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THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN ENGLISH CANADIAN  
AND FRENCH CANADIAN NOVELS OF THE 1950S

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Thesis presented to the School of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Ph.D. degree in English literature

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

OTTAWA, CANADA, 1977



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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge my appreciation to Dr. Glenn Clever, not only for his patient and ever-ready assistance in this thesis, but also for his practical and moral support of my interest in Comparative Canadian Studies.

I am also indebted to the Canada Council for their support of this work.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

For over two thousand years Western Civilization has debated the question of human freedom--determinism versus indeterminism, causality versus free will--but has arrived at no definite conclusions. The following study offers no solution; its purpose, rather, is to explore the subject as it appears in the Canadian novel during the 1950s, in an attempt to discover if there exists an attitude towards, and a concept of, human freedom common to both the English and French Canadian novels of the decade. Freedom can be defined negatively as the absence of compulsion, but in more positive terms, directly relevant to a literary study, freedom as an expression of self offers a comprehensive frame of reference well suited for an examination of the fictional worlds of Canadian novelists during the 1950s.<sup>1</sup>

The search for a concept of freedom common to both the English and French Canadian novel would be of interest in any period of Canadian history; it is particularly so in the 1950s. While there is perhaps never any single issue which sets the whole tempo of a time, some concerns seem particularly important at specific moments in a people's history. The novelist's job, according to Morley Callaghan, is to find out these concerns, "somehow or other to catch

the tempo, the stream, the way people live, think, and feel in their time, quite aside from any intellectual attitude to the matter.<sup>2</sup> Leading thinkers in both English and French Canada express the view that during the 1950s Canadians, both English and French, lived, thought, and felt a drama of human liberty.<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this present study it is worthwhile attempting to establish some of the "intellectual attitude" towards human freedom as it found expression in certain of the foremost minds of English and French Canada during the decade.<sup>4</sup>

What is most remarkable in examining the social, cultural, and economic writings of French Canada during the 1950s is how often the problem of human liberty is phrased in terms of self-expression versus an all pervasive clerical power in the society. Maurice Blain, for example, discussing "la liberté de l'esprit" in 1952, begins by unequivocally identifying the problem of freedom as the central issue of his time: "C'est en termes de liberté que se pose le problème spirituel de ma génération, et plus précisément de la jeune génération des intellectuels."<sup>5</sup> In equally unequivocal language he locates the origin of the problem in the "oppression cléricale" exercised by French Canada's unofficial "église nationale."<sup>6</sup> For Blain, both the separation of Church and State, as well as the guarantee of fundamental civil liberties, are more theoretical than real in his present French Canadian society; if an intellectual dares to risk a nonconformist opinion, he can expect

condemnation by a united front of opposition:

La sanction sociale, cléricale et politique s'applique avec l'instinct immédiat d'un danger et avec l'automatisme d'un réflexe porte une condamnation sans appel. Ce mécanisme de masse fonctionne avec une exactitude et une efficacité d'autant plus remarquables que l'hétérodoxie gêne plus directement l'alliance des pouvoirs qui la répriment. Car c'est précisément la force de l'oppression que cette unanimité instantanée des pouvoirs dans la sanction collective.<sup>7</sup>

Blain's extreme indictment of the Church-led Quebec establishment is by no means unique. When in 1950, Pierre Elliot Trudeau and Gérard Pelletier founded Cité libre, they created a forum for an increasing number of dissident French Canadian intellectuals, many of whom identified the fundamental problem of their time as that of liberty; and moreover, posed this problem in terms of self-expression versus clerical oppression. In a 1955 article, entitled "Idéologie et crise de conscience du Canada français," Marcel Rioux examines the consequences to French Canadian cultural expression of the clerically inspired nationalist ideology. Concerned only "conserver" and "transmettre" the French cultural heritage, such an ideology has, according to Rioux, destroyed what he considers to be the essence of the French identity:

Il semble que ce qui fait l'essence de la mentalité française, cet esprit critique, cette soif de liberté et ce sens de création, se soit réfugié chez quelques individus vivant comme en marge du groupe canadien-français.<sup>8</sup>

Jean LeMoyne, perhaps the most pessimistic of all these writers finds that clerical oppression and Church invasion of every territory within the society, by robbing

the individual of his very self, has rendered self-expression impossible. LeMoynes wrote "L'Atmosphère religieuse au Canada français," for Cité libre in 1951; it is a measure of the Church's strong influence on the society that even this most outspoken journal agreed with LeMoynes in 1951 that it would be "inopportun" to publish the article at this date.<sup>9</sup> It, thus, does not appear in Cité libre until May, 1955.

LeMoynes concedes that "il y a ici des esprits libres," but goes on to explain what kind of painful, poisoned liberty they can exercise. His direct attack is upon the clerical control of the educational system:

Notre éducation a été un bain de clergé, mais nous avons affaire à de si petits gens! Nous sortons d'entre les mains de personnages individuellement si insignifiants, (sauf quelques exceptions inconnues de la majorité pour leur propre bien), si inoffensifs! Et pourtant ils nous ont si bien possédés que la solitude à laquelle oblige le simple salut humain, le non-conformisme le plus élémentaire et le plus discret est à peine vivable. La solitude et la liberté ne devraient être que pénible: elles sont empoisonnées par la corruption presque indéracinable de la culpabilité.<sup>10</sup>

While the preceding three writers each, in some way, identifies an all-powerful, all-pervasive, state-supported Church as the main threat to self-expression in the French Canadian society, other writers focus upon the power which supported both the ruling political parties and the Church. Foreign-controlled capital constitutes the economic base upon which the alliance of power rests in this industrialized society. In a 1952 symposium on "Les répercussions sociales de l'industrialisation dans la province de Québec," Albert Faucher and Maurice Lamontagne outline the main

characteristics of the Quebec economy at that point in time. Essentially, Quebec represents a "regional manifestation" of the overall North American economy, and as such shows the following features: (1) expansion in Québec has been "characterized by large-scale and monopolistic industries," (2) "American ownership and control are widespread," (3) "economic development in Quebec has been financed, directed and controlled from the outside." These two authors conclude that, because of the large foreign ownership, Quebec "suffers from absentee ownership and entrepreneurship."<sup>11</sup>

According to Hubert Guindon, the absentee ownership and entrepreneurship in the economic affairs of Quebec is precisely what made possible the monolithism of the Quebec society deplored by Blain, LeMoynes, and Rioux. He describes how the "converging interests of clergy, political parties, and foreign capitalists" produced a solid alliance of the three powers:

The capitalists gave the surplus population something to do and a place to go. In exchange, the local power élites let the capitalists dictate the industrial rules of the game. And in their game, unions were quite unwelcome players. Furthermore, their interest in local society was specific. They sought maximum yields with minimum involvement in the local game of politics, religion, and urban development, a requirement that dovetailed nicely with what the local power élites required, and still do, of invading aliens.<sup>12</sup>

The main thrust of Guindon's examination focuses upon how the primary, most important power elite--that of the Church--maintained its power during the massive industrialization and bureaucratization of Quebec society

in the post-World War II period.<sup>13</sup> Arguing from a sociologist's point of view, he shows the method of self-transformation adopted by the Church in its transition from rural to urban power:

The basic mechanism it adopted was that of rapidly building and investing in large-scale institutions of assorted sizes and qualities. While it continued its old roles, it undertook to create completely new ones. The clergy became bureaucratic overlords and the rate of growth of clerical bureaucracies is simply amazing.<sup>14</sup>

Guindon expresses his unease at the Church's monopolization of the social structures in Quebec. His concern arises not out of a simple anti-clerical bias, resentful of any gains in the Church's power, but from what may be lost if and when the Church succeeded, as he expected it would, in becoming all-powerful:

With the systematic maintenance of the clergy's increasingly diversified number of roles, the image of what a priest is, why he exists, becomes blurred. After having achieved complete control over the social organization, the clergy may discover, perhaps too late, that its population no longer knows what religion and its cherished symbols mean. The symbols may become hollow and meaningless for the population, and even for parts of the clergy. And not because of alien and foreign culture, but as a direct result of the clergy's own successful control of the whole society.<sup>15</sup>

Guindon strikes a note in these closing remarks which echoes through many of the French Canadian writings of the decade--a criticism of the clerical invasion of every aspect of social and intellectual life which at the same time recognizes the need for a value system that up until this point had been found within the Church. The great fear, as expressed by Maurice Blain, is what lay on the other side

of the religious crisis through which the intellectual was passing:

L'essentiel de son drame se joue à une autre profondeur. Il se demande au nom de quoi va s'opérer ce bouleversement, et quelles valeurs vont survivre à la liquidation. . . . Cette génération sans maîtres est à la recherche d'un humanisme et se demande avec angoisse sur quelles assises spirituelles elle pourra le fonder.<sup>16</sup>

Pierre Elliot Trudeau recognizes the depth and breadth of the hold which the Church has on the loyalties of the French Canadian people, even while he deplores what he considers to be the abuses of power by which it maintains this hold. The very institution which now, according to a number of the writers, threatens the French Canadians' self-expression, was, Trudeau claims, for centuries their only voice, their only means of self-expression as a people:

Quant au peuple canadien-français il reconnaissait volontiers la hiérarchie comme son interprète autorisé. Car outre que sa foi l'engageait à l'obéissance, ce peuple devait en bonne partie à son clergé d'avoir survécu; il le savait et on le lui rappelait volontiers.--Par ailleurs nous étions dominés, souvent même bafoués, par l'étranger sur les plans politique, économique et social; quoi d'étonnant que nous ayons respecté le clergé qui constituait le seul poste de commande où nous ayons librement eu accès? On se donne le self-government qu'on peut . . .<sup>17</sup>

Blain, Rioux, LeMoyné, Guindon, and Trudeau, in the very process of describing the monolithic nature of the Catholic Church in French Canadian life, constitute the cracks in the base of the "alliance des pouvoirs." The very existence of a review such as Cité libre shows that a voice of opposition had found a viable means of making known its discontent. As Mason Wade points out, a "new spirit found

expression in the review Cité libre, which under the editorship of Gérard Pelletier, a labor journalist, and Pierre-Elliott Trudeau, a political scientist and labor lawyer, found no cow too sacred to be sociologically anatomized."<sup>18</sup> But while the sacred cow of the Church could be anatomized, it could not be slaughtered. Although a significant number of French Canadian intellectuals of the 1950s saw the problem of freedom phrased in terms of the Catholic Church, they also recognized that their own identity had been moulded by this very Church. No one states this identification more clearly than Jean-Charles Falardeau in his study of the "Rôle et importance de l'Eglise au Canada français." For Falardeau: "L'histoire du Canada français, c'est l'histoire de l'Eglise au Canada, et réciproquement."<sup>19</sup> Thus, the problem of freedom, or self-expression, for many French Canadians during the 1950s took the form of a seemingly unresolvable conflict of interests: the very institution which prevented, distorted, or usurped all power of self-expression, was the only known channel of expression within the society of the time.

One would not expect to find the same personal cry of anguish among English Canadian writers as in Blain's, Rioux's, or LeMoynes' writings on freedom, for, outside of Quebec, no single institution exercised such wide ranging powers as did the Catholic Church in that province. Yet George Grant, writing at the end of the decade, identifies at the heart of English Canadian society, the monolithic

quality which is so apparent to the French Canadian writers in their society. Not an alliance of Church and State, but the economic system upon which all social, cultural, and religious institutions are based, provides the monolithic nature of English Canadian society for Grant: "Even in the ten short years I have lived in Halifax, I have watched with amazement the speed with which the corporation empires have taken over this old culture and made it their own. This culture of monolithic capitalism creates the very fabric of all our lives."<sup>20</sup> Identifying the stage at which industrial civilization has arrived as that of "late state capitalism," Grant goes on to portray the plight of the individual in such a civilization in terms as devastating as those used by French Canadian writers. Like Blain, Grant sees the individual searching for a new set of values with which to face a new age:

Yet, as soon as we have admitted the need for that search, we must admit that our very society exerts a terrible pressure to hold us from that search. Every instrument of mass culture is a pressure alienating the individual from himself as a free being. In late capitalism the individual finds more and more that responsibility for his own life lies not with himself but with the whole system.<sup>21</sup>

Working from economic and sociological data on the 1950s, sociologist John Porter arrives at the same conclusions as moral philosopher George Grant. In The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada, Porter establishes the existence of a relatively small group of men who form the economic elite of the country, and shows

how such an elite exercises a vast control, not only over the economy, but over the whole value system of a people. The relevance of such a power elite to our present concern with human freedom becomes clear when Porter examines their influence outside of their own sphere of the business and financial world. In a section entitled "Beyond the Board Room" he documents how the economic elite, as "society's leading citizens," holds positions of high influence in the leading cultural and educational institutions of the country. "The boards of charitable organizations, symphony orchestras, art galleries, institutions for delinquent boys (and not so delinquent ones), universities, and hospitals are almost exclusively the preserve of the corporate elite."<sup>22</sup>

Porter's study of Canadian society as a whole arrives at the same conclusions as Faucher and Lamontagne's study of Quebec's economic and social conditions. Like them, Porter emphasizes the somewhat extraordinary economic conditions which prevail in Canada. This country, he claims, "is probably unique among modern industrial societies for the large proportion of its productive resources which are owned outside its borders."<sup>23</sup> But if Canadians do not adequately control their own economy, Porter implies that someone else might. In a section entitled "An External Elite?" Porter remarks that "It is . . . significant from the point of view of power that such a large proportion of the foreign capital comes from one country, the United States."<sup>24</sup> The main interest of Porter's 1966 study for the purposes of the

present review is that it provides statistically informed background observations for our examination of the actual writings of the period. In documenting the presence of a small economic elite who exercised wide-ranging decision-making powers throughout the society, virtually becoming the voice of self-expression for Canadian values, and even more importantly, in showing that this decision-making power was often in the hands of a foreign elite--namely American, Porter touches upon a major theme which runs persistently throughout the writings of English Canadians during the fifties.

Stuart Jamieson, in the opening chapter of his Industrial Relations in Canada, details the extensiveness and the profundity of Canada's ties to the United States. Given the discrepancies in size and population of the two countries, Jamieson accepts as only logical that the more powerful of the two should exercise both economic and cultural influence on the weaker one. In fact, he goes one step further. After detailing the numerous ways in which Canadians have become Americanized in recent years, sharing "much the same system of values and goals as do Americans,"<sup>25</sup> Jamieson concludes with a generalization that is of rather crucial relevance to the question of Canadian self-expression: "Rarely if ever in history have two immediately adjoining peoples with so many similarities managed to retain separate and distinct national identities, particularly where the one outnumbered the other by about eleven to one."<sup>26</sup>

Having demonstrated how profoundly and extensively English Canadians have adopted American life styles, cultural expression, economic outlooks, and goals, it is hardly surprising that Jamieson finds a certain "lack of self-confidence"<sup>27</sup> among these people--they may begin to wonder what real self they have to express.

Edgar McInnis's 1959 study, Canada: A Political and Social History, outlines a picture of Canada's economic dependence upon the United States, and the consequent difficulties of autonomy, similar to that presented by Porter and Jamieson. He also goes on to explore some of the political and military implications of the close Canada-United States relationship not mentioned by these other authors. An important element of a nation's self-expression is clearly manifested in her international relations. McInnis points out that Canada, "second in rank to the Great Powers, has the obligations that go with that status yet lacks the full resources that would enable her to undertake major projects on her own initiative in the field of world affairs."<sup>28</sup> In order, then, to carry out her foreign affairs policies in such projects as NATO or the Colombo Plan, Canada had to ensure that such policies were couched in terms which were favourable to her "major associates." And McInnis continues "of all those associates, the one whose importance is paramount for Canada is the great neighbor with whom she must live in such close and continuous contact."<sup>29</sup>

McInnis describes the American-Canadian relationship of this period as one of "interdependence." Yet the partnership was not based upon an equal division of power, especially in vital political and military areas. In the most obviously dramatic decision making of the day, the outcome of which was felt to involve the life and death of every Canadian, Canada had no input--McInnis feels--no voice with which to express herself:

. . . American conduct in the field of world politics attracted Canadian interest and concern; In the Cold War, the fortunes of the common cause rested to a very large extent in the hands of the United States. The wisdom and effectiveness of American policy could affect for good or ill the safety and stability of the whole Free World; and Canada, like other small associates, had a vital stake in American actions which she could not control and which she could only rarely hope to influence.<sup>30</sup>

What makes Canada so different from the "other small associates" is that, due largely to a common border and a common language, her ties with the United States seemed so overwhelming on every front of her national life. This cultural proximity, based upon the shared language combined with the shared border, placed English Canada in what many writers of the day considered to be an especially vulnerable position. And while Quebec obviously shared the same economic and military dependence upon the United States as did English Canada, at least a few English Canadian writers felt that the French Canadian escaped the cultural influence of the Americans.

Kaspar D. Naegele in discussing English Canada's "marginality," her uncertainty about her own cultural

identity, finds French Canada in a stronger, if more limited, position:

The (English) Canadian seems guided by two models. About both of these he has strong and contrary emotions. He feels in the middle between the United States and England. (The French Canadian feels more on his own: he can claim a more distinct culture as his resource and accomplishment; but that culture is relatively local.)<sup>31</sup>

Harold Innis gives more specific details on how the French Canadians, protected from American influence by "the barrier of the French language,"<sup>32</sup> have been able to pursue a more autonomous course in their cultural endeavours than English Canadians. The thrust of Innis's whole argument in The Strategy of Culture, is to underline the "dangers to national existence" of the American mass media upon English Canadian cultural self-expression. Innis considers the "pernicious influence of American advertising" and the "persistent impact of commercialism . . . in all the ramifications of Canadian life" to be so serious that he concludes his study with a dramatic warning: "We are indeed fighting for our lives."<sup>33</sup>

Yet, among a number of English Canadians writing during this decade, one finds a profound ambivalence towards the United States, somewhat comparable to the mixed emotions of a Maurice Blain, or a Hubert Guindon in their attitude towards the Catholic Church in Quebec. Frank Underhill, for example, throughout most of the decade unequivocally supports a close United States-Canada tie, and tends to reject all criticism of the United States as a misguided

pro-British sentiment. In a 1951 article, Underhill accuses the Massey Report (Massey Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1951) of a pro-British bias in its warnings against an "alien" American influence, and advises his fellow countrymen to stop fighting American influence and accept it willingly as their destiny:

" . . . if we will only be natural, and stop going about in this eternal defensive fear of being ourselves, we shall discover that we are very like the Americans, both in our good qualities and in our bad qualities."<sup>34</sup> By 1957,

however, the Canada-United States relationship seems more complex to Underhill. He still deplores the anti-American speech-making which is now rampant in Canada, but he admits that "actually, at this moment, we the people of Canada are being swept by storms of neurotic emotion."<sup>35</sup> And it is precisely, Underhill claims, the relationship with the Americans which is the cause of the Canadian collective neurosis. Americans, for Underhill, are clearly "inexperienced" in their new role as leader of the Western alliance of free nations, yet Canadians must face the challenge of accepting this "immature" leadership. The difficulty lies in just how much of it they must accept:

What makes us more neurotic at the moment is that just when we become aware of this new challenge, we are also having it made uncomfortably clear to us that we are more dependent upon our neighbor economically than ever before in our history.<sup>36</sup>

Stuart Jamieson outlines essentially the same paradox at the heart of Canadian attitudes towards the United States:

Precisely as so many aspects of life--particularly those that are more outward and easily observed--become more Americanized, more uniform and indistinguishable between Canada and the United States; those which do remain different tend to assume greater importance in the minds of Canadians . . . . Thus at the very time that Canada is undergoing the most rapid and extensive Americanization of her economy, her scale of values and the day-to-day living habits of her people, there has been a rising national consciousness that almost merits the term "nationalism."<sup>37</sup>

Freedom, self-expression, individual and national autonomy, all of these related concepts expressed themselves for a significant number of English Canadian writers during the 1950s in terms of Canada's relationship to the United States. If, as Jean-Charles Falardeau claims, the history of French Canada is the history of the Church, and vice versa, then the history of English Canada is the history, formerly--as Underhill states--of her British century, and presently, of her American century.<sup>38</sup> If, for the French Canadian authors of the decade, all roads led to Rome--or to Rome's representative in Quebec--then, for their English Canadian counterparts, all roads led south, to the major economic, cultural, and military centres of the United States.

A subject as complex as that of human freedom in a society as complex as that of Canada during the 1950s, cannot be reduced to a single issue of self-expression--be it individual or national--versus any one particular power structure--be it the Catholic Church in Quebec or the United States' presence in English Canada. Throughout every period of Quebec history since 1760, freedom has been for many French Canadians a liberation from "English" dominance.

Also, the "English-French question," "les deux nations," has been at the heart of English Canada's long search for a self-identity to express. The awareness of the Church's dominance in French Canada and the United States' dominance in English Canada are not the only terms in which the problem of human freedom was phrased during the decade. I focus upon these two power structures in Canadian life for the following reasons: (a) clerical oppression in Quebec and ubiquitous American presence in English Canada do prove to be persistent and major concerns for a significant number of the intellectuals and socio-economic writers during the decade; (b) the isolation of a single major theme in the writings of both language groups provides a concrete and easily definable example of the problem of human freedom during the decade; and finally, (c) the Church's status in Quebec life and the United States' status in the life of English Canada as they were felt by the writers of their respective cultures, demonstrate a comparable, if by no means identical, structuring of the problem of human freedom.

