systematic frustrations of his civilian life. Those frustrations are highly specific: the hero's frigid wife leaves him; the farm work he does to dull his mind becomes self-defeating when it becomes profitable. As a result, says Cooperman, "The European war comes as a release - indeed, as an emotional necessity"1

Just such a pattern, perhaps from different sources, emerges in a number of Canadian war novels. Dennison Grant seizes the opportunity of the war to escape from frustrating business responsibilities he has had thrust upon him. In The City of Comrades, Frank Melbury's frustration is explicitly sexual. Having redeemed himself from a life of alcohol and petty crime, and regained a modest position as an architect, he has revealed his past to Regina Barry. Thinking that she has rejected him, he flees first to the Canadian wilderness and then to the war. The wilderness, despite its masculine companionship, offers no solace. But the news of war inspires him:

1 Cooperman, World War I and the American Novel, p. 133.

I wonder how many hundreds of thousands of men and women there are to whom the war came as a blessed opportunity to get away from uselessness or heartache. Stranded, purposeless, spiritless, futile, tired, empty, with something broken in the life or seemingly at an end, they suddenly found themselves called on to put forth energies they never knew they had, to meet needs they had never heard of.

"Son of man, can these dry bones live?" one might have been asking oneself a few years previously; and all at once there were multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, energized into newness of being. Among them I was only one humble, stupid individual; but the summons was like that which came to the dust when it was bidden to be Adam and a man.¹

For Frank Melbury, war is literally a Godsend, rescuing him from a prosperity which is meaningless without sexual fulfilment. Wes Thompson, in Burned Bridges, goes to war on the strength of the returned man's atrocity stories; but he has been prepared for this step through his estrangement from Sophie Carr and his growing realization that Tommy Ashe, his longtime friend, is merely profiteering from the war. When he enlists in the Royal Flying Corps, he does so because civilian life has become intolerable.

In The Major, Ralph Connor prepares us carefully for the onset of war; it is fought out in advance in the microcosm of Wolf Willow, Alberta. In The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, however, the narrative break does occur. Barry Dunbar feels he has failed as a

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 227.

missionary. Though his supporters in his congregation have narrowly outvoted a minority which wants him removed, he has resigned his position and has retreated, like Frank Malbury, to the wilderness. When war breaks out, he decides instantly to enlist.

Clearly, machine war for some novelists is literally a deus ex machina, "the next Universal after God,"¹ and offers a fervently welcomed escape for a generation "deprived of romance and bold enterprise, limited and circumscribed and in danger of stifling spiritually in the midst of material plenty."² The melodramatic suddenness with which World War I had begun permits Canadian war novelists to use it as a melodramatic device, requiring little or no preparation and serving admirably to move the action from the mundane level of Edmonton real-estate deals or Vancouver car sales to that of heroic self-sacrifice. The very remoteness of war, and its seeming lack of roots in everyday life, make it well-suited to transform the ordinary man and woman into hero and heroine, and their materialist world into the heroic society.

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 313.

2 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, p. 80.

THREE: THE HERO AGAINST HIMSELF

The central conflict faced by the hero in the Canadian war novel is with himself and his society, not with the Germans. If he senses something noble in his character, he is aware of something base in it as well, and he sees the same duality in his society. To choose nobility is complex and ambiguous, however, because it involves the achievement of manhood by the loss of it. In a materialist society, the test of manhood is to prosper materially, to "make two dollars grow where only one flourished." Commitment to the war, however, demands the repudiation of such prosperity; to give up wealth, and the manhood it bestows, is the first crucial decision the hero must make. Moreover, the physical and mental abilities which define manhood in combat are precisely those which combat destroys. The hero unfits himself both for normal bourgeois society and for the society of the trenches; if he survives, therefore, his greatest concern is to create a new social order that will accept and reward his own kind of manhood.

Compounding the difficulty of the hero's choice is the fact that he invariably suffers from social inadequacies which cast doubt on his manhood. The most common of these is simply that he is an intellectual; that is, he is more concerned with ideas and ideals than with producing and consuming. On a continent dominated for most of its history by a materialist ethos, the artist, writer, teacher,

and cleric have inevitably been regarded as somewhat effete and parasitical. Stephen Leacock's Parson Drone is not so named merely for his vocal qualities; he is an unproductive member of a society dedicated to production and to acquisition. Similarly, anyone involved in manipulating abstractions is considered unmanly unless such manipulations make him rich. The intellectual is relegated to the world of women; he is the direct descendant of Fenimore Cooper's David Gamut.

Carl Berger's discussion of Leacock's attitudes toward bourgeois society is illuminating, for it shows a contradiction we find again and again in the hero of the Canadian war novel. In the decade and a half before the war, Berger observes,

men of learning were pushed aside in the bustling search for profit and gain. Business was predominant and it set the tone of the entire community. The professor, Leacock discovered, "more than any ordinary person finds himself shut out from the general society of the business world," scorned because he "does not know how to make money." . . . On the one hand, Leacock's toryism moved him to idealize the country life as the only basis for civilization and ridicule the men who were destroying it, and, on the other, he partially accepted the monetary standard of success which he attacked.¹

1 Berger, The Sense of Power, p. 44. The quotation is from Stephen Leacock, "The Apology of a Professor," University Magazine, IX (April 1910), pp. 178, 179. For a useful discussion of this conflict in American society, see Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (New York: Knopf, 1964), pp. 233-252.

Just such a contradiction can be found in Barry Dunbar, the hero of Ralph Connor's The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land. We see him first as an image of almost unreal masculine beauty, poised naked above a river and seemingly made of precious metals:

The sunlight glistening on the beautiful white skin lay like pools of gold in the curving hollows of the perfectly modelled body, and ran like silver over the rounded swellings of the limbs.

Another man, observing Barry, exclaims: "Ye gods of Greece! . . . What is this thing I see? Flesh or spirit? Man or god?"¹ Yet we soon learn that Barry is a failure as a man. A good outdoorsman, a talented musician, well educated, he has been given a position as a missionary in his home district in northern Alberta, but his congregation finds him wooden and boring. He reproves his neighbours for their profanity, threatens to report them for poaching, and generally behaves like a prig.

Despite his alienation from the villagers of Wapiti, Barry foresees a great future for the Canada of which it forms a part. He promises a young American girl:

"The day is coming when along this waterway great cities shall be, with factories and humming industries. These plains, these flowing hills will be the home of millions of men, and in my lifetime, too."²

1 Connor, The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, pp. 9, 10.

2 Ibid., p. 21.

And after a flood of statistics on Canada's potential, Barry exclaims, "Ah, to have a hand in that!" The girl, struck by Barry's visions of industrial greatness, observes with some disappointment that he is "only a missionary." His response is violent:

"Only a missionary. Ah, if I could only be one. A missionary! With a mission and a message to my people! If only I had the gift of tongues, of flaming, burning, illuminating speech, of heart-compelling speech! To tell my people how to make this country truly great and truly free, how to keep it free from the sordid things, the cruel things, the unjust, the unclean, the loathsome things that have debased and degraded the older nations, that are debasing and degrading even your young, great nation. Ah, to be a missionary with a tongue of fire, with a message of light! A missionary to my people to help them to high and worthy living, to help them to God! Only a missionary! What would you have me? A money-maker?"¹

Barry feels himself at two removes from manhood: he lacks both the business skill that defines normal Canadian manhood, and the rhetorical skill that would provide a substitute for it. That the two are closely linked is made clear when he discusses his failure as a preacher with his father. His congregation, he feels, is simply not getting value for money:

". . . I couldn't go on here, dad, preaching . . . to people, in short, who could not profit by my preaching."

"Because it had no pep, eh?" said his father with bitter scorn.

1 Connor, op. cit., p. 22.

"Do you know, dad, I believe that is what is wrong with my preaching: it hasn't got pep. What pep is, only the initiated know. But the long and the short of this thing is, it is the people that must be satisfied. It is they who have to stand your preaching, they who pay the piper."¹

Barry's use of the slang term "pep," and his father's rejection of the word, are significant here. It is a word much in vogue in the business world in the World War I era, and its use is deplored by Barry's father, who asserts that "'Correct English is the only English for a gentleman."² Barry thus finds himself caught between the genteel and old-fashioned values of his father, and those of a rough, uncouth community. As Barry complains, "when I come within range of any of my flock all my flip vocabulary absolutely vanishes, and I find myself talking like a professor of English or a maiden lady school ma'am of a very certain age."³ His smiles echo Leacock's view of the intellectual as pariah; and it is his inadequate command of the vernacular which keeps him from becoming "initiated."

A similar attitude, but expressed with an unbeliever's gusto, appears in Bertrand Sinclair's portrayal of Wes Thompson upon his arrival at a remote Indian village, where he plans to set up a Methodist mission. The rivermen who have brought him to the village

1 Connor, The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, pp. 69-70.

2 Ibid., p. 40.

3 Ibid.

are vastly amused by his "abysmal ignorance . . . concerning practical things, his awkward length of body, his student's pallor," and predict that "'once he's had a fair tast o' the North he'll be less a saint an' more a man.'"¹ This is an accurate forecast, but before Wes loses his vocation and gains his manhood, he is made to suffer numerous indignities. The Athabasca Cree treat him with an absent-minded tolerance more crushing than hostility would be. The only other resident whites, Sam Carr and his daughter Sophie, are rationalist agnostics and far better educated than Wes. Even Tommy Ashe, an English wanderer with an Oxford education, can look after himself in the wilderness, while Wes can only wound himself with a clumsily handled ax.

Yet in the course of several months, Wes gains considerable knowledge of himself and the wilderness; at length he is offered a job as a trader's agent further out in the wilds. His decision to take the job and to renounce his mission is the first step out of immaturity, as he clearly realizes: "'If I can't honestly be a minister," he tells himself, "I can at least be a man.'"²

The step from intellectual to businessman is taken by almost every hero in the Canadian war novel. Dave Elden, in Stead's The Cow Puncher, works as a reporter before moving on to real estate. Austin Selwyn, in The Parts Men Play, turns from modestly successful

1 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, pp. 22, 233.

2 Ibid., p. 122.

novels to highly profitable pacifist propaganda. Larry Gwynne leaves the university for a business position in Chicago; Greg Vant, in Redemption, returns from Oxford to Nova Scotia and becomes a noted mining geologist.

In one or two cases, chiefly in Sinclair's novels, the crucial step is from intellectual to worker. Thus Robert Hollister, in The Hidden Places, suffers eye trouble "brought on from overstudy" at college, and recovers by spending a year in British Columbia logging camps. Sinclair tells us that

During that twelve months books were prohibited. He lived in the woods, restored the strength of his eyes amid that restful greenness, hardened a naturally vigorous body by healthy, outdoor labor with the logging crews.¹

Sinclair is even more anti-intellectual in The Inverted Pyramid, in which Rod Norquay returns from four years at McGill

with a B.A., a few lettered sweaters, a miscellaneous assortment of classical and scientific and philosophical odds and ends imprinted on a fairly retentive memory, - and a half-formed doubt of the utility or advantage of formal education. . . . He was finished with school. . . . If he were trained for any specific purpose, that purpose was as yet hidden from him. The desire to write an epic novel scarcely qualified as a purpose. In the outwardly simple but internally complicated affairs of the Norquay establishment he was a superfluous unit.²

1 Sinclair, The Hidden Places, p. 12.

2 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, pp. 81-82.

Like Robert Hollister, Rod finds his purpose in becoming a logger; after the war his wife, not he, becomes a novelist.

The hero's intellect does more than merely alienate him from society. On many occasions, his thoughts lead him into open conflict with those around him. Probably the most powerful expression of this conflict is found in Beverley Baxter's The Parts Men Play, whose American hero, Austin Selwyn, becomes an anti-British propagandist in wartime London. Selwyn is living in England at the outbreak of war, but does not share in the wave of patriotism; instead he asks himself what has led to the war, and arrives at an answer in keeping with his intellectual nature:

Ignorance.

That was the answer to it all. It was ignorance that kept a nation unaware of its own highest destiny; it was ignorance that fomented trouble among the peoples of the earth. Suffering, sickness, crime, tyranny, war, were all growths whose roots were buried in ignorance and sucked its vile nourishment.¹

When he tries to express this view to Elise Durwent, his fiancée, she violently repudiates it, and him as well;

"Do you think I'd marry you," she exclaimed scornfully - "a man who counsels treason? . . .

"I would rather marry the poorest groom in our stables than you. He would at least be a man."²

1 Baxter, The Parts Men Play, p. 165.

2 Ibid., p. 170.

Selwyn settles down in a London flat and begins to write, in total isolation from the society around him:

Day after day, and into the long hours of the night, he wrote, destroying pages as he read them, refining, changing, rewriting, always striving for results which would show no signs of construction, but only breathe with life. . . . He saw no one. His former London acquaintances were engrossed in affairs of war, and made no attempt to seek him out. . . .

He who lives alone among millions courts all the mad fancies that his brain is heir to. Insanity, perversion, incoherent idealism, fanaticism - these are the offspring of unnatural detachment from one's fellows, and in turn give birth to the black moods of revolt against each and every thing that is.¹

Thought breeds isolation, and isolation intensifies thought; Selwyn is therefore understandably alienated from "a race that acts more on instinct than on reason,"² as Baxter describes the British.

Another American, Doug Watson, sharpens the contrast between the overly intellectual Selwyn and those around him. Watson is a student at Cambridge, but is far from effete:

His face was broad, and in the poise of his head and thick neck there was the clear impression of great physical and mental driving-power. Although still a student, the mark of the engineer was strongly stamped on him. He was of the type that spans a great river with a bridge; that glories in the overcoming of obstacles by sheer domination of will.³

1 Baxter, The Parts Men Play, pp. 199-200.

2 Ibid., p. 195.

3 Ibid., p. 201.

Watson has left the loneliness of a depopulated university town and is about to enlist in the British Army, though Selwyn argues against it. Watson tells him,

"I haven't your gift of plausible argument, . . . and I suppose that theoretically you are sound in everything you say. Yet, instinctively, I know that I am doing the right thing."¹

After further useless argument, Watson prepares to leave Selwyn's flat, and urges that they enlist together the next day: "It'll be all kinds of experience, you'll get wagonloads of copy, and when it's all over you'll feel like a man instead of a sissy."²

That the intellectual's isolation can be remedied through war is made clear in a later passage, when Selwyn stands watching a parade of recruits still in civilian clothes: they include a "Varsity man," a costermonger, a poet, an artist known to Selwyn, and Elise Durwent's outcast brother Dick. Whether one is socially inadequate because of class, intellect, or criminal act (all roughly equal drawbacks, in Baxter's view), war offers an escape from alienation.

The hero's social inadequacies are usually the result of intellect or temperament, rather than class origins. There are no proletarian heroes in the Canadian war novels of this period, though a number of working-class characters assume the role of squire to the hero. Wes Thompson, raised by "maiden aunts," has suffered an

1 Baxter, op. cit., p. 207.

2 Ibid., p. 210.

unmanly but otherwise middle-class upbringing. Dave Elden may seem crude and semiliterate at the novel's opening, but he comes of good family; his alcoholic father and the prosperous Dr. Hardy both spring from eastern Canadian middle-class stock, and have many friends in common.

More frequently, the hero is the son of a very wealthy family; he has descended, voluntarily or otherwise, into the "lower depths" of society. In some cases, the descent is a steep one. Frank Melbury, whose full name is Francis Worsley Melbury Melbury, is a son of Sir Edward Melbury, a man of wealth and public honour and one of the Fathers of Confederation. But, as Frank puts it, liquor, "the curse of Canada - the curse, more or less, of all northern peoples - began to be laid upon me,"¹ and he has become an alcoholic drifter. Rod Norquay is unfitted by temperament and circumstance for a meaningful position in upper-class life, and so chooses the life of a logger. A similar attitude leads Dennison Grant to reject the wealth his father has passively acquired through land ownership; as he tells Zen, not long after her encounter with Drazk,

"society, in considerable numbers, wanted his land to live on, so society made of my father a wealthy man, and gave him power over many people"

"My father has also become wealthy," she said, "although I never thought of it in that way."

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 43.

"Yes, but in exchange for his wealth your father has given service to society; supplied many thousands of steers for hungry people to eat. That's a different story"1

Grant, having taken up the life of a cowhand, is happy because he is doing useful work; and in the pastoral world of Alberta's cattle country, the blurring of class lines makes such a choice possible.

Carl Berger has pointed out the importance of the concept of work in imperialist thought; for imperialists, as for many other disciples of Thomas Carlyle, work

was a virtue in itself, a process in which character was disciplined and man's nature developed. One was to work in the correct spirit, ever conscious that one was serving God in a secular calling.²

This attitude toward work is held by most Canadian war novelists, even agnostics like Sinclair, but their definitions of work vary. Different kinds of work have different moral values for these writers, and they do not always agree on the worth of a particular kind of enterprise. In general, however, three kinds of work are open to the hero and those around him: productive, exploitative, and abstract. Productive work is usually associated with the pastoral world of Alberta ranching, in Connor, or Manitoba farming, in Durkin. Exploitative work consists of mining or manufacturing, and is usually less acceptable in moral terms; it menaces the pastoral present for

1 Stead, Dennison Grant, pp. 122-123.

2 Berger, The Sense of Power, p. 221.

the sake of an industrialized future. Abstract work, perhaps because it is associated with intellect and requires little physical effort, is generally despised; it includes finance, speculation in stocks and real estate, and any other activity producing "unearned" income. The Gwynnes, in Connor's The Major, face a typical dilemma when coal is discovered on their ranch. Ernest Switzer, the young German who is later to attack Kathleen Gwynne, persuades the family to set up a mining company with himself as manager. Larry's mother reminds the family that

"if we accept this proposition it will mean a complete change in our family life. . . . [W]e shall no longer be ranchers, but shall become coal miners."¹

Noral Gwynne sees German duplicity in Switzer's offer: "Ernest Switzer wants our Kathleen. Mother knows it. We all know it."² Exploitative work is associated with the overthrow of a stable rural society and with base sexual desires. But not all novelists agree on the nature of exploitative work. For Bertrand Sinclair's heroes, logging is productive if done wisely. Rod Norquay's father draws a sharp distinction between the family's logging methods and those of most loggers:

"Outside of two or three concerns, logging in B.C. today is an orgy of waste. They're skimming the cream of the forest, spilling

1 Connor, The Major, p. 173.

2 Ibid., p. 172.

half of it. Kicking the milkpail over now and then, refusing to feed the cow they milk. However, we dcn't do that. I can show you limits we logged when I was a young man that will bear merchantable timber by the time your children are grown, my boy."¹

That Mr. Norquay's prediction is unfulfilled is the direct result of the folly of abstract work - in this case, the shaky financial empire built up by Rod's brother Gove. When the Norquay Trust collapses, threatening the savings of those who have invested in it, Rod and his father log every foot of their holdings to repay the Trust's shareholders.

Another of Sinclair's loggers, Robert Hollister, also sees his work as essentially productive. The cedars felled by his men

would be sawn into thin sheets to make tight roofs on houses in distant towns. . . . Hollister perceived both the complexity and the simplicity of that vast machine into which modern industry has grown. . . . He was fed and clothed by unseen hands. And in return he, as they did, levied upon nature's store of raw material and paid for what he got with timber, rough shaped to its ultimate uses by the labor of his hands.²

Hollister's work is sharply contrasted with the parasitism of an English remittance man, Jack Bland, who is not involved with any work at all, but idles his life away, awaiting an inherited fortune.

In a war economy, exploitative work turns to profiteering

1 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, p. 97.

2 Sinclair, The Hidden Places, pp. 151-152.

more readily than does, say, farming or ranching. But the farmer Jackson Stake, in Grain, has some bad moments about his wartime prosperity. After visiting neighbours who have just lost a son, Jackson and Susie Stake are driving home when he suddenly stops their new car and tells his wife: "'Susie, I was just thinkin' o' the price o' wheat. Blood money, Susie, every dollar of it!'"¹ Yet the demands of war must be met, and the next day he is planning to buy more land to grow wheat.

In contrast, exploitative and abstract work become perversions of true work under the influence of war. Tommy Ashe, in Burned Bridges, is a car salesman like Wes Thompson. Rather than give up his business, however, he parlays it into a shipbuilding venture under government contract. He himself of course knows nothing about shipbuilding, but will merely hire those who do. As he tells Wes,

"We finance the construction, but we don't really risk a penny. The contracts are on a basis of cost, plus ten per cent. You see? If we go above or under the estimate it doesn't matter much. Our profit is fixed."²

Although Sam Carr has loaned Tommy fifty thousand dollars for this enterprise, no stigma attaches to Sam, presumably because he is too old for combat.

The clash between productive work and profiteering is the

1 Stead, Grain, p. 138.

2 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, p. 241.

major theme of Alexander Charles Stewart's novel The Discard. Stewart's autobiographical narrator-hero is a 47-year-old contractor named K. C. Sport, a self-styled "Rough Neck" who nonetheless publishes poetry; at the outset of the war, he is nearly bankrupt after being bilked on a government construction job, and joins the army as much for security as for the contribution he can make to defeating the Hun. Hoping to join a pioneer battalion, K. C. wins a commission but refuses to seek the political influence he needs to be sent overseas. As a result, he spends the war in Canada, posted from one city to another as he waits for orders that never come.

Even such a brief account of the novel suggests that K. C. is in many ways a parody of the typical war-novel hero. He is middle-aged and married, has no illusions about the war, and pokes fun at its rhetoric:

And thou, England! Mistress of the Seas
and Benevolent Tax-Collector in many
lands! thou flaming (yet shaken a little;
the shock was so sudden and terrible),
righteously indignant o'er "violated
Belgium," o'er "inhumanities," "atrocities,"
"cynical machiavellianisms" (thou having
grown almost wholly beyond the need of
these).¹

K. C.'s own rhetoric is uncontrollably facetious: Ottawa is always "Snottawa," Sir Sam Hughes is "Sir Slam Bruise," and the war itself

1 Alexander C. Stewart ["Professor A.C.S."], The Discard: Being the Historical Remnants of a Rough Neck, Translated and amended from the original Canadian Vernacular and done for the first time into collateral English (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1919), p. 108.

is the time "when the boys across the fish-pond were blasting each other to pieces by the 100,000, all the way from the Swiss Sentinels to the Flanders Flats."¹ K. C.'s coy and involved style is in part a reaction against war propaganda, and in part a bad imitation of Tristram Shandy, which he frequently praises. But his facetiousness disappears when he speaks of work:

I am not a Preacher - the world has too many of them. Nor a Statesman - though there's room enough. Nor a Prophet - though there is need. Nor a Bookmaker . . . - the world is deluged with them. But I was a Workman - till Finance, a Crook, and a Crooked Minister blackballed, bled and shackled me, and having worked - and worked with the men of many nations (all nations, almost) - I believe that personal, national, and international advantage is a fraud; that the world is not a sweatshop, neither whole nor in part. I believe that Profit and Plunder are the basis of and causes of war; and I believe in Work.²

Productive work, detached from profit, is an article of faith held by virtually every Canadian war novelist, regardless of religion or politics, and the hero whose work produces only a subsistence is seen as far more contented than any profiteer. Rod Norquay exults as he contemplates the acres of stumps that are all that remain of his inheritance; Robert Hollister is philosophical about the fire which destroys his timber limit; Dennison Grant pours his unwanted wealth into a nonprofit scheme for settling returned soldiers on the land.

1 Stewart, The Discard, p. 3.

2 Ibid., pp. 260-261.

Only K. C. Sport, for all his seriousness about Work, sees how easily such an attitude can be exploited by profiteers, and puts this speech in the mouths of the "Mighty Ones:"

"For your dead - they died gloriously. Such death to so many in so short a time is only given once in a thousand years; and we - you see we are not physically fit, fat, unexercised, mentally indisposed from our constant employment in regulating mankind - we envy them their glorious deaths; you have no occasion for tears or grief on that score. For your maimed - who would not give all this world's goods in exchange for their honourable scars and their poverty? Poverty must still be their portion, because to reward them according to their merit, were to traduce them to mercenaries, and shrink their heroic service into the sordid balance of barter and sale. Perish such abominations!"¹

If the hero's intellect isolates him from others, his belief in work without profit wins him an uncertain acceptance at best. Prewar Canada offers him banal prosperity or humiliating frustration, and his response to the war largely depends on whether he has been "successful" or not.

The successful hero is often unsure of the proper attitude he should take toward the war. Wes Thompson's car dealership means more to him than a distant European conflict; Gander Stake is deeply involved in the family farm. In such cases, the hero's decision for war is the crucial act, towards which the narrative moves. The successful hero feels very little loyalty to the society which has

1 Stewart, op. cit., p. 165.

enriched him. Instead, a more primitive sentiment motivates him, which has nothing to do with bourgeois institutions. For Bertrand Sinclair's heroes, this sentiment is powerful enough to overwhelm reason itself, as Wes Thompson finds:

Deep in him his emotions were stirring. The old tribal instinct - which sent a man forth to fight for the tribe no matter the cause - was functioning under the layer of stuff that civilization imposes on every man. His reason gainsaid these stirrings, those instinctive urgings, but there was a stirring and it troubled him.¹

An identical conflict assails Rod Norquay's logger friend Andy Hall, whose radical beliefs seem irrelevant to the demands of the war. Though he can demonstrate that the workingman has nothing to gain, he tells Rod,

"But logic doesn't help me where I live, inside of me, when I see fellows I know, fellows I like, getting ready to go. The old tribal instincts that are stronger and deeper than civilization and industry keep stirring up in me, nagging at me."²

By contrast, the hero as failure identifies himself with the society that has rejected him, at least on an abstract level. Barry Dunbar is rejected by his congregation, but when he learns that war has broken out he decides instantly to enlist because

1 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, pp. 228-229.

2 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, p. 186.

"it is England's war, it is Britain's war, and when Britain is at war my country is at war, and when my country is at war I ought to be there."¹

Yet in many cases the hero is physically as well as morally separated from the society he proposes to defend. When war breaks out, he is usually deep in the Canadian wilderness, which is portrayed in idyllic terms. This is the case in The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, A Romance of the Halifax Disaster, The City of Comrades, and most notably in The Inverted Pyramid, where the symbolism of the wilderness is explicit. Rod and Mary Norquay, newly married, have been expelled from the Norquay estate after Rod has beaten up his brother Grove. With no clear idea of what to do with himself, he takes Mary camping to the "Hiding Place," a remote inlet offering them a womblike privacy:

They turned a jutting point and met a slow outsetting current. Against this Rod made his way straight for a cliff which, as they drew near, opened like a great window chiselled in solid granite. Through this the stream flowed, sluggish, deep, a pale-green translucence between high, damp walls. Somewhere within rose the monotone of a waterfall. . . .

They rowed into the cleft, worked upstream between high, flood-scoured walls. In that chasm the sun touched only for an hour at noon. It was dark and cool. Mosses and maidenhair fern lightened black crevices with streaks and clusters of green. There was a beauty about this gloomy cleft floored with liquid emerald, but it was not a beauty one wished to embrace or linger

1 Connor, The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, p. 82.

with too long, - too cavernous,
a little grim. Mary drew closer to Rod
in that hundred-yard passage. But she
clapped her hands when the boat drew
clear. They came out into sunlight.
They had passed through the canyon as if
it were a door which led to a tiny flat
cupped in the hills, all clear of dense
forest, almost free from thickets, clothed
with bracken. . . . Between two maples
on one side stood a small cabin of split
cedar.¹

The sexual meaning of this passage is clear. Defeated by established society, with no useful role to play, Rod retreats to the undemanding world of the womb. He will eventually have to leave it, but his woodsman's skills enable him to prolong the idyll for weeks while he works on his "Iliad of the pioneers." When he and Mary do return to the outer world, it has been transformed by the war and offers him new opportunities for manhood.

In his attitude to sex, Sinclair seems very close to Connor, though he does not associate it with violence as explicitly as Connor does. But both authors, like most Canadian war novelists, see the sexual act as both beautiful and unpleasant, something to be got over with as quickly as possible. Just as Kathleen Gwynne shifts instantaneously from lover to mother in The Major, so Mary Norquay drops her sexual role for that of housekeeper and companion, and then of mother. Rod, like most men in Canadian war novels, is content to have it so.

1 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, pp. 169-170.

Yet Rod and Mary never envision the Hiding Place as a permanent home:

They were both too much the normal produce of society even to wish complete withdrawal from their kind. That would only be evasion. But it was an experience they found to their liking. They promised themselves to repeat it often.¹

It offers them, instead, an opportunity to return to the "barbarian" world of "instinct"; Mary speculates, "Maybe we're throwbacks."² From this world they can emerge, in effect reborn. And in "promising themselves to repeat it often," they recognize the existence of a cycle in their lives - a cycle which is carried out, in one form or another, in almost every one of these novels. We might call this the heroic cycle, since it is accessible only to those who relinquish material values for the sake of self-sacrifice in combat.

A typical example of the heroic cycle can be found in Basil King's novella Going West. A young American named Lester rejects his father's bookselling business, perhaps because it is too intellectual, in favour of a career as a stockbroker. His parents disapprove when he becomes engaged to a girl named Molly Dove, but he marries her over their objections. When war threatens, he enlists in the army automatically:

1 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, pp. 173-174.

2 Ibid., p. 174.

It was the kind of call against which his instincts and interests both rebelled, but he took it with no more analysis than he gave to the necessity of getting out of bed on a winter's morning.¹

As a soldier, Lester's individuality is submerged and his former roles are stripped from him:

His life after that could scarcely be distinguished from hundreds of thousands of other lives. One overruling need had bound up the manhood of the race into a solidarity so tense that the individual was swallowed up in it. Lester was no longer a son, a brother, a husband, the father of a coming baby; he was an infinitesimal part of a huge machine, with no more to say in matters of his life and death than the wheel to the man who turns it round. . . . It was like a rebirth - only it suggested a rebirth into hell.²

The absorption of the individual into a machinelike army is one of the most recurrent images in World War I fiction, but in the Canadian war novel it is treated wholly without irony, because the hero's selfhood is unimportant except as something to be given up. King makes this explicit after Lester and a "big, blond Bavarian" kill one another in hand-to-hand combat. They then find themselves ghosts, a condition which the Bavarian somehow understands better than the American. He explains that Lester is morally advanced:

1 Basil King, Going West (New York: Harpers, 1919), p. 6.

2 Ibid., pp. 11-12.

"You gave the most precious things you had - your business, your happiness, your family, your wife, your life. You held nothing back. You not only gave without reserve, but you gave without complaining. You didn't do it for yourself, but for a great cause - as men conceive of great causes - and you did it of your own free will."¹

At length, Lester returns to America where his invisible presence heals the rift between his family and his wife and child; he sees their reconciliation as analogous to

the readjustment of nations to nations and of men to men. The blind hatred that had hurled him against the Bavarian and the Bavarian against him would cease. Their folly would be recognized. Of the blood that had been shed, and was still to be shed, this would be the recompense. It would be shed to its highest purpose when it should be shown that it had been shed in vain.²

The hero's death, in other words, permits a divided society to unite and renew the cycle, usually on a higher moral plane. The Elden ranch, at the opening of The Cow Puncher, is ramshackle but set in "an Arcadia where one might well return to the simple life."³ At the close of the novel, it is clean and tidy, a fit home for the widowed Irene and her baby son. In this new era, Irene says,

1 Basil King, Going West, p. 27.

2 Ibid., p. 49.

3 Stead, The Cow Puncher, p. 34.

"we women of the war - we have nothing left to be selfish for. But we have the whole world to be unselfish for. It's all different, and it can never go back. We won't let it go back. We've paid too much to let it go back."¹

In many cases, however, the hero returns from the dead to initiate the new cycle. Like Dennison Grant, he may be merely scarred; more often, he is genuinely resurrected. Tony Mackinroy, in Treading the Winepress, is reported killed in action but is later discovered alive and amnesic. Robert Hollister, in The Hidden Places, is hideously disfigured and has been temporarily deprived even of his identity: "In 1917 he was a nameless convalescent in a German hospital; officially he was dead."² Austin Selwyn, seriously wounded in the combat he had so long opposed, "hovered for a long time in the borderland between life and death,"³ and Wes Thompson suffers perhaps the subtlest but most illuminating wound. As a rising car salesman, he has been complimented by his employer for his "nerve," a trait indispensable in the business world. Returning to Vancouver after two years in the Royal Flying Corps, he is outwardly unhurt but suffering from "the hidden sickness of racked nerves in an unmaimed body."⁴ Like Tony Mackinroy and Robert Hollister, he too has been

1 Stead, The Cow Puncher, p. 342.

2 Sinclair, The Hidden Places, p. 23.

3 Baxter, The Parts Men Play, p. 409.

4 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, p. 274.

reported dead. With his "nerve" gone, Wes has no place in the business world symbolized by Tommy Ashe's profiteering; instead, he joins Sam and Sophie Carr in a pioneering attempt to establish a new community on the B.C. coast. Wes is like Sinclair's other returned soldiers, who are compelled to support themselves through some kind of hard, productive work. Jack MacRae, in Poor Man's Rock, must go salmon-fishing as his father did; Rod Norquay, in The Inverted Pyramid, is happily destitute at the novel's end; Robert Hollister finds similar fulfilment in being thrown on his own resources.

In those relatively rare cases in which the hero remains wealthy, he still rejects the society which has made him so. Frank Melbury, having inherited a fortune from his mother, neither continues his architectural career nor sinks into sloth; he becomes a full-time propagandist. Dennison Grant uses his unwanted wealth to establish returned soldiers on farms and ranches. Craig Forrester, after half-heartedly resuming his career as a grain broker, abandons the world of commerce for the simpler life of the farmer. The start of a new cycle, then, is usually marked by the resurrected hero's setting out on a new career which is both more productive and less materialistic than his old one.

Allied soldiers, especially those from Britain's white colonies and dominions, were frequently addressed by the name of their homelands: "Canada," "Australia," "Africa."¹ In many Canadian war

1 Nielsen, "A Barely Perceptible Limp: The First World War in Canadian Fiction (1914-1939)", p. 48; see also Gertrude Arnold, Sister Anne! Sister Anne!! passim.

novels, it is clear that the hero does symbolize the nation; his inner conflicts and triumphs reflect those of his country. Other characters similarly symbolize their homelands: the United States, England, Scotland, Germany.

For Basil King, the identification of the hero with his country is not a trivial matter. Frank Melbury, in The City of Comrades, seems clearly intended to reflect the strengths and weaknesses of Canada. He is, after all, the son of a Father of Confederation and an American mother. With a promising career before him, he succumbs to alcoholism, "the curse of Canada - the curse, more or less, of all northern peoples."¹ As a result, he has been cast out of his family and has drifted to New York, where we first see him as a nondescript member of the shabby mob aimlessly walking around Columbus Circle: a "crowd of Slavs, Mongolians, Greeks, Italians, aliens of all sorts."² His only friend is Lovey, an even shabbier old Englishman. After attempting a burglary, Frank makes the difficult decision to renounce alcohol, and joins the Down and Out Club, a self-help group of reformed drunkards. He succeeds in the long climb back to respectability, bringing Lovey with him, and then finds his career unsatisfying because Regina Barry, whom he loves, seems to have rejected him. After a flight to the Canadian wilderness, he enlists, fights in France for two years, and returns

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 43.

2 Ibid., p. 6.

wounded but spiritually reborn to propagandize for the war. His nationality is the crucial factor for this role:

The appeal would be the stronger for the fact that I was not an Englishman, but a Canadian - blood-brother to the man of his own continent, blood-brother to the Briton, blood-brother to the Frenchman, blood-son of the great ideals fostered by the Anglo-Saxon race I was to be, therefore, a kind of unobtrusive, unaccredited ambassador to the man in the office and the street, with instructions to be inoffensive but persuasive.¹

In Andrew Christian's climactic address, the saintly founder of the Down and Out Club makes explicit the purpose of the identification of the hero with his nation:

"It's the individual who makes the country, who forms the army, who becomes the redemptive element. In proportion as the individual cleanses himself from the national sin the national sin is wiped out."²

So Frank Melbury, by overcoming "the curse of Canada," redeems not only himself but his country.

As redeemer, the hero must inevitably take on Christlike attributes, especially in a war commanding the total support of the churches. What Stanley Cooperman has called the concept of "Jesus in khaki"³ is widespread in Canadian war fiction, especially that

1 King, The City of Comrades, pp. 232-233.

2 Ibid., p. 390.

3 Cooperman, World War I and the American Novel, p. 18.

written by clergymen such as Ralph Connor and Basil King. Barry Dunbar's sacrificial death in No Man's Land; the stigmata which so many others carry home to Canada; the resurrection from the dead of Tony Mackinroy, Robert Hollister, and Wes Thompson: all are indications of the novelists' readiness to see the hero as Christlike. In King's Going West, for example, the Bavarian identifies Lester's sacrifice with Christ's: "You were . . . like Jesus of Nazareth, who laid down His life for his friends, and so, as He said Himself, losing your life you have found it."¹ Frank Melbury senses his own Christlikeness. Seeing New York at peace while Europe is at war, he tells us:

In the countries I had been living in war was the sky overhead and the ground beneath the feet. . . . There was no home it didn't visit, no pocket it didn't rifle, no face it didn't haunt, no heart it didn't search and sift and strengthen and wrench upward - the process was always a hard, dragging, compulsive one - till the most wilful had become submissive and the most selfish had given all. Prayer was war; worship was war; art, science, philosophy, sport were war. Nothing else walked in the streets or labored in the fields or bought and sold in the shops. It was the next Universal after God.