It is certainly not, however, the intention of this thesis to undertake a sociological analysis of the 1950s' novels which establishes the thematic importance of the Church's power in French Canada or the American presence in English Canada.<sup>39</sup> Nor does the present study in any way expect to identify such a one-to-one relationship of content between the society and the literature since it accepts the premise that the novel is not a mirror image of the society;

the novelist is not a sociologist. Two critics who disagree about some aspects of the Canadian novel do at least agree on this point. Jean-Charles Falardeau and Robert McDougall both attempt to define the novel--or the novelist--in terms which recognize the extremely close relationship between the fictional world and the social world within which it is born, while at the same time emphasizing the differences between art and reality. For Falardeau the novel is not the society but "la société rêvée, transposée, recomposée, transfigurée, refigurée, transcendée."<sup>40</sup> And for McDougall, our novelists should not have "to testify as amateur sociologists."<sup>41</sup> Indeed, there is no need for any writer, novelist, or poet to consciously attempt a sociological statement. As a member of the society, participating in, even protesting against the value systems which structure the many groups to which he belongs--cultural, ethnic, national, religious, professional, and familial--the novelist necessarily writes his society in everything he creates. The main purpose of this present study will be then to discover if English and French Canadian novelists of the 1950s in writing their society make any coherent statement about the nature of human freedom within the terms of the fictional worlds created in the novels.

A large number of both English and French Canadian novels of the decade could suitably illustrate the concern with human freedom. More noteworthy even than the fact that the conflict between individual and communal

self-expression should be the focal point in such a significant number of novels,<sup>42</sup> is that this conflict should so rarely find a satisfactory resolution. Speaking of the French Canadian novel of the decade, Henri-S. Tuchmaier describes a vista of unrelieved bleakness: "le roman est, plus que jamais, celui de la défaite et de la résignation."<sup>43</sup> The plight of the individual and the community as a whole seems extraordinarily black in the works of such novelists as André Langevin, Robert Elie, Jean Simard, Eugène Cloutier, Jean Filiatrault, and André Giroux. Jean Cheteffe, the tortured protagonist of Langevin's Evadé de la nuit,<sup>44</sup> and Marcel Laroque in Elie's La Fin des songes,<sup>45</sup> finally both commit suicide when they fail in all attempts to find a viable means of self-expression within the community. Godley Roundabout slowly goes blind throughout the course of Jean Simard's Les Sentiers de la nuit,<sup>46</sup> his inner darkness symbolizing the obscurity of the world around him where human beings are unable to reach one another. Jean and Antoine the two "inadaptés" of Eugène Cloutier's Les Inutiles<sup>47</sup> never come to terms with their society, and finally flee from a world where a nonconformist expression of individuality is seen as, and becomes, madness. The dying Jean Sirois of André Giroux's Le Gouffre a toujours soif<sup>48</sup> succumbs to cancer after abandoning all hope of ever being able to find meaningful self-expression in this world. Jean Filiatrault, in his three novels of the fifties: Terres Stériles, Chaînes, and Le Refuge impossible,<sup>49</sup>

presents an uncompromisingly black vision of the human condition as do Marie-Claire Blais in La Belle Bête,<sup>50</sup> and Anne Hébert in Le Torrent.<sup>51</sup>

Not all attempts to achieve human freedom in the French Canadian novel of the 1950s end on such bloody terms as the conclusions to the works of Langevin, Elie, Filiatrault, and Blais. An exhausted, embittered, or merely numbed acquiescence to one's prison-house, is more the fate of such failed or thwarted rebels as Fabrice Navarin, Jules Lebeuf, Richard Lanoue, Jacques Grenon, and Pierre Boisjoly.<sup>52</sup> After an initial rejection of their communal identity, ranging from the barely articulated withdrawal of Richard Lanoue to the flamboyant escape of Pierre Boisjoly, all of these characters finally abandon their hopes of individual self-expression, and submit to the role and identity which their communities have delegated to them.

It would be difficult to find anywhere among English Canadian novels of the decade a world as black as that portrayed by a novelist such as Filiatrault. Yet the individuals in English Canadian novels of the fifties who fail to find self-expression within their communities are as numerous, and on occasion, as despairing as any of their French Canadian compatriots. Mordecai Richler, Brian Moore, Adele Wiseman, Earl Birney, Ernest Buckler, and Morley Callaghan, all present fictional worlds in which the forces of hatred, evil, or blindness to the needs of others can pervert and destroy attempts at human freedom. André Bennet

and Norman Price, the respective protagonists of Richler's The Acrobats and A Choice of Enemies,<sup>53</sup> see the hollowness and corruption of all societies' values. Each wanders from community to community in search of a meaning which he never finds, until André is murdered, and Norman drifts into a meaningless existence with a woman who will never understand him. George Saunders, the protagonist of Earle Birney's Down the Long Table,<sup>54</sup> experiences a long series of deceptions with various social ideologies and the human relationships which thrive within them. He finally ends by affirming his humanity, but, it is in defiance of, rather than in praise of; any communal values he has discovered in his attempts at self-expression. Murder and madness is the destiny of Abraham in Adele Wiseman's The Sacrifice.<sup>55</sup> Abraham is as unable to adapt to the world around him as are Jean and Antoine of Cloutier's Les Inutiles; and finally, he can only express his rage at life's injustices in murder. The closing pages of Morley Callaghan's The Loved and the Lost<sup>56</sup> and Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley<sup>57</sup> also contain corpses. In these two English Canadian novels as in Elie's La Fin des songes and Giroux's Le Gouffre a toujours soif, individual self-expression finds an outlet only in death.<sup>58</sup>

No bodies appear at the end of Brian Moore's two 1950s' novels: Judith Hearne and The Feast of Lupercal<sup>59</sup> but the life which awaits the protagonists, particularly Judith, after they have ceased to find any hope or meaning

in their pitiful existences, is as desolate as the fate of many of their French Canadian counterparts. Like Brian Moore, Robertson Davies employs a good many comic touches to relieve the general blackness which seems to engulf so many of the French Canadian novels of the decade. The humour, however, cannot disguise the profound problems of individual and communal self-expression which lie at the heart of the works. As in Filiatrault's Terres stériles and Chânes, an oppressive parental authority weighs upon, and threatens to engulf the younger generation in all three of Davies's Salterton novels: Tempest-tost, Leaven of Malice, and A Mixture of Frailties.<sup>60</sup> Davies allows one nonconformist in the Salterton community, but Humphry Cobbler pays a high price for his insistence upon individual self-expression, since he is considered slightly mad by the rest of the community. In Hermann of Le Dompteur d'ours,<sup>61</sup> Yves Thériault offers a protagonist of an equally profound nonconformism. Hermann will never consent to the compromise of his individualism which he knows that a communal tie would impose upon him. Neither Humphry nor Hermann are miserable in their social isolation. But they are perhaps the eccentric exceptions who prove the rule. For the vast majority of individuals in these novels of the fifties, the sacrifices entailed by such an extreme pursuit of individual self-expression are too great.

In Davies's last novel of the decade, A Mixture of Frailties, the heroine Monica Gall manages to free herself

from the stifling atmosphere of family and community, escaping to London and a singing career. As a success story, however, Monica leaves something to be desired. The self-expression which she does achieve, completely cut adrift from any communal identity, is a pallid and finally a somewhat negative example of human liberty. Robert Choquette's protagonist in Elise Velder<sup>62</sup> achieves a similar success in her attempts at individual self-expression. She, like Monica, escapes oppressive family and social circumstances, and moves into a different, more glittering world, but one in which she is hardly at home. In both novels the communal identity seems more abandoned than reconciled with the new-found individual self-expression. Elise Velder and Monica Gall, however, are among the bright spots in the general gloom of the fifties' novels which deal with the problems of human freedom. They are not alone. Elisabeth Bourdeaux in Elie's Il suffit d'un jour<sup>63</sup> also effects her escape from an oppressive and destructive family environment to seek refuge, and hopefully, a chance at self-expression in the protection of a loving aunt. In Yves Thériault's La Fille laide<sup>64</sup> the ugly protagonist Edith and her handsome lover Fabian finally reconcile their own rebellion with the communal demands and are reintegrated into the communal stream at the end of the novel.

A. M. Klein's The Second Scroll,<sup>65</sup> Gabrielle Roy's La Petite Poule d'eau,<sup>66</sup> and Ethel Wilson's Swamp Angel<sup>67</sup> stand among the rare success stories of the decade. In all

three the protagonist finds his individual self-expression to be an inseparable part of his communal identity. The narrator of The Second Scroll merges in identity with his Uncle Melech Davidson. Melech, in turn, embodies the troubled history of the Jewish people which finally ends in the reestablishment of a whole community in the new state of Israel. Gabrielle Roy's Luzina Tousignant, by giving unstintingly to the world around her, literally creates a community of good will. Ethel Wilson's Maggie Lloyd achieves essentially the same reconciliation of individual and communal self-expression by creating a community based upon her own discovery of self in others.<sup>68</sup>

From total despair, through bitter resignation, partial success, and finally, in rare cases, to a full reconciliation between individual and community, the English and French Canadian novels of the decade explore the range of possible outcomes to the problem of human liberty. A number of viable approaches for examining this range suggest themselves. The comparative study of such major novelists as André Langevin, Mordecai Richler, Yves Thériault and Robertson Davies, is one possible method. Logically, however, such an approach would include all of the published works of each author, thereby extending beyond the decade under examination, and changing the nature of the study. Another possible approach could examine human freedom in relation to various other factors, such as geographic, ethnic, or class milieu. Such a comparison of the

manifestations of human freedom in a rural, urban, bourgeois, or working class setting, while undoubtedly interesting, would deflect from the primary focus of the present study which is the exploration of human freedom as an expression of self where the self is composed of two distinct facets: an individual identity and a communal identity. In order to best pursue its specific aim, this study bases its choice of texts, its organization, and its methodology upon the following rationale.

The inherent complexity of such a topic as human freedom, as it is defined above, suggests that only a detailed analysis of individual-communal relations within a novel would reveal the nature of the conflicting values in each case. The number of novels chosen for such an in-depth analysis must necessarily be limited. Because a primary objective of this study is to examine the whole range of the problem as it manifests itself in terms of the individual versus the community, it is necessary that the works selected trace the movement from one pole of the conflict to the other. As such, the thesis begins by exploring, in Chapters II and III, novels in which an oppressive communal identification crushes individual expression. It reaches the opposite extreme in Chapter V, where rampant individualism has replaced and destroyed all sense of community. The middle of the thesis, Chapter IV, examines the intermediate stage when the individual and community forces are in open conflict. Finally, Chapter VI shows a means by which

individual and community find full expression within each other.

In order to discover whether there exists in the novels of the decade a concept of human freedom common to both English and French Canadian works, the study compares in detail, at each stage of the examination, works from both language groups. Consequently, the choice of the specific novels was to a great extent dictated by the facility with which they lent themselves to a detailed comparative analysis. An example of the selection rationale can be illustrated by the choice of texts for Chapter IV. Although Adele Wiseman's The Sacrifice portrays a conflict between a strongly traditional father, Abraham, and a rebelling son Isaac, the focus of the novel is definitely upon the father, Abraham, and his difficulties in adapting to the new world in which he finds himself. On the other hand, Yves Thériault's Aaron,<sup>69</sup> Mordecai Richler's Son of a Smaller Hero,<sup>70</sup> Jean Simard's Mon Fils pourtant heureux, and John Marlyn's Under the Ribs of Death<sup>71</sup> all focus upon the rebellious young man's attempts to assert individual self-expression against a member, or members, of the older generation who embody communal tradition and authority. As such, these four novels contain a major comparative point which Wiseman's admittedly fine novel does not share. In all cases where it was possible, of course, I have sought the strongest novels to illustrate the thesis.

Morley Callaghan's The Loved and the Lost and André Langevin's Poussière sur la ville,<sup>72</sup> the two novels analysed in Chapter II, present one extreme pole of the conflict between individual and communal self-expression. In both novels the protagonist has no individual self of his own; it is completely alienated from him, externalized in a figure who is an outlaw within the community. Peggy Sander-son and Madeleine Dubois exist in their respective novels as the protesting cry of individualism in a rigidly conformist world. Unsupported, incapable of assimilation by the community in which they find themselves, the women flare briefly, defiantly, and die violently. With their death, dies all hope of individual self-expression for the protagonists. By betraying the expression of individualism, by denying that their own actions are an expression of the communities' values, Jim McAlpine and Alain Dubois are each left at the end of the novels with no self to affirm or to express. The community has triumphed, the protagonist has lost everything.

The novels under examination in Chapter III, Hugh MacLennan's Each Man's Son,<sup>73</sup> Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley, and Gérard Bessette's La Bagarre, also illustrate the dominance of communal over individual self-expression. Only in each of these three novels, the protagonist's individual identity instead of being externalized and outlawed as is the case in The Loved and the Lost and Poussière sur la ville, is internalized and imprisoned. By

outwardly acknowledging, even insisting upon, their strong allegiance to communities which in some way appear vulnerable and threatened, Jules Lebeuf, David Canaan and Daniel Ainslie condemn themselves to an existence in which they will constantly have to deny and suppress their own individual identity--those dreams, visions and goals which fall outside of the narrow limits of their communities. At the end of The Mountain and the Valley, David Canaan dies without realizing the one project which would have allowed him to express both individual and communal self by writing the story of his people. In the final pages of La Bagarre, Jules Lebeuf accepts the deadening automaton-like existence of the night foreman's routine as the expression of a self which has become equally dead. Daniel Ainslie, unable to express himself within his community and unwilling to leave it, settles for a vicarious self-expression in the life of his newly adopted son, Alan.

Chapter IV examines four works in which the two opposing forces come into open conflict. Yves Thériault's Aaron, Mordecai Richler's Son of a Smaller Hero, Jean Simard's Mon Fils pourtant heureux, and John Marlyn's Under the Ribs of Death, all show a young man in revolt against the imposition of a falsifying communal identity.<sup>74</sup> While in each novel the conflict centres upon the rebellion of the protagonist against a strongly defined figure, or figures, of traditional authority, the four works represent a certain range in the phrasing and the outcome of the

confrontation. Aaron Cashin's initial rebellion is quite clear cut. He rejects as unreal, the grotesque and distorted heritage which his grandfather Moishe would impose upon him as the essence of his Jewish identity, and apparently adopts in opposition to the old man's uncompromisingly non-materialistic vision of life an equally uncompromising materialistic ethic. Richler's protagonist Noah Adler also finally abandons his own community, knowing that within its empty ritual he will never achieve individual self-expression. His rebellion takes the form of a quest for some other community, or system of values within which he can find individual self-expression. By the final pages of the novel he has not found any substitute for his original community. Marlyn's Sandor Hunyadi and Simard's Fabrice Navarin also reject a partial and falsifying communal identity, but both eventually return to their communities, their hopes for individual self-expression abandoned. The novels of Chapter IV all portray a confrontation between individual and community in which neither side emerges victorious. The authoritarian community either drives from it those who wish to explore individual goals and visions and thus loses one of its most vital sources of life, or, if it succeeds in recapturing the rebellious individual, contributes to its own decay, since such broken and devitalized members indicate a dying communal organism.

In Yves Thériault's Agaguk<sup>75</sup> and Hugh MacLennan's The Watch that Ends the Night,<sup>76</sup> the two novels examined in

Chapter V, the communities are indeed dying organisms. Ironically, they do not release their individual members into a satisfying self-expression. On the contrary, individual self-expression, cut adrift from all meaningful community experience, becomes as destructive to human liberty as an exclusive and authoritarian communal expression. Jerome Martell and Agaguk embody an absolute, unbridled, uncompromising individualism, but unlike Peggy Sanderson and Madeleine Dubois, Jerome and Agaguk are potential heroes of their worlds. They embody the best in the cultures to which they belong, but the cultures themselves are no longer able to appreciate and support their best, most vital individuals. With communal values in decay, an unattached, unassimilated, rampant individualism--in which men murder, torture, mutilate, and betray each other--blights both fictional worlds. Individualism, which gives Jerome and Agaguk their destructive power, symbolizes the communities' sickness but also its hope for some form of redemption. Jerome fighting the Fascists and Agaguk fighting the white wolf, are both battling against forces of perverted individualism. The victory at the end of each novel does not represent a full reconciliation between individual and community. Both Thériault and MacLennan offer instead a new balance in which communal and individual identities are transcended. Jerome (through his alter-ego George Stewart), and Agaguk leave community behind them, and find in another human being what is lacking in themselves. Freedom for these protagonists,

then, is neither a full expression of communal self, nor a full expression of individual self, but a compromise between the two where the hope of a newer, better community resides in accepting a diminuation of individual force.

The freedom achieved by the protagonists in Sheila Watson's The Double Hook and Anne Hébert's Les Chambres de bois, the two novels examined in Chapter VI, involves no permanent sacrifice but a reciprocity between individual and community.<sup>77</sup> Both novels open with perverted communities where there is not merely an absence of communal values but a strong anti-communal force based upon inverted values: incestuous relationships, tabooed in every community, become a norm and traditional symbols of life such as water and light become associated with death. James Potter and Catherine, both flee from these nightmare worlds in which they find themselves, and begin a search for their own individual identity. Both discover that an absolute individual self-expression unattached to any communal self-expression is a contradiction in terms. Individualism pursued to its fullest expression ends in self-destruction. Admitting their need for others and others' need for them, James and Catherine discover the meaning of community. In the giving of themselves to others, the protagonists of these two novels not only find their fullest individual expression, they give expression to a redeemed communal spirit.

Although the volume of comparative studies in English and French Canadian literature has steadily increased throughout the years, particularly within the last decade,<sup>78</sup> the discipline remains, if no longer an infant, then at least a toddler in the larger family of Canadian literary criticism in English and French. I have found no full length study which deals with the particular topic of human freedom in the English and French Canadian novel of the 1950s.<sup>79</sup> Certain critical pieces touch upon freedom in the specific novels analysed in the thesis and those are referred to in the context of my discussion. A number of more general studies, either comparing the two literatures, or treating them singly, are of particular interest. The broadest critical statements on French and English Canadian literature of the post-World War II era find that it reflects a new tension. For George Woodcock this is due to "the strains that arise in a society pulled by strong external influences and at the same time trying desperately to create and hold on to its own special identity."<sup>80</sup> Paul Wyczynski in reviewing the French Canadian novel of the period, finds that: "Une inquiétude quasi indéfinissable pénètre la vie, et par la voie des thèmes, s'infiltré dans le roman."<sup>81</sup> More specifically, Hugo McPherson sees "Canada's most gifted writers . . . in the throes of self-discovery" during the post-World War II period,<sup>82</sup> while Henri-S. Tuchmaier finds the French Canadian novelists of the fifties "en pleine période de crise."<sup>83</sup>

A crucial aspect of the "inquiétude," the new tensions, reflected in the Canadian novel of the post-World War II generation finds its origins in a fundamental change in Canadian society that is pointed out in four comparative studies on the period. Clément Moisan cites urbanization as the pivotal factor in the change between the pre- and post-World War II novel:

Dupuis 1945, l'image du pays et le mode d'existence centré autour d'une civilisation agraire, la terre natale, la région commencent à disparaître et à se transformer. Un nouveau mythe se forme autour de la ville . . . Dans ce milieu urbain, le cosmopolitisme et la guerre font surgir de nouveaux problèmes dont le roman fait sa matière.<sup>84</sup>

In his Montréal dans le roman canadien, Antoine Sirois focuses his comparative study on the effects of one large urban centre upon the lives of its inhabitants. He concludes that the novels written between 1940 and 1965 present a vision of urban life and urban values of materialism as detrimental to the humanism of the city dwellers.<sup>85</sup> Ronald Sutherland in his comparative study of "the breakup of the old order," concedes that the culmination of a major movement in the twentieth century Canadian novel coincides with, if it does not originate in, the "large scale urbanization, man's removal from dependence upon the cycles of nature."<sup>86</sup> Finally, Allison Mitchum, looking at the larger plight of the individual in relation to his total environment concludes that:

There are very many parallel reactions and attitudes of French and English writers in Canada to the various themes of flight to the wilderness, the violence to be encountered or provoked there, a reaction against urban civilization, the problems of the intellectual, the artist, the emigrant, the expatriot, and the racial minority.<sup>87</sup>

Of more specific interest to this present study, however, is the critical discussion centred upon Jean-Charles Falardeau's distinction between English and French Canadian literature which finds "that the former expresses itself along an axis which I would see as horizontal while the latter has a more vertical axis."<sup>88</sup> Such a distinction means for Falardeau that in novels such as John Marlyn's Under the Ribs of Death "The tension [is] between man and his milieu, geographical and social."<sup>89</sup> Observation of Grove, Callaghan, MacLennan, and a few other English Canadian novelists leads Falardeau to formulate a general principle: "for most English Canadian novelists, the novel as artistic expression is more the description and analysis of a social situation than a plunging into the depths of an individual soul."<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, Falardeau claims that: "In the French-Canadian novel, with Langevin, Elie, or Charbonneau, the characteristic tension is one between man and himself."<sup>91</sup>

The distinction which Falardeau insists upon between the French and English Canadian novel raises a question of crucial concern to the present study. If indeed, the former expresses itself along a "vertical" axis and the latter is on a "horizontal" one, then any attempts at a comparative study face severe limitations. Interestingly enough, however,

Falardeau arrives at his horizontal-vertical distinction in response to Claude Bissell's description of the contemporary English Canadian novel as belonging to a "tradition of contemplative realism." While Bissell does emphasize the horizontal aspects of the works, he hardly ignores their vertical dimension:

A detailed realistic background is united with a concern for human values. These novelists give form to the writing through the implicit statement of a moral problem, which is usually some variant on the conflict between moral obligations and individual instinct.<sup>92</sup>

Bissell, one might note, finds no difficulty in including contemporary French Canadian novels by Langevin, Elie, Roy, and Lemelin, in the same tradition of "contemplative realism," placing them alongside works by Buckler, Marlyn and Wiseman.