And here, after God, a man was his own Universal Safe people, happy people, dwelling in an Eden out of the reach of cannon and gas and bomb!

"I came not to bring peace, but a sword!"

1 King, Going West, p. 27.

Sacrilegiously, perhaps, I was applying those words to myself as we jolted homeward. But I was applying them with a query. I was asking if it could possibly be worth while. All at once my mission became unreal, fantastic.¹

This passage both illuminates and complicates King's vision of hero as Christ. There is, first of all, the total identification of religion and war, "the next Universal after God." A secular, peacetime society is, ipso facto, heathen; it must be converted to the true religion of war. If the United States is Eden, however, Frank Melbury is not merely Christ bringing a sword: he is the agent of America's expulsion from Eden, bringing the knowledge of good and evil. Presumably his awareness of this duality in his role causes first his hesitancy and then his virtual paralysis, which lasts until America declares war and Frank can embark on the less ambiguous task of preaching to the converted.

The hero's duality deeply concerns Canadian war novelists, and is often expressed through the motif of the hero's double - one or more characters who closely resemble the hero, but whose actions and values are at best morally inadequate, and at worst absolutely evil. The presence of the hero's double in so many Canadian war novels of this period indicates a deep-seated self-mistrust verging, in some cases, on self-hatred and the desire for death, carefully disguised as selflessness and the desire for salvation.

One of the commonest examples of the hero's double is the

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 313.

evil partner: a young man associated with the hero, often more competent, who nevertheless fails to reject material wealth for the higher values of combat and self-sacrifice. Tommy Ashe, in Burned Bridges, is such a partner. We see him first as "a good-looking specimen of pure Anglo-Saxon manhood,"¹ courting Sophie Carr at Lone Moose Creek. A well-born English vagabond, he at first has nothing but amused contempt for Wes Thompson; but they become friends, and together make a winter journey from northern Alberta to the Pacific coast, where they take jobs in the fish canneries. They part temporarily, but eventually find themselves as friendly competitors in the automobile business in Vancouver. While Wes finally leaves business, Tommy becomes a near-millionaire on government shipbuilding contracts. When Wes returns to Vancouver after being reported killed, Tommy goes to Sophie and tries to get her to marry him, an attempt which Wes foils.

Rod Norquay's older brother Grove is also a double:

They were blood-brothers. There was even a profound physical likeness, except that Grove ran slightly to beef. But they didn't think, or act, or feel alike. They were antagonistic at every point where their lives touched. And Rod did not mean, if he could help it, to let this scowling elder duplicate of himself put a single spoke in the wheel which promised to revolve so smoothly for Mary and himself.²

1 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, p. 6.

2 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, pp. 142-143.

Apart from Sinclair's emphasis on the brothers' likeness and mutual hostility, this passage is interesting for its use of a cyclical image - "the wheel which promised to revolve so smoothly" - to describe the life Rod foresees for himself and Mary.

Not all heroes are so hostile to their doubles; Dave Elden, in The Cow Puncher, vaguely mistrusts Conward, the enigmatic "con man," from the moment they meet on Dave's first night in the city, but not until years later, after both have become millionaires, does Dave repudiate his partner. The occasion is Conward's attempted seduction of a naive young secretary; the double is usually a libertine.

In Isabel Ecclestone Mackay's Mist of Morning, the hero's double is more closely associated with Germany than is the case in most Canadian war novels. David Greig, a young orphan who bears the name of the man who has raised him, learns that his father was a sadistic, sensual vivisectionist and is so horrified that he refuses even to learn the man's name. After a successful university career, David becomes the associate of John Baird, a misanthropic inventor, and together they design and build a powerful new engine, well suited for aircraft. David also comes to know Murray Willard, Baird's selfish and semi-criminal nephew. Murray's dissipations put him in the power of Herr Stumpf, a German spy of comic appearance. Stumpf and his colleagues blackmail Murray into trying to steal the plans of the engine, an enterprise foiled by Baird's foresight. The Germans, thinking they have the plans, shoot Murray and escape; David then

rushes upon the scene and learns that Murray is his half-brother; their vivisectionist father is Baird's brother. Always haunted by thoughts of his loathesome ancestry, David watches Murray die with mixed feelings of horror and relief:

The shadow that walked beside him. This was what he had feared! Here in this other man, his brother, was that dread incarnate. "What if it had been you?" Yes, he might have been like that. Who knew how barely he had escaped?

Surely something in him must have known! It seemed now that there had always been some tie between them, mysterious, far-reaching, not to be denied.¹

The taint which has destroyed Murray seems to have missed David by sheer chance, and he contemplates his brother's fate with agonized empathy:

Had that other son of the same father ever suffered like that? Had he, too, shivered under the menace of an evil which he could not understand, or see, or grapple with; but which he felt might lie already crouched in his own heart, waiting its chance to spring? Had he met this dread and fought it, as David had fought, through many ghastly hours? . . .

And if Murray had failed, why not Murray's brother?²

When he turns to his uncle, David finds a dubious consolation in the old man's words:

1 Mackay, Mist of Morning, p. 384.

2 Ibid., pp. 387-388.

"He had the bad in him, David."

"Then so have I." . . .

"Maybe, but it hasn't made a traitor of you yet. No, my lad, we can't tell about these things. You escaped, he didn't."¹

In all these cases, the hero's double is associated with a sensual and immoral materialism which is usually signalled by an act of sexual transgression, especially a threat against the heroine. In The City of Comrades, Basil King creates a variation on this convention. Here, Frank Melbury's brother is the upright individual, while Frank himself, who closely resembles him, is an alcoholic and would-be burglar. And in the course of his burglary, Frank finds himself hiding in Regina Barry's boudoir while she prepares for bed. A similar reversal appears in Grain: Gander's hated older brother, for all his selfishness, joins the army while Gander stays home. Gander's isolation is emphasized by the death in battle of his close friend Tommy Burge. Since both his enemy and his friend have been capable of enlisting, Gander finds he has no moral basis for having stayed at home; and having tried to rape Jo Burge, he has no hope of winning her. Frank Melbury redeems himself through war, but Gander's stubbornness dooms him to failure and exile.

The significance of the double is best understood by its treatment in The Major, where it dramatizes the conflict between the

1 Mackay, Mist of Morning, p. 389.

pastoral, productive world of ranching and the mechanical, exploitative world of mining. These worlds are presented, closely linked, in an expository passage comparing the "little clump of buildings" of the Gwynnes' ranch with the Switzer family's "rather pretentious homestead with considerable barns and outbuildings attached."¹ Connor's narrator adds that in getting established, the Gwynnes

"Lost their little bit of money. Suffered, my! how they must have suffered! though they were too proud to tell any of us."²

The Switzers' wealth, on the other hand, comes from passive ownership:

"The father owned the land on which Wolf Willow village stands. He made quite a lot of money in real estate - village lots and farm lands, you know."³

Although Connor never describes Larry Gwynne, he gives considerable attention to Larry's sister Kathleen - "a girl of tall and slender grace, with an aura of golden hair . . . eyes as blue as the prairie crocus and as shy and sweet"⁴ Ernest Switzer, in colouring at least, is physically similar to her yet sinister in appearance, with a "pale set face, his blue eyes flaming with rage"⁵ Ernest has loved Kathleen for years, and everyone expects

1 Connor, The Major, pp. 94, 95.

2 Ibid., p. 94.

3 Ibid., p. 95.

4 Ibid., p. 97.

5 Ibid., p. 156.

them to marry eventually. This prospect dismays Jack Romayne, who after first meeting them exclaims:

"My God, it would be a crime! . . .
To allow that brute to get possession
of that lovely girl."¹

What this would mean for Kathleen is spelled out by Ernest's sister, who warns Larry that German men treat their wives cruelly. Then she adds:

"You are not to let him know I told you."
A real terror shone in her eyes. "Do you
hear me?" she cried. "He would beat me
with his whip. He would, he would."

"Beat you, beat you?" Larry pulled
his horse up short. "Beat you in this
country - oh Dorothea!"

"They do. Our men do beat their
women, and Ernest would too."²

This brings a promise from the nonviolent Larry that he would "knock his block off" if Ernest ever did such a thing. His sentiment is echoed, somewhat uncertainly, by his mother. She tells him that "Fighting is no work for man, but for brute," to which Larry replies:

"But, Mother, in these present wars
should not men defend their women and
children from such outrages as we read
about?"

"When it comes to the question of
defending women and children it seems to
me that the question is changed," said

1 Connor, op. cit., p. 111.

2 Ibid., p. 123.

his mother. "As to that I can never quite make up my mind . . . I am not very wise in these things."¹

To fight is to be a brute; to attack or threaten women is equally to be a brute. Ironically, Ernest himself seems to agree with Mrs. Gwynne, for when he is threatened with a slap in the face from Jack Romaine he exclaims,

"In this country of barbarians there is no way of satisfaction except by the beastly, the savage method of fists"²

However, since Ernest implies that swords are a preferable means of resolving this dispute, he leaves little to choose between the "brute" and the "beastly."

But there is a deeper division here than mere tastes in violence. Ernest, the "brute" who seeks "possession" of Kathleen, is associated with the exploitative, mechanical coal mine which has enriched the Gwynnes but which has also ended their earlier, happier life together. And it is the mechanical which both Ernest and Connor see as the essential German aptitude. As Ernest tells a public meeting,

"Germany has shown the way to the world, even to America, in every activity of life, in industrial organisation, in scientific inquiry in the laboratory and in the practical application of science to every-day life."³

1 Connor, op. cit., pp. 166, 167.

2 Ibid., pp. 168-169.

3 Ibid., p. 156.

Jack Romaine expresses Connor's own view in replying to Ernest:

"Germany is a great nation, marvellously organised in every department of her life, agricultural, manufacturing, educational, commercial. But to what intent? What is the purpose dominating this marvellous organisation? The purpose, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the manufacturing of a mighty war machine."¹

Paradoxically, the brute or subhuman becomes associated with the most effective use of intelligence; and the noblest kind of human is he who sinks his intelligence in "instinct," like Sinclair's and Baxter's heroes.

A similar association of the beast and the machine appears in The City of Comrades when Frank Melbury describes the encounter between the armed liner Assiniboia and a U-boat, which he sees as "the most baleful and fascinating monster in the world:"

For it was as a monster, baleful and fascinating, that we regarded her. She was not a thing planned by men's brains and built in a shipyard. She was an abnormal, unscrupulous venomous water beast, with a special enmity toward man. She had about her the horror of the trackless, the deep, the solitary, the lonesome, the devilish. Few of us had ever got a glimpse of her before. It was like Saint George's first sight of the dragon that wasted men and cities, and called forth his hatred and his sword

Viewed as a spectacle, there was a terrific beauty in it all. Nature and man were raging together, ferociously, magnificently, without conscience, without

1 Connor, op. cit., p. 158.

quarter, without remorse. Hell had unsealed its springs even in us who stood watchful and inactive. There was a sense of abhorrent glory in the knowledge that there were no limits to which we would not go.¹

In short, Frank Melbury sees himself when he regards the U-boat. Not only is it a "beast," symbolizing worldly evil threatening heavenly good; its characteristics are those of Frank's prewar self - "abnormal," "unscrupulous," "solitary," "lonesome." Yet it becomes nature itself, against which man fights "without conscience, without quarter, without remorse," as unscrupulous as the beast itself. If the glory to be gained is abhorrent, it is glory nonetheless; and even the Assiniboia's attempts to defend itself with its two small guns, though futile, inspire "an appalling glee"² in Frank. Significantly, the battle is inconclusive; the liner escapes with minor damage, described in a plagiarism from Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn:

". . . Didn't do no 'arm. On'y killed Sammy Smelt, a steerage cabin-boy."³

What is important in this passage is not only that it portrays a conflict between a passive, conformist hero and a machine which symbolizes the material world, but that the conflict is unresolved. For Frank to act decisively, by himself, would be to become someone,

1 King, The City of Comrades, pp. 249-250.

2 Ibid., p. 250.

3 Ibid., p. 251.

to gain an identity; and this possibility seems genuinely to frighten King, for his characters are always built around a core of ambiguity strenuously defended. Thus Bob Collingham, in The Empty Sack, returns from war in uncertain triumph:

with the wounds he had got while in the French army in the early days of the war, he had brought back with him a real enhancement of manhood. Having come through Groton and Harvard little better than an uncouth boy, his experience in France had shaped his outlook on life into something like a purpose. It was not very clear as yet, or sharply defined¹

And Alexandra Adare, asked what it is that Canadians have which makes them superior to Americans, replies,

"I don't know. It's there - and I can't tell you what it is."²

Why should the hero's double become such a widespread convention in Canadian war novels? And why should that double be so persistently identified with intelligence, sexuality, and the material world of nature? The answer, I believe, must lie in an unresolved conflict in Canadian culture over the nature of man's relationship to the land. Writer after writer yearns nostalgically for an idyllic wilderness, yet looks forward to a future in which the wilderness has been replaced by cities and industries. Northrop Frye, speaking of English-Canadian poets, suggests that their "imperial preoccupation

1 Basil King, The Empty Sack (New York: Harpers, 1921), p. 14.

2 King, The High Heart, p. 43.

. . . leads to much clearing of forests and planting of crops and tapping vast natural resources; a grim earnestness of expansion which seems almost more German than British."¹ Connor embodies just that "earnestness" in Ernest Switzer, whose last name seems to connote the neutrality, the indecisiveness, which usually plagues the hero. And the hero feels himself deeply indebted to the earnest, German approach to life; Larry Gwynne has learned to play the violin from Dorothea Switzer; Barry Dunbar's education has included a year's theological study in Germany; Ernest himself must also return to Germany before turning into a "brute." What the hero distrusts about the "German" attitude is its narrowness and materialism; its learning, in the words of one of Connor's Scotchmen, is "'Lairnin' that will lay sacraleegious hands upon the Sacred Word, an' tear-r-r it to bits."² Divorced from religion and the pastoral world associated with religion, the German attitude creates a machine-dominated, materialistic society which has everything but a soul. Canadian novelists feel the tension between the religious pioneer society and the materialist industrial society into which the former inevitably changes. While this tension may be shown as existing in the hero's mind, the double is more effective dramatically as a means of externalizing the conflict. So the hero's conflicting values are presented as a struggle between

1 Northrop Frye, "Canada and Its Poetry," in The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), pp. 133-134.

2 Connor, The Major, p. 155.

himself and "the shadow that walked beside him."

If the hero represents the middle class at war with itself, and the heroine is estranged from him, then where shall he turn for allies and companions? The usual answer is, to the lower classes - a mysterious world of lumberjacks, cowpunchers, trappers, and bums. Canadian war novelists often employ a rhetoric of chivalry; the knightly hero is therefore accompanied by a squire, though he is not so named. The function of the squire is to reassure the hero that he is not alone in his struggle with his middle-class antagonists, that he is part of a society which is unified vertically if not horizontally.

In some cases, the hero-squire relationship is disguised by class conflict. Andy Hall, who plays the squire's role in The Inverted Pyramid, is a radical young logger who tells Rod,

"We make the wheels go round and the master class - to which you belong - lives soft off the proceeds. It must be great to ride always on the band wagon, and to feel the conviction that you are ordained by God to do so, eh? To pop your whip and make the plug lean hard against the collar. What would happen to you if they all balked?"¹

As a maverick capitalist, Rod does not reject such talk out of hand; and he listens carefully when Andy compares capitalism to

"a huge unwieldy machine that we've built up hit-and-miss, and the damned thing is operating us instead of us operating it. Even the men who are supposed to control it aren't sure

1 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, p. 110.

they have the thing in hand. Some day this machine will become so complicated it won't work at all. You can hear friction squeaks in a good many of the joints now. It's liable to break down."¹

Andy's chief criticism of capitalism is not that it is unjust, but that it is complicated and uncontrollable, which also seems to be Rod's attitude toward his brother Grove's enterprises:

When he pondered Andy's simile of the complex machine gradually getting out of hand, proceeding to the ultimate smash, he couldn't help thinking of Grove's accelerated pace. That was merely a casual impression. Probably Grove had the levers firmly in hand.²

Despite the seeming differences in their outlooks, Rod and Andy are in fact very close philosophically. The war offers new evidence of their similarities; both enlist almost against their better judgment, and after the war Andy goes to work for Rod as an assistant in a logging operation run on Rod's enlightened management principles. At length Andy even marries Isabel Wall, a millionaire's daughter who had once been in love with Rod. By the novel's end, Andy's radicalism has simply vanished.

Similar knight-squire relationships appear in several other novels. In Dennison Grant, one of Grant's fellow-cowboys meets him again in France; each saves the other's life, and they return to Alberta together to implement Grant's scheme for resettling soldiers

1 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, p. 112.

2 Ibid., p. 113.

on the land. McCuaig, a rather simple frontiersman in The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, follows Barry Dunbar into war, and precedes him into death. The squire in Treading the Winepress is Levi Kedge, a Nova Scotia sailor who joins Tony Mackinroy's crew as a gunner. Unconvinced that Tony has been killed in action, Levi spends two years searching for him; having found him, he arranges for the operation which restores Tony's memory. The convention is strong enough for Douglas Durkin, in The Magpie, to ring an ironic change on it. Ex-Captain Craig Forrester meets ex-Sergeant Jim Dyer on a Winnipeg street not long after the General Strike and learns that his old comrade is unemployed and bitter about the neglect shown returned soldiers. Dyer eventually succumbs to the delayed effects of mustard gas, leaving a widow, Millie, and three children whom Craig tries to help when they have nowhere else to turn; but when he sees Millie Dyer one night, staggering through the streets with a drunken man, he realizes how totally the social fabric has rotted, and how isolated he himself has become.

The homoerotic element in the knight-squire relationship is strong but usually not acknowledged. Since the heroine is sexually inaccessible most of the time, the hero turns to his lower-class companion for the love and understanding he craves. In The City of Comrades, Basil King presents the relationship between Frank Melbury and Lovey, an old English alcoholic, as one between man and wife. When they meet at the outset of the novel, Lovey calls Frank "sonny," but Frank sees him as anything but fatherly:

I can still recall the shy, half-frightened pleasure in his face as he saw me advancing toward him. He might have been a young girl.¹

After Frank fails in his attempt to burglarize Regina Barry's home, he heads for a lumberyard where Lovey awaits him:

My immediate need was to get back to poor old Lovey and lie down by his side. That again was beyond my power to analyze. I suppose it was something like a homing instinct, and Lovey was all there was to welcome me.