Indeed, Falardeau's rather drastic categorization of the French and English novels which restricts them to a single axis, provoked a direct response from both a French and an English Canadian critic. Both J.-S. Tassie and Robert McDougall attempt to repatriate the dimension which Falardeau excludes from their literature. At the end of his article, "La Société à travers le roman canadien-français," J.-S. Tassie begins his discussion of Falardeau's vertical-horizontal categorization by defining the vertical axis as that interested in the "âme humaine à la lumière des valeurs éternelles"; and the horizontal as "l'étude de l'individu dans son milieu social." He concludes: "il est évident que

les deux points de vue ne s'excluent pas, l'un et l'autre étant compris dans la définition du roman comme genre littéraire." While Tassie concedes that, in general, the "grandes lignes" of French Canadian literature seem more vertical than horizontal--citing the poetry as the prime example of this--he concludes, from the evidence of his study, that a distinct "dimension horizontale s'est développée au Canada français."<sup>93</sup> Robert McDougall also concedes to Falardeau that "up to a point" the English Canadian novel "belongs to a tradition of realism in which the horizontal dimension is clearly displayed as part of the requirement for what Henry James called 'solidity of specification'."<sup>94</sup> McDougall continues, however, to interpret the lack of a class consciousness in the English Canadian novel as a significant weakening of its supposed social awareness. Even as he relegates the horizontal or social dimension to a marginal position, McDougall insists upon a strong vertical dimension in the contemporary English Canadian novel. Citing Morley Callaghan's The Loved and the Lost and The Many Coloured Coat, where "the 'vertical' is unquestionably the main dimension of the work";<sup>95</sup> Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley, whose main emphasis is "not so much on movement forward as on exploration below";<sup>96</sup> and Hugh MacLennan's The Watch that Ends the Night, "a spiritual odyssey of the search for the meaning of pain and life and death"; McDougall asserts that a "wide spectrum" of the contemporary English Canadian novel develops along the vertical

axis.<sup>97</sup>

In the final analysis, however, it is the practising comparatists who can perhaps tell us most about the dimensions which exist or are lacking in either of the literatures. Clément Moisan in "Le Roman canadien de 1945 à 1960" and Ronald Sutherland in Second Image demonstrate that both English and French Canadian novels of the 1950s portray the individual in relation to himself, to his destiny, and to his society. Dividing both English and French Canadian novelists into two categories: "les romanciers du particulier" and "les romanciers de l'universel,"<sup>98</sup> Moisan demonstrates that in each language group there exist novelists who approach fundamental human problems either through the particular circumstances of time and place, the horizontal, or through an exploration of the purely human drama, the vertical. Sutherland does not differentiate between particular and universal, horizontal and vertical; he simply demonstrates by a comparison of such novelists as Adele Wiseman, Gabrielle Roy, Jean Simard, Hugh MacLennan, Colin McDougall and Jean Vaillancourt, that the majority of novels written between 1945 and 1960 "are concerned with a confrontation between the traditional values and the new absence of values."<sup>99</sup> In fact, Sutherland touches the root of the horizontal-vertical issue when he claims that in both French and English Canadian novels of the post-World War II period, "the characters are not so much struggling against something external as they are struggling against themselves,

and particularly against personal feelings of emptiness and indecision."<sup>100</sup>

The emptiness and indecision identified by Sutherland arises not so much from the absence of the horizontal, social, external dimension, as from the fact that in both English and French Canadian novels of the period, the individual's community was, for one reason or another, unable to provide answers to the most fundamental human questions. Such is the conclusion drawn by both Jean Filiatrault and Robert McDougall in examining their respective literatures. Filiatrault in his article "Quelques manifestations de la révolte dans notre littérature romanesque récente," might seem to support the lack of a social or horizontal context when he remarks that in the novel of the period the "recherche de l'autonomie ne se fait qu'au niveau de l'individu."<sup>101</sup> It is not, however, the lack of a social dimension which forces the individual in upon himself. On the contrary, according to Filiatrault, it is the very oppressiveness of too strong pressures on the horizontal axis which push the protagonists of the French Canadian novel into retreat: "C'est qu'ils ont été trop longtemps soumis à une discipline extérieure qui leur était contraire. Ils préfèrent ou bien se soustraire à leur milieu . . . ou bien se suicider."<sup>102</sup>

Essentially, Robert McDougall arrives at the same conclusion when he considers the situation of the individual in English Canadian literature. In the "cold," "hostile,"

"frigid," and "constrained" atmosphere of Canadian literature, particularly its fiction, "man's stance is static, his mood introverted, his virtues stoic."<sup>103</sup> While Filiatrault insists upon the pressures of an external discipline in driving the protagonist of the French Canadian novel to isolation and despair, McDougall seems to find a rigid immobility in English Canadian society which is equally detrimental to individual fulfilment:

In our literature, heroic action remains possible but becomes so deeply tinged with futility that withdrawal becomes a more characteristic response than commitment. The representative images are those of denial and defeat rather than fulfilment and victory.<sup>104</sup>

It would seem, then, that even if certain distinct differences exist between the individual's relationship to himself and his society in the English and the French Canadian novel, these are more apt to involve different balance points in the tension between the horizontal and the vertical, than a complete absence of one dimension or the other. The present study, in comparing novels by Langevin, Callaghan, Simard, and Marlyn, which have been classified as belonging to either one dimension or the other by various critics, hopes to show that for both the French and English Canadian novelists of the 1950s, the question of human freedom was charted on the intersecting axes of individual and community.

This study, then, contends that not only was human freedom a central issue in the Canadian novel of the 1950s, but that both English Canadian and French Canadian novelists

conceived of this issue in the same terms, and that the conflict between individual and community finds a common expression and a common resolution in the novels of both language groups during this decade.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology, ed. by James Mark Baldwin, new ed., with corr. in 3 vols (1960), s.v. "Free and Freedom," discusses three possible attitudes towards the free-will controversy. All of the three include the concept of freedom as some sort of self-expression:

(a) that volition is free when, and in so far as, it is due to the character and motives of the individual--because it is his action (as distinguished from actions due to the application of external force, or to physiological reflex); (b) that the free volition is in some way and to some extent independent of motives--being due to a self not entirely accounted for by character, motives, and circumstances; (c) that free action means action in accordance with reason, reason being thus regarded as a man's true self (Spinoza and Kant).

In the chapter headings of An Enquiry into the Freedom of Decision (Oslo: Norwegian Universities Press, 1961), Harald Ofstad covers several categories, including self-expression, under which freedom may be discussed: "Freedom as Absence of Compulsion," "Freedom as Indeterminacy," "Freedom as Self-Expression," "Freedom as Rationality or Virtue," and "Freedom as Power."

<sup>2</sup>Morley Callaghan, "A Talk with Morley Callaghan," interviewed by Robert Weaver, Tamarack Review 7 (Spring 1958): 5.

<sup>3</sup>The terms "liberty" and "freedom" will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis as having the same basic meaning. Also no distinction will be made between "freedom," "liberty," and "liberté."

<sup>4</sup>Because of its specific aim to examine the actual expression of the intellectual attitude during the decade, this present study will limit itself, in the main, to a consideration of works appearing in the 1950s.

<sup>5</sup>Maurice Blain, "Sur la liberté de l'esprit," Esprit, nos. 193-94 (août-septembre 1952), p. 201.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>8</sup> Marcel Rioux, "Idéologie et crise de conscience du Canada français," Cité Libre, no. 14 (decembre 1955), p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> The following footnote appears in Cité libre, no. 12 (mai 1955), p. 1:

N.D.L.R.--Le texte qu'on va lire date de 1951. S'étant trouvé entraîné par son sujet vers une peinture assez sombre de notre climat religieux, Jean LeMoyne jugea alors inopportun de publier ces pages. . . . l'article peut servir à mesurer avec assez de précision combien l'atmosphère religieuse s'est éclaircie en quatre ans, puisque nous n'arrivons plus à retrouver aujourd'hui le motif des scruples que CITE LIBRE partagea alors avec l'auteur.

<sup>10</sup> Jean LeMoyne, "L'Atmosphère religieuse au Canada français," Cité libre, no. 12 (mai 1955), pp. 6-7.

<sup>11</sup> Albert Faucher and Maurice Lamontagne, "History of Industrial Development," in Essais sur le Québec contemporain / Essays on Contemporary Quebec, ed. Jean-C. Falardeau (Québec: Les Presses Universitaires Laval, 1953), pp. 35-36.

<sup>12</sup> Hubert Guindon, "The Social Evolution of Quebec," The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science 26 (November 1960): 547.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Elliot Trudeau, in "La Province de Québec au moment de la grève," in La Grève de l'amiante, ed. Pierre Elliot Trudeau (Montréal: Les Éditions Cité libre, 1956), pp. 60-61, details the omnipresence of the Church in virtually all of Quebec's social institutions. After outlining the obvious larger organizations such as, schools and nationalist groups which were directly inspired by the Church or her clergy, Trudeau continues by remarking the clerical presence in a whole range of secondary roles:

. . . pour compléter le tableau sur l'ubiquité des clercs dans les oeuvres sociales et éducatives, il faudrait aussi dire leur participation, à titre d'aumôniers, de "modérateurs," ou de directeurs, aux multiples oeuvres de bienfaisance.

<sup>14</sup> Guindon, "The Social Evolution of Quebec," p. 548.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 551.

<sup>16</sup> Blain, "Sur la liberté de l'esprit," p. 203.

<sup>17</sup> Trudeau, "La Province de Québec au moment de la grève," pp. 58-59.

<sup>18</sup> Mason Wade, The French Canadians 1760 - 1967, rev. ed. in 2 vols. (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1968), 2: 1109.

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Charles Falardeau, "Rôle et importance de l'Eglise au Canada français," Esprit, nos. 193-94 (août-septembre 1952), p. 214.

<sup>20</sup> George Grant, Philosophy in the Mass Age (Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Co., 1959), p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> John Porter, The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 300.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>25</sup> Stuart Jamieson, Industrial Relations in Canada, Studies in International Labor, no. 1 (New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Edgar McInnis, Canada: A Political and Social History, rev. and enlg. (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1959), p. 536.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 536.

<sup>31</sup> Kaspar D. Naegele, "Canadian Society: Further Reflections," in Canadian Society: Sociological Perspectives, eds. Bernard R. Blishen et al, rev. ed. (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1964), p. 501.

<sup>32</sup> Harold A. Innis, The Strategy of Culture (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), p. 18.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> Frank Underhill, "Notes on the Massey Report," collected in his In Search of Canadian Liberalism (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1960), p. 212.

<sup>35</sup> Underhill, "Canada and the North Atlantic Triangle," In Search of Canadian Liberalism, p. 256.

<sup>36</sup> Underhill, "Canada and the North Atlantic Triangle," p. 259.

<sup>37</sup> Jamieson, Industrial Relations in Canada, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Underhill, "Canada and the North Atlantic Triangle," p. 257.

<sup>39</sup> A study of the clerical presence in the French Canadian novel has, indeed, already been done. Claude Racine, L'Anticléricalisme dans le roman québécois (1940 - 1965), Collections Littéraire, Les Cahiers du Québec (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1972).

<sup>40</sup> Jean-Charles Falardeau, "Les Milieux sociaux dans le roman canadien-français contemporain," in Littérature et Société canadiennes-françaises, eds. Fernand Dumont and Jean-Charles Falardeau, Recherches sociographiques, deuxième colloque (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1964), p. 123.

<sup>41</sup> Robert L. McDougall, "The Dodo and the Cruising Auk: Class in Canadian Literature," Canadian Literature, no. 18 (Autumn 1963), p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> In "A Quest for National Identity: Canadian Literature vis-à-vis the Literatures of Great Britain and the United States," Proceedings of the IIIrd Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1962), p. 234, Reginald Watters suggests that "the plight of an individual in tension between the desires of his own heart and the established patterns of his social surroundings" is a "universal" theme.

<sup>43</sup> Henri-S. Tuchmaier, "L'Evolution du roman canadien, II," La Revue de l'Université Laval 14 (novembre 1959): 242.

<sup>44</sup> André Langevin, Evadé de la nuit (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1951).

<sup>45</sup> Robert Elie, La Fin des songes (Montréal: Editions Beauchemin, 1950).

<sup>46</sup> Jean Simard, Les Sentiers de la nuit (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1959).

<sup>47</sup> Eugène Cloutier, Les Inutiles (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1956).

<sup>48</sup> André Giroux, Le Gouffre a toujours soif (Québec: Institut littéraire du Québec, 1953).

49. Jean Filiatrault, Terres stériles (Québec: Institut littéraire du Québec, 1953); Chânes (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1955); Le Refuge impossible (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1957).
50. Marie-Claire Blais, La Belle Bête (Québec: Institut littéraire du Québec, 1959).
51. Anne Hébert, Le Torrent (Montréal: Editions Beauchemin, 1950).
52. Respectively, the protagonists of Jean Simard's Mon Fils pourtant heureux (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1956); Gérard Bessette's La Bagarre (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1958); Jean Vaillancourt's Les Canadiens errants (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1954), Bertrand Vac's [Aimé Pelletier], Deux Portes . . . une adresse (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1952); and Roger Lemelin's Pierre le magnifique (Québec: Institut littéraire du Québec, 1952).
53. Mordecai Richler, The Acrobats (London: André Deutsch, 1954); A Choice of Enemies (London: André Deutsch, 1957).
54. Earle Birney, Down the Long Table (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1955).
55. Adele Wiseman, The Sacrifice (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1956).
56. Morley Callaghan, The Loved and the Lost (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1951).
57. Ernest Buckler, The Mountain and the Valley (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1952).
58. A slightly different case is that of the protagonist in Gabrielle Roy's Alexandre Chenevert (Montréal: Editions Beauchemin, 1954). While the novel ends with Alexandre's death, the final note is one of victory. The primary focus in this novel is upon the tension between divine and human justice. The triumph of the human over the divine provides a profound and credible affirmation which is rare in the novels of the decade.
59. Brian Moore, Judith Hearne (London: André Deutsch, 1955); The Feast of Lupercal (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1957).
60. Robertson Davies, Tempest-tost (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1951); Leaven of Malice (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1954); A Mixture of Frailties (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1958).

- <sup>61</sup> Yves Thériault, Le Dompteur d'ours (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1951).
- <sup>62</sup> Robert Choquette, Elise Velder (Montréal: Fides, 1958).
- <sup>63</sup> Robert Elie, Il suffit d'un jour (Montréal: Éditions Beauchemin, 1957).
- <sup>64</sup> Yves Thériault, La Fille laide (Montréal: Éditions Beauchemin, 1950).
- <sup>65</sup> A[braham] M[oses] Klein, The Second Scroll (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951).
- <sup>66</sup> Gabrielle Roy, La Petite Poule d'eau (Montréal: Éditions Beauchemin, 1950).
- <sup>67</sup> Ethel Wilson, Swamp Angel (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1954).
- <sup>68</sup> Among these three novels, Swamp Angel most clearly arrives at the same reciprocal relationship between individual and community, as that found in Sheila Watson's The Double Hook (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1959) and Anne Hébert's Les Chambres de bois, with a "Préface" by Samuel de Sacy (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1958).
- <sup>69</sup> Yves Thériault, Aaron, 2nd. rev. ed. (Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1957).
- <sup>70</sup> Mordecai Richler, Son of a Smaller Hero (London: André Deutsch, 1955).
- <sup>71</sup> John Marlyn, Under the Ribs of Death (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1957).
- <sup>72</sup> André Langevin, Poussière sur la ville (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1953).
- <sup>73</sup> Hugh MacLennan, Each Man's Son (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1951).
- <sup>74</sup> Mordecai Richler's The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz (London: André Deutsch, 1959), one of the most celebrated novels of the decade, does not seem to fit this category. Duddy never undergoes any profound conflict between a communal and an individual self. He blindly exploits everyone with whom he comes in contact--within and without his community--yet remains completely deluded about his own individual identity.
- <sup>75</sup> Yves Thériault, Agauk: roman esquimau, 2nd. ed., 2 vols. (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Homme, 1961).

<sup>76</sup> Hugh MacLennan, The Watch that Ends the Night (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1959).

<sup>77</sup> As Watters points out in "A Quest for National Identity," p. 236, such a reciprocal relationship between the individual and his society might be a peculiarly Canadian literary characteristic:

The truly Canadian heroic figure is one who wishes to maintain his own separate identity within the social complex, however cramping it seems to be.

<sup>78</sup> David M. Hayne and Antoine Sirois, comps., "Preliminary Bibliography of Comparative Canadian Literature (English-Canadian and French-Canadian)," Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée 3 (Spring 1976): 124-36. Consists of 177 entries which attest to the increasing volume of works in this field.

<sup>79</sup> In her article "Two Related Solitudes: Canadian Novels in French and English," The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, no. 3 (July 1967), pp. 49-57, Catherine Rubinger touches on the question of freedom, seeing it mainly in terms of "the individual in search of himself," p. 55.

<sup>80</sup> George Woodcock, "Away From Lost Worlds: Notes on the Development of a Canadian Literature" (1964), collected in his Odysseus Ever Returning: Essays on Canadian Writers and Writing, with an Introduction by W. H. New, New Canadian Library, no. 71 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Paul Wyczynski, "Panorama du roman canadien-français," Le Roman canadien-français: évolution, témoignages, bibliographie, ed. by Paul Wyczynski et al, Archives des lettres canadiennes, vol. 3 (Montréal: Fides, 1964), p. 21.

<sup>82</sup> Hugo McPherson, "Fiction (1940 - 1960)," Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, gen. ed., Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 707.

<sup>83</sup> Tuchmaier, "L'Evolution du roman canadien, II," p. 241.

<sup>84</sup> Clément Moisan, L'Age de la littérature canadienne: essai, Collection Constantes, vol. 19 (Montréal: Editions HMH, 1969), p. 29.

<sup>85</sup> Antoine Sirois, Montréal dans le roman canadien (Montréal: Marcel Didier, 1968).

<sup>86</sup> Ronald Sutherland, Second Image: Comparative Studies in Québec/Canadian Literature (Toronto: New Press, 1971), pp. 10-11.

<sup>87</sup> [Elizabeth] Allison Mitcham, "Environmental Influences on Themes of Isolation and Protest in Recent Canadian Fiction," La Revue de l'Université de Moncton 4 (septembre 1971): 30.

<sup>88</sup> Jean-Charles Falardeau, Roots and Values in Canadian Lives, Alan B. Plaunt Memorial Lectures (1960) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), p. 15.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>92</sup> Claude Bissell, "The Novel," in The Arts in Canada, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1958), p. 94.

<sup>93</sup> J.-S. Tassie, "La Société à travers le roman canadien-français," in Le Roman canadien-français: évolution, témoignages, bibliographie, p. 164.

<sup>94</sup> McDougall, "The Dodo and the Cruising Auk," p. 12.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 14. Here McDougall is citing Claude Bissell's comment on The Mountain and the Valley in "The Novel," The Arts in Canada.

<sup>97</sup> McDougall, "The Dodo and the Cruising Auk," p. 14.

<sup>98</sup> Clément Moisan, "Le Roman canadien de 1945 à 1960," Études littéraires 2 (août 1969): 143-56.

<sup>99</sup> Sutherland, Second Image, p. 144.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>101</sup> Jean Filiatrault, "Quelques manifestations de la révolte dans notre littérature romanesque récente," in Littérature et Société canadiennes-françaises, eds. Fernand Dumont and Jean-Charles Falardeau, Recherches sociographiques, deuxième colloque, p. 189.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., pp. 189-90.

<sup>103</sup> McDougall, "The Dodo and the Cruising Auk," p. 7.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

## CHAPTER II

### THE INDIVIDUAL AS OUTLAW IN THE COMMUNITY

The present chapter examines the problem of human freedom in Morley Callaghan's The Loved and the Lost and André Langevin's Poussière sur la ville. In both novels the central conflict between individual and communal self-expression becomes explicit and focused in the relationship between the protagonist and a rather extraordinary woman. Because of the public position that Alain Dubois takes towards his wife Madeleine and that Jim McAlpine adopts towards Peggy Sanderson, both men find themselves in confrontation with their worlds. The following complementary aspects of the central conflict are analysed in detail: the identities of the characters, the relationship between the protagonist and the woman; and the ensuing conflict that this relationship causes between him and his society.