"Is that you, sonny?" he asked, sleepily, as I stooped to creep into the cubby-hole which a chance arrangement of planks made in a pile of lumber.

"Yes, Lovey."

"Glad ye've come."

When I had stretched myself out I felt him snuggle a little nearer me.

"You don't mind, sonny, do you?"

"No, Lovey. It's all right. Go to sleep again."²

After another day or two, when their situation has grown even more desperate, Frank resolves to join the Down and Out Club, a group of reformed alcoholics; he brings Lovey with him, and the older man vows to remain loyal to Frank even if it means giving up liquor:

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 5.

2 Ibid., pp. 39-40.

"You won't leave me, Lovey?"

The extinct-blue eyes were raised to mine.

"No, sonny; I won't leave ye - not for 'ardly nothink."¹

Their stay at the Down and Out Club has the desired effect: they give up alcohol, Frank resumes his old career as an architect, and Lovey becomes his servant:

He had . . . metamorphosed himself into the typical, self-respecting English valet, with a pride in his work sprung chiefly of devotion.

And for me he made a home. I mean by that that he was always there - something living to greet me, to move about in the dingy little apartment. As I am too gregarious, I may say too affectionate, to live contentedly alone, it meant much to me to have some one else within the walls I called mine, even if actual companionship was limited.²

If Frank's complacent recognition of Lovey's "devotion" grates on more democratic sensibilities, it nevertheless throws light on his attitude toward Lovey - as does his consequent description of Lovey as a combined wife and pet, "something living" which offers "limited" companionship for an "affectionate" gentleman. That Lovey feels himself to be a kind of wife is made clear when Frank returns from war, Lovey having spent the interim as valet to Stephen Cantyre, a

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 69.

2 Ibid., p. 221.

physician friend of Frank's. Lovey comments on Frank's loss of an eye:

"Used to it till you looks in the glass, I expect. Get a fright when ye do that, don't you? But it's all right, Slim. It wouldn't matter to me if you was a worse looker than y'are. I wouldn't turn ye down, neither, not if it was for all the doctors in the world. Not but what he's been very attentive to me while you was away. I don't make no complaint about that. Bit finicky about socks and 'andkerchiefs always the same color . . . but a good spender and not pokin' 'is nose into my affairs. I'll say all that for 'im; but if he was to ask my 'and in marriage, like, and I could get you, Slim - all bunged up as y'are now and everything! - well, I know what I'd say."¹

Lovey's affection for Frank helps him sense that Frank is about to plunge into alcoholism again, and to save him from it. His appeal is based on their long relationship:

"All I want to say is that you don't know - you couldn't know - the fancy I've took to you - and I used to think that you kind o' 'ad a fancy for me, like."²

Since there can be no room for Lovey once Frank wins Regina, King eliminates him. Learning that Lovey has been benignly meddling in his courtship of Regina Barry, Frank throws him out; Lovey collapses and dies. Watching the old man's last minutes, Frank remembers moments of heroism he has witnessed in Flanders, especially one scene

1 King, op. cit., p. 310

2 Ibid., p. 347.

which presumably parallels Lovey's death:

It was the day I got my dose of shrapnel in the foot. Lying near me was a colonel named Blenkins. Farther off there lay a sergeant in his regiment named Day. Day had for Blenkins the kind of admiration that often exists between man and officer for which there is no other name than worship. Slowly, painfully, dying, the non-com. dragged himself over the scarred ground and laid his head on the dying colonel's heart. Painfully, slowly, the dying colonel's hand stole across the dying non-com.'s breast; and in this embrace they slept.¹

The vision of a homoerotic union in death is most intensely felt in this novel; but it appears as well in The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land when Barry Dunbar dies "'with his body spread over Sergeant Matthews, to keep off the shrapnel.'"² That this is a not unwelcome consummation is clear from an earlier passage, in which Barry and Paula Howland speculate on death:

"It's a chilly, ghostly subject. It makes me shiver. I get little comfort out of it."

"Ghostly it is, if you mean a thing of spirits," said Barry, "but chilly! Why chilly?" Then he added to himself in an undertone: "I wonder! I wonder! I wish sometimes I knew more.

. . . "And yet," mused Barry, "somehow I cannot forget that out there somewhere there is one, kindly, genial, true, - like my dad

1 King, The City of Comrades, pp. 378-379.

2 Connor, The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, p. 342.

"Life moves 'round a centre, in outer and inner circles. This is the outer circle. Nearer in there, it is kinder, with better light and clearer vision"¹

Once he perceives himself as part of a cyclical process, the hero has no fear of death; quite the contrary. Only by his death, symbolic or actual, can the cycle be renewed; only by his death can the hero make his life meaningful. He must overcome the selfish, materialist aspect of himself, symbolized by his double and by the German system. The purified hero must then show, through self-sacrifice, how war has ennobled him. His Christlike death and resurrection, made possible by war, find a complement in the heroine's transformation into a madonna. If the hero's strongest bond is homoerotic, the heroine's is maternal; the war offers both of them an opportunity to form those bonds while rejecting the sexuality implicit in them.

1 Connor, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

FOUR: THE HEROINE AS MADONNA

The heroine of the Canadian war novel closely resembles the hero. Like him, she is usually a middle-class misfit, set apart by her talent and intelligence. In prewar society she searches restlessly for an acceptable role, and often becomes a career girl or a suffragist. In either case, she is regarded as an oddity at best and a threat at worst. In peacetime, her verbal skills are wasted in social dissent or in the service of money-grubbing advertising agencies; in war, she finds a proper outlet in propaganda or in nursing, and when peace returns she settles quickly into domesticity. While the hero loses only his manhood in war, the heroine is asked to sacrifice both her intelligence and her sexuality, and to find true fulfilment in motherhood rather than in a continuing sexual partnership.

An illuminating passage in one of Coningsby Dawson's letters from the front indicates how seriously prewar society felt itself threatened by the changing role of women - and how war was bringing a welcome return to their old role:

Women had grown discontented with being wives and mothers, and had proved that in many departments they could compete with men. This competition was responsible for a growing disrespect. Men were beginning to treat women in a way they demanded - as though they were men. Women were beginning to regard men with quiet sex-comtempt [sic]. It looked as if chivalry and all that made for knighthood were at an end. Then came war, calling men to a sacrifice in which women had no share -

could not share, because they were physically incapable of fighting - and women to the only contribution they could make, mercy and motherhood. We've been flung back on our primal differences and virtues. War has cut the knotted sex-emancipation; we stand today as elementally male and female as when the Garden of Eden was depopulated. Amongst our fighting men, women actually hold the place which was allotted to them by idealists in troubadour times. Mothers and sisters and sweethearts, remembered at this distance, have made all women sacred.¹

Most Canadian war novels, whatever their stated attitudes toward women, dramatize Dawson's observations. Prewar restlessness, wartime exaltation, and postwar domesticity form the elements of the heroine's cycle, from which she cannot escape even if she would.

As a social critic, the prewar heroine is sincere but uncertain. In Sinclair's The Inverted Pyramid, Mary Thorn finds that "three years at the U.B.C." have unsuited her for the usual woman's role, but gained her nothing in exchange:

"There are times when Euripides, and Housman's lyrics, and Thomas Hardy don't fit in with cooking and cotton stockings - when poetic and artistic vision of what-might-be tantalize like glimpses of a cloud-hidden moon. Why should one sharpen one's perception of beauties that are beyond one's reach? I should have been trained in domestic science, or nursing, or selling fripperies to rich women, instead of being put through the cultural hotbed of a university. They meant well.

1 Dawson, Living Bayonets, pp. 158-159.

But unless a girl has a ready-made social background, or a decided talent, the so-called higher education is only a handicap."¹

Mary's faith in the value of "social background" is not shared by Elise Durwent, who contemplates a dreary future as an upper-class Englishwoman:

"I shall get used to the idea of being an Englishman's wife; of living in a calm routine of sport, bridge, week-ends, and small talk - entertaining people who bore you, and in turn helping to bore those who entertain you. In time I'll forget that I was born . . . with a fine perception of life's subtleties, and settle down to living year in and year out, with no change except that each season you're less attractive and more petty."²

Mary Thorn has no programme for resolving her dilemma, apart from marrying Rod; Elise Durwent is vehement but unclear:

"We may not know what we want," she said, "but, as an Irishman said the other day, 'we won't be satisfied till we get it.' . . . Our ultimatum is - give us a life which demands all our resources and permits women unlimited opportunity for self-development."³

The suffragist who acts on her principles is rarely portrayed, except as a wild woman. Joan Compion, in Beckles Willson's Redemption,

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- 1 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, p. 85.
 - 2 Baxter, The Parts Men Play, pp. 95-96.
 - 3 Ibid., p. 98.

joins a militant suffrage group for no particular reason and then burns down the country home of an important Government leader. Her explanation to a young man who is hiding her does not persuade him:

"You see, Ralph, we've got to do something big, something outrageous, to move the British public. What is a house compared with the tremendous issue at stake?"

She stood before him defiantly in her boy's clothes, with her glowing eyes and her dark, tumbled, bobbed hair, this slender, graceful girl with whose name all England would soon be ringing, who was being universally execrated as an hysterical fanatic. Of course, he recognized in her words a mere echo of the diatribes of . . . the other suffragist agitators. And yet, somehow, the sight of her boyish grace and beauty silenced his protests, took all the force out of his indignation. He wanted to be severe, to remonstrate, . . . yet - he couldn't. He simply couldn't! After all, it was Joan, Joan the seductive, fascinating, irresistible rebel, and not Christabel Penny and those others.¹

Joan's ideology is dismissed out of hand, and her femininity is changed into boyishness; yet the act of revolt, and the maleness which the act lends her, make her all the more alluring. Since Willson does not understand suffragist motives, he is unaware of the irony in Joan's enhancement of her sexual attractiveness through an act intended to help her escape from just that narrow role.

The career girl, unlike the suffragist, has seemingly come to terms with the man's world of commerce, but finds herself in a

1 Willson, Redemption, p. 143.

position which brings rewards but no status. Rosme Selwyn, in Mist of Morning, is a copywriter for "Lots' Best Advertising Agency," run by two Jewish brothers whom she smoothly bullies into raise after raise, since without her they would go out of business. Alix Adare, in The High Heart, is a nursery governess, but her position is complicated by her romance with the heir of the family. Effie Vant, in Redemption, seizes the opportunity to buy the newspaper she has been working for, but puts in a figurehead editor though she knows he is illiterate: "'I'm only a girl, after all, and I don't think the time is ripe for me to be blazoned forth as editor of the Clarion, much less proprietor. '"¹

Both the suffragist and the career girl find that their efforts are futile. Effie Vant's control of the newspaper results in disaster when her anti-German editorials incite mob action. Joan Champion, whose suffragism has led to pacifism and involvement with German agents, dies giving birth to an illegitimate child. The heroines of Aleta Dey and Clara Barron also meet death as a direct result of the war. Aleta is fatally injured when soldiers mob her as she tries to give an anti-war speech in Winnipeg; Clara, after meeting success and failure as a propagandist for radical causes, goes to Europe at the outbreak of war and is killed in the bombardment of Antwerp. It seems clear, therefore, that many Canadian novelists of this period are genuinely concerned about the role of women but

1 Willson, Redemption, pp. 227-228.

have little or no understanding of the social forces behind the suffrage movement and the entry of women into hitherto masculine occupations. The war serves to beg the question of women's peacetime role, not to answer it.

Once she accepts the war, however, the heroine finds herself transformed from girl into woman; she wins the opportunity to explore new roles, and a measure of sexual freedom. The war serves as rite of passage for her as much as for the hero. Jeanne Desiree, the fiancée of Colonel Vandebroek in The Faith of a Belgian, attains womanhood while a prisoner of the Germans. She overhears a plan to use her as bait in a trap for her lover:

It appeared too fiendish to be true, but there was, nevertheless, little doubt but that it was the plan of these heartless Prussian brutes. No longer could she doubt the truth of the atrocities which these same men had practised on thousands of other Belgian women. They were capable of any crime. . . .

Alternating fear and hatred swept through the heart and mind of Jeanne Desiree. . . . In those few moments she had passed out of the girlhood stage and she had become a full grown woman. Never before had she known what life really meant, its trials and sorrows, its stress and vicissitudes; but, now that she knew, she had become a woman and must play a woman's part.¹

Lucy Maude Montgomery's Rilla of Ingleside portrays the same transformation, though in Rilla Blythe's case it is the result of

¹ Dancey, The Faith of a Belgian, p. 283.

dedication to mundane war work and acceptance of responsibilities. When the man she loves comes home, he finds a person very different from the one he had left.

The slim Rilla of four years ago had rounded out into symmetry. He had left a school girl, and he found a woman - a woman with wonderful eyes and a dented lip, and rose-bloom cheek, - a woman altogether beautiful and desirable - the woman of his dreams.¹

A war-inspired entry into womanhood has serious dangers, however, and not all women survive the temptations to break sexual taboos. Elise Durwent exults, at first, that war offers women freedom and equality with men:

"Do you think war appals us? . . . Rubbish! There are thousands of us to-night who could almost shout for joy. . . . Men are going to die - horribly, cruelly - but they're going to play the parts of men. . . . We're part of it all. It was the women who gave them birth. It was the women who reared them, then lost them in ordinary life - and now it's all justified. They can't go to war without us. We're partners at last. Do you think women are afraid of war? Why, the glory of it is in our very blood."²

After several years of war service, however, Elise is disillusioned. She describes her various roommates to Austin Selwyn:

1 L. M. Montgomery, Rilla of Ingleside (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1921), p. 369.

2 Baxter, The Parts Men Play, p. 168.

"Edna couldn't break herself of the habit of wandering into the Ritz for luncheon every second day with only a shilling in her pocket. . . . Some one always paid - don't worry. . . . Mabel was frightfully nice, but took to opium cigarettes, and then to heroin. She disappeared one night, and never came back. . . . Lily had only one weakness - marrying Flying Corps officers. It was really the army's fault giving two of her husbands leave at the same time. . . . Men are rotten, and women are cats."¹

Such girls might be called failed heroines, and they pay a heavy price for their failure. In Sinclair's The Hidden Places, Myra Hollister confronts her husband after she has taken up with an English remittance man; her explanation of her desertion is, significantly, backed up with anti-war arguments:

"There were thousands like me in London. The war took our men - but took no account of us. We were untrained. There were no jobs to occupy our hands - none we could put our hearts into - none that could be gotten without influence in the proper quarters. We couldn't pose successfully enough to persuade ourselves that it was a glorious game. . . . The country! That shadowy phantasm What does it really mean? . . . Men going out to die. Women at home crying, eating their hearts out with loneliness, going bad now and then in recklessness. . . . I've learned to think, Robin, and perhaps it has warped me a little."²

While Robert Hollister bears her no grudge, Myra's life is short and

1 Baxter, The Parts Men Play, pp. 298-299.

2 Sinclair, The Hidden Places, pp. 216-218.

wretched. She becomes involved with yet another man, and the two are shot to death by her second husband.

The problem facing the heroine is one of control versus abandonment; somehow she must let down her peacetime sexual defences without "going bad now and then." Kathleen Gwynne confronts this challenge in The Major after her wounding of Jack Romayne. Having expressed her love for him, she spends the following weeks in misery, not knowing whether to carry on the affair or not. This internal conflict is presented in significant terms:

she began pacing the floor, fighting once more the battle which during that last ten days she had often fought with herself. . . . over against that reserve of his she contrasted her own passionate abandonment of herself in that dreadful moment of self-revelation. The contrast caused her to writhe in an agony of self-loathing. . . . In her march up and down the room she paused before her mirror and looked at the face that stared so wildly back at her. Her eyes rested on the red line of her mouth. "Oh," she groaned, rubbing vigorously those full red lips. "I just kissed him." . . . she fled from the accusing mirror, buried her burning face in the pillow in an exultation of rapture. . . . "But I loved it, I loved it; I am glad I did." Lying there, she strove to recall in shameless abandon the sensation of those ecstatic moments . . . wave upon wave of sickening self-loathing flooded from her soul every memory of the bliss of that supreme moment. . . . An uncontrollable longing came over her to go to him. . . . she threw herself upon her bed and abandoned herself to a storm of tears.¹

1 Connor, The Major, pp. 202-204.

These long excerpts from a yet longer passage indicate how important Kathleen's inner struggle is to Connor. Still more importantly, when she does decide to go to Jack, she goes as a nurse rather than as lover. Returning to his combat metaphor, Connor writes: "The battle was over and some sort of victory at least she had won." This victory is signalled by her regaining "serene control."¹ Her sexuality has been vanquished in motherliness, as Connor emphasizes in a passage describing the lovers' meeting again for the first time since Jack's wounding:

"Why have you stayed away from me?"
He raised himself upon his elbow, his voice was high, thin, weak, his eyes glittering, his cheeks ghastly with the high lights of fever upon them.

Shocked, startled and filled with a poignant mothering pity, Kathleen struggled with a longing to take him in her arms and comfort him as the mother was the little wailing child upstairs. . . .

"I feel just like a kiddie in the dark, do you know? Like a fool rather. You won't go again?" . . .

"No, Jack, I am going to stay. I am your nurse, you know, and I am your boss too. You must do just as I say. Remember that. You must behave yourself as a sick man should."²

The withdrawn, reserved Englishman, his defences ruined, settles happily into the role of child-man, fussed over by the nurse-mother.