Callaghan and Langevin each provide a few background details about his protagonist's early life and milieu and the values associated with it. In one brief phrase, Alain Dubois, the first person narrator of Poussière sur la ville, reveals that he was fatherless from early childhood and grew up in more or less constrained economic circumstances, the effects of which he still feels: "La somme modique que m'avait donnée ma mère, épargnée à même les maigres rentes

que mon père, mort alors que je n'avais que cinq ans, lui avait laissées, ne pouvait certes suffire à mon installation."<sup>1</sup>

But, although fatherless and of modest circumstances, Alain never knew the perhaps more difficult but more open life of the working classes. He manages to imbibe all of the middle class value structures:

D'une famille de petit bourgeois, je n'ai pas d'inclination pour les départs subits, les mains vides, et sans but. Le risque, pour moi, n'est pas nécessairement total. J'ai le sens de la mesure. (62-63)

Lacking a father, lacking solid economic security, but endowed with the middle-class work ethic and sense of measure, and ensconced in the respectable medical profession, Alain might be expected to behave in most situations as the model citizen.

Jim McAlpine, a son of a post-office employee, also comes from a middle class background. Callaghan does not make his protagonist fatherless but the single incident he chooses to relate about Jim's boyhood, depicts Jim making a comparison between his kindly but insignificant father and a wealthy neighbour who snubs him. The same wealthy Havelock family figure in an incident which marks the boy and clarifies within him certain goals and values he will hold all his life. When Mrs. Havelock discovers Jim present at a family party on an impromptu invitation from one of her nephews, she expresses her disapproval of this interloper with the query: "'Who's that boy?'" Jim never forgets this reception, nor that when he went to retrieve a croquet ball outside of the hedge, the other guests conveniently

overlooked his absence. From that moment on, he resolves to make "a name for himself some day so no one would ever have to ask again who he was."<sup>2</sup> But Jim's ambition to secure personal fame within the society, like Alain's more limited goal of establishing a medical practice, necessitates that he, like the young doctor, be prudent in his social and economic affairs. He is as dependent as Alain on the goodwill of the powers in his community. Moreover, both are strangers in the communities where the conflicts develop. Each man begins, not from the centre of any group or circle of intimates, but from the outer edge of the community. As such, both have everything to prove by the way they conduct themselves; and when their conduct does not conform to the pattern established by the communities, the pressures upon them become increasingly pronounced. In summary, Jim's and Alain's respective economic uncertainties and the social conditioning or ambition which predisposes them to weigh carefully their actions, suggest that neither will be likely to deviate entirely from the value systems of the community in which he must make his life.

The women with whom they become involved, however, are anything but conformist, anything but well integrated members ~~of~~ the communities. In one sense it is difficult to arrive at any objective picture of either Madeleine Dubois or Peggy Sanderson. The fact that Alain Dubois relates his own story in a first person narrative means that the reader sees Madeleine almost entirely through his eyes.

Similarly, Callaghan rarely presents Peggy directly to the reader; most often other characters describe and evaluate her. A certain image of the two women, at least an image of how they appear to others, does, however, emerge. And since these women function in the novels almost as agents provocateurs, revealing and crystallizing the structures of their worlds, it is undoubtedly the authors' deliberate choice to allow the other characters to expose their own values in describing and judging Peggy and Madeleine.<sup>3</sup>

Three things, above all, strike the observers of Peggy Sanderson and Madeleine Dubois: a certain childlike quality; an aura of danger and violence which surrounds them; and a kind of unattainability, an elusiveness of their innermost being. Although both are frequently described as childlike, there is a marked difference in the immediate impression that this quality has upon others. Peggy strikes McAlpine as having the naïvete and innocent air of a child, whereas Madeleine seems to possess more of a child's instinctive impetuosity and unruliness. According to Alain, Madeleine speaks in a "ton puéril." She has the "mépris de petite fille qui ignore instinctivement la prudence" (21). Her lovemaking has a violence that is like "celle d'un enfant" (23). Jim is equally insistent upon the association of Peggy with a child: "Her small face had a childlike prettiness" (15). She has a "childlike suggestion of innocence" (30). Standing next to her in the department store "was like standing with a child" (32). But despite

these differences of temperament, fundamentally each woman represents exactly the same rather astounding quality in her fictional world--an embodiment of absolute unrestrained individual self-expression.<sup>4</sup> Peggy's air of naïve innocence and Madeleine's more aggressive wilfulness function as blinders, shutting out any obstacle to an absolute personal freedom.

It is this demand for absolute individual self-expression which so forcibly impresses, even frightens, each of the protagonists. For Jim McAlpine, who has set himself an ambitious goal which can be gained only by a reasoned pursuit, Peggy's insistence on ignoring those social barriers which prevent relationships between white women and black men, is beyond all bounds of reason: "The utter impossibility of her attitude, its wilfulness, its lack of prudence, frightened him" (59). Similarly, for Alain Dubois, the struggling young doctor who knows how much he needs the goodwill of the Macklin community in establishing himself, Madeleine's refusal to respect the social structures which prevent the doctor's wife from spending her afternoon alone in a workingmen's restaurant, demonstrates her "étonnant instinct d'imprudence, la liberté de jouer son va-tout à l'instant" (62).

This astonishing imprudence, this "passionate longing for the impossible" (110), which is fundamentally the same in both Peggy and Madeleine, has its roots in an aspect of their natures which is even more astonishing, more impossible:

neither woman will commit herself to anyone or to anything, neither recognizes the necessity of any allegiances. In explicit, almost legal terms, Alain describes Madeleine's refusal of commitments: "L'appareil de la loi n'est pas pour l'intimider. De droits sur elle, je n'ai que ceux qu'elle accepte. Un pacte pour la vie? Madeleine ne signe pas de pactes, ne se donne pas en contrat" (64). Neither does Peggy care to acknowledge what Jim McAlpine's prospective employer, Mr. Carver describes as: "the compact we enter into to protect our way of living" (113). Not only does Peggy refuse to recognize the compact which isolates blacks from whites in this society, she will not even cast herself into any of the allowed roles which permit the contact of a white woman with black men. Even the blacks are upset by their inability to place her, to define her allegiances. Wagstaffe, one of Peggy's ~~black~~ musician friends complains to Jim:

"Soon I see her floating around the neighbourhood . . . So I'd say to myself maybe she was just a friend like Rogers here is a friend. Maybe its the big church glow she's giving, so I try to talk to her about the problems, the Negro in the White world, the big intellectual talk, the brotherhood talk, the routine, but she won't listen.. She don't give the slightest damn for it. She won't think about it. She makes me feel that thinking about it is bad. She don't believe in it. It hits me then that she don't believe in anything." (93)

If at first, Alain and Jim are attracted by the women's show of independence they eventually become frightened by it. What particularly marks Madeleine and Peggy in their quest for personal liberty is the totality of their demand.

And both Alain and Jim, men of measure, instinctively sense that the only logical end of Madeleine's and Peggy's quest for absolute liberty is in death itself. This fear, this foreboding that the woman's pursuit of freedom will end in disaster permeates the consciousness of both protagonists. And since we see the woman either largely or wholly through their eyes the image that emerges of her is that of an individual who has a date with disaster. Each author establishes this association between the woman, and a kind of threatening violence, in an especially vivid scene at the opening of the novel. In a flashback, Alain describes his and Madeleine's arrival in Macklin: Madeleine, her eyes "fixes et durs" (21), forces Alain's old car to outrace an approaching train. After they have escaped a collision by seconds he notes her reaction: "A côté de moi, le visage de Madeleine reflétait l'extase" (22). In the fictional world of Poussière sur la ville, the exercise of an absolute individual freedom is as dangerous for the individualist and for those associated with her as a race against an oncoming locomotive.

Almost the first glimpse that Callaghan gives us of Peggy after the initial brief meeting in the restaurant when Foley introduces her to Jim, shows her in an episode as striking, if less dramatic, than that of Madeleine and the train. Peggy brings Jim to see a wood carving of a leopard, "crouching, ready to spring" (32). But what strikes Jim as much as the "suggestion of power, of lurking violence" (32)

in the animal, is Peggy's attraction to it. He is surprised by her rapt attention: "she did not turn; maybe she could not turn from her contemplation of the leopard's jungle violence; she was rapt and still, waiting for the beast to spring at her" (32). A wooden leopard could not, of course, destroy Peggy, as the onrushing locomotive could have killed Madeleine and Alain with her. The obvious differences in the personalities of the two women will make for differences in their contacts with violence: Madeleine seems to fling herself into danger, while Peggy stands in danger's path. And, although this difference persists to the end when Madeleine kills herself, and Peggy is killed by another, the violence is the same. Thus, from the very opening of each novel, a firm link is made in the mind of the protagonist, and of the reader, between the woman's desire for absolute individual self-expression, and the hostile forces which threaten to destroy her.

As each novel progresses, the articulation of a coming disaster becomes more and more precise. In The Loved and the Lost the black trumpet player, Wagstaffe, warns Jim of the increasing atmosphere of violence which is forming around Peggy because of her refusal to commit herself to an exclusive relationship with anyone:

"Let me make up my mind tonight, and I could find her and lay her. If it would do any good, I'd want to own it, have it for myself. I guess other boys feel the same way, and you get a little tired waiting for the nod from her, and that's the trouble; and that's where there could be big trouble, and that's why I say it's no good having her around here, being against something so much, and with the boys suspicious of each other, and some of those wives knowing how to use a beer bottle." (95)

In Poussière sur la ville Madeleine is in equal danger.

Although married to Alain she has not in any way ceded her liberty to him as he had anticipated. Like Peggy sitting in the St. Antoine nightclub refusing to choose, Madeleine's refusal to belong to anyone but herself is inviting disaster. For Alain, in reminiscing about his first conquest of Madeleine, has stated as clearly as Wagstaffe his world's refusal to allow a beautiful young woman to remain free and unclaimed: "Madeleine était si belle qu'elle ne pouvait continuer d'aller ainsi en liberté. Elle appelait la destruction" (146).

The most deeply felt sentiment, however, which Peggy's and Madeleine's pursuit of absolute individual liberty arouses in the protagonists is neither attraction nor fear but a profound regret. Instinctively, both Alain and Jim know that the women will remain forever beyond their grasp, ultimately alien to them. The love story convention in the novel allows, of course, for the romantic heroine to keep her lover, perhaps even her new husband, pining at a distance, but there is at least one passage in each of these two novels which captures the utter despairing conviction of the protagonist that the woman is--perhaps

always was--forever beyond his grasp. Alone in their apartment one evening after a disagreement with Madeleine, Alain evokes the image of his absent wife:

Je n'ai pas de peine à évoquer le visage inquiétant de Madeleine. Je la vois comme si elle dormait; une forme étrangère à mon amour, un corps qui s'est mis hors d'atteinte pour la nuit et Madeleine qui l'a quitté pour s'en aller ailleurs. Un corps mort que j'interrogerais, étonné de ne plus le reconnaître, irrité que Madeleine n'y soit plus, de ce que je n'aie rien fait pour l'arrêter. J'avais charge de son âme, de son bonheur. Et pendant toute une vie elle m'a filé entre les doigts. Et c'est terriblement vrai qu'elle m'échappe, que je ne peux la retenir par aucun point. (72-73)

In a moment of comparable despair Jim McAlpine admits to what extent Peggy escapes him, and how incapable he is of following her:

To be with her would be to be jarred always, to be hurt strangely in the heart whenever he tried to be sensibly disciplined. All so difficult, so difficult and mystifying, he protested within himself, staring down at the white city where Peggy still called to him, trying to compel him to follow and understand the quick darting changes in her life; to follow till he caught the disturbing glow of a poetry in it he could never understand, alien as it was to his nature and shattering to his soul. (107)

Madeleine runs through Alain's fingers, he cannot hold her at any point; Peggy with the quick darting changes of her life glows with a poetry that Jim will never understand, which is alien to his nature. Yet both Alain and Jim will feel an equal compulsion to reach out and hold these women, to possess for themselves a being who represents a dangerous, an even violent, a seemingly unattainable spirit of individual freedom. Both will, however, fail in their quest, since in both cases it is based upon a fundamental

self-deception on the part of the protagonist. Neither, despite his protestations to the contrary, condones the independent stance of the woman, her defiance of the community's social code. Neither wishes to see and understand the woman as she is. The exact opposite is the case; both protagonists exert most of their energy in avoiding a confrontation which would lead to a clear understanding and acceptance of the woman. The quest involves, instead, a desperate attempt on the part of the protagonist to maintain either a falsified image or a void between himself and the supposed object of his desire. The remainder of the chapter attempts to discover why he should so deceive himself.

The answer ultimately depends upon an understanding of the protagonist's relationship with himself, his primary goal, the motivating force in his life. Very early in The Loved and the Lost, Callaghan gives a vital clue to understanding the motivation of Jim's future actions. Jim McAlpine likes to believe that he is, as the title of his article in the Atlantic Monthly proclaims, "The Independent Man." The most striking manifestation of this independence is to be "his absolute faith in his own judgement" (10). But as Mr. Carver, Jim's prospective employer observes about Jim's penchant for independent thinking: "'It isn't just faith in himself. It's an unshakable belief in what he thinks he sees'" (10). If Jim accepts Carver's job offer and his patronage, if he accepts Carver's beautiful daughter Catherine and the highly respectable social position that

such a relationship guarantees, he will fulfil the boyhood ambition formulated at the moment of his rejection by the Havelocks; he will have arrived in society. The essence, however, of Jim's philosophy of independence is that "a man can make adventurous choices in his own life, particularly in his difficult relationships" (28). And neither Carver who wishes to sponsor his success, nor Catherine who is eager to collaborate in it, represent very adventurous choices for Jim. On the other hand, friendship with Peggy Sanderson, a young girl who has black friends, works in a factory and lives in a cheap basement room, provides Jim with a brilliant opportunity to prove his adventurousness and ultimately his independence. Half of Jim's ambition, then, springs from his strong need for acceptance by the community, and thus demands from him a strong assertion of his communal identity. The other half, however, stems from an equally strong need to assert himself as an individual, independent of the community's collective values.

Peggy Sanderson, it would seem, ideally suits Jim's needs for independence. Yet, from the very beginning he demonstrates a conspicuous lack of adventurousness in this relationship which is supposed to establish his adventurous spirit. From their first meeting when Peggy deserts Jim and Foley to pursue her own plans for the evening, Jim has a distinctly negative reaction to all that is nonconformist in Peggy's life. Adventurous is not the word to describe, for example, his reaction to the cheap basement room where

she lives: "Knowing that she must earn a decent salary, he resented the room; she didn't belong there" (35). Jim's feelings upon learning that Peggy's special attraction to blacks dates from her childhood affection for a black family, are censorious and even reactionary, rather than enthusiastic:

. . . she had only tried to show him why she had certain sympathies. Her own life could be blameless. But was there another side to her nature suggested by her actions? Blamelessness could be carried too far-- it could have dreadful consequences. (44)

Jim's concern with Peggy's "blamelessness" and his urge to "defend the room" (43) where she lives, seem rather excessive in the light of what he knows of her up to this point--that she was close to a black family as a child, and that she presently has some black friends.

What Jim is defending, however, is not a blamelessness which Peggy has claimed for her actions or her character, but rather that "charming innocence" which was Jim's own "remarkable discovery" (16) in his first meeting with her. There are undoubtedly glimpses of Jim as simply a man in love with a pretty young woman, but his desire to incorporate Peggy's life into his own philosophy is never far below the surface of the conventional love story. By defending Peggy's innocence in her relationship with blacks against the condemnation of her by the Montreal society, Jim has the opportunity to demonstrate "that absolute faith in his own judgement" which characterizes the independent man. And, if his own judgement is more perspicacious than that of everyone else, if he can prove that Peggy is fundamentally

"innocent" despite the damning circumstantial evidence, then Jim has justified beyond a doubt the value of his own individual perceptions independent of the communal vision. The simple but disastrous flaw in Jim's reasoning, however, is his confusion of a belief in Peggy's innocence with a belief in Peggy herself. At no point does Peggy ever make any claim to "innocence." The value system which demands innocence, especially sexual innocence in a woman, and more especially sexual innocence in white women with black men, is the value system with its methods of categorization and judgements, of the very community from which Jim is attempting to prove his independence. That he adopts the community's values in his relationship with the very woman who is to prove him independent of the community is the central irony of the novel, and the basis of Jim's self-delusion.

If Jim McAlpine's main motivation in life, to be an "independent man," appears very ambitious given his status and the society in which he moves, then Alain Dubois's primary goal of finding how "se conduire en homme" (111) must be seen as perhaps the most difficult goal that man has faced in any society at any time. In Alain's case to "act like a man" will involve, as it does in Jim's case, a testing of his ability to make value judgements independent of and even in conflict with those of the community. From the beginning of the novel Alain is concerned with all the possible ways of asserting and proving his manhood. And

just as Jim McAlpine uses Peggy Sanderson to prove his independence, so Alain Dubois uses his wife Madeleine to prove his manhood. At its most basic level manhood can be defined simply as the state which follows boyhood; that is, if Alain acts like an adult then he must be a man. He interprets Madeleine's consent to marry him as a proof of this adulthood: "Pour la posséder il m'a fallu l'aimer en adulte. Sa fierté de jeune fauve ne pouvait céder devant des trépignements et des prières" (18). Manhood is also a question of virility. For the men of Macklin, in fact, virility seems to be the only criterion of manhood and Alain pretends to despise them for this. It is wise, however, to be chary of the pronouncements made by a first person narrator. In an incident fairly early in the novel Alain fails to take any action when Macklin's gross taxi driver publicly ogles Madeleine in front of an assemblage of miners. He realizes the position in which this places him vis-à-vis the men of Macklin: "En ne faisant rien moi-même pour la défendre, je leur cétais le terrain sur le seul plan qui les intéressait vraiment, celui de la virilité" (33). But he goes on to defend his lack of action and in the process to condemn the whole machismo ethic of the miners: "On ne lutte pas contre la vermine. On change de vêtements" (34). Yet the final episode in this restaurant incident indicates that Alain judges his own manhood by the same criterion of virility:

En quittant le restaurant, elle [Madeleine] me donna le bras et se pressa contre moi avec l'air d'annoncer au monde entier qu'elle était mienne. Je lui pardonnais tout. (35)

Like Peggy Sanderson with her black friends, her cheap basement room, and her sorties into the St. Antoine night life, Madeleine Dubois, with her flaming red hair, her "liberté quasi-animal," her "port de tête orgueilleux," is ideally suited to prove the manhood, the independence, the sheer force of the man who can possess her. And while Alain knows instinctively that all of these external signs of Madeleine's rebellious and proud temperament are what make her so attractive to him, he has no desire to know what is beneath them. Alain, by his own admission first fell in love with an image of Madeleine and not the woman herself:

J'en vins à l'aimer peu à peu, mais en adolescent, sans trop chercher à la connaître, sans rien analyser. Je crois que j'aimai une image plutôt qu'elle même. (18)

To love as an adolescent is perhaps precisely to love an imagined or fantasy woman and to never be obliged to deal with the complexities of a real human being. With a tragic irony equalling that of Jim McAlpine, Alain Dubois chooses to prove himself a man by possessing a woman whom he admittedly loves "en adolescent." Thus, the history of Alain's relationship with Madeleine begins like that of Jim and Peggy, with Alain choosing an image of Madeleine, tailored to his own needs, and ignoring the real woman and any needs which she may have.

It might be argued that Jim and Alain can never truly know or fully understand the reality of the women whom

they claim to love, since such complete knowledge of another human being is virtually impossible. Yet, there is something deliberate, almost perverse, in the protagonists' refusal to recognize elements within Peggy's or Madeleine's nature which are unacceptable to the images that the men have formed for them. Jim, for example, is at one point afraid to enter the St. Antoine night club which Peggy frequents, afraid that if he sees her "swaying in the arms of a whispering Negro" (52), his image of her "innocence" might be shattered. When he does return the following evening, it is not because he is now prepared to face the reality of Peggy's friendships with blacks, but because an intervening day with Catherine Carver has "made him feel completely sure of himself" (54). With his confidence in himself, and his own judgement restored, Jim goes to the nightclub, sure that he will once again see the innocence which he himself discovered in Peggy. Similarly, Alain claims that his inability to reach and know Madeleine is caused by her withdrawal; yet, he gratefully accepts Madeleine's decision to spend their first evening in Macklin at the movies, not to lose himself in the romance of the film as his wife does, but to avoid a "tête-à-tête" with her:

Il fallait chercher le vertige, le mouvement ou son apparence, où je pourrais encore du moins la tenir à bout de bras. N'était-ce pas ainsi qu'elle se défendait, elle? (35)

Alain, then, would have us believe that he prefers to hold Madeleine at "arm's length," rather than not hold her at all. But his own analysis of their relationship, of

its "fragility" and "irreality," his own admission that there exists "une ignorance profonde" (34) between himself and Madeleine, forces one to conclude that Alain would rather hold Madeleine at arm's length than allow her to come any closer to him. If, then, Alain prefers an image of Madeleine to the flesh and blood reality, his is an image that has no face. Unlike Jim McAlpine who fashions a picture of an "innocent" Peggy in order not to confront the complexities of the real human being, Alain creates around himself a kind of void, a protective barrier of non-being through which he will never allow Madeleine to pass.<sup>4</sup> This difference between Alain and Jim and the process of self-delusion which underlines the initial phase of the protagonist's quest, suggests the desirability of more closely defining the similarities and the differences which exist between Jim McAlpine and Alain Dubois. Each protagonist needs the non-conformist woman to prove something about his own life. Neither man can, therefore, accept the woman as a distinct, separate, and autonomous individual. Alain most clearly articulates the role the woman plays in each man's life. Fearing that Madeleine will some day escape completely, Alain realizes that with her departure he would lose his identity, his only means of individual self-expression:

Je défends une part de moi que est en elle, dont je ne peux me laisser amputer parce que c'est la part la meilleure, la plus vivante, celle qui fait que je suis Alain Dubois. En me quittant Madeleine emporterait mon identité. (101)

It is because the woman is part of them that both men feel

threatened if she asserts any claims of her own. The women embody the expression of individual self which the men need to complete their identities. Yet the very fact that this expression of individualism exists in another, beyond their control, poses the greatest threat to their full self-expression.

Distinct differences between the two men eventually colour the course of action which each takes in his relationship with the woman. Jim McAlpine is in all ways a more aggressive character than Alain Dubois. All of the circumstances of his life--as a navy commander, as a history professor whose opinions bring him into conflict with the administration, as the budding journalist with loudly voiced ideas about independence--suggest that Jim will take a positive approach in his relationships, that he will act rather than be acted upon. It is thus entirely characteristic that when faced with a woman whom he wants in his life but whose personal peculiarities might prove embarrassing to him, Jim should create an image of her which is to his liking and then attempt to bring her in line with the imagined ideal. Alain Dubois, on the other hand, demonstrates from the beginning of the novel, a tendency to cast himself in a passive role. He sees himself as the object of others' regards. Kouri's suggestion that Madeleine is behaving indiscreetly does not inspire Alain to either defend or condemn her position; he is too preoccupied with his own position. Any hint that Madeleine is outside of his control

threatens the very basis of his identity, making him feel "un intrus" in his own home; and, rather than having answers about life as Jim, at least, thinks he does, Alain has only questions. Jim provides a formula for being an "independent man," Alain does not even know what it is to be, simply, a man or a woman: "Hé, grands dieux! qu'est-ce que cela peut signifier être femme ou homme!" (36). Thus, Alain, faced with the same situation as Jim--how to deal with a woman who is necessary to him but whose own personal demands he is unprepared to meet--acts in a way entirely characteristic of his nature. He withdraws, placing between himself and Madeleine, not a more acceptable image of her, but a void. In the end, however, the result is the same: both protagonists delude themselves that the distance between them and the women is caused by the women's withdrawal from them, and not by the barrier that they themselves have erected to keep the women at a distance.

The basic unreality of the protagonist's position inevitably leads to a crisis which in both novels involves a conflict between the values represented by the women and those embodied by the communities. The protagonist must choose between the two, between individual and communal self-expression. In both cases there appears to be a turning point in the novel where he rejects the line of action which conforms with the community's value systems and opts to follow the woman into whatever strange paths she may be following in pursuit of her liberty; but in both cases the

protagonist is continuing, even intensifying his self-deception. As one might expect, in The Loved and the Lost, it is Jim himself who precipitates the crisis. After meeting Peggy and formulating his notion of the fundamentally "innocent" girl who leads an outwardly questionable existence, Jim becomes preoccupied with reinforcing and focusing this image.<sup>5</sup> Each further action of Peggy's which secretly outrages his sense of propriety must somehow be brought into line with his original vision of her; he becomes obsessed with his ability to "know how to place her" (76); that is, to find a way in which he can reduce the variety of her adult experiences in her relationship with blacks to a reenactment of a childhood--and thus "innocent"--friendship with a black family. Watching Peggy walk away from him to her factory job, Jim is deeply discontented with her whole life. Suddenly, however, he finds a way to "place her," to bring his image of innocence back into focus:

He stood there, frowning, close to an insight; then he got it. The little Negro section in Montreal had become for her the happy and fabulous Johnson family; and if the Johnsons, knowing her, could love and respect her, why shouldn't the Negroes down on St. Antoine? If only he could talk with some of them! Perhaps he could get Foley's friend to go down there with him . . . (86)

Jim succeeds in convincing Foley's friend, Milton Rogers, to accompany him to the St. Antoine nightclub; he succeeds in talking with some of Peggy's friends, but he finds to his dismay that they are not like "the happy and fabulous Johnson family." He finds also that, as Rogers and Wagstaffe make clear, Peggy is no longer a child. Jim

valiantly defends Peggy's innocence against Rogers's and Wagstaffe's assumption that she is sexually promiscuous. But it is too late. He has ventured too close to the real Peggy, not perhaps to the Peggy imagined by Rogers and Wagstaffe, whose own vision is undoubtedly clouded, but to the Peggy who has an autonomous existence which includes black friends very different from the storybook Johnson family. It is essentially this brush with reality that forces the crisis in Jim's relationship with Peggy. Since he is only capable of measuring Peggy by the degree to which she meets or fails to meet his image of what he thinks she should be, he can only explain her acquaintance with violent people in relation to his original concept of her innocence:

If some of her friends were thugs who used knives, she was intelligent enough to have found out about them. And it hadn't destroyed their appeal. No, it might even add to it, which would mean, of course, that she had a taste for violence. His perceptions quickening, he realized he had at last put into words the emotion that had bothered him the day in the department store when he had watched her staring at the carving of the crouching leopard. She had been held in the spell of all the fierce jungle wildness the cat suggested. . . . He must have suspected then that her gentle innocence was attracted perversely to violence. (101)

Although Jim continues to falsify Peggy's experience, he does come to one of the most honest assessments of his own position up to this point in the novel. A Peggy who is attracted to and perhaps attracts violence,<sup>6</sup> is a threat to all that he hopes to achieve within the community--the job on the Sun, prestige, fulfilment of his boyhood dream to be someone:

If he himself followed her into those dives where she stirred up jealousy, suspicion, lust, and old racial hatreds, he might find himself involved . . . he would be forgetting that he had come to Montreal to take a job on the Sun. . . . It was time, then, to realize what was expedient and what was inexpedient. It certainly would be unwise to see Peggy again. (101-2)

Jim's decision to put Peggy out of his mind and to opt for all that Mr. Carver and his daughter Catherine can offer, indicate victory for the community and victory for a value system which is, as Mr. Carver makes clear, based upon "compacts" people enter into to protect their way of living from the destruction threatened by the economic and aesthetic barbarians always at the gates trying to hasten the end of things (113-4). Peggy Sanderson, with "the mysterious disorder of her life" is one of the "barbarians" who threatens the neatly compactual world of Montreal society. Jim's instinctive knowledge of this frightens him into abandoning her.<sup>7</sup>

How romantic, then, how courageous and "adventurous" is Jim's return to Peggy after all. In the midst of a glittering social gathering at the home of one of Montreal's most celebrated hostesses, Jim acknowledges to himself that he loves Peggy and that it is with her that he belongs, not among the Carvers and their important friends. The chapter describing Jim's brief temptation to abandon Peggy ends on a note of triumph for the "Independent Man": "He had made his own decision; he knew now with whom he belonged" (117). But this seeming turning point in Jim's relations with Peggy and the community is more pernicious than his original

self-deception. It is not Peggy whom Jim returns to, but his image of her. It is not Peggy whom he betrayed when he lied to his hostess about knowing her, but his own infallible judgement in the image of Peggy which he created:

. . . his denial of Peggy left him stricken with remorse.

It wasn't only that he had denied Peggy; but with the denial he had yielded up his respect for his own insight which had always been his greatest strength. (115)

Jim, thus, returns to Peggy, strong in his respect for his own insight and ready to use his strength to make Peggy live up to that insight. On his very first visit to her room after his momentous decision that he "belongs" with her, Jim unwittingly reveals how fundamentally unchanged his attitude towards Peggy remains. Seeing her, for the first time, dressed for an evening date, he immediately begins to reaffirm his belief in his idealized Peggy:

When she returned in a simple black dress, her hair combed and twisted into a smooth knot on her neck, he nodded and smiled. "Why, you look beautiful," he said. Now he knew she had always belonged in his own world. She looked like an exquisite little figurine done with a delicate grace and belonging in some china cabinet. "Those overalls, that bandanna handkerchief you've been wearing. Why, it's all masquerade!" (125)

In attempting to defend his "exquisite little figurine," Jim falls once again into the same pattern of supporting Peggy in public against the community's harsh judgement of her, yet privately subscribing to the same value system of those who condemn her. Thus, in response to the sexual insinuation of the "Earbender's Club," Jim can explain with apparent sensitivity some of the possible humane reasons

why a white woman may associate with black men. Yet, a few hours later when he is with Peggy, it is precisely this preoccupation with her sexual innocence or guilt which he condemned in the others, that prompts his "one pathetic cry, Why couldn't she be a virgin? Virginity would be so becoming to her" (139). But virginity is not only "becoming," it is essential in the Peggy whom Jim hopes to reclaim for his own world, the world which he believes he has given up for her. His decision to rescue Peggy sets the rhythm for the whole second half of the novel. In fact, now that he has decided that she really belongs to his world, he acts with typical determination. Persuading Peggy to allow him to work in her room during the day, he begins his campaign to reform her existence until it conforms to his own needs: "He had wormed his way into the room, he would worm his way into her life and into her heart and take her life into his" (142). Jim's main task now, as he sees it, is to make the real conform to the imagined, to make Peggy, the expression of individual self, conform to Jim's own communal self.

One crucial scene in this second half of the novel clarifies Jim's ambitions for Peggy. As he spends the lonely hours in her room writing his articles on "the lost men of Europe, the mass men who were driven by some death wish to surrender their own identity and become anonymous parts of a big machine" (145-46), Jim often takes time out to daydream with chilling irony of destroying Peggy's identity,

of "breaking her resistance and remolding her" (146). The details of these dreams reveal to what extent his ambitions for success in the Montreal society have remained unchanged: "Given time, he and Peggy would be ready to emerge from the dark cellar world of illicit relationships and meet the Carvers" (146). But the most revealing little scene in that dream world where Peggy has "yielded to him," is her imagined meeting with Sol Bloom, one of Jim's best friends:

The short round-faced little doctor, with only a fringe of hair around his head, was one of the wisest and kindest men he knew. He could see Sol having a cocktail with him and Peggy. And Sol in his wisdom would say, Yes, she had those rare child-like qualities that the Chinese sages used to admire, she was spontaneous, acted only on impulse, never reflected, cared nothing for her circumstances, took no stock of the future. (146-47)

If he can force Peggy to "yield" to him, Jim will have captured and tamed some rare wild creature. But whether he thinks of her as the exquisite porcelaine figure in the china closet, or the Rousseauesque child of nature now in his tutelage, Jim's main interest in Peggy is as a proof of his own strength of judgement--the cornerstone of the "Independent Man." To employ the grossest comparison, Jim with a submissive Peggy at his side will gain all of the prestige that civilization accords to the wild animal trainer who exhibits the once ferocious beast now tame under the hand of the master. Jim is not quite this gross, however. He does not necessarily want to titillate a jaded society with his exotic catch, but he does want to wear Peggy on his arm in the drawing rooms of Montreal society. Jim's daydream is doomed to fail because it is based upon a fundamental

contradiction. He wishes to place within bounds that which, by definition, must remain unfettered; he wishes to make dependent that which can only be true to its own nature in independence. A Peggy conforming to the tight club rules which govern all segments of Montreal society from the mountain to St. Antoine would cease to be Peggy. The fact that Callaghan stages her murder only hours after she has agreed to follow Jim into his own world is dictated as much by the inner necessity of her character as it is by the final release of pent up violence in the people surrounding her.

Madeleine Dubois' death in Poussière sur la ville is equally inevitable. As one might expect, it is not Alain who provokes the crisis. All of his energies are employed in maintaining the void between himself and Madeleine which allows him to keep her "à bout de bras." Thus, when Jim, Macklin's taxi driver and purveyor of gossip, insinuates to Alain that something may exist between Madeleine and the young miner Richard Hétu, Alain only hesitantly touches on the subject with his wife. When Madeleine fails to react to Alain's insinuations, he eagerly abandons his suspicions, happy that he has not been forced into a confrontation which could abolish the void:

Les mots de Jim, je n'y crois plus tout à coup. Ils prennent un caractère anodin et je suis heureux, au fond, de n'avoir pas poussé davantage mon manège. (85)

Alain's capacity to block out unpleasant reality is prodigious, but even he cannot refuse to act when he sees Madeleine on the arm of Richard Hétu boldly taking a Sunday

afternoon stroll in the full view of Macklin. The reality of his wife's existence breaks through his protective void:

Nous nous sommes pénétrés enfin. Plus d'opacité.  
Je ne la tiens plus à bout de bras. Ame contre  
âme, lié par la glu de la haine, autrement plus  
tenace que celle de l'amour. (96)

Even after this incident Alain is prepared to accept some explanation or excuse from Madeleine which will allow him to keep face and avoid a confrontation. But Madeleine refuses to cooperate. Alain is thus forced into a series of actions which could constitute a turning point in the novel. Like Jim McAlpine, Alain's first reaction upon being brought face to face with the reality of the woman whom he has tried to keep at a distance, is to escape from the problem of dealing with her by instinctively reaffirming the community values. Thus, in The Loved and the Lost, Jim retreats into the elegant world of Sunday night suppers at the Ritz and glittering social gatherings; his very participation in this closed and correct world, a condemnation of Peggy's disorderly and indiscriminating life style. The value system which reigns in the Macklin community expresses itself more crudely. Although it may ultimately be power and strength which command in Montreal, the iron fist is at least clothed in a velvet glove. In the small Quebec mining town, however, such niceties are absent. Naked, brute force is visibly the basis of the community's value structure. Alain has been aware of this strength from his first day in Macklin. He feels it almost as a palpable presence in the miners gathered at Kouri's restaurant: "ici, les hommes se sentaient forts

des limites de leur ville" (32). Richard Hétu, who might be considered as a prime example of what Macklin could produce in her sons, is described as tall, dark, and good-looking, but it is significantly Richard's strength which strikes Alain: "Je suis frappé de l'impression de force qu'il donne. On dirait qu'il doit retenir tous ses muscles pour ne pas avoir des gestes démesurés" (80).

Macklin's women match its men in strength. Langevin surely includes the story of Alain's female cardiac patient in order to illustrate the particular quality of Macklin's force--prodigious, awesome, even frightening. Despite Alain's warning that she should take complete rest, the sixty-five year old woman leaves his office for an afternoon of heavy cleaning work at a local hotel. Not surprisingly she dies the same night, providing Alain with yet another illustration of the brute strength which forms the heart of Macklin:

Elle travaillait encore à l'hôtel cet après-midi. Et je me demande quelle force poussait la morte à gagner encore sa vie, avec l'insoutenable anxiété des cardiaques. . . . Elle est morte farouche et courageuse, comme une bête. (77)

It is with both brute and virile force that Alain reaches out to assert himself over Madeleine. Fortified with whisky, he forces himself upon his wife. If he is not as courageous as his old cardiac patient, he is as fierce:

Elle me résiste, griffe, mord. Nous l'avons notre beau combat. Elle est déchaînée, moi aussi. Nous nous roulons sur le lit. Je n'ai aucune honte de la vraincre [sic] et de la tenir sous moi, tordue par la colère et l'humiliation. C'est son horrible fierté que je broie. De son orgueil qui m'a trop fait souffrir, devant lequel je me suis senti trop souvent démuni, je me venge, avec délectation, sans pudeur. (104)

Alain, however, is uncomfortable in such a role and as he flees the house in self-disgust to escape Madeleine's silent condemnation of him, he moves towards the first of two encounters with Macklin that night which will clearly define for him the nature of the community's strength and provoke his revolt against it. Alain's first encounter is with a group of miners gathered in a hotel bar. And, although he has dealt with Madeleine according to the machismo ethic which he ascribes to Macklin's men, Alain does not feel any camaraderie with the other men. On the contrary, they frighten him. For the force of the Macklinites has nothing in common with Alain's fierce but passionate assault on Madeleine; their force is entirely without passion, without pity, the force of an animal rather than a human being:

Ils m'effrayent avec leurs visages terreux, durcis par l'effort quotidien, leur regard sans pitié. . . . Mes voisins interrompent leur conversation et me regardent droit dans les yeux, sans amusement, avec gravité. Comme si je me noyais et qu'ils se demandaient si je remonterais encore une fois à la surface. (106)

There is reason enough to suspect a certain amount of paranoia in Alain's assessment of Macklin. Having employed against Madeleine the brute strength which he finds all around him in the community, and having been left sickened by it, aware only

of his own "impuissance," Alain perhaps senses the Macklin-ites' strength as a reproach. But this first episode in the bar is only a prelude to a much more dramatic show of Macklin's strength. Langevin goes on to finish the chapter with an episode which provokes an apparent turning point in the novel, similar to the moment in Chapter 14 of The Loved and the Lost when Jim McAlpine apparently abandons the Carver's world and returns to Peggy.

Feeling the effects of the evening's two drinking bouts, and fortified with another few doses of whisky, Alain arrives at an isolated farm house for an emergency delivery. Unmoving and stolid the patient's mother and sister watch him flounder and panic as he realizes that the baby is a hydrocephalic, and that he will have to puncture its head to save the mother. With a chilling lack of emotion and a bizarre incongruity the older woman simply asks the child's sex. Alain's attempts to explain the necessity of his act meet only with silent condemnation:

Le silence n'est troublé que par les gémissements de l'accouchée. Les deux autres femmes me regardent comme si j'étais un monstre qu'elles n'auraient plus la chance de revoir. (119-20)

This incident with the hydrocephalic baby seems to be the coup de grace that severs any bonds which might have existed between Alain and the community. The eyes of the men in the hotel bar, the eyes of the women over the dead baby are pitiless. In employing force with Madeleine, Alain hoped at least "se conduire en homme," because force is the standard by which Macklin measures her men; force is the

outstanding characteristic of the man Madeleine had chosen in preference to Alain. But the two incidents, in the hotel dining room and over the dead baby, convince Alain that the force of Macklin has nothing of the human in it. Not men and women but brute animals possess the strength which displays no emotion, no softness, no pity. Thus Alain rebels against Macklin and its ultimate value of strength because, within it, he feels that he cannot achieve his primary goal--to act as a man.

Alain now has a chance, in denouncing the pitiless force of Macklin, to face Madeleine as she is, to deal with her individuality in all its complexity. The kindly old Dr. Lafleur even shows him how to attain his goal, how to "faire son métier d'homme." When Alain protests to the older man that he cannot believe in the justice of God, "une justice qui assène elle-même les coups, quitte à se reprendre ailleurs, plus tard. Une justice qui brise l'innocent avant de le reconnaître" (127), and demands how Lafleur himself can accept it, the older doctor replies:

--Au chevet du malade, je n'accepte jamais. Je lutte. Je lutte aussi dans la vie chaque fois qu'il m'est possible. Je suis toujours battu. . . .

--Mais je continuerai jusqu'à la mort. Ma foi ne m'empêche pas d'aimer assez les hommes pour les soustraire quand je peux à ce que vous considérez comme l'injustice de Dieu. Vous voyez, nous sommes deux à lutter contre Lui. Il n'y a pas d'autres solutions que de faire notre métier d'homme. (128)

Alain's opportunity to follow Dr. Lafleur's example comes a few days later on Christmas Eve when Madeleine admits to him her love for Richard. Alain's reaction appears, at

first, both very noble and very much in accord with the philosophy articulated by the older doctor:

Je ne veux que la consoler, la soustraire à l'injustice divine, ainsi que disait le docteur Lafleur. Son mal ne vient pas de moi et elle n'est pas mon bourreau. Je la vois morte sans avoir été heureuse . . . Que m'importera alors d'avoir été trahi; je ne la revendiquerai plus pour femme. On ne peut avoir des droits sur un être qu'on ne peut empêcher de mourir. (152)

In repeating the words of Dr. Lafleur Alain seems to be wholeheartedly espousing his humanistic philosophy. He has, however, omitted one aspect of Dr. Lafleur's definition of the "métier d'homme," and it is the most crucial aspect of all. Dr. Lafleur does not merely pity his suffering fellow-men, he fights for them and with them. Even recognizing the absurdity of the battle in which he is engaged, even knowing his defeat beforehand, he continues to fight. Alain recognizes the absurdity of life in which he cannot save Madeleine from her ultimate fate of death, but he does not recognize the necessity for the fight. Relinquishing all rights to Madeleine allows him to relinquish all responsibility for her. Alain's self-delusion at this point in the novel, like that of Jim McAlpine when he "returns" to Peggy, is more pernicious than his original position. While believing that he now fully accepts and supports Madeleine, he has merely found a new way to keep her "à bout de bras." Any pity that Dr. Lafleur might feel for the suffering of a fellow human being only serves to spur him on to battle, but for Alain, pity is a shield against involvement in the suffering of another. Far from being Madeleine's champion,

or even her ally in the fight against an absurd destiny, as Lafleur suggested, Alain refuses the battle entirely:

Moi, je quitte le champ clos dès maintenant. La pitié monte en moi comme une eau chaude et irrésistible, née peut-être de voir ma propre souffrance en Madeleine. (153)

Beneath the new protestations the old Alain remains. His new-found pity for Madeleine is merely a projection of his self-pity. In this guise as Madeleine's protector, as her ally against a cruel fate, Alain abandons her to that fate with the same pitilessness he condemned in the Macklinites.