1 Connor, The Major, p. 205.

2 Ibid., p. 207.

The nurse-mother's role is not merely a romantic convention of Canadian war novels. Even as men were fighting to enlist, women were applying for training as nurses or for positions in the Volunteer Aid Detachment. Twenty years after the war's outbreak, a Canadian nurse, M. B. Clint, reflected on the dislocations the war had imposed on her profession:

Like the men the lure of adventure was uppermost in the minds of some, experience and mass-action appealed to others, but we like to think that most of those who responded immediately to the call were awaiting a chance to serve, counted not the material cost, and to that end more nurses were available in the Empire than the authorities accepted. The stimulus to entering the profession that the war created was of course great, and has had its very unfortunate repercussions in recent years in Canada by congestion in its ranks.¹

Such repercussions are far from the thoughts of fictional nurses, who consistently find their new relationship to the hero to be less threatening than that of sexual partner. Regina Barry, in The City of Comrades, cares for Frank Melbury while he is temporarily blind, without revealing her identity. When he regains his sight, Frank notes that "People and things crowded on one another as they do in the vision of a baby," and he is relieved, when his awkwardness causes an accident, to be rescued by her: "It is one of the results of the war that men, who are often reduced to the mere shreds of human nature, grow accustomed to being taken care of by women, who remain the able-bodied

1 M. B. Clint, Our Bit, p. 5.

ones."¹ In another Basil King novel, The High Heart, Alix Adare marries Larry Strangways after his enlistment in the Princess Pats, follows him to England, and takes "such nursing training as I could."² She becomes pregnant (it is not made clear whether before or after Larry's wounding) and after the baby is born all three return to Nova Scotia, where Larry recuperates while Alix writes their story:

I have just been in to look at him. He is sound asleep, lying on his left side, the coverlet sagging slightly at the shoulder where the right arm is gone. He is getting accustomed to using his left hand, but not rapidly. Meantime he is my other baby; and, in a way, I love to have it so. I can be more to him. In proportion as he needs me the bond is closer.³

The tendency to treat the wounded hero as a baby is not confined to amateur nurses like Regina Barry and Alix Adare. In Sister Anne! Sister Anne!!, Gertrude Arnold gives us vignettes of Canadian nurses in the combat zones who are equally maternal. There is a touch of racism in their attitude - speaking of the Sikhs, one nurse says, "You have no idea how like children they are"⁴ - but

1 King, The City of Comrades, p. 217.

2 King, The High Heart, p. 415.

3 Ibid., p. 416.

4 Gertrude Arnold, Sister Anne! Sister Anne!! (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1919), p. 40. M. E. Clint makes a similar remark in Our Bit (p. 86) about the "Soudanese," whom she describes as "great, ebony, good-natured, biddable children."

it applies to white soldiers as well. Sister Anne listens to a ward full of wounded men who brag of having bayoneted Germans pleading for mercy; when they change the subject to the impending Christmas celebration, she tells them: "You're only big children after all."¹

When the hero is killed, the nurse-mother's reaction is a kind of ecstatic hysteria. Barry Dunbar's pregnant wife Phyllis shows such a response when told the "tale" of Barry's heroic death:

"Oh, Paula," she cried, turning to her friend. I'm so happy! It was a beautiful closing to a beautiful life. He was a beautiful boy, Paula, wasn't he? His body was beautiful, his soul was beautiful, his life was beautiful, and the ending, oh, was beautiful. Oh, Paula, God is good. I am so glad he gave Barry to me and gave me to him. Oh, I'm so - happy - so - happy."²

Phyllis' explicit description of him as a "boy" deprives Barry of his combat-earned manhood and asserts the moral supremacy of the nurse-mother.

In The Cow Puncher, Robert J. C. Stead grants his hero manhood through one woman, and takes it away through another. The nameless narrator of the concluding chapter says to Irene Elden:

1 Arnold, Sister Anne! Sister Anne!!, p. 52.

2 Connor, The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, p. 349.

"I think I knew your husband, a little He was a - a man."

"He was all that," she said.¹

In a clear parallel to the convention of the hero's double, Stead divides the nurse-mother into two characters: Irene Elden and Edith Duncan. Once competitors for Dave, they find consolation in sharing his death, which Edith has witnessed as a nurse at Courcelette. She writes Irene with satisfaction that

A new Order has been born into the world, the Order of Suffering. Not that it is new, either; it has been with us since the first mother went into the shadow for her first child; . . . now it is universal, a thing not to be escaped, but to be accepted, readily, bravely, even gladly.²

After describing Dave's dying moments, during which he had confused her with Irene, Edith writes,

Suddenly he sat up.

"The mountains!" he exclaimed, and his voice was a-thrill with the pride of his old hills. "See, the moonlight - on the mountains!"

Then his strength, which seemed to have gathered itself for this one last vision of the place of his boyhood, gave way, and he fell back. And he did not speak any more.

1 Stead, The Cow Puncher, p. 342.

2 Ibid., pp. 343-344.

And what can I add? Dear, it is not
defeat. It is promise. It is hope. . . .

I salute you, sister in the Order of
Suffering - and of hope.¹

The manhood which Irene has accorded him is taken away by Edith when she describes Dave's "last vision of the place of his boyhood" - a suitably ambiguous expression of the hero's completion of the cycle, and of the heroine's relieved escape from the threat of his brief manhood. Irene, her baby son, and an older adopted son can now settle into a maternal idyll; the Arcadian but chaotic, male-dominated world of the novel's opening chapters has changed into the safe haven of a "little white-washed home."²

Once safe from the threat of male sexuality, the heroine has two other roles open to her, those of national symbol and of madonna. Kathleen Gwynne is made to stand for Canada in The Major, and Ernest Switzer's passion for her symbolizes German designs on Canada, although Connor does not develop this theme. But in Basil King's The High Heart, Alix Adare's Canadian nationality obsesses her and sets her off from the wealthy American family which employs her. Yet the identity lent her by nationality ultimately disappears.

At the novel's outset, Alix clashes with the head of the Brokenshire family over her intentions to marry the family's heir, and Mr. Brokenshire rejects her in part because of her nationality.

1 Stead, The Cow Puncher, p. 346.

2 Ibid..

Speaking to a more sympathetic American afterward, she says,

"He attacked my country. I think I could forgive him everything but that." . . .

"Attacked your country? Do you mean England?"

"No; Canada. England is my grandmother; but Canada's my mother."¹

Alix insists on Canada's having a "special contribution toward the civilization of the American continent," which she nevertheless cannot express:

"It's there - and I can't tell you what it is. . . . I think - mind you, I only think - that what it consists in is a sense of the comme il faut. We're simpler than you; and less intellectual; and poorer, of course; and less, much less, self-analytical; and yet we've got a knowledge of what's what that you couldn't command with money."²

She then contradicts herself almost at once, first by stating what Canada offers the United States and then by rejecting the idea of nationhood altogether:

"What we can offer to you is a simpler and healthier and less self-conscious standard of life, with a great deal less talk about it - with no talk about it at all, if you could get yourselves down to that - and a willingness to be instead of an everlasting striving to

1 King, The High Heart, p. 37.

2 Ibid., p. 43.

become. You won't recognize it or take it, of course. No one ever does. Nations seem to me insane, and ruled by insane governments."¹

Alix is no nearer a resolution of her contradictory beliefs in a later interview with a cynical old American woman:

"What are you besides being a Canadian?"

"Nothing, madam," I said, humbly.

"Nothing? What do you mean?"

"I mean that there's nothing about me, that I have or am, that I don't owe to my country."

"Oh, stuff! That's the way we used to talk in the United States forty years ago."

"That's the way we talk in Canada still, madam - and feel."

"Oh, well, you'll get over it as we did - when you're more of a people."

"Most of us would prefer to be less of a people, and not get over it."²

Seeing herself as simultaneously the social inferior and the moral superior of those around her, Alix at last abdicates her nationality altogether when she marries Larry Strangways:

He is an American and I am one. I thought I became one without feeling any difference. It seemed to me I had been born one, just as I had been born a subject of the dear old queen. But on the night of our landing in Halifax, a

1 King, op. cit., p. 44.

2 Ibid., p. 144.

military band came and played the "Star-spangled Banner" before my uncle's door, and I burst into the first tears I had shed since my marriage.¹

In her new identity, as in her old, Alix is as uncertain as ever. When she contemplates the effect of the war on the Allies, Canada merges into the Empire:

If I think most of the spiritualization of France, and the consecration of the British Empire, and the coming of a new manhood to the United States, it is because these are the countries I know best.²

To Alix, Canada seems permanently cast for a feminine role, dominated by - yet somehow reforming - the virile nation to the south. This prospect seems tolerable as long as the United States' "new manhood" is typified by Larry Strangways' helplessness.

A few heroines become madonnas, virginal mothers free of sexuality, instead of becoming national symbols. Basil King presents us with two such madonnas, though in neither case does he do more than hint at this quality in the heroines. Molly Dove, Lester's wife in King's Going West, is no virgin; yet her name and her association with the Christlike Lester indicate that she is a sacred person. King's description of her response to the war also serves to set her apart:

1 King, op. cit., p. 417.

2 Ibid., p. 418.

Molly Dove alone seemed to ride on the wave of events, like a sea-bird on a storm, cradled, rocked, at ease in her element, secure, serene, sure of both present and ultimate good whatever might befall.¹

In The City of Comrades, Regina Barry's name indicates her moral relationship to the hero; and when Frank Melbury enters her bedroom while burgling the house, he notes that "Over the small white virginal bed was a copy of Fra Angelico's 'Annunciation.'"² He then overhears a conversation between Regina and a girl-friend about the impending end to Regina's third engagement. When her friend warns her that men will be afraid of her, Regina replies, "'They won't be nearly so much afraid of me . . . as I am of them. I wish - I wish they'd let me alone!" After her friend says that her fiancé would be "pretty good, as husbands go," Regina says, "'If I can't reach a higher standard than as husbands go I sha'n't marry any one.'"³ And despite her romantic involvement both with Frank and with Stephen Cantyre, she preserves her virginity throughout the novel; marriage with Frank must await the milennial postwar world.

Another novel which portrays the heroine as madonna is Lucy M. Montgomery's Rilla of Ingleside, still in print after over fifty years. A part of the Anne of Green Gables series, this work portrays

1 King, Going West, pp. 9-10.

2 King, The City of Comrades, p. 24.

3 Ibid., pp. 25, 26.

the war as seen from the perspective of an idyllic Prince Edward Island. Rilla Blythe is fourteen when the war breaks out, disrupting the lives of her family and friends. In addition to organizing a Red Cross group with some other girls, and giving patriotic recitals at public meetings, Rilla raises a baby whose mother has died and whose father has gone off to war. A young soldier on leave comes to visit her, and watches her hold the baby:

Jims . . . cuddled down against her just where a gleam of light from the lamp in the living room struck across his hair and turned it into a halo of gold against her breast.

Kenneth sat very still and silent, looking at Rilla - at the delicate, girlish silhouette of her, her long lashes, her dented lip, her adorable chin. In the dim moonlight, as she sat with her head bent a little over him, the lamplight glinting on her pearls until they glistened like a slender nimbus, he thought she looked exactly like the Madonna that hung over his mother's desk at home. He carried that picture of her in his heart to the horror of the battlefields of France.¹

Montgomery draws a genteel irony from the scene by showing us that Rilla does not feel at all like a madonna, but is simply disappointed that the demands of the baby have interrupted Kenneth's visit: "And all the while, poor Rilla was sitting, disappointed and humiliated, feeling that her last evening with Ken was spoiled and wondering why

1 Montgomery, Rilla of Ingleside, p. 180.

things always had to go so contrarily outside books."¹ The irony is genteel because we are asked to believe that Rilla's realistic view of the situation is mistaken, and that Ken perceives her as she really is.

Even for Rilla, the madonna's role is only temporary; the baby's father, remarried, returns to claim him and Ken returns to claim Rilla, who will presumably take up a maternal role again with her own children. The mother's role is the only one open to the heroine; just as the hero rarely returns to his prewar career, the heroine abandons the thought of competing again in a man's world. Elise Durwent, once so appalled at the prospect of becoming an Englishman's wife, becomes an American's; Mary Norquay writes novels in the time she can spare from raising her family; Alix Adare settles down with her husband and child. A few enjoy a comfortable widowhood; Irene Elden, Phyllis Dunbar, and Kathleen Romaine are among these. For the failed heroine, however, death is the only prospect. Diana Farrer, in Treading the Winepress, disloyally marries after learning that Tony Mackinroy has been lost at sea; when he returns, she considers running away with him. He refuses to break up her marriage, however, and she dies in an auto accident caused by her husband. Joan Campion, the suffragist actress in Redemption, finds that both suffragism and pacifism can betray their adherents, and dies giving birth to an

1 Montgomery, Rilla of Ingleside, p. 180.

illegitimate child. Clara Barron, whose name is no accident, sees her career as a propagandist fall to ruins, and is killed in the early weeks of the war. Even Aleta Dey, whose anti-war views are presented sympathetically, dies for them. For the woman who threatens the status quo, there is no forgiveness.

Yet it is clear that motherhood is an anti-climax to the heroine for whom the war means an intense but acceptable sexual release. How can a mere man like Larry Gwynne ever hope to win Jane Brown after she has known war as her demon lover?

Larry could hardly believe his eyes and ears, so immense was the change that had taken place in Jane during these ten months. . . . What was this that had come to her? What had released these powers of mind and soul which he could now recognise as being her own, but which he had never seen in action. As in a flash it came to him that this mighty change was due to the terribly energising touch of War. . . . War had poured its potent energies through her soul and her soul had responded in a new and marvellous efflorescence. Almost over night as it were the flower of an exquisite womanhood, strong, tender, sweet, beautiful, had burst into bloom. Her very face was changed. . . . As he listened Larry felt himself small and poor in comparison with her. More than that he had the sense of being excluded from her life. The war . . . had taken possession of the girl's whole soul. Was there a place for him in this new, grand scheme of life? A new and terrible master had come into the lordship of her heart.¹

1 Connor, The Major, pp. 377-378.

FIVE: "A FIT COUNTRY FOR HEROES"

"I know how selfish and individualistic and sordid and money-grabbing we have been,"¹ says Edith Duncan to Dave Elden in The Cow Puncher, soon after the war has begun. Countless other fictional characters make the same charge against prewar Canada and, like Edith, grimly welcome the prospect of "a long war and sacrifices and tragedies altogether beyond our present imagination to make us unselfish and public-spirited and clean and generous" ² It is, in fact, almost universally accepted that the society for which the hero suffers and dies is morally unfit to survive. When it not only survives but prospers, "sordid and money-grabbing" as ever, the hero's response is consternation and disgust. His allegiance to materialism, never strong, has vanished in his wartime sacrifice. Instead of making a fortune, therefore, he attempts to create a Utopia. His new society is supposedly a radical advance over self-seeking capitalism, but its blend of paternalism and co-operation is more reminiscent of the pioneer community. With the founding of his new society, the hero inaugurates a new cycle.

There would be little point in cataloguing various writers' explicit criticisms of prewar Canada; Edith Duncan's remark sums

1 Stead, The Cow Puncher, p. 318.

2 Ibid.

them up. A deeper sense of social malaise can be found in the conventions and imagery of Canadian war novels. These conventions are shared by authors whose political views vary widely, but are employed with a consistency which indicates that they form part of a social myth, a fundamental vision of Canada as a people and a land. Whether the authors' explicit ideas are optimistic or not, their myth is a despairing one of a society either dying or struggling feebly to be born. The major elements of this myth are the broken family, the wilderness, the divided village, the garrison city, and the family restored.

The wilderness forms the background of the myth, and many Canadian war novels open in a wild and uninhabited setting, through which men and women move almost at random. The wilderness may be a place of peace and beauty, as in The Cow Puncher:

Here was an Arcadia where one might well return to the simple life; a little bay of still water sheltered from the onrushing tide of affairs by the warm brown prairies and the white-bosomed mountains towering through their draperies of blue-purple mist.¹

More often, however, it is neutral or ugly and uninviting, as in Redemption when Greg Vant, a graduate of Oxford, returns to his native Nova Scotia:

1 Stead, The Cow Puncher, p. 34.

The swiftly unfolding landscape, drab stretches of earth fenced in with split rails, the sparse pines and hemlocks, the rock-strewn slopes, so saturated with the icy damps of winter as to be, as yet, impervious to the touch of spring - could it be otherwise than depressing?¹

Even when the setting is idyllic, human society is shown as fragmented: the Elden ranch is a decayed log cabin in which Dave's widowed father is drinking himself to death and Dave is growing up into a crude, unlettered youth. Into this world come Dr. Hardy and his daughter Irene, also a broken family. An accident compels the Hardys to stay for some weeks at the ranch, but no lasting society is formed. A similar pattern appears in The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, when Dunbar father and son meet Howland father and daughter; again, no permanent society emerges from their chance meeting.

Two kinds of wilderness can be seen in these examples: the virgin wild of Ralph Connor and the decaying, half-tamed land reclaimed by the forest. The latter image seems to predominate, and Sinclair's Burned Bridges offers perhaps the most deeply felt portrait of the failed pioneer society. The would-be missionary Wes Thompson contemplates the ruined cabin which a predecessor had built, and which he must live in:

The place was foul with dirt and cobwebs, full of a musty odor. The swallows had nested along the ridgepole. They fluttered out of the door, chattering

1 Willson, Redemption, p. 12.

protest against the invasion. Rat nests littered the corners and the brown rodents scuttled out with alarmed squeaks.¹

The wilderness, then, symbolizes social disorder and the failure of the pioneer society. Even for those, like Connor, who look forward to a time when "'These plains, these flowing hills will be the home of millions of men,'"² the wilderness offers only a limited promise. Barry Dunbar, for all his visions, does nothing to tame the wilderness; that task is reserved for Americans like Cornwall Brand, who enter the forest only as the first step in exploiting it, and whose moral values are questionable. Like Ernest Switzer in The Major, the exploiter is a dangerous and ambiguous figure.

Rarely is there an intact family in these novels. Wes Thompson is an orphan, raised by maiden aunts. The girl he loves, Sophie Carr, has lost her mother; her father's Indian mistress and half-breed children scarcely count. In Grain, Gander Stake's older brother runs away; in The City of Comrades, Frank Melbury is cast out by his family; Tony Mackinroy in Treading the Winepress has lost his mother before the novel opens; Aleta Dey's little brother dies, and she is estranged from her parents; Alix Adare in The High Heart has lost both father and mother. The list could go on very much longer. The Gwynne family, in The Major, is physically intact but the father

1 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, p. 35.

2 Connor, The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, p. 21.

is an amiable nonentity ignored by all.

The broken family is obviously a metaphor for a society in disarray or outright collapse. The loss of the mother seems especially critical to Ralph Connor, for it means society has lost its moral centre. The gentle but absolute tyranny of Mrs. Gwynne over her family shows what that centre ought to be; the morbid veneration of the dead Mrs. Mackinroy by her husband and son shows how keenly that tyranny is missed. In the heroine, of course, the hero finds a new incarnation of his mother, a new moral centre around which a restored family can be established.

In the wilderness, the broken family may enjoy some idyllic days, but cannot endure. The Hardys leave the Elden ranch, and Dave Elden's father dies soon after. Sam Carr inherits a fortune and takes his daughter back to the United States, leaving Wes Thompson more alone than ever. Similarly, Barry Dunbar and his father cannot long enjoy the company of Osborne Howland's exploring party. Whatever the reason, the wilderness must be abandoned, at least temporarily. The scene shifts to the village, a larger society which nevertheless is divided against itself and offers the hero little satisfaction.