Having convinced himself that he has chosen Madeleine's happiness over the community's sense of propriety, Alain is prepared to defend her to her critics in the community. Like Jim McAlpine, however, he places himself in the essentially false position of condemning in Macklin's attitude towards Madeleine the very ingredient upon which his own attitude is based. Thus, when Macklin's curé denounces Madeleine's affair with Richard and, above all, Alain's own tolerance of this scandal, Alain accuses the priest of a lack of charity and defends himself with: "--J'ai pitié, monsieur le curé. Je pardonne l'adultère, moi aussi" (164). Alain's final comment on the priest ranks him with the rest of Macklin, and ultimately accuses him of the same lack of humanity that Alain has found everywhere in the community: "Il n'a pas pitié et ne comprend pas la pitié parce qu'il est de leur race à eux, dur, courageux et cruel pour les faibles" (165). Nothing, however, could be more suspect than

Alain's own pity. It consists not only of a complete retreat from the battlefield where Madeleine is waging her war against destiny, but a retreat from life itself. Taking refuge in his downstairs office while his wife entertains her lover on the second floor, he slowly drinks himself into a kind of sublime detachment: "Je n'entends rien de ce qui se passe en haut et je vis au compte-gouttes, m'habituant à ne pas penser, à exister seulement, si peu que ce soit" (170). Alain claims that the whisky is necessary to nourish his pity, but his next statement reveals a less noble sentiment: ". . . je nourris ma pitié avec du whisky, . . . je n'ai pas le tempérament d'un ivrogne. . . . Je me retranche dans mon sanctuaire et je m'injecte de l'indifférence" (170). According to Alain the whisky is also the sustenance necessary to him on his road to sainthood: "L'alcool me rend sage, abolit ma dureté, ouvre toutes grandes les écluses de ma pitié. Autrement, he renoncerais peut-être à l'apprentissage de la sainteté" (174). It is not Alain's sainthood, however, which is in question as the novel moves into its final stages, but his manhood.

As the facade of his pity wears thinner, Alain, like Jim McAlpine, moves further from an identification with the woman's expression of individual self, and closer to an overt expression of his own communal identity. As Jim begins to inhabit a dream world of the future in which Peggy has been replaced by his image of her, so Alain begins to imagine a future in which Madeleine will trouble him no more. Even as

Jim unwittingly has come to adopt all of the community's values in regard to Peggy, so Alain now regards Madeleine with the same eyes that he felt upon him in the farmhouse, and in the hotel bar where with perfect equanimity the miners watched him as if he were drowning, wondering if he would surface again. Alain does not think that Madeleine will surface alive from her affair with Richard, but he will not intervene in any way. And it becomes impossible to find any of Dr. Lafleur's philosophy left in Alain's position towards Madeleine, or to believe that his pity for her is the basis of his manhood when it provokes this cold-blooded analysis of her situation:

. Madeleine, elle, a conservé sa jeunesse, mais si son expérience actuelle ne réussit pas, et je ne crois pas en son succès, elle brûlera très vite elle aussi. . . . Mais moi, je lui laisse la bride sur le cou. Je ne la retiens pas dans la voie étroite. Je lui permets de se damner. Elle se passera bien de mon autorisation. Madeleine n'est pas de nature docile. Mais, enfin, je n'interviens ni dans un sens ni dans l'autre.  
(175)

Even as Jim McAlpine avoids the unacceptable aspects of Peggy's life with her black friends by escaping into a dream world with a Peggy of his own making, so Alain avoids the unbearable sight of Madeleine's love affair with Richard by escaping into a type of sainthood where all that concerns him is the fate of Madeleine's soul, where he can calmly contemplate the destruction of her body. Alain's delusion is then as profound as that of Jim. He is preparing himself for the disaster which will strike Madeleine, and preparing his own premature acceptance of it.<sup>8</sup>

The conclusions to both novels are inevitable in each detail. The communities of Macklin and Montréal always had the power to end the situations which outraged their sense of propriety, and now they act. With almost surprising ease Macklin's curé and its largest entrepreneur combine forces to remove Richard Hétu from the adulteress' grasp. In Montreal, members of both black and white communities combine to eject Peggy from the black nightclub where her presence has caused so much hostility. But it is in the reaction of the protagonists, when faced with this final crisis that the inevitability takes on its tragic proportions. Alain and Jim now, it seems, have a final chance to redeem the relationship with the women they have held at arm's length for so long, a last chance to assert and affirm the expression of individuality against the communal value system which they have outwardly condemned. Now there are no black friends to intervene between Jim and Peggy. Now, indeed, that Peggy promises to leave her basement flat and factory job, to accompany Jim into his world, Jim has everything he wants and no longer needs the falsified image of Peggy; he can now accept the actual woman. But, of course, he cannot. When Peggy finally offers herself to him, he can only see her as the woman whom he, along with the rest of the community, has secretly condemned from the beginning. Following the community's value systems, he reaches his decision not to stay with Peggy on the night she most needs his protection:

His thoughts were whirling wildly. It was the others who clamored for his attention, insisting he listen: they had got into the room and were dancing around in his mind; Foley, his best friend, and Gagnon and Jackson and Wolgast--and they all twisted and tortured his thoughts, digging out of the depths of his mind the suspicions he had so resolutely suppressed. (200)

Jim's "suppressed" suspicions about Peggy resurface and he abandons her with the thin excuse that he does not wish to take advantage of her emotions on this traumatic night. In leaving Peggy, Jim leaves behind all hopes of attaining his independence within the community, and thus abandons a crucial element in his double goal.

Alain, as well, is now face to face with the woman whom he has held away for so long. Richard no longer intervenes between Madeleine and himself. And now is the moment when Madeleine, miserably unhappy, rejected by all, has most need of him. But Alain's pity for Madeleine, the touchstone of his manhood, was as illusory as Jim's love for Peggy. He fashioned it to deal with his own inability to face Madeleine's betrayal of him, not to comfort her for any suffering she might undergo at the loss of Richard. In fact, now that Richard has disappeared from their lives, Alain's pity disappears as well, and he reveals himself as the true child of Macklin. Throughout the novel Alain has accused Madeleine of being Macklin's daughter, but despite her working class background and her proletarian manners, Madeleine has an impulsiveness, a need for movement, excitement, and emotional involvement which is the antithesis of Macklin's cold stolidity. At the crucial moment when Alain must decide

for or against Madeleine, when a display of disinterested pity for her might prove his manhood and his ability to assert himself as an individual outside of Macklin's ethic, he acts, like Jim, in perfect accordance with the values he has so long condemned in the community:

Je la regarde se consumer, attentif seulement à ne la point troubler, à prévoir ses mouvements. Ce n'est plus de la pitié que j'ai pour elle, c'est le regard froid du clinicien. Je surveille l'incubation. (181)

When Madeleine leaves Alain, ostensibly to visit her mother but, in fact, to carry out a plan that ends in her suicide, Alain has ceased even his cold clinical stare. He has ceased to look at Madeleine at all. As Jim left Peggy with the transparently thin excuse of not wanting to cheapen her, so Alain--ever passive--accepts Madeleine's far-fetched excuse for not accompanying her to the station because some of his patients might require him. Since Alain's actions vis-à-vis his wife and her lover have rendered him a pariah in Macklin, it is not likely that many patients would require his services that afternoon. But Alain easily grabs at this excuse, and Madeleine goes to her death.

In the end both protagonists accept their share of the responsibility in the woman's death; Jim even admitting to the police his guilt for Peggy's rape and murder, with an unequivocal: "'The way it is, it's my fault she's dead'" (224). But it is perhaps Alain who speaks for both of them when he describes his failure at the final, most important

test:

Il y a là une stupidité énorme, comme d'avoir laissé tomber une allumette sur un plancher imbibé d'essence. Je ne l'ai quitté du regard que lorsqu'elle a pressé la détente. J'ai fermé les yeux au seul moment où il fallait la regarder. Comme si tout le jour je l'avais soustraite à sa mort et que le soir, par maladresse, je l'eusse poussée dans un trou d'eau. (195)

Neither novel, however, ends on this note of confession, nor is there any absolution granted to the protagonists after they confess their guilt. The only person who could forgive or pardon is dead, and in both novels the community, who has no power to forgive the protagonist, decides ironically to condemn him. If Alain and Jim are willing to admit their own guilt in the deaths of the women, they are totally unprepared to accept any blame or reproach from communities which they consider to be equally guilty. Both novels end, thus, on a note of ambiguity. Jim, walking the early morning streets, after being released by the police, "regarded the sleeping city with fierce defiance."

Yes, what they say is unimportant, forever unimportant to me, he thought. I know what happened, Peggy. I know why you're gone. In a moment of jealous doubt his faith in her had weakened, he had lost his view of her, and so she had vanished. . . . And now he was alone. (233)

Jim's "view" of Peggy, however, is highly suspect. It was because he insisted upon his view rather than upon ever trying to understand Peggy's view of her own life, that Jim came to grief. Alain, likewise, ends by insisting upon that very element in his relationship with Madeleine which blinded him to her individual needs. His defiance of Macklin consists of a resolve to inundate the community with his

pity: "Je resterai, contre toute la ville. Je les forcerai à m'aimer. La pitié qui m'a si mal réussi avec Madeleine, je les inonderai" (213). Neither of the protagonists, therefore, has managed to transcend certain limits of awareness.

Both Langevin and Callaghan provide a key to our final assessment of their heroes. Jim defying the city and clinging to his own view of Peggy, searches for the little church which she showed him the second time they met. If he succeeds in finding the church Jim believes that he will somehow have found "a way to hold on to Peggy forever" (233). The last thing that Callaghan tells us about Jim is that he did not find the church. What Alain is seeking at the end of the novel is not anything as concrete as a church, but rather a way to justify his previous action towards Madeleine and to disprove the horrible accusation of "lâcheté." But it is of crucial significance that Langevin allows the community's verdict of cowardice to be delivered by Dr. Lafleur, the one man in Macklin whom we must believe. And, although the accusation does not originate with the old man, although he may refuse to judge Alain, the word comes from his lips.

In conclusion, what Jim and Alain are strongly attracted to in Peggy and Madeleine is the women's embodiment of an absolute personal liberty. Both protagonists feel that only in relationship with these women can they fulfil the most fundamental requirement for a meaningful existence:

the expression of their own individual identities. In each case, the very quality of personal liberty which attracts the protagonist to the woman also frightens him when he realizes that she will no more submit to his control than to the established proprieties of the community. In each case also, the protagonist's attempts to control the women become ironically a reinforcement of his own communal identity. Langevin and Callaghan eventually place their protagonists in a position where they must choose between the woman and the community, between individual and communal self-expression. The final status of each protagonist can best be defined as one of alienation: both are unwilling to live within the value systems of their communities, but unable to live without them. Each, by his own admitted failure to pursue a goal which transcends the limits allowed by the community, has imprisoned himself within a group whose values he finds abhorrent. With the death of the women dies the individual identity of the protagonists. Remaining in communities whose values they persist in condemning, Jim and Alain refuse their communal identities. At the end of the novel, neither man has any identity, any self left to express. As hollow, insubstantial figures they shout their final defiance to the communities. But all that one hears is a whisper.

Neither Langevin nor Callaghan, therefore, arrive at a solution to the problem they pose in these novels. Each author directs our sympathies towards the "betrayed" women,

and consequently our blame falls upon the vacillating protagonist. Yet, both novelists present the woman's death as inevitable; neither is prepared in this novel to explore the consequences of a society where absolute individual self-expression is given full rein.<sup>9</sup> The final two chapters of this study examine novels in which individualism finds an unchecked expression, and communities flounder in decadence and perversion. The following chapter, however, goes on to explore an intermediary stage in the conflict between individual and community where the latter still retains the upper hand.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> André Langevin, Poussière sur la ville (Montréal: Cercle du Livre de France, 1953), p. 30. All further citations from the novel will refer to this edition and be indicated by page numbers in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Morley Callaghan, The Loved and the Lost (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1951), p. 102. All further citations from the novel will refer to this edition and be indicated by page numbers in the text.

<sup>3</sup> John Matthews in "The Inner Logic of a People: Canadian Writing and Canadian Values," Mosaic 1 (April 1968): 45, sees Peggy in just such a role: "Like the white whale in Moby Dick, Peggy becomes a type of image of centrality, mirroring back aspects of the one who sees her." Réjean Robidoux and André Renaud in Le Roman canadien-français du vingtième siècle, Visages des lettres canadiennes, vol. 3 (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1966), p. 135, assign Madeleine the same vital role in Langevin's novel: "Mais si Alain Dubois est le narrateur, Madeleine est réellement le personnage moteur de Poussière sur la ville sur le plan de l'anecdote. C'est elle qui provoque le drame, puis qui l'alimente."

<sup>4</sup> Jean-Charles Falardeau in "André Langevin: le romancier de l'angoisse et de la mort," Europe, nos. 478-79 (février-mars 1969), p. 64, essentially supports this view of Alain when he describes the relationships between the protagonist and the central woman in three of Langevin's novels: "Que la femme se nomme Micheline, Madeleine ou Yolande; qu'elle soit un être de compassion ou d'instinct, elle est désespérée devant l'homme distant et incomplet. Cet homme est hors d'atteinte et au-delà de tout cri."

<sup>5</sup> John Moss in Patterns of Isolation: in English Canadian Fiction (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1974), p. 221, comes to the conclusion that Jim's "life becomes a commitment to the quest of her [Peggy's] innocence; not to possess it but to prove its existence."

<sup>6</sup> Callaghan himself in "A Talk with Morley Callaghan," interviewed by Robert Weaver, Tamarack Review 7 (Spring 1958): p. 22, is fully conscious of how threatening such an absolute individualism can be:

But you see the saint and the sinner, or the saint, let us say, and the man guilty of the sin of monstrous pride--there's a very thin line there because the saint in his own way has a kind of monstrous egotism. And the great criminal has a monstrous egotism.

<sup>7</sup>Douglas G. Jones, in Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 53, sees the Carver world as an example of a garrison mentality which permeates Canadian consciousness, and he sees Peggy threatening this culture: "the majority of people, it is implied, must stay where they belong. If order and security are to be preserved in social life, each must respect the lines of demarcation which have been drawn between groups. Peggy Sanderson does not."

<sup>8</sup>There is a certain variety of opinion among critics about the nature of Alain Dubois's struggle. Jean-Louis Major, in "André Langevin," Le Roman canadien-français: évolution, témoignages, bibliographie. Archives des lettres canadiennes, vol. 3 (Montréal: Fides, 1964), p. 222, believes that "Pour Dubois, . . . après les vaines tentatives de l'illusion, l'existence prendra la forme sisyphienne de l'engagement dans l'absurde." Major, classing Langevin with the French existentialist writers, especially Sartre, sees Alain's pity as the foundation of his "lucidité." Given the actual text of Poussière sur la ville, however, this pity seems more a shield against lucidity, than a pathway to it.

Christina H. Roberts-Van Oordt in "Constellation Tragique," Canadian Literature, no. 64 (Spring 1975), pp. 67-74, like Major, feels that out of Alain's suffering and feeling of impotence is born a lucidity which leads to a revolt against the absurdity of existence. She cites Camus and the importance which he places upon the "volonté de lutter" as "la seule force de l'homme" (p. 70), but she does not attempt to demonstrate from the text exactly where she sees Alain's "volonté de lutter." Nor does she offer any substantiation for her statement that Alain's position vis-à-vis Madeleine in the latter part of the book opens "les voies larges et droites de l'amour", permettant d'établir un contact profond et direct" (p. 70) between Alain and Madeleine.

On the other hand, Gilles Marcotte in "L'Oeuvre romanesque d'André Langevin," Une littérature qui se fait: essais critiques sur la littérature canadienne-française (Montréal: Editions HMH, 1968), pp. 51-61, is more suspicious of the nature of Alain's pity, and the quality of his fight. Stating at first that "Comme Camus, Alain ne reconnaît plus qu'un moyen de salut: une charité toute humaine, la pitié" (p. 57), Marcotte goes on to examine this

pity, finding that it does not lead to an engagement with life, but serves as a screen against it:

La pitié n'est peut-être qu'un amour qui ignore la vie, qui s'ignore lui-même. Nous ne sommes pas rassurés, quand nous la voyons brandir comme l'arme du désespoir, par cet enfant dont les blessures saignent encore . . . Macklin, non plus que Madeleine, ne se laissera vaincre par cette arme de faible. (58)

Jean-Charles Falardeau in "André Langevin: le romancier de l'angoisse et de la mort," Europe, nos. 478-79 (février-mars, 1969), pp. 61-65, does not make any reference to Alain's pity. He sees Alain, as well as the protagonists of Langevin's other novels as "écrasé par un destin qui l'accable le paralyse ou l'anéantit" (p. 63). Paralyzed by the spying eyes and judgements of Macklin, Alain "abdique et se laisse couler" (p. 62). All Falardeau offers on Alain's attempts to battle the fates is a curt: "Alain Dubois s'efforce de s'assumer bien qu'il échoue devant ses responsabilités" (pp. 62-63).

It seems then, that in the case of Major and Roberts-Van Oordt, the presence of a few key words in the novel such as "la pitié," "la lutte," and "Sisyphé" provide the basis for an identification of Alain Dubois as a Sartrean or Camusean hero. The concept of "la lutte" is undeniably fundamental to Albert Camus's concept of manhood. In Le Mythe de Sisyphé: essai sur l'absurde, Les Essais, vol. 12 (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1942), p. 166, Camus concludes his examination of the absurd hero with the positive note "La lutte elle-même vers les sommets suffit à remplir un coeur d'homme." In La Peste (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1947), Camus's Dr. Rieux insists upon "l'honnêteté," as the sole weapon man can utilize in battling the plague. I would suggest that Alain's projection of self-pity towards Madeleine is a poor substitute for the "honnêteté" embodied by Camus's Rieux in his battle against the plague.

<sup>9</sup> According to Frank W. Watt in "Morley Callaghan as Thinker," The Dalhousie Review 39 (Autumn 1959), Callaghan's decision to make the centre of focus in the novel Jim McAlpine, rather than "the saint, Peggy," is an artistic gain over his earlier novels:

He may indeed have moved to that more complex and difficult view of life already more than hinted at in the earlier books, in which all the saints are ultimately ambiguous and unrecognizable if not demonstrably false. (313)

## CHAPTER III

### THE INDIVIDUAL AS PRISONER IN THE COMMUNITY

Conflict between the individual and the community can take forms very different from the hostility of Macklin and Montreal towards the external embodiment of individual self-expression in Madeleine Dubois and Peggy Sanderson. In Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley, Hugh MacLennan's Each Man's Son, and Gérard Bessette's La Bagarre, this conflict is internal, fought entirely within the psyches of the protagonists. The present chapter examines these three novels, considering first, each protagonist's identity within the community--the values and roots which tie him to a particular group of people; second, his individual identity, or what sets him apart from the community; and finally, the complications, the crisis, the denouement, and, in each case, the lack of a resolution, which form the story of the protagonist's conflict with his world..

Whereas the protagonists of the previous chapter were intruders in the communities, David Canaan, Daniel Ainslie, and Jules Lebeuf are native sons in the fictional worlds they inhabit. All three protagonists belong to their communities in the most rudimentary sense of simply having shared the circumstances of daily life as it is lived by the other members. Jules has known the poverty and the cruel

exigencies of the French Canadian working class. Daniel has shared the poverty and the religion of the Cape Breton Highlanders. And David has fully participated in the daily joys and sorrows of the Entremont farmers. This first level of membership is unconscious, unwilling, but on a second level all three are joined to their communities in a more conscious, even a more articulate way. Each is aware of belonging to a localized group which for some reason-- ethnic, historical, geographical, and economic--finds itself distinct from the larger society around it. In both Each Man's Son and La Bagarre this distinctiveness can almost be defined as a racial consciousness. Daniel, contrasting his non-Scottish wife Margaret with the Highlander Mollie MacNeil, defines his own sense of racial identity. Although he loves Margaret, he finds something lacking in her:

There was no smoke in her eyes, no mystery, nor any sense of it; . . .

Into his thoughts came the face of Mollie MacNeil, the face of his own people. They were all lost here in the mines. They were inextricably lost in their own sea-deep feelings and crazy dreams.<sup>1</sup>

Interestingly, Bessette employs the same phrase as MacLennan in describing his protagonist's community. The French Canadians, like the Highlanders, are presented as a lost group of people. And ultimately, Bessette explains, it was this fact which compelled Jules to leave Boston and return to his own people:

Voilà sans doute pourquoi il était revenu. Parce qu'il faisait partie d'un petit groupe francophone perdu dans un coin de l'Amérique du Nord . . .<sup>2</sup>

David Canaan's sense of community with the Entremont farmers does not have the same racial overtones as Daniel's and Jules's, but he is aware of fundamental differences between his community and people of the larger world of towns and cities. These differences, as they appear to David's sensitive eyes, are as profound as those which separate Daniel's Cape Breton Highlanders from other Canadians, or Jules's French Canadians from the English speaking world which threatens to engulf them. David's hostility to the townspeople is the hostility that the stranger might exhibit finding himself in the midst of a totally alien breed of men:

He despised most of the town people--especially its laughable bigwigs and those who paid them petty court.

They didn't seem like people it would be possible to know, or to be known by. They lacked the rich soil of his neighbours' original simplicity. They lacked too the rich soil of those people in the city who had gone beyond this artificial complexity of theirs to simplicity again.<sup>3</sup>

David has only to listen to the townspeople's banal conversations to "feel the vital variety of the people at home" (200). Yet at the same time he knows that his neighbours' "original simplicity" is often looked down upon by the townspeople, as Daniel and Jules know that the "lost peoples" to whom they belong are at best dismissed, at worst exploited by the larger society.<sup>4</sup> It is because the communities in which they have their roots are in some way open to hardships, or ridicule, or exploitation that each feels a special loyalty, a necessary allegiance to his group. Thus, when

the old chief surgeon, Dr. MacKenzie, advises Daniel Ainslie to stop wasting his time tending drunken brawlers and to leave Cape Breton for Vienna or London where he can pursue his studies, Daniel refuses: "'This is where I belong . . . Why should I take what I can from the island and then go off with it?'" (67). To leave Cape Breton, to take the money earned from treating these men, broken by the mines and by their own futile brawling, and escape to a better fate himself, carries with it a burden of guilt and betrayal which Daniel cannot bear.