Wapiti, the hamlet in which Barry Dunbar works as a young missionary, is typical of the divided village. The Dunbar home is unique in possessing a garden, carefully tended and so productive that "Visitors were taken 'round to the back street to get a glimpse."¹

1 Connor, The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, p. 37.

As if this were not enough to set him apart, Barry reproves his neighbours for their profanity, and threatens to report them for hunting out of season. The community, in turn, finds him a dull preacher; when he succeeds in enlivening the Sunday school, however, the townspeople complain of that as well: "'Quare sort o' Sunday School where the kids carry on like that.'"¹ As a result, some of his congregation try to have him fired, and though they fail he nevertheless resigns and retreats to the wilderness, this time as a guide for another Howland expedition. Barry must have unanimous support, not merely a majority; if his society is of two minds about him, he must quit it altogether.

The village need not be divided about the hero, however: Wolf Willow, in Connor's The Major, is a microcosm of Canadian society which would be united if not for Ernest Switzer's grim pro-Germanism. After a bitter argument with English-born Jack Romaine at a public meeting, Ernest disrupts a crude anti-German skit. Larry Gwynne, with a graceful impromptu speech, restores order.

In some cases, as in The Cow Puncher, the hero is so isolated from the village that its internal struggles are perplexing and academic. After leaving the ranch to seek a job in town, Dave Elden finds himself intensely isolated:

In the evening he walked through the streets of the little cow-town. It was not altogether new to him; he

1 Connor, op. cit., p. 54.

had frequently visited it for business or pleasure, but he had never felt the sense of strangeness which oppressed him this night. In the past he had always been in the town as a visitor; his roots were still in the ranch; he could afford to notice the ways of the town, and smile to himself a whimsical smile and go on. But now he was throwing in his lot with the town; he was going to be one of it, and it stretched no arms of welcome to him. It snubbed him with its indifference. . . . He became aware that he was very lonely.¹

Dave has trouble learning city ways. After losing his bankroll in a gambling game, he finds a job and begins to explore the town. On an impulse, he goes to church for the first time in his life and is repelled by what he understands of the sermon:

There was no doubt about it; the preacher was declaring that an innocent One had been murdered that the guilty might go free. That was bad enough, but when the speaker went on to say that this was God's plan . . . Dave found himself boiling with indignation. If this was Christianity he would have none of it.²

Stalking out of the church, Dave feels still more alone. He wanders into a gathering which turns out to be a Socialist meeting. Its noisy arguments confuse him still more, but excite him as well: "It was his first glimpse into the world of reason, and it charmed and

1 Stead, The Cow Puncher, pp. 59-60.

2 Ibid., p. 91.

invited him. He would follow."¹ In fact, he does nothing of the sort. As the town grows, he grows rich as the respectable partner of a crooked real-estate promoter, but remains as estranged as ever from the town he has helped to create. His uneasy partnership with Conward reflects the contradictory desires of the divided village: to keep its pastoral innocence and to gain wealth and power. Unable to resolve its dilemma, the divided village goes to war with the same eager relief that the hero feels.

This relief evidently stems from a fearful premonition of the village's future as a mongrelized city, its identity lost in hordes of foreigners. The model for such a city is New York; several Canadian novelists express repugnance for such a society, and are concerned that Canada might be contaminated by its shabby, materialist egalitarianism. The opening passage of King's The City of Comrades expresses this nightmare vision. The Canadian Frank Melbury and the Englishman Lovey are drifting aimlessly around Columbus Circle in a crowd of equally down-at-heels men; Lovey is trying to convince Frank to take part in a burglary:

"Ye've got to live! Ye must do it -
for my sake - now. I suppose it's
because we're - we're Britishers
together." He looked round on the
circling crowd of Slavs, Mongolians,
Greeks, Italians, aliens of all sorts.
"We're different from these Yankees,
ain't we?"²

1 Stead, The Cow Puncher, p. 97.

2 King, The City of Comrades, p. 6.

King's rather heavy-handed irony is intended to show that Anglo-Saxons ought to be "different from these Yankees," and equality with them inevitably implies a fall from a higher moral level. This view of the mongrelized city is intensified by the experience of war, for when Frank returns to New York after two years in combat, the city seems even dirtier and more degraded than ever:

A leaden sky cloaked the streets in a leaden, lifeless atmosphere. . . . On the pavements a strange, strange motley of men and women - Hebrew, Slavic, mongolian, negro, negroid - carried on trades as outlandish as themselves. Here and there an outlandish child shivered its way to an outlandish school. Only now and then one saw a Caucasian face, either clean, alert, superior, or brutalized and repulsive beyond anything to be seen among the yearning, industrious aliens.¹

With a shock, Frank realizes that what seems most "outlandish" about the city is that it is at peace; Canada has been spared this "strange, strange motley" by its commitment to war.

Beckles Willson sees a similar threat confronting Canada, but sees a hope of salvation in French-Canadian conservatism. Tresman, an English-Canadian scholar, makes his case to Greg Vant:

"The French-Canadians represent the only real conservatism in the country. When I look for any spirit of idealism in Canada, where do you, I, go for it? To our big, half-baked, showy schools and colleges administered by hustling commercants and staffed by underpaid

1 King, The City of Comrades, pp. 311-312.

misfits and misanthropes? To our second-rate jerry-built literature? . . . I tell you, Vant, Anglo-Saxondom on this continent has lost its soul."¹

When Vant protests that most French-Canadians are ignorant and superstitious, Tresman shrugs.

"I'm a pretty good Canadian, Vant, but I'm no democrat; and you know as well as I do that in intellectual matters the masses don't count a damn. . . . I claim for French Canada in this year of grace nineteen-thirteen that she had first of all a more widespread moral and spiritual decency than English Canada has; that above that stratum you have an aristocracy which in essence . . . is superior to our own imitative, pretentious, moneyed classes. . . . I honestly believe they are on the eve of greatness, if they can only resist - contagion."²

"Contagion" is of course the materialist society symbolized by the mongrelized city, and Willson sees it as an inevitable consequence of a society at peace. With the end of the war approaching, Greg Vant looks forward to a bleak future, in which

"we in Canada must sit tight and wait for the passing of the agony and the bloody sweat. I don't suppose we ourselves will wholly escape. We will again be invaded by mongrel hordes, alien in thought and speech; we will have labour troubles, bloody riots, economic unrest. But it will be a better country than Europe. We must set our jaws firmly and hold

1 Willson, Redemption, p. 236.

2 Ibid., p. 237.

fast. It will all come right in the end -
but in the meantime we must abandon
quixotism and cultivate our garden."¹

Vant's desire to retreat from the corrupt world of "Slavs and Celts,
Babus and Egyptians"² and to "cultivate our garden" is a conservative
repudiation of materialism and the democracy it fosters. It is also,
clearly, an impulse to renew the heroic cycle by a return to the land.

Willson's faith in French Canada is not shared by other
Canadian novelists, though they too are anxious to find a society which
is unified, mature, and free of American domination. The refusal of
the United States to enter the war for almost three years is universally
condemned; yet it also provides Canadian writers with a sense of
superiority. Willson is certainly in harmony with other writers when
he describes Canadian wartime society as "A sparse, rugged people
finding themselves in a position of admitted moral superiority to the
large and powerful nation alongside of them, which had rather regarded
them with goodnatured contempt as a certainly-impending 'adjunct' to
its own political system."³

The society at war is no longer portrayed as a divided village,
but as a garrison city. What contradictions remain are suppressed,
at least for the duration, and the mood of the garrison city is one

1 Willson, Redemption, p. 399.

2 Ibid..

3 Ibid., p. 275.

of exultation. One of the most effective descriptions of the formation of this society is given in The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land. Learning of the outbreak of war, Barry Dunbar and his companions abandon the wilderness and race for Edmonton to enlist. Connor shows us a scattered population suddenly converging, leaving the wilderness to become a denser, more rigidly organized society. The process is not entirely orderly:

The city of Edmonton was in an uproar, its streets thronged with excited men, ranchers and cowboys from the ranches, lumberjacks from the foothill camps, men from the mines, trappers with lean, hard faces, in weird garb, from the north. . . .

At home, hundreds of thousands were battering at the recruiting offices. In the Dominions of the Empire overseas it was the same. In Canada a hundred thousand men were demanding a place in the first Canadian contingent of thirty-five thousand. . . . The rumour in Edmonton ran that there were only a few places left to be filled in the north Alberta quota. For these few places hundreds of men were fighting in the streets.¹

War gives Canada a sense of purpose, but only to the few chosen for this new, militarized society.

While the new society seems essentially secular in The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, its religious core is emphasized in The Major. Here Connor presents a set-piece description of the war's impact he would repeat almost word-for-word in The Sky Pilot: "Twenty-five

¹ Connor, The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land, pp. 95-96.

thousand Canada asked for. In less than a month a hundred thousand men were battering at the recruiting offices demanding enlistment in the First Canadian Expeditionary Force."¹ He then goes on to show the religious sentiment stirred by the war:

On the first Sunday of the war the churches of Winnipeg were full to the doors. . . . War had shaken the foundations of their world, and men were thinking their deepest thoughts and facing realities too often neglected or minimised. . . . in this crisis of Canadian history the churches of Canada were not found wanting. . . . The newspaper press published full reports of many of the sermons preached. These sermons all struck the same note - repentance, sacrifice, service. On Monday morning men walked with a surer tread because the light was falling clearer upon the path they must take.²

Even for antireligious writers like Bertrand Sinclair, war creates a special mood. In The Inverted Pyramid, he shows Vancouver in its first days as a garrison city:

The streets wore the panoply of war in the recruiting aspect. Troops drilled in parks, on playgrounds. Bands marched abroad to stir men's blood. There was an edge of expectancy in the air, for the Leipzig, the Dresden, the Nuremberg, and two unknown battleships were loose in the Pacific. No one knew what truth lay in the rumor that any hour might see their shells dropping in the downtown section.³

1 Connor, The Major, p. 333.

2 Ibid., pp. 333, 334, 335.

3 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, p. 178.

There is fighting in the streets of Sinclair's city, but it has economic, not patriotic, origins. A workingman, standing in a crowd outside the office of the Vancouver Province exclaims:

"I'll go. Damn right I'll go - in the ranks of a regiment made up of bankers, bond owners, and politicians. . . . I ain't goin' to fight just for a job."

"Maybe you'll fight for that?" a voice taunted, - and with the words came the sound of a blow, and then a scuffle and oaths.¹

The garrison city's euphoria is transitory, however, and the normal business routine is quickly re-established. Gander Stake, in Grain, is intensely uncomfortable when he takes a load of wheat into the town of Plainville; his unease is due as much to his helplessness in the hands of the grain buyers as to the men in uniform he sees everywhere. Wes Thompson, the hero of Burned Bridges, is in San Francisco when the war begins, and when he reaches Vancouver it is very different from the city described in The Inverted Pyramid:

Barring the recruiting offices draped in the Allied colors, squads of men drilling on certain public squares, successive tag days for the Red Cross, the Patriotic fund and such organizations, the war did not flaunt itself in men's faces. The thing had become a grim business to be gone about in grim determination. And side by side with those unostensible [sic] preparations that kept a stream of armed

1 Sinclair, op. cit., p. 180.

men passing quietly overseas, the normal business of a city waxed and throve in the old accustomed way.¹

"Grim business" is the chief concern of the garrison city, but it becomes, in the disillusioned view of Sinclair and one or two others, just another job-producing industry at the service of a stubbornly materialistic society.

At war, Canadian society condenses into the garrison city, but there is little tendency to embody that society in the person of a leader. Willson is an exception to this, and devotes considerable effort to a portrait of Sir Sam Hughes, Canada's Minister of Militia during the early years of the war. The leader is shown, however, as a central figure rather than a superior one, and is far from messianic.

Vant, had already had a glimpse of the network of wires which were being pulled at Ottawa, by which the subordinate actors all over the country were actuated. He had supposed, that this system of wires was organised by, and co-ordinated to the various branches of the Government; but scrutinizing it at closer quarters, he perceived that these directing filaments which transmitted energy to all the leading actors, Executive, Parliamentary, Journalistic and Military, converged towards one spot.

In that spot sat Steve Davies, the wires compacted like fasces in his hand.

...

Steve Davies was not a great statesman.

1 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, p. 218.

So far from being revered, . . . it would be truer to say that he was universally criticised, contemned, ridiculed, and even abhorred.¹

Judging by Sir Steve's attitudes, such criticism would seem merited.

Told by Greg Vant that an anti-war lawyer, Emile Lanctot, has "considerable poetic talent," Sir Steve sneers,

"Patriotic poetry, hey? All about sacred liberty, the soul of the habitant, le ancient regeem, Claire Fontaine, defence doo foyer, amour du pay, je me souveen - and all that sort of punk? No? Well, I guess he can be got round. All these French-Canadians have got to come into line."²

But it is indicative of Willson's ambiguous feelings for Sir Steve that he shows the warlord "getting round" Lanctot very effectively indeed: Lanctot accepts a commission, goes into the trenches, and is seriously wounded. It would seem that Willson objects to Sir Steve's style more than anything else. The image of "the wires compacted like fasces in his hand" would not, in 1924, be chosen at random, especially since Sir Steve himself is described as a kind of Canadian Mussolini:

This beetle-browed, hard-eyed, square-jawed fellow, resembling the marble effigy of more than one Roman Emperor, was, after all, great, by reason of his amazing egoism, his volcanic energy. . . . He resolved to push, drive, bully the entire Canadian nation into the war because of his magnificent, naive and touching faith in the British

1 Willson, Redemption, p. 277.

2 Ibid., p. 311.

Empire, and also, because, he held the conviction that fighting was a necessity of human nature and an inevitable corollary of all human development. . . . The curtain went up in a blare of trumpets and two titanic figures in the centre of the stage, stood revealed and luminous - Young Canada and Steve.¹

Willson is not the only author to show the garrison city as a semi-Fascist society in which the individual is subordinated to the demands of the state. In The Parts Men Play, Austin Selwyn learns from his old friend Gerard Van Derwater that dissent, in wartime, equals treason:

"Since the war began," he said, his tones calm and low, "the United States has been trying to speak with one voice, the voice of a united people. It was the plain duty of every American to aid the Administration in that. Instead, what have we found? Pro-Germans plotting outrage, and pro-Britishers casting slurs; conspiracy, political blackmailing, financial pressure - everywhere she has looked, this country has found within her borders the factors of disruption. We have fought them all. We have refused to be bullied or cajoled into choosing a false national destiny. At the moment that we seem to have accomplished something - with Europe looking to us for the final decision that must come - you, and others of your kind, contrive to poison the great educated, decent-thinking class that we always thought secure. Your cry of 'Peace - peace - at any price let us have peace,' has done its work. Consciously or unconsciously, Austin, you have been a traitor."²

1 Willson, Redemption, p. 278.

2 Baxter, The Parts Men Play, pp. 325-326.

For Baxter, however, treason does not carry with it the taint of blasphemy as it does for clergymen such as Connor and King. Perhaps the most extreme expression of the image of the garrison city appears not in fiction but in one of Coningsby Dawson's letters from the front, written in the last months of the war:

And God - He says nothing, though we all pray to Him. He alone among monarchs has taken no sides in this war. I like to think that the Union Jack waves above His palace and that His angels are dressed in khaki - which is quite absurd. I think of the irresistible [sic] British Tommies who have "gone West," as whistling Tipperary in the streets of the New Jerusalem. They have haloes round their steel helmets and they've thrown away their gas-masks¹

The garrison city is an Anglo-Saxon society, and fights to defend Anglo-Saxon values which are never clearly defined. Alix Adare, in King's The High Heart, declares her allegiance to those values without explaining them:

"I'm not a rebel. I'm loyal to the King. That is, I'm loyal to the great Anglo-Saxon ideal of which the King is the symbol - and I suppose he's as good a symbol as any other, especially as he's already there. The English are only partly Anglo-Saxon. . . . But they're saved by the pure Anglo-Saxon ideal in so far as they hold to it - just as you [Americans] 'll be, with all your mixed bloods - and just as we shall be ourselves. It's like salt in the meat, it's like grace in the Christian religion - it's the thing that saves, and I'm loyal

1 Dawson, Living Bayonets, p. 176.

to that. . . . We [English and Canadians and Australians] don't always like each other; but that doesn't matter. What does matter is that we should betray the fact that we don't like each other to outsiders - and so give them a handle against us."¹

The Anglo-Saxon ideal, Alix implies, is simple xenophobia exaggerated into the garrison mentality, and is the only factor which can unite the mutually hostile English-speaking peoples. Her tepid monarchism foreshadows her transformation into an American - an act made possible, presumably, by the United States' coming to share in Imperial suspicion of "foreigners."

An inevitable component of the garrison mentality is racism, and it is virtually universal among Canadian war novelists. They take it for granted that some races are genetically, morally, and culturally superior to others. For many writers, "race" is almost synonymous with "nationality," so that Anglo-Saxons can be portrayed as racially distinct even from those who are physically indistinguishable from them. Racism in Canadian war novels strengthens the Anglo-Saxons' sense of identity; it justifies their domination of the French-Canadians and Indians; it sanctifies their struggle against Germany, even to the point of genocide. The persistent influence of racism in Canadian literature has not been given the attention it deserves. Though Ronald Sutherland has dealt with racism in his recent study,

¹ King, The High Heart, pp. 40-41.

Second Image, by discussing it chiefly as it appears in Susanna Moodie he makes it seem safely remote from modern society. The only other English-Canadian writer he mentions in this context is Connor, and then only in passing:

throughout Susanna Moodie's work, as throughout the works of Ralph Connor, to name one other obvious example, there is always the disconcerting body-odour of race, the undertone of racism. Not the screeching, messianic racism of a Houston Stewart Chamberlain, . . . but something almost as malignant in the long run, because it is in the form of a deeply ingrained pattern of thought, a conviction which may even be unconsciously held.¹

Under normal conditions, Canadian racism does seem relatively benign, manifesting itself in comic French-Canadians named Jean-Baptiste or in the "darkie" stories which Maclean's regularly published in the 1920's. Under wartime pressures, however, something "screeching and messianic" does appear in Canadian fiction. We might expect that a war against Germany would inspire racist propaganda, yet in fact the Germans are only one target among many; native and immigrant minorities, the French-Canadians, the Jews, and even the French come under attack.

Bertrand Sinclair, in many ways the most radical of Canadian war novelists, scarcely mentions the Germans, but takes it for granted that non-Anglo-Saxons are ipso facto inferior. The writer and

1 Ronald Sutherland, Second Image: Comparative Studies in Quebec/Canadian Literature (Toronto: New Press, 1971), pp. 36-37.

intellectual Archie Lawanne, in The Hidden Places, regards the prospect of hunting with only Indian companions as equivalent to being alone: "those Siwashes are like dumb men."¹ Sam Carr, the patriarchal atheist of Burned Bridges, treats Indians even more casually. After his wife has run off with a preacher, Sam brings his daughter Sophie to the Alberta backwoods; here he takes an Indian wife and fathers several children by her. Neither he nor Sophie takes much notice of these offspring, and when Sam learns he has inherited a fortune he returns at once to the United States with Sophie. Wes Thompson learns of this from Sam's Indian wife, who is undisturbed:

"Sam he good man," she said evenly.
"Leave good place for me. I plenty warm,
plenty to eat. I no care he go. Sam,
pretty soon he get old. I want ketchum
man, I ketchum. No feel bad. No."²

We are told that Sam will provide some sort of regular support for his half-breed family, but they are never mentioned again. What is acceptable for Sam, however, is unthinkable for his daughter. When the Englishman Tommy Ashe proposes to her, Sam observes, "'He's practically the first young, attractive white man you've ever met, the very first possibility as a lover."³ For Sinclair, sexual freedom is the prerogative of the white man, not the white woman. (Doris, the blind white girl in The Hidden Places, does enter into a bigamous

1 Sinclair, The Hidden Places, p. 161.

2 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, p. 130.

3 Ibid., p. 10.

marriage with Robert Hollister, but does so unwittingly and never learns the truth. Myra Hollister's violent death removes the difficulty, as far as Hollister is concerned.)

French-Canadians are notable by their absence from most Canadian war novels. When they are portrayed, it is always in patronizing terms. In "Petite Simonde," by Beverley Baxter, published in his collection of war stories, The Blower of Bubbles, Captain Douglas Campbell commands a French-Canadian company. Defending one of his men who has gotten into trouble over a point of military etiquette, Campbell explains to a less understanding officer: "I know him for a brave chap, faithful as a dog. . . . They are like children, easily swayed and true as steel to those they trust."¹ Campbell later dies while saving the same soldier's life, winning his gratitude as well as his respect. Racism is combined with class distinction in Gertrude Arnold's Sister Anne! Sister Anne!! The concluding vignette deals with a convalescing French-Canadian soldier who is supposedly in love with an aristocratic English girl; the nurse-narrator's relief is considerable when she learns the boy is in fact in love with the girl's maid.

Only in Beckles Willson's Redemption is there any serious, extended effort to portray French-Canadians as more than stereotypes, but Willson's French-Canadians are even more racist than his Anglo-Saxons. When Greg Vant discusses the war with Emile Lanctot, he finds

¹ Arthur Beverley Baxter, The Blower of Bubbles (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1920), p. 126.

that the Acadian lawyer, now a Member of Parliament, has nothing but contempt for English Canada and its war. Vant argues that the war has "welded" the country, to which Lanctot replies:

"Why should we be welded?"

"For prestige - for civilisation."

"Civilisation?" said Lanctot scornfully. "What do you mean by civilisation? What kind of civilisation - what ideals, what standards have you of Ontario and the West to give the simple God-fearing people of Quebec? . . . Civilisation of the type of the Honourable Dave and the Honourable Steve, cynicism and conscription in public life, ostentation and excess in society, free-thinking and self-indulgence in family life."¹

Vant has no real response to this save to assert that Nova Scotia, at least, does not share in the vices of Upper Canada and the West.

Lanctot retorts,

"Yes, and just for that reason they are sneered at by Ontario and the West and condemned just as New England is sneered at by the Middle West of America. Can't you read the signs of the times? Don't you see that there is a destroying monster abroad, which is eating out the ancient heart of America? We too are marked out for destruction because we won't conform. Look at the American cities - look at Boston - the city of Emerson and Lowell and Longfellow - in twenty years it will be peopled chiefly by Irish and Italians. What chance have we to escape once we have allowed the fangs to enter our flesh? No, I see no hope in amalgamation. . . . I

1 Willson, Redemption, p. 296.

tell you, Vant, we don't want your megalomania, your dollar-worship, your feverish, nerve wracking activity, your unconscionable competition, your craze for novelty, your lack of decency and your contempt for simplicity and honest contentment and your indiscipline."

"You are with the Nationalists?"

I am going to give my life and energy to preserving the integrity of the country of my ancestors - Quebec. It's time we gave up prating of our French origin. At this time of day it means about as much as your ancient British or Norman origin means to you."

"I think you are making a mistake, and I know you will fail. The day of small nationalities is over."

"The day of small nationalities is just begun. I am certain . . . that in less than a century this continent will contain a dozen separate nationalities. More and more do the interests of the West clash with those of the East. Already in this war there is a mighty cleavage of sentiment. What do you gain by a fusion of essentially irreconcilable peoples?"¹

This passage is important because Willson is manifestly on Lanctot's side, and repudiates the materialist values of Anglo-Saxon society in favour of the traditional - and reactionary - values of French Canada. Yet Lanctot himself eventually enlists, in outrage over the burning of the Houses of Parliament and shame after reading the last letter of a French-Canadian soldier killed in action. At the novel's

1 Willson, Redemption, p. 297.

close both he and Vant lie wounded in a military hospital, contemplating a bleak future dominated by "mongrel hordes." After listening to Vant attack "a disillusioned, reactionary generation which doesn't care a newspaper paragraph or a revue gag for the old and beautiful things,"¹ the blinded Lanctot says:

"Would it be quixotism, Vant, for you and me to work together towards bringing our peoples together? I have been thinking here in the darkness a great deal about that. Can't we do something to profit by the terrible lesson Europe has taught us? Wouldn't that be cultivating our garden? If we can't make any moral gesture to Europe in spite of our fifty thousand dead, surely we can heal our own discords?"²

Willson's position is contradictory and not thought out very carefully, but what he seems to be saying is that Canada can in fact be preserved as a nation, but only if its Anglo-Saxons adopt the most reactionary French-Canadian values and apply them to the rest of the world - to turn the whole of Canada, in effect, into a gigantic Quebec.

Paradoxically, Willson's racism extends to a bitter condemnation of the European French, whom Vant comes to see as the real threat to peace:

During his year's secondment as an Imperial officer . . . he had not only come to understand the British soldier, to wonder a little at the British civilian, to have his opinion of the steadiness and sobriety

1 Willson, op. cit., pp. 398-399.

2 Ibid., p. 399.

of the German soldier confirmed, but also to mix freely with French and Belgian soldiers and civilians. And slowly, but irresistibly, the truth came upon him . . . that amongst the prime causes of this war, and not only this war, but previous wars, and threatening wars to come, was the peculiar, the inveterate military temper of the French nation as a whole. As long as this temper existed war would be a perpetual menace. . . . He came to have a thousand talks with French soldiers and civilians and found that of all that high moral fervour, that generous reprehension of war, that righteous indignation which had so stirred his own country and the world - not a trace.¹

This condemnation extends as well to the Belgians, for whose sake the war has ostensibly been fought. Mrs. Longhurst, an important figure in the suffragist movement, tells Joan Campion:

"England did not go to war for Belgium. There was a secret treaty with France, believe me - I know. And if you only knew how their wretched refugees are hated in England. They are not the least bit grateful and I am sure that after the war they will turn the cold shoulder to England in spite of all that we have done."²

Earlier in the novel, Willson derides Effie Vant's anti-German racism, but only, it is clear, because she has chosen the wrong target.

Anti-semitism is justified by some writers on the grounds that the Jews in Britain and North America are pacifist and hence pro-German. Coningsby Dawson feels he must include an anti-Jewish observation if

1 Willson, op. cit., p. 393.

2 Ibid., p. 303.

he is accurately to describe a London hotel in wartime:

You know what the Savoy is like, crowded with actresses, would-be-taken-for actresses, officers on leave, chaps hobbling out of hospital like myself, and a sprinkling of Jews with huge noses and a magnificent disregard for the fact that they are not in khaki¹

A similar attitude appears in The Parts Men Play when Austin Selwyn goes to meet the mysterious C. B. Benjamin, a manufacturer who has offered to pay Selwyn to give pacifist lectures. Benjamin is a "smartly dressed Jew, with a shrewd face and an unquestionable dignity of manner"² who explains why he has made his offer:

"Simply business," he said. "Same with you - same with me. You write all this dope against war - why? Because you know there's big money in it. I pay you to lecture because you can help to keep America out of the war. In 1913 I was worth two hundred thousand dollars. Today I have ten million. We are wise men, Mr. Selwyn, both of us. While all the rest of the peoples fight, you and I make money."³

A more patronizing attitude appears in Isabel Ecclestone Mackay's description of the Lot brothers in Mist of Morning:

The Brothers Lot never admitted that they were Jews. On the other hand they never denied it, nature having taken care that no one would have believed them if they

1 Dawson, Living Bayonets, p. 210.

2 Baxter, The Parts Men Play, p. 333.

3 Ibid., pp. 334-335.

had. They always said simply that they were "of Russia," which was rather odd considering that their own country had never done them any harm while Russia had never done them anything else. . . . They were shrewd men and just, according to their lights. But their lights were not brilliant ones.¹

The brothers are foolish enough, as well, to enjoy the company of a German, Herr Stumpf: "Mr. Lot . . . would be delighted to serve his friend Stumpf in any way. . . . Herr Stumpf was extremely hospitable, so open-handed, so free!"²

The only sympathetic portrait of a Jew appears in Connor's The Major: Heinrich Kellerman, a young scholar, joins a Winnipeg regiment after war breaks out. He explains to two young girls that his father had been killed by a German officer during a riot in a Polish village years before, and Heinrich is out for revenge. The girls are very much impressed, but their new respect is somewhat patronizing:

"Tell me, Jane," said Ethel, as they set off down the street, "am I awake? Is that little Kellerman, the greasy little Jew whom we used to think such a beast?"

"Isn't he splendid?" said Jane.
"Poor little Kellerman! . . . I am sorry now we were not better to him."³

1 Mackay, Mist of Morning, p. 186.

2 Ibid., p. 285.

3 Connor, The Major, p. 342.

Moments later, the girls meet two young men who laugh at the news about Kellerman:

"Good Lord! That greasy little Sheeny?" exclaimed Rushbrooke. . . .
"And you say the little Yid was in the Ninetieth? Well, what is the Ninetieth coming to?"

"Lloyd, you mustn't say a word against Mr. Kellerman," said Jane. "I think he is a real man."

"Oh, come, Jane. That little Hebrew Shyster? Why, he does not wash more than once a year!"

"I don't care if he never washes at all."¹

Rushbrooke's contempt for Kellerman is invalidated, in other words, only by Kellerman's enlistment, and Jane seems to see nothing wrong with anti-Semitism as such.

The Germans themselves are rarely portrayed at length, and then only in the broadest stereotypes. Captain S. N. Dancey's The Faith of a Belgian presents a few brutal Prussian officers, all uniformly evil. One is described in a chapter titled "The Way of the Unspeakable Hun":

A big, burly officer appeared in the doorway. His was by no means a kindly face, but rather did it appear to embody all the wickedness for which the Prussians are so famed in this and other wars. . . .

He turned back again, and there he

¹ Connor, The Major, p. 343.

stood in the big, open doorway, a perfect picture of tyranny and despotism. Once more he laughed, but it was the laugh of one who, having given his hand to a foul deed, gloated over the ghastliness of his act.¹

In contrast to this crude caricature is John Murray Gibbon's description of prewar German militarism as seen by two young Englishmen on vacation, in Drums Afar:

Charles and Frank were fascinated by the drillyard where the young soldiers learned to shake the ground with the Paradetrutt. Relentless indeed was the discipline under which they drilled. See for instance the officer back his horse into the face of a private slightly out of alignment.²

The young men also witness a soldier being drilled to death as an example to others. Since German civilians are portrayed with some sympathy and realism, such glimpses of Prussian callousness are much more effective than Dancey's unspeakable Huns.

Most writers, however, concentrate on Germans in North America, and they are usually unable to resist the comic possibilities in the German stereotype. Isabel Ecclestone Mackay's Herr Stumpf, in Mist of Morning is a good example:

. . . one saw that in appearance he was laughably like the pouchy, pipe-smoking German of the kindly humourist's cartoon. Besides being short and fat he had red,

1 Dancey, The Faith of a Belgian, pp. 79-80.

2 John Murray Gibbon, Drums Afar: An International Romance (New York: John Lane, 1918), p. 78.

bulgy cheeks, a stiff moustache and little eyes deeply set. . . .

"Ach, we Shermans are not abreciated in this country."¹

Laughable he may be, but Stumpf has a sinister partner, who is shown as a stereotype of the Prussian junker:

His profile being sharply outlines against the window showed rather too plainly the flatness of the back head and the thickness of the neck which were the only unprepossessing things about him.²

After working out a blackmail scheme and drinking to "The Day!", the two Germans turn to more general topics:

"I think," said Stumpf dreamily after a pause, "that when things are settled down again I would as soon live here as anywhere. I like Canada. And it will not be unpleasant to have a little something to say here, eh?" He laughed softly. "They need a little discipline, these Canadians!"³

A German even more stereotyped appears in Baxter's The Parts Men Play. Mr. Schneider, a German propagandist in New York, is

a small, crafty-faced man, whose oily smile and air of deference did not harmonise with his eyes, which were as shifty and gleaming as those of a rat. He shook hands with his visitor, and then clawed at the papers on his desk with moist fingers that were abnormally long.

1 Mackay, Mist of Morning, pp. 190-191.

2 Ibid., p. 292.

3 Ibid., p. 295.

"Vell, Mister Selvyn," said Mr Schneider gutturally, "to vot do I attribute dis honour?"¹

Selvyn, horrified that his anti-war articles have been published by this man, assaults him and leaves him in a pool of ink.

Surprisingly enough, these few portraits of Germans are practically the only ones in Canadian war fiction, and they are extremely sketchy: Baxter's Mr. Schneider, for example, takes up just two and a half pages in a long novel. Ernest Switzer, the grim young German in The Major, is really a portrait of the dark side of the Canadian character as Connor sees it: materialistic, sexually aggressive, and contemptuous of spiritual values. But Connor's Anglo-Saxons are deeply involved in German culture. Jane Brown is an honours student of German, Barry Dunbar has studied theology in Germany, and Larry Gwynne has learned much about music from the Switzers. Other writers describe the enemy only as stereotype, but Connor takes pains to show that Germany and Canada have much in common. When he then becomes the only Canadian novelist to call for genocide against Germany, there is more involved than the logical conclusion of wartime racist propaganda; Connor seems to want to destroy the artistic and intellectual values he has associated with Germany.

The circumstances of the call for genocide suggest Connor's

1 Baxter, The Parts Men Play, p. 330.

seriousness. At the close of The Major, Larry has enlisted, and after receiving his commission is about to go overseas. Discussing the war with his sister Nora, he bursts out,

"This is a damnable business
But the sooner that cursed race is wiped
off the face of the earth the better.

"Why, Larry, is that you? I
cannot believe my ears."

"Yes, it is me. I have come to
see that there is no possibility of
peace or sanity for the world till that
race of mad militarists is destroyed.
I am still a pacifist, but, thank God,
no longer a fool."¹

Having said this, Larry quickly changes the subject, but the statement is made and never questioned or contradicted. That Connor's pacifist hero makes the statement, rather than the militantly anti-German Jack Romaine, indicates the importance he attaches to it. And though he is the only Canadian novelist to call for genocide, he is not alone in his feelings; Francis Beynon, in her anti-war novel Aleta Dey, suggests that such sentiments are held by many ordinary Canadians. Aleta volunteers for Red Cross work, despite her opposition to the war, and is horrified to hear a fellow-worker,

a woman, whom I had always regarded as
a [very] mild and reasonable person,
[say], in answer to a lament about air
raids, "Those German swine will all have
to be killed off."²

1 Connor, The Major, p. 370.

2 Francis Marion Beynon, Aleta Dey (London: C. W. Daniel, 1919), pp. 167-168.

A businessman later tells her, "We've got to go on until we've wiped the last German off the earth."¹ Her opposition to such views leads Aleta to lose her job, have her phone tapped, and at last to die at the hands of a mob of soldiers.

Persistent though they may be in Canadian writers' work, racist attitudes rarely play much part in their visions of a heroic postwar society. No doubt this is due in part to writers' automatic assumption that Canada will continue to be a white man's country dominated by its English-speaking majority. Far more often, however, the heroic society is founded on a rejection of capitalism; in its place are offered various alternatives whose common denominator is a return to the land and to productive or exploitative work.

Alexander C. Stewart, the author of The Discard, does not offer a programme for postwar society, but he does express the basic attitudes underlying the social visions of such writers as Stead, Sinclair, and Durkin. Movement from the land to the cities, in Stewart's view, is folly:

If we transfer from the cities to the farms
two millions of our urban population, how
much will our food carrying charges be
reduced, and by what amount will our products
be increased and the hours of labour
shortened. . . . Factories do not make
men and women - they destroy them.
Fundamentally, our manufacturing ambitions
kill themselves: taking the farmer off

1 Beynon, Aleta Dey, p. 208.

his acres to manufacture ploughs and leaving his acres untilled is a punk way of extending the market for ploughs.¹

For Stewart, twentieth-century capitalism is sordid profiteering; it is both disgusting and laughable, but he sees little to be done about it. Other writers offer specific recommendations for a better society, or at least an indication that such a society is attainable.