As Ainslie sees his community fighting for survival against the mines, against the whole burden of history which drove the Highlanders from their home, so Jules Lebeuf is conscious of the heavy odds which destiny has set against the survival of his people. Like Daniel, he experiences his strongest sense of allegiance to the community at the moment when he is questioning his wisdom in remaining there. Jules senses that it is the weakness, the flaws, even the corruption of his people which bind him, demanding his loyalty, and indisputably establishing his communal identity:

Vu de l'extérieur, ce groupe n'offrait pas plus d'intérêt que des centaines de minorités disséminées un peu partout sur le globe. Le climat intellectuel était loin d'être satisfaisant. "Comment s'en étonner? C'est le contraire qui serait surprenant." Une poignée de Français, des paysans pour la plupart, sans instruction, privés de leurs chefs, avaient choisi de rester en Amérique après la défaite . . . Ils avaient dû aller au plus pressé: vivre, cultiver la terre, défendre leurs traditions leur langue. Et ils avaient tenu le coup. Ils s'étaient adaptés peu à peu au nouveau régime; avaient essayé de tirer parti de la situation . . . (189-90)

David Canaan's strongest attachment to his community, like that of Jules and Daniel, springs from a sense of protective loyalty. The night of the school play when he speaks his lines before his neighbors gathered in the school hall, David knows that his deepest feeling of kinship with them is due to his awareness of their limitations:

How much better this was than saying the words to himself had been! The kind of better you could never imagine, until you were into it. . . .

This was better than the cosiness of doing anything alone. He'd never do anything alone again. He'd take them with him always, in their watching. Closer somehow because they followed. (88)

In summary, each of the three protagonists claims full membership in his community: because so many of his own personal experiences have been those of the community; because the community's distinctive character sets it, and all who belong to it, apart from others and therefore closer to one another; and because this distinctiveness is coupled with a vulnerability which demands loyalty.

Other factors, however, separate the protagonist from the community. In all three novels he views himself and is viewed by the community as being in some way special, in some way singled out. The most obvious manifestation of this is his educational level. Daniel Ainslie's medical degree and his training in the United States give him a place of honour and distinction among the families of Broughton. Molly MacNeil explains Ainslie's position to her child Alan: "'Dr. Ainslie is a surgeon and he is a very fine, clever man . . . Think of it! He studied so hard he

went away to be a doctor in the United States and then he came home to help us here'" (11). Any education beyond the local school house is as unusual in the farming community of Entremont as it is in the mining town of Broughton. Having exhausted all that the local school house could offer him at the rate of two grades a year, David continues his studies by mail until he has his matriculation. His academic achievements earn him a special but isolated--even decorative--status in the rural community. The neighbors will hire David's older brother Chris to work on the woodsaw, but never ask the language student:

They never ask to hire me, David thought. They bring me their damned old letters to answer or their papers to fill out, but they never offer me a day's work. Just because I'm studying languages . . . they think it has something to do with weakness. (184)

Jules Lebeuf's experience among his fellow night shift workers at the Compagnie de Transport Métropolitaine exactly parallels that of David among the farmers. Although Jules, like David, is actually doing the same work as the others, the fact that he is continuing his education sets him apart. While his fellow workers accord him a distinction for his education, they use it as an excuse to exclude him from a full membership in their fraternity. When Lebeuf talks to the other sweepers about the possibility of a strike the coming September, Charlot, the oldest member of the group, gently but definitively, puts him in his place:

--On sait ben, toé, Lebeuf, tu t'en sacres pas mal de ça. Tu vas à l'université. C'est pas ton affaire. (46)

When another worker protests that Jules has joined and even led some of their causes with the boss, Charlot replies:

--J'dis pas, j'dis pas, reconnut Charlot en grimaçant. Ça empêche pas que, Lebeuf et nous autres, c'est une autre paire de manches. Lui, il va à l'université. (46)

In all three novels, however, the educational differences which separate the protagonist from his community are merely indicative of a more profound cause of separation. For, in each case the protagonist's education is the instrument for developing some special talent with which he believes he is endowed, and which is not possessed by the others. Of Daniel Ainslie's talent there can be no question. MacLennan even labours the point.<sup>5</sup> The narrator and various characters in the novel inform us at many points what a brilliant surgeon Ainslie is. David Canaan's and Jules Lebeuf's gifts are not so manifestly brilliant as those of Daniel. In both their cases it is more the hope or the promise of talent which marks them out from the others. David Canaan is very much aware from an early age of an ability to master language which first demonstrates itself when he learns his role for the school play:

All through the year the words of his part in the play kept flushing in and out of David's head like an exalting secret. . . .

The words were something no one else had. For that reason, everyone who was there when the thought of them came seemed revealedly wonderful, and somehow more fiercely loved, for being so pitiably, humdrumly outside it. (56)

Of the three protagonists, Jules is the least sure of himself and of the talent he possesses. No brilliant

technical prowess marks him out as in Daniel Ainslie's case; no effortless manipulation of words as with David Canaan. On the contrary, Jules seems more tongue-tied than his other university friends, and he envies the facility with which Augustin Sillery, another university student, glibly displays his verbal gifts.

But, despite the indifference, even the overt hostility, of those around him to his literary ambitions, Jules persists with a modest and stubborn hope that he has some talent:

Ecrire des romans lisible, capables de captiver le lecteur pendant une soirée, Lebeuf n'en demandait pas davantage pour l'instant. Ce serait au moins un commencement. D'un geste absent, il passa la main sur sa brosse roussâtre. "Je ne le ferai jamais; je manque d'imagination; je ne ponderai que des romans 'sérieux' . . . du sous-Bazin ou du sous-Bourget . . ." Pourtant, un espoir subsistait au fond de lui-même. "On ne sait jamais: j'ai peut-être du talent." (25)

Although Jules's special talent is less manifest than that of Daniel Ainslie, less acknowledged than that of David Canaan, it, nonetheless, forms the basis of his goal in life. Only if he succeeds in writing his novel can he give life and form to the complex world around him which is waiting for expression:

L'université d'un côté, les balayeurs de l'autre; entre les deux, toute une variété de classes sociales . . . Superposés à tout ça, deux groupes ethniques de mentalité et de langues différentes. Lui, Lebeuf, appartenait à l'un de ces groupes . . . C'était toute cette complexité qu'il aurait fallu exprimer dans un roman. "Faire vivre Montréal lui donner une âme en quelque sorte." (29)

By defining his goal in terms of using his individual gift in aid of his community, Jules expresses the fundamental desire common to all three protagonists. Jules's, Daniel's, and David's talents, then, function as a metaphor for the individual self which the protagonist would express within and for his community if he could. The tragedy of each novel is that he cannot. What ultimately isolates the protagonist from those around him is his awareness of the severe limitations of the people whom he loves, and of the impossibility of his talent ever being able to flourish in its native milieu. In each case such an awareness produces a particular sense of isolation in the protagonist: he is an individual who both belongs and does not belong; he shares and he does not share in the common life of the people; he is and is not a member of his community. Aware that his background, his family or "racial" ties, bind his loyalties to a distinctive and, in some way, vulnerable community, and equally aware that the best of himself which he could offer to the enrichment, the enlightenment, the defence of his community can never flourish as long as he remains with it, each of the protagonists finds himself in an intolerable position. Marguerite, the waitress with whom Jules lives, provides the metaphor for the untenable division of self that all of the protagonists suffer, when she advises Jules: "--On peut pas être deux choses en même temps, à cheval su' la clôture (28).

The fact that none of the three ever really escapes from the existential stasis implied in the image of the straddled fence, means that the movement in each novel is not one of complication, crisis and resolution, but rather a presentation of the basic problem and the elaboration of its effects upon the protagonist and those with whom he comes in contact: David Canaan, Jules Lebeuf, and Daniel Ainslie present three studies in alienation. All of them, with variations due to the particular circumstances of their fictional worlds and the exact nature of their own individual selves, display at least one of the fundamental ingredients of alienation: they suffer a crucial psychological separation in their own lives. The term "alienation" has become so widely used to describe such a variety of discontents that a more specific definition is required for our purposes. Lewis S. Feuer gives one which is general enough to cover the larger implications of the term, yet specific enough to the particular interest of this enquiry:

Alienation lies in every direction of human experience where basic emotional desire is frustrated, every direction in which the person may be compelled by social situations to do violence to his own nature. "Alienation" is used to convey the emotional tone that accompanies any behaviour in which the person is compelled to act self-destructively.<sup>6</sup>

An examination of each novel establishes the basic conflict between the protagonist and his community and reveals how in each case the only recourse that the protagonist finds before this insoluble problem is one which does "violence to his own nature."

While the lack of a resolution to the basic conflict in La Bagarre prevents any real development in the novel, Bessette presents Jules's position in two distinct stages: Part I focuses upon the broad outlines of his alienation, describing his double life as daytime student and nighttime sweeper; while Part II brings into focus his specific failure before life. At the very outset of Part I, Jules voices his frustration with the double existence he is pursuing, admitting that, in fact, it is not a life at all:

. . . maintenant il hantait les cabarets presque tous les soirs. Ensuite, sauf les jours de congé il courait à son travail, abattait ses huit heures (de minuit à huit), gagnait parfois l'université ou bien rentrait à sa chambre où il semblait dans le sommeil. Ce n'était pas une vie. (23)

This merry-go-round of nightclubs, work and university is not a life in that it brings Jules no closer to what he has determined his life must be: "Ecrire! Voilà ce qui lui semblait la vraie la seule 'solution'" (22-23). If Jules could, through his writing, give a soul to Montreal and his people, then he would indeed have found a "solution" to the main problem of his existence by expressing in a single act both his individual and his communal self. Yet the novel remains unwritten. When he attempts to analyse the reasons for his failure, Jules tends to focus not upon what is rigid in the society but what is absent from it:

"Si seulement j'avais un guide, un critique sûr. On ne peut jamais se juger soi-même." . . . "Si encore le milieu m'y poussait! Si on me prodiguait des encouragements! . . . Alors, on pourrait dire que je me suis laissé influencer. . . ." (97)

While Jules feels his milieu is at best disorganized, at worst a kind of intellectual vacuum with no guides, no encouragement in it for his goal, there are certainly strong forces in it which most decidedly function to push him in another direction. His double life makes him a member of two different groups within his society. He soon discovers that the value systems, the goals and expectations, of both these groups are equally antithetical to his goal. Given his ambition to be a writer, Jules's decision to finish his "cours classique" and enter the Faculté des lettres at l'Université de Montréal is not surprising, but he is disappointed in university life. Instead of intellectual stimulation, he finds only "les cours qui l'ennuyaient." More importantly, as an institution whose goals reflect the structures and goals of the society within which it operates, the university functions to groom and eventually produce in its graduates future teachers of Quebec's school system. And Bessette shows, what are for him, the gross failings of the Quebec educational system in the story of Gisèle Lafrenière, the daughter of one of Jules' co-workers at the Compagnie de Transport Métropolitaine. Although Gisèle proves to have a natural ability for mathematics, which ranks her in this field among the top five per cent in the province, there is no place in the system for her. Jules explains: "--Aucune école française pour les filles n'existe dans ce domaine. Le Sir George Williams me semble la seule place" (225). But Sir George Williams, an entirely English

environment, poses the very real threat of anglicization to the French Canadian. And eventually, for this reason, Gisèle's parents refuse to allow her to go there. As a university student, then, Jules finds himself in the position of working towards a degree which will suit him to teach in an educational system which has nothing to offer to the most talented of the people whom it is supposed to serve.

Perhaps an even more bitter disappointment is Jules's discovery, during the other half of his double life, spent with the sweepers, that the very people whom he wishes to aid are completely unappreciative of his goals. His co-workers have no difficulty in seeing that they are being exploited by a company which continues to augment its profits while keeping them on pittance salaries, but they remain totally uncomprehending before Jules's suggestion that the company should use its profits to furnish libraries, universities, and museums:

Bill se frotta le menton:

--Ouais, hâ, e'L'beuf, on sait ben . . . Mais il feraient p'tête ben mieux de nous donner ein peu plus de salaire.

Lebeuf eut un geste d'assentiment:

--Les salaires raisonnables, je suis pour ça cent pour cent. Mais c'est pas pareil. Ça passe. On les dépense. Tandis que l'instruction, ça reste, c'est du solide . . . (86)

Jules's double life, is therefore, doubly absurd: not only does he fail to write his novel, but, in order to help people who do not want to be helped, he spends one half of his time cleaning streetcars to finance the other half of his time spent studying for a degree which will be of no value in advancing his goals for his people. And it is

precisely this position of double absurdity which provides the basis of his alienation. Having established what is of value and significance, what is to give meaning to his life, and provide the "solution" to his existence, Jules pursues a daily routine within the community which has absolutely no relation to the goals which he has defined for himself as an individual.

Nowhere perhaps is this absurdity so concretely presented as in Jules's relationship with Marguerite, the waitress with whom he lives. Even the most fundamental physical circumstances of such an arrangement impede Jules in his attempts to write his novel. He complains to his American friend Weston:

--Penses-tu qu'il y a moyen de travailler dans une chambre quand il y a une femme à côté de toi continuellement? Vas-y voir! T'arrives chez toi un beau soir. T'es décidé à faire quelque chose. Tu t'installes à la table, tu prends une plume, tu commences à penser à ton affaire, puis tout d'un coup, merde! La radio se met à gueuler ou bien c'est elle, la poule, qui commence à jaser. Pas moyen d'écrire un mot. Alors tu prends ton veston et ton chapeau et tu décampes. Pas d'autre chose à faire . . . (9)

Yet Marguerite interrupts Jules when he is attempting to write his novel only because she recognizes no tangible goal in his writing, even as she sees no point in his double life as university student and sweeper. If, however, Jules were working towards one of the middle class professions, Marguerite would have no objections: "--. . . si tu voulais devenir ein docteur ou ben ein avocat, je dirais pas trop rien. Mais toi, quoi c'est que tu veux devenir au juste?

J'ai jamais été capable de te l'faire dire" (28). At this point Marguerite voices not only those aspects of the community's value system which hinder Jules in his attempts to express his individual goals, she posits some specific goals which the community would accept and even admire in him.

Marguerite is not a totally unsympathetic figure. On the contrary, it is because her own ambitions for her life and that of Jules have such credibility, such a fundamental practicality, that she poses a real threat to Jules's much more tentative dreams. Marguerite, much like the Lafrenières, is simply doing her best within the givens of the system to which she belongs. She makes, in fact, the most convincing spokesman for the very values against which Jules is fighting. As a French Canadian, in a society dominated by English Canadian and American money, Marguerite accepts with a stoic fatalism the rigidity of the system and finds her own limited modus operandi within it which she offers to Jules: "Quand on n'a pas assez d'argent pour aller à l'université, hé ben, on reste ce qu'on est. On essaye de monter à partir d'en bas, c'est toute" (28).

Jules's and Marguerite's relationship, then, clearly embodies, on the one hand, the conflict between the protagonist's individual goals and the value system of his community which finds expression in Marguerite's ambitions. On the other hand, it serves as one of the clearest examples of Jules's alienation. From the first description of his

life with Marguerite it is apparent that Jules never had any intentions of finding in her an intellectual, spiritual, or even emotional companion. He formed a liaison with Marguerite to ensure the basic creature comforts of bed and board. Only later does he realize that he has committed more of himself than he had planned to in this arrangement of convenience:

Au début, il avait eu la naïveté de s'imaginer que ce collage réglerait ses problèmes. "Plus de chasse aux poules, plus de visites au lupanar, une vie rangée, tranquille, studieuse." La cohabitation avec cette serveuse lui avait semblé une solution idéale. (22)

Although Jules very quickly realizes the naïvety of his original assessment of this relationship, he does not appreciate the critical dangers inherent in it. The essential element of a person's alienation, as defined above, consists of his doing violence to his own nature, and acting in a way that is self-destructive to his own interests. In delegating one of the most elemental aspects of his life to the status of a necessary evil, Jules performs a grave act of violence against his own life. He hopes to avoid any emotional commitments which might threaten his freedom to pursue his own goals; he pays for it. That withdrawal from life on one front inevitably involves withdrawal on other fronts is implied by Jules's reflection that even in the first months with Marguerite, when she let him work in relative peace, his talent did not flourish: "Il est vrai que, même alors, Lebeuf écrivait très peu: quelques notes psychologiques; une nouvelle sans intérêt

qu'il avait jetée au panier . . ." (22). Perhaps most dangerous of all in Jules's attitude towards his relationship with Marguerite is his failure to realize that once set aside, it is very difficult to reclaim a part of your life.

By the end of Part I, then, Bessette has shown Jules's alienation in the three most important aspects of his life: as a student, as a worker, and in his most intimate personal relationship. To complement this presentation of a protagonist, whose individual self-expression is checked or compromised in all his involvements with the community, Bessette also includes a small galaxy of other characters who, each in his own way, finds his individual expression constrained or checked by some aspect of the community. The least complex of the three is Ken Weston, an American ex-G.I., who is attempting to write a thesis on the French Canadians. But "Statistics vs life," as his thesis is called, runs into problems.

L'Américain repensa aux difficultés de sa thèse. "Statistics vs life," songea-t-il. Comment concilier les deux? Comment fusionner ces antinomies en une thèse sur les Canadiens français? Ken avait l'impression que ses expériences les plus intéressantes à Montréal restaient totalement étrangères à son travail. "Les statistiques, les documents d'un côté: la vie de l'autre." Entre les deux, un abîme . . . (37)

On the most obvious symbolic level, it would seem that the statistics comprise all of the external life of the French Canadians--the communal value system articulated by Marguerite and the sweepers--which blocks Jules's inner vision and functions here in the same way to block or to contradict Weston's awareness of the inner life that he

glimpses in his acquaintance with individual French Canadians. At times the discrepancy between the two can be so vast as to be almost amusing. Ken reflects that:

· Avant son départ de Saint-Louis, un type lui avait affirmé que tous les Canadiens-français étaient des fermiers à peine dégrossis. En arrivant, l'ex-G.I. était tombé sur Sillery! (36)

Even as Ken Weston's dilemma over his thesis provides a symbolic figuring of the central conflict in La Bagarre, so Augustin Sillery's life is an in-depth illustration of the novel's structural antithesis. Bessette's portrayal of the young homosexual's existence demonstrates how painful life can be for someone whose individual desires do not conform to the mores of his community. A witty conversationalist, capable of organized intellectual pursuit, and "pas un mauvais diable, après tout" (218), despite his dandyism, Sillery, nevertheless, impresses the reader with an overwhelming sense of waste. His facility with language is dissipated in fopperies; his ability to pursue an intellectual investigation leads him into the sterile categorization of Pascal's works:

Quelles parties des Pensées et des Provinciales s'adressent à l'intelligence? quelles à la sensibilité? quelles, à l'imagination? --Telle était la question. "Au fond, c'est stupide: ni l'intelligence, ni l'imagination n'existent; ce sont de vieilles conceptions périmées." (31)

Sillery, however, continues his intellectual pursuits within a system which he recognizes as outmoded, even as he pursues his day to day existence within the parameters of a society which is equally irrelevant, even hostile, to

his own needs. There is no acknowledged place for his homosexual preferences, nor for his investigative intellect; only a surface brilliance of repartee is accepted from him, and Sillery uses his language with a vengeance, more as a weapon than as a means of communication.

Augustin Sillery and Gisèle Lafrenière complete with Jules, the trilogy of young French Canadians, whom Bessette presents as isolated and unappreciated in the midst of a community whose every structure and institution is suited only to thwart, dissipate, or crush any individual talent that they might possess.<sup>7</sup> Each of them is pursuing a life style inimical to his or her own individual interests: Sillery fritters away his talent in superficialities and sophistries, Jules submerges himself in a pointless routine, and Gisèle is imprisoned in a family and school system which is manifestly unsuited to the development of her particular talents. Part I of the novel ends with these three alienated figures momentarily united in the common cause of promoting Gisèle's mathematical genius, the most tangible of the talents among them.

The next time that Bessette brings them together is in the nightclub brawl at the centre of Part II. This brawl provides the title for the novel, and its importance in the work could perhaps be assigned to the fact that it is the single scene in which all of the major characters are present. Aside from this more or less mechanical point, however, the brawl is mainly significant for its futility.

Yet, because this outburst of violence has so little point and solves nothing of the serious problems which face each of the major characters, it perhaps serves as a perfect symbol of the frustrations which mark all of the characters' lives. Nothing could be more pointless in Sillery's attempt to revenge his "condition" on Jules and Weston, than his bringing Gisèle to a seedy nightclub; nothing could be more fruitless than Gisèle's infatuation with the homosexual Sillery whose elegant manners have attracted her; and finally, nothing could be as futile as Jules's abandonment to fist-swinging when he fails in his attempts to remove Gisèle from the club. Finding no outlet for his creative energy, Jules turns to a release in destruction. And "destructive" most aptly describes the protagonist's condition throughout the second half of the novel. Although in the first section of the work he is vaguely disquieted about the life he is living--or failing to live, although he is aware that he is not advancing towards a realization of his ambitions, nothing happens to crystallize his discontent. He remains "à cheval su' la clôture," hoping against all evidence that his latent talent will somehow emerge and thus justify and valorize his existence.

In Part II, Jules's basic situation does not worsen; he makes no initiative to solve his equivocal position in one direction or another, but the outside world intrudes upon his private balancing act. Offered a job of foreman in the Compagnie de Transport Métropolitaine as part of a

bargain for reinstating a fired worker and increasing the men's salaries, Jules is finally forced to assess his position. The resulting "examen de conscience" (142), reveals that his sense of individual freedom has deteriorated to an entirely negative expression:

"Je suis normal, en bonne santé, d'une résistance exceptionnelle." On pouvait difficilement imaginer un type plus désengagé, plus libre . . . Il y avait Marguerite, évidemment, qui le "tenait." Mais là n'était pas la question. Elle le tenait par la chair, l'habitude. "Rien d'essentiel." (143)

That Jules can somehow view his own flesh and the habits it has formed as having no essential claim on him shows an alienation of mind from matter which borders on the schizophrenic. Yet, it is precisely this "disengagement" which is the essence of Jules's impression of liberty. The facts, the actual events, may prove that Jules is deeply involved with the waitress, but his sense of individual liberty consists of his ability to deny the facts, the actual. Indeed, as Jules goes on to examine his position, it becomes increasingly clear to what extent he has disengaged himself from the world of the actual:

. . . Jules était revenu au Canada. Et il n'en partirait sans doute plus . . . Mais que faisait-il depuis son retour? Aidait-il ses compatriotes? S'était-il affilié à un mouvement politique? S'occupait-il d'action sociale? Songeait-il seulement à fonder un foyer? à avoir des enfants?--Non, toujours non. Au fond, toutes ces choses ne l'intéressaient pas. Du moins, pas directement, pas en soi. Il aurait voulu les exprimer, certes, leur donner vie et forme, mais elles ne le passionnaient pas par elles-mêmes. (144)

Jules's freedom, it seems, depends upon his retaining the precarious position on the fence, since to descend would be

to admit fully a communal identity which is essentially destructive to his life as an individual. If he becomes a full-time university student he will have to abandon vital contact with the very people whom he wishes to serve. The alternative communal role open to him, that of a foreman at the Compagnie de Transport Métropolitaine, is equally problematic since it would require that Jules enforce the laws of a system which he recognizes as exploitive of his people; it would also constitute an abandonment of all pretensions to an intellectual life. All that remains for Jules is to stay perched on the fence, to choose neither one life nor the other, to have no life at all.

It is not accidental that the novel should turn its focus from the stasis of Jules's position to the seemingly less hopeless problem of young Gisèle Lafrenière. Finding an outlet for her talent within the community would represent a clear victory for both sides in the conflict between individual and community: "'L'important c'est qu'elle veut se cultiver. Je dois l'aider.' Elever le niveau d'un individu, n'était-ce pas élever tout le groupe?" (190). Yet Jules is not a miracle worker and it would require a miracle to dissolve the formidable forces which act against the realization of Gisèle's ambition--the inadequacy of the francophone educational system and the centuries of French Canadian suspicion against the English which effectively prevent Gisèle from gaining her parents' permission to attend Sir George Williams. In the face of

her tearful disappointment, Jules promises to seek a way out of her dilemma. But such a promise is empty, more a reflection of Jules's half-admitted love for the young girl than any real commitment on his part to undertake a definitive course of action. Jules, of course, is beyond any definitive action; no longer capable of commitment. Having defined his liberty as the freedom not to enter into any commitments, he has lost the ability to engage himself in any personal relationship.<sup>8</sup> In his final meeting with Gisèle, Jules admits this, although not fully realizing the significance of his statement. Because he has already promised the fired Bouboule that he will be reinstated in his job, Jules has effectively fallen from his perch on the fence into the foreman's position. Unable to come to any decision about his life; he has allowed external events to decide things for him. In a kind of apology to Gisèle for what he has failed to do for her, and for himself, Jules comes as close as he ever will to admitting the defeat of his life:

--Comprends-tu ça, toi, qu'un type passe sa vie à chercher quelque chose, à essayer d'exprimer quelque chose, sans savoir s'il réussira jamais, sans savoir s'il a du talent? et que le type, à cause de ça, néglige le reste--comme d'amasser de l'argent, de se faire une position, de se marier peut-être, de vivre comme l'autre monde? Peux-tu comprendre ça? (223)

What Jules has neglected, and therefore missed while perched on his fence, is his own life.

The final brief chapter of La Bagarre is one of the most depressing in modern Canadian literature. Jules is all

alone. Ken Weston has realized the impossibility of ever reconciling statistics with life in a study of the French Canadians, and has returned to the United States. Gisèle Lafrenière, now a boarder in a school where the nuns teach her courses for which she has no aptitude and ignore her mathematical abilities, has slipped away from Jules's life. Augustin Sillery, having failed to solve the conflict between his individual needs and the modes and mores of his society, has run away to forget his problems in Africa. For Jules, who stays, the remnants of his individual liberty are reduced to the minutes which remain to him out of each hour after he has punched the series of clocks on the foreman's hourly round--twenty minutes if he walks, forty-five if he runs. Nothing could more aptly evoke the image of a caged animal than Jules's running from clock to clock on an hourly round. And when he is not working there is Marguerite, whom he admits is a fixture in his life, at least for the present, maybe forever.

Jules's final position in the novel is the anti-thesis of human freedom. Punching his clock at hourly intervals he is entrapped in a kind of living death where neither individual nor communal self finds any meaningful expression. Unable to fulfil his own aspirations within the community, and equally unable to leave his people, Jules defined for himself a concept of individual liberty that keeps him free from the community in which he lives his daily life, that negates the realities of his existence, and that

finally destroys his very identity. At the end of the novel, Jules has no self left to express. He wears a mask of communal identity, empty in itself and covering a hollow man.<sup>9</sup>

The problem of human freedom in The Mountain and the Valley reaches a conclusion very similar to that of La Bagarre. Buckler's novel gives a stronger impression of development than Bessette's because it traces David's life from childhood to the age of thirty. But, as in the case of Jules Lebeuf, all of the elements of David's alienation are present from the opening of the novel. The Mountain and the Valley has six parts, plus a prologue and an epilogue. These six sections break rather naturally in half. The first half, consisting of "The Play," "The Letter," and "The Valley," functions as a kind of mise en scene in which Buckler establishes all of the circumstances of the conflict between David's strong sense of loyalty to his community and his individual aspirations which can never find expression within that community. The last half of the novel, "The Rock," "The Scar," and "The Train," crystallize the protagonist's position, forcing him to adopt some kind of a stand towards it, although not to solve it. In the image of his protagonist "à cheval su' la clôture" Bessette provides a metaphor for Jules's alienation; Buckler supplies a similar one in the target pattern rug which David's grandmother is hooking on the day of her grandson's death. A series of ever narrowing circles forms the pattern of the

rug and of David's involvement with the real world as he progressively withdraws further and further from contact with the members of his community, and with his own life as it unrolls within the community.

In the first section of the novel, "The Play," Buckler establishes David's extraordinary response to the imaginative power of words as he learns his role in the school play. From this moment, he recognizes that his special sensitivity to language constitutes a unique kind of individual liberty for him, an escape from the world of humdrum routine which imprisons those around him. Against his own sense of freedom David sets the bondage of the community's men: "They would seem, beside himself, like people tied" (58). Against his inner world of wonder he sets the banality of the women's existence: "so terribly without private excitement like his" (58). And while David moves, guided by the light the words have released in his imagination, "it seemed as if the others were coasting in the dark" (58). David's impression of having found a new world to which only he has freedom of access culminates the night of the school play. Thus, in the very opening section of The Mountain and the Valley Buckler shows David beginning his withdrawal from the real world of the community around him. His talent, the imaginative response to the magic of words, gives him an escape from the mundane, banal, inarticulate farming community. Significantly, however, David moves not from a limited to a larger reality but from

reality to make-believe:

Oh, it was perfect now. He was creating something out of nothing. He was creating exactly the person the words in the play were meant for. He had the whole world of make-believe to go to. They had only the actual, the one that came to them. (88)

For an instant, however, it is not a question of withdrawal but a kind of transcendence. as David accomplishes the dream of every artist and by sheer force of his talent, his belief, his power, brings the audience with him into the elevated realms of his imaginative world. But the world of the actual reasserts itself suddenly when a coarse jest from a member of the audience snaps the magic link between David and his community. The break is never completely mended. Thus, by the culminating scene of Part I, Buckler has provided the basic ingredients of David's alienation. He has shown how there exists in David's mind a clear distinction between, on the one hand, the real world of the day to day life of the community, and, on the other hand, a totally private world which exists apart from mundane experience, which David can create "out of nothing," and to which only he has access. From the very beginning, then, David's sense of himself as a distinct individual finds expression not only in withdrawal but in a projection of himself into a world of make-believe which denies the reality of daily life.

David enters into two new relationships in the second section of the novel which apparently expand his involvement in the world around him. At the age of fourteen

he has his first sexual experience with a girl. Although he has known Effie all his life, this new physical tie changes David's feelings towards both her and himself. And it is of crucial significance that, although David's feelings for Effie are far more tender than Jules Lebeuf's pragmatic attitude towards Marguerite, there is a distinctly negative element in his definition of this new relationship. Watching Effie after their first lovemaking, David "felt a kind of loss. She was like a part of himself that had slipped away where he could never again be able to watch it all the time. It might be hurt without his knowing it-- beyond the cure of being brought back inside and thoroughly apprehended" (131). The fact that David loves Effie, boyish as his love might be, separates his experience from that of Jules. If Effie had lived, then that part of himself which he had lost to her would also live and flourish with her, and in the community. Effie's early death places David in exactly the same position as Jules; both have given up the most vital parts of their emotional lives, and one of the most vital links to the world of experiences, to a woman with whom they lose all real means of communication either through death or through indifference.

The second new relationship which David establishes in "The Letter" comes in the form of a letter itself, and appears to be entirely the most promising event in his life up to this moment. Toby Richmond, David's new pen pal from Halifax, is a voice from another world; but this other world

is a real one. In it, David's imagination might flourish without the constraints of the rural farming community.

"The Letter" closes on a promising note, with David feeling as if this first contact with the outside world marked "some kind of turning point in his life" (115). Two events in the following section do effectively establish the course of David's future life: Effie dies, depriving him of his first and what will prove to be his only love, and Toby appears, David's first and only friend. Buckler makes clear from the beginning of this friendship that Toby's life, like Effie's death, will take something away from David. At their first meeting David feels an intense identification with the city boy:

It was different from David's identification with the boys here. The part of him, which he must withhold from them was released now. It was like a second language come full-worded to him, without any learning. (159)

The part of David which identifies with Toby is his extraordinary imagination, his verbal articulateness. All those things which constitute his sense of himself as an individual and which are silenced in the community of farmers, find release in the presence of this city boy. Going to sleep that first night of Toby's visit, David carries this sense of identification one step further: "David lay awake thinking: I have a friend. What he'd been missing all his life had been a reflection of himself anywhere. Now he had discovered it at last" (167). Yet it is entirely typical of David's position that such a discovery should immediately strike him as a betrayal of his community. Instinctively,

David recognizes that in identifying himself with a non-member of the community, he is admitting the split between his individual and communal selves. In "The Valley" Buckler does not bring the inherent problem of David's and Toby's relationship to any crisis. He merely establishes the fact that David has identified his inner self, the part of him which soars freely above the inarticulate and unimaginative farmers, with a boy who will return to Halifax, to his own varied life leaving David behind or, more precisely, leaving behind the shell of David, that part of him which is tied to the daily chain of routine within the community.

The fourth section, "The Rock," opens the second half of the novel on this note of deadening routine. A farmer's work undoubtedly has its high moments: sowing the spring seeds, harvesting the ripe fruits, . . . but much of it is back-breaking, repetitive, drudgery. Portraying David--now eighteen years old--caught in this drudgery, and chaffing against the brutalizing dullness of it, Buckler, for the first time in the novel overtly poses his protagonist's conflict. He brings David, as Bessette brings Jules, to a point where he must make an examination of conscience and an assessment of his life. While helping his father clear rocks from the land, David suddenly faces, as if for the first time, the actuality of his daily life. His habitual means of escape, for some reason, fails him on this day. He senses that if he stays he will become as brutalized

as the ox:

He would grow old here, he thought, like his father. That's what it would be like: the pace of an ox. Lifting their feet with such horrible patience. No revolt in them against the gall of the yoke straps, . . . They held their heads down, drawing the heavy rocks. Their eyes saw only the ground. (188)

David, thus, clearly admits the deficiencies of his communal identity. All of his studies, his talent, those things which constitute his sense of individual liberty will be imprisoned and crippled within the severe restrictions of the farming community:

What was the good of learning here? All they thought about was liftin' and luggin'. They thought if anyone was smart it was like being half foolish. You had to cripple every damn thought you had, every damn thing you did, so they wouldn't look at you funny. (194)

The obvious solution is to leave. And, after a flaring of tempers between him and his father, David does leave, but gets no more than a few miles from home before an overwhelming, crushing sense of guilt drives him back. Even more than Jules, David feels bound to his community by ties of loyalty so deep, that to desert it, to attempt an independent existence in Halifax, represents a betrayal that is almost treason. Thus for David, as for Jules, escape is no solution, and neither is remaining. Standing on the road to Halifax, but turned back to face the home he has just left, David evaluates his situation: "He felt as if he were in a no man's land" (203). The only retreat left is withdrawal into himself:

Suddenly he put his head into the only place left to hide: the crook of his elbow along the rail of the bridge. He began to sob. He sobbed because he could neither leave nor stay. He sobbed because he was neither one thing nor the other. (204)

In fact, from the moment that David returns to the community in which he must "cripple" his individual self-expression, he is no longer either one thing or the other. He is nothing at all. David's abortive flight is a changing point in his life. Like Jules, he never at any point makes a positive decision about what to do with his future, but this very failure to take a stand about his own life constitutes a position which will be as definitive as any conscious choice he might have made. From this point on David will be like Jules, "à cheval su' la clôture," or, to use the metaphor of the novel, he will be voyaging in ever decreasing circles to the centre of his private world, his world of make-believe.

One of the ways to illustrate David's increasing withdrawal is to examine the direction taken by his interpersonal relationships, those ties which bind him to the outer, real world of the community. Significantly, after his failure to leave Entremont, a second meeting with Toby makes explicit in their relationship what has remained implicit in their boyhood relations. David, as a boy, had found a reflection of his individual self in Toby. Now, as a young man, unable to find self-expression within the community, he begins to confuse Toby's action and Toby's life with his own:

Toby hummed "Some of These Days" as they drove down the hill below the church. . . .

"Why don't you sing too, Dave?" Anna said.

"Me sing?" But he was singing. He was saying the words in his head silently, taking the sound of Toby's voice for his own. (212)

The incident is trifling. It is tragic as well, however, since it sums up all that is left of life for David.<sup>10</sup> By the opening of the next section, "The Scar," David has already ceased to participate, and like Jules, now frankly defines his freedom in terms of this lack of commitment to the events of the actual world:

Joseph never counted him, as he did Chris, when he figured the number required for a job like this. It always annoyed David. Yet, in a way, he was glad of it. The spectator sense had a special freedom when no specific niche in the job was assigned to you alone. (222)

David's special freedom is guaranteed once and for all at the beginning of this section when he falls from a rafter in the barn and permanently disables himself. The dull ache which lodges itself forever in his head purchases for David the only freedom he will ever have. Now, he is free from the impossible choice between being one thing or another, between living one life or another. He does not really have to live at all in the sense that others around him do. The accident stops all that, releases him from the flow of life around him and from a communal self-expression which crippled his individuality. Regaining consciousness after his accident, and regarding his family and friends, David "had the instant feeling that he'd overslept, so long that now he'd never catch up with them" (235).

David, however, does not truly desire to "catch up." He leaves the narrowing circles of his life in the community, turning to the world expanding within himself--the same make-believe world of words which he first discovered the night of the play, where he can create something out of nothing. Now David defines his freedom exclusively in the world of words:

Suddenly he knew how to surmount everything. That loneliness he'd always had . . . it got forgotten, maybe, weeded over . . . but none of it had ever been conquered. (And all that time the key to freedom had been lying in these lines, this book.) There was only one way to possess anything: to say it exactly. (237)

But it is important to realize that the words which David says are never spoken aloud, never used as currency in the world of the actual. He writes them to himself, for himself, in a scribbler which he hides from the eyes of the world. "Saying" is not a means of living now for David, but a substitute for it.<sup>11</sup> And briefly, in a flash of bitter recognition, David acknowledges, if only for a moment that the freedom to which words provide the key, is the freedom not to live your life:

He caught a glimpse of his face in the mirror as he climbed into bed. It was pale and indeterminate. It looked as if it were waiting for some deposit of experience to focus it. (241)

But no experience, no involvement with the world of the actual will ever touch David again.

The last major section of the novel, "The Train," explores the consequences of David's definitive withdrawal into himself following the accident; it explores, subtly

and devastatingly, the day to day life of a man who has totally alienated himself, or his vision of himself, from the circumstances which make up his daily life. Alone now with his grandmother Ellen, following the deaths of his parents and the marriages of his brother and sister, David slips into the routine of the oxen which so terrified him at the age of eighteen. He remains, like Jules, in his community affirming his communal identity, yet, like Jules, he is also free from it; his freedom consisting of his rather frightening ability not to live:

It didn't seem like five years that he'd been alone here.

It didn't seem like any time at all. These years were like a kind of suspension, before time became really, movingly now again. Though never consciously called up, an absolute conviction was always there: sometime, somewhere, just as surely as ever, everything was still waiting.

But that sometime was never today. (277)

Occasionally, David has moments of clarity when, panic stricken, he sees his life slipping away. During one of these crises, he attempts to plunge back into the stream by going to a neighborhood dance. His failure to establish any rapport with the younger girls serves to reaffirm his alienation from life. Retreating from the brutal reality which clearly shows him that it is too late ever to live a normal life within the community, David intensifies his dream world, the only one in which he still has any identity: "The girls of 'sometime' were realer than ever" (282).

David, however, still makes one last attempt to latch onto life. Once, many years ago, hearing Toby sing,

David took Toby's voice for his own. Now, even as Jules hopes to fulfil his own individual goals through Gisèle, so David, with an even greater ambition turns to Toby, hoping to take his friend's life for his own. But because the world of words has become more real to David than the people and events around him, he cannot communicate his need to Toby. Instead, he writes his desire into a story, "Thanks for Listening," which details the exploits of the narrator and a character called Tony--a thinly disguised David and Toby. Miraculously, such is the power of David's gift with words, for a moment in this fictional world everything falls into its proper place. In a moment of grace, the narrator of the short story and David find a justification for the life they have missed. Someone else can live it for them:

For Tony had done all the things, even the ones you'd missed. He'd been in all the places--even this one . . . And in a minute like that when its clear how another can have for you the things you might have had for yourself, the meaning of everything else is clear too. (322-23)

But the epiphany in the fictional world is matched and eventually annulled by an epiphany in the real world. After visiting the Entremont farm for a final time before he goes off to war, Toby leaves on the train without a backward glance towards David who remains standing in the field facing reality, facing the fact that now neither Toby nor he himself could live those years that have gone by, emptyly:

A baring and frightening light shone suddenly on his own life. It was like a strip of daybreak striking down a long naked corridor.

This was the toppling moment of clarity which comes once to everyone, when he sees the face of his whole life in every detail. He saw then that the unquestioned premise all his calculations had been built on was false. He realized for the first time that his feet must go on in their present path, because all the crossroad junctions had been left irretrievably far behind. Anything your own hands had built, he had always thought, your own hands could destroy. You could build a wall about yourself, for safety's sake, but whenever you chose you could level it. That wasn't true he saw now. (337)

No admission of alienation, of having acted against one's own best interests, could be more explicit than this. David's realization of his own wasted life is so much more fully conscious than that of Jules, that his death at the end satisfies the demands of dramatic necessity. But in spite of the difference between David's death and, what we might call, Jules's living death, it is important to notice that structurally, in terms of the clash of values operating in the fictional worlds, both novels arrive at the same point. Bessette leaves no doubt, as was previously demonstrated, that Jules is finally trapped by his own negative concept of freedom. David, like Jules, has conceived of freedom in entirely negative terms. Building a wall around himself to ensure his own individual freedom, David participates instead in his own self-destruction. At the end of the work no means of self-expression remain open to David. The wall which cut him off from the community, also cut him off from reality. The individual self, protected behind such a barrier, has become a thing of pure air and fantasy,

incapable of ever finding expression, except in a brief but insubstantial vision which comes to David moments before his death. He imagines how he will "tell" the story of his people--family, friends, the whole community--who have never understood or appreciated his individual talents. The story itself will take the place of David's life, the one he has missed: "He saw at last how you could become the thing you told" (369). Thus, David's final thoughts at the close of the novel are on the book he will write, much as Jules's thoughts turn to his unwritten novel. We do not know if Jules ever writes his book; David does not. He dies thinking that he has found a solution, but within the pages of The Mountain and the Valley, as in La Bagarre