In Robert J. C. Stead's Dennison Grant, his hero returns from the war with a "Big Idea" for a new society which has both heroic and Christian overtones:

"You know the position which I have taken with regard to the spending of money, that one should not spend on himself or his friends anything but his own honest earnings for which he has given honest service to society. I have seen no reason to change my position. On the contrary the war has strengthened me in my convictions. It has brought home to me and to the world the fact that heroism is a flower which grows in no peculiar soil, and that it blossoms as richly among the unwashed and the underfed as among the children of fortune. This fact only aggravates the extremes of wealth and poverty, and makes them seem more unjust than ever. . . . The point is that under our present system we do acquire wealth which we do not earn, and the only thing to be done . . . is to treat that wealth as a trust to be managed for the benefit of humanity. That is what I call the new morality . . . although it is not so new either. It can be traced back at least nineteen hundred years . . ."2

1 Stewart, The Discard, p. 222.

2 Stead, Dennison Grant, pp. 268-269.

It had been repeatedly asserted during the war that combat made all men equal; now peacetime society must re-create that egalitarian world. But Dennison Grant's plan is far from democratic, though it is restricted to ex-soldiers:

"I propose to form a company and buy a large block of land, cut it up into farms, build houses and community centres, and put returned men and their families on these farms, under the direction of specialists in agriculture. I shall break up the rectangular survey of the West for something with humanizing possibilities; I mean to supplant it with a system of survey which will permit of settlement in groups - villages, if you like - where I shall instal all the modern conveniences of the city, including movie shows. Our statesmen are never done lamenting that population continues to flow from the country to the city, but the only way to stop that flow is to make the country the more attractive of the two."¹

There is a feudal overtone in this proposal: the link between military service and landholding, the deliberate rejection of the isolated farmstead in favour of the village.² Grant intends to turn his settlers into shareholders who will possess their land as long as they obey the rules of the company which really owns it:

1 Stead, Dennison Grant, p. 271.

2 The veterans' colony is an old concept in Canada. Professor Richard Preston notes in his "Military Influence on the Development of Canada," in H. J. Massey, ed., The Canadian Military: A Profile (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1972), p. 53, that Loyalist soldiers were settled in such colonies, and though they failed, "the principle was revived time and time again."

"If the company rules that hayracks are not to be left on the front lawn you will have to deposit yours somewhere else. If it orders that crops must be rotated to preserve the fertility of the soil you will obey those instructions."¹

Grant's company, obviously, will be a benevolent despotism, and the individual shareholder will have only a limited voice in running it.

Grant frankly admits that he will personally hold the real power:

"there are times when the most democratic countries have to use autocratic methods, as, for example, Great Britain and the United States in the late war. We must learn to make autocracy the servant of democracy, not its enemy. Well - I'm going to be the autocrat in this case. I am going to sit behind the scenes and as long as my company functions all right I will leave it alone, but if it shows signs of wrecking itself I will assume the role of the benevolent despot and set it to rights again."²

We are told that this scheme gets off to a good start, but Grant is more interested in marrying his secretary and settling into domesticity; the Big Plan is administered by Linder, who is Grant's squire.

An equally paternalistic society is created by Sam Carr in Bertrand Sinclair's Burned Bridges, and like that in Dennison Grant its ostensibly capitalistic structure - the joint stock company - conceals an anticapitalist yearning to return to a pioneer life:

1 Stead, Dennison Grant, p. 273.

2 Ibid., pp. 275-276.

"We secured all the timber limits in this valley. We got together a little group for a start. They were returned men, some physically handicapped, but eager to do something for themselves. . . . We put in machinery and gear, put up a small sawmill for ourselves, tore into the logging business, cleared land, built houses. You see we are quite a community. And we are a self-supporting community. Some of these men own stock in the company. Any returned man can find a place for himself here. There is room and work and security and ultimate independence here for any man willing to co-operate for the common welfare.¹

Sam's last remark seems to foreshadow the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation; in any case, he is concerned with society as a collective, engaged in productive and exploitative kinds of work. His position is thoroughly autocratic, and he even offers Wes Thompson the succession:

"Better get in with us, Wes . . . I'm getting old. It won't be long before I have to quit. This thing will need a pilot for a long time yet. Men will always have to have a leader. You can do good here."²

Wes is attracted to the idea, and decides to go in with the Carrs after Sophie shows him the valley from a hilltop. It is a pioneer paradise: "immediately beneath them lay the houses of the settlement, . . . little gardens, and the green square of cultivated fields, and beyond

1 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, p. 302.

2 Ibid., p. 303.

in greater expanse the stump-dotted land that was still in the making."¹
Wes Thompson's response indicates how far he has come from his days as a missionary, when Sophie's intelligence and rationality had cowed him:

"It is a great view, and there is more in it than meets the eye," Thompson said.
"Eh, little woman? The greatest war of all, the biggest struggle. One that never ends. Man struggling to subdue his environment to his needs."²

Though both Dennison Grant and Sam Carr hope that their veterans' colonies will serve as social models for the entire nation, neither Robert Stead nor Bertrand Sinclair seems to have held for long to their visions of benevolent despotism. In Grain, Stead shows that those who fail to serve in wartime are exiled from the land in peacetime, while the veteran recuperates in a comfortable but not idealized rural society. Sinclair returns to Toba Inlet in The Hidden Places, but the veterans' colony plays a very small part in the story of Robert Hollister, who lives apart from society except for his blind wife. As boss of a small logging operation, Hollister gains contentment, but his disfigured face keeps him isolated from others. Rod Norquay, in Sinclair's The Inverted Pyramid, is similarly uninterested in any society outside his immediate family, but both he and Hollister share Wes Thompson's desire to leave the city and return to the wilderness to renew the heroic cycle. With that renewal

1 Sinclair, Burned Bridges, p. 304.

2 Ibid..

comes also a return to innocence and an escape from the compromises and corruptions of a complex society. The liquidation of the Norquay Trust, whose sign had dominated the Vancouver skyline, is achieved by the total destruction of the Norquay family's timber resources, but with the Trust gone Rod feels his honour has been upheld; no one has suffered despite Grove Norquay's mismanagement. Though he has no idea what he will do "with a great, empty stone house and twelve hundred acres of worthless land,"¹ Rod sees himself as an ancestor of a family destined to grow great again - and, less clearly, as a foe of his brother's kind of capitalism.

Though for Rod Norquay the only meaningful society is that of his wife and child, he is unusual in assuming a dominant role in that society. Very often, the hero's return to innocence is also a return to dependence on a father figure or on the heroine. Larry Strangways, in The High Heart, is his wife's "other baby." Wes Thompson is Sam Carr's heir apparent, but still subordinate to him. In Douglas Durkin's The Magpie, we find one of the most effective expressions of this tendency to relinquish manhood. Durkin's hero, a young veteran named Craig Forrester, finds himself alienated from Canada's postwar society. His career as a grain broker comes to mean little to him. He investigates the labour movement and champions it to his fellow-capitalists, but is rejected by its leaders. So corrupt is everyone

1 Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid, p. 336.

around him that he is almost relieved when a fall in grain prices drags him down in the ruin of another trader. Forrester swiftly parts from his wife, sells what little property he still has, and leaves Winnipeg for the farm of his childhood sweetheart. Arriving at dawn, he finds her father already at work in the fields:

"Well, it's taken you a damn' long time to get back where you belong," said Farmer Lane.

Craig smiled. "I'm not there yet," he replied. "I want to get over on that place my Dad left with you."

"If you think you're fit for it, after living like a tramp for the best part of your days."

For answer Craig took his position behind the plough and put the horses about. A moment later he had them headed toward the other end of the field, leaving behind them a furrow as true and straight as its mate.¹

The heroic society consists, finally, in the broken family made whole again; but for many writers such as Sinclair, King, and Durkin, it is only by abdicating his manhood that the hero can find a place in that family. In this response to the Great War - a moral retreat from the realities of modern society - Canadian novelists express a nation's uncertain maturity.

1 Durkin, The Magpie, p. 330.

SIX: CONCLUSION

The modern reader, on first encountering the war novels of Connor, Stead, and others, is likely to respond with amused incredulity. Here are the stock characters, the formula plots, the sentimental clichés he has known only from the attacks made on them by later and better writers. Given their literary and intellectual weaknesses, early Canadian war novels might be dismissed as mere kitsch, the transient expression of an immature society under the stress of war. But their influence, direct or indirect, continues to be felt by modern Canadian writers. To discuss that influence in detail would be outside the scope of this study, but it is worthwhile to point out at least a few elements in later novels which are clearly related to the initial Canadian response to the Great War.

After the mid-1920's, pro-war novelists such as Connor and Stead either fall silent or turn to other themes. For a year or two, practically no war fiction is published in Canada; then, with Peregrine Acland's All Else is Folly in 1929 and Charles Yale Harrison's Generals Die in Bed in 1930, a new vision of the war is expressed. Concentrating on the reality of trench warfare, Acland and Harrison reject almost every element of earlier war novels except those which can be exploited for ironic effect. For example, the pastoral west of Connor is presented very differently in All Else is Folly, where a brawl in the wild cow-town of Whoopee is interrupted by a militia colonel's

announcement that war has broken out:

"If you boys want fighting"

In that room, that night, the reverberation of his words was like the booming of a bell.¹

Colonel Carson's voice is much like that of Joseph Vandebroek in The Faith of a Belgian, or of Colonel Van Derwater in The Parts Men Play, but Carson gives up his rank and goes to war as a private - "He thought it would help recruiting."² Though his bravery helps to win a skirmish, Carson's death is far from glamorous: "The upper half of the face was blown away . . . a red mess"³

Harrison's Generals Die in Bed is set almost entirely in the trenches; both in style and content it owes much to Hemingway and nothing to Connor. But in his later There Are Victories, Harrison ironically employs a number of motifs from early war novels. The heroine's husband, a wealthy but unstable man named Edgar Kennedy, is seriously wounded in combat: "he had been buried alive twice and his nerves were gone."⁴ This symbolic death has deprived him of his manhood - "His handwriting . . . was loose and sprawled over the

1 Peregrine Acland, All Else is Folly: A Tale of War and Passion (New York: Coward-McCann, 1929), p. 27.

2 Ibid., p. 169.

3 Ibid., p. 280.

4 Charles Yale Harrison, There are Victories (New York: Covici, Friede, 1933), p. 132.

page like the writing of a boy of ten."¹ The war has changed him into a drunken, foul-mouthed libertine who eventually goes mad; his wife, after a long illicit affair, commits suicide. Harrison's treatment of these lurid events is not entirely melodramatic, and Ruth Courtney is a far more complex woman than such failed heroines as Myra Hollister in The Hidden Places or Joan Campion in Redemption. Ruth's predicament is a grim parody of the postwar reunions in Sinclair's The Inverted Pyramid and Burned Bridges, or King's The High Heart.

Hugh MacLennan's Barometer Rising also owes much to the early Canadian war novels. Its hero, Neil MacRae, returns from supposed death to vindicate himself. Penelope Wain, like the heroines of several other novels, seeks a position of equality with men through her work as a successful ship designer, but finds no real fulfilment until she assumes the role of wife and mother. Halifax is of course a literal garrison city, but until the explosion it seems more like a divided village through which Neil wanders, as isolated and friendless as Barry Dunbar in The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land or Frank Melbury in The City of Comrades. Like Melbury also, Neil is made to symbolize Canada and her destiny:

For better or for worse he was entering the future, he was identifying himself with the still-hidden forces which were doomed to

1 Harrison, There Are Victories, p. 132.

shape humanity as certainly as the tiny states of Europe had shaped the past. Canada was still hesitant But if there were enough Canadians like himself, half-American and half-English, then the day was inevitable when the halves would join and his country would become the central arch which united the new order.¹

MacLennan is not the only important modern writer to employ the motifs of the early Canadian war novel. Margaret Laurence deals with the aftermath of the war in her short story "A Bird in the House" and, to a lesser extent, in her novel A Jest of God. The MacLeod family, in "A Bird in the House," had sent both its sons, Ewen and Roderick, to fight in the Great War; Roderick had died in the trenches. When Vanessa MacLeod asks her father Ewen about it on a Remembrance Day in the 1930's, his laconic replies are reminiscent of the mute soldiers of Stead and Sinclair; Vanessa's response is like that of a Connor character hearing a personal account of the war:

"You were right there when Uncle Roderick got killed, weren't you?" I began uncertainly.

"Yes."

"How old was he, Dad?"

"Eighteen," my father said.

Unexpectedly, that day came into intense being for me. He had had to watch his own

¹ Hugh MacLennan, Barometer Rising (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1958), p. 218.

brother die, not in the antiseptic calm of some hospital, but out in the open, the stretches of mud I had seen in his snapshots.¹

Grandmother MacLeod, "surrounded by half a dozen framed photos of Uncle Roderick and only one of my father,"² is much like Larry Gwynne's mother in The Major, or Dave Elden's widow in The Cow Puncher, had they lived into the Depression years still venerating their lost boys. There is an echo of the heroic cycle in the fact that Vanessa's younger brother is named Roderick. And the old identification of war with sexual release appears at the story's end, when Vanessa, years after her father's death, finds a snapshot of a French girl among his papers.

She looked like what she probably had been - an ordinary middle-class girl, but in another country. . . . I looked for a long time at the girl, and hoped she had meant some momentary and unexpected freedom.³

A "momentary and unexpected freedom" is of course just what the war had offered to the heroes of the early war novels, and to return to the frustrations of civilian society would have seemed even less appealing after knowing that freedom; such an attitude doubtless underlies the efforts of Dennison Grant, Wes Thompson, and others to create a heroic postwar society. The private, scarcely revealed misery of men such as

1 Margaret Laurence, "A Bird in the House," in A Bird in the House (New York: Knopf, 1970), pp. 93-94.

2 Ibid., p. 107.

3 Ibid., p. 112.

Ewen MacLeod and Niall Cameron, the alcoholic undertaker in A Jest of God, stems directly from their experience of war, which seems to make the return to peacetime life almost unbearable. Rachel Cameron senses this, but cannot explain it, when she remembers her father spending every Remembrance Day among the corpses in his funeral parlor:

He must have been very young then. He never talked about that time in France, and when the Armistice Day parades were held, he never would go. Mother used to say "Everyone goes, Niall - it looks so peculiar, for you not to." He would agree to nearly anything, for quiet, but not to that. He would stay downstairs that day, with the silent company if there happened to be anyone in residence waiting burial, or else alone, and he wouldn't come upstairs all that night, either, being unable to move sufficiently, I guess. What could have happened to him, all those years ago, to make him that way?¹

Niall Cameron's annual descent to the underworld has considerable ironic power, since of course it is nothing special; he has done it every day since his return from the war. That he had expected something more from the war, something transcending ordinary life, is hinted at when Rachel recalls the Cameron Highlanders marching out of Manawaka on their way to the Second World War:

"Dad - come and see - they've got pipers, and they're playing The March of the Cameron Men." He stood in the

¹ Margaret Laurence, A Jest of God, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1966), p. 53.

doorway, his face showing no feeling at all. "Yes, I expect they are, Rachel. It has a fine sound, the lies the pipes tell. You run away now, there's a good girl."¹

Laurence's ex-soldiers live in the ruins of the hopes which the war had inspired in them, and their frustrations would be far less keenly felt if they had not once sensed - and grasped - an opportunity to escape into war.

Another recent novel, Fifth Business by Robertson Davies, exploits many motifs of early war fiction. His village of Deptford is sharply divided between religious sects. Dunstable Ramsay, the hero-narrator, feels isolated from most of the village by his desire to be a "polymath" and by his conviction that Mrs. Dempster, the Baptist preacher's demented wife, is a saint capable of performing miracles. Dunstable's mother is much like Ralph Connor's Mrs. Gwynne seen clearly: a mixture of generosity and flinty self-righteousness. When she puts her son in an impossible position by demanding that he choose herself or Mrs. Dempster, Dunstable escapes the dilemma by enlisting. This wins him widespread admiration; as he observes, "Feeling about the war in our village was romantic, because it touched us so little Girls took a new view of me, and to my delighted surprise Leola Cruikshank made it clear she was mine on loan, so to speak."² Dunstable's acceptance into the society of soldiers

1 Laurence, A Jest of God, p. 54.

2 Robertson Davies, Fifth Business (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 69-70.

recapitulates his peacetime difficulties: his incessant reading of the New Testament (the only book he can carry conveniently in the trenches) gains him "a disagreeable reputation as a religious fellow, a Holy Joe,"¹ much like Barry Dunbar. When he imitates Charlie Chaplin at a troop show, however, his dirty jokes make him an instant success; it is this performance, not his later heroism in combat, which gains him acceptance.

Dunstable's killing of three German machine-gunners - more by chance than intent - makes him a hero, but is described in baldly anti-heroic terms:

I . . . found myself in the German machine-gun nest, with three Germans ahead of me firing busily.

I had a revolver, and I shot all three at point-blank range. They did not even see me.²

The passage is reminiscent of one in Acland's All Else is Folly in which Alec Falcon and another soldier outflank the enemy: "They were both lying flat. Shooting into the crowded German trench. Shooting the Germans in the back."³

Gravely wounded, Dunstable loses consciousness in a ruined building, beneath a statue of the Virgin and Child. Regaining

1 Davies, Fifth Business, p. 77.

2 Ibid., p. 82.

3 Acland, All Else is Folly, p. 275.

consciousness months later in an English hospital, he learns that he had been officially reported killed in action and posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. Though Dunstable is reborn as helplessly dependent on a nurse-mother as Larry Strangways in The High Heart or Frank Melbury in The City of Comrades, he is grimly determined not to stay that way. When he learns that his parents had died of influenza, he says: "I was glad that I did not have to be my mother's own dear laddie any longer," and adds - with considerable heat -

Oh, these good, ignorant, confident women!
How one grows to hate them! I was mean-
spiritedly pleased that my mother had not
lived to hear of my V.C.; how she would
have paraded in mock-modesty as the mother
of a hero, the very womb and matrix of
bravery, in consequence of my three years
of degradation in the Flanders mud!¹

Diana Marfleet, the nurse who tends him through his recovery, renames him Dunstan and initiates him sexually - "an important step toward the completion of that manhood which had been thrust upon me so one-sidedly in the trenches,"² he observes with some irony. While he loves Diana, he feels he must break away from her if he is to maintain his new manhood. She is much, indeed, like Alix Adare, "raised on a mental diet of heroism, Empire, decency, and the emotional superiority of womanhood."³

1 Davies, Fifth Business, p. 90.

2 Ibid., p. 94.

3 Ibid., p. 102.

Like the heroes of the early war novels, Dunstan has a double - the rich, selfish, and materialist Boy Staunton, who returns from the war to claim - and destroy - Leola Cruikshank. Leola emerges as a failed heroine like Diana Farrer in Treading the Winepress, doomed to death for having chosen wealth over heroism. Of course Dunstan is aware, as his predecessors were not, of how morally compromised he is by his association with his wealthy double, and how shaky is his own claim to moral superiority. This awareness lends an irony to Fifth Business which makes it a far more complex work than the early war novels, but it should be clear that its irony relies heavily on their romantic conventions.

The early Canadian war novels, it is evident, do not exist in a vacuum. They reflect the responses of a specific society, one which is influenced strongly by others but which is nevertheless distinct from them. The social myths expressed in the early war novels did not vanish as the novels did, but have continued shaping Canadian culture. Half a century after the war, the heroic sky pilots and car salesmen still populate the Canadian imagination; they are ironic figures now, no longer romantic, but they still seek new identities in the transcendence of their purposeless materialist society. Through these novels, we gain a clearer idea of what we are by seeing what we have tried to become.

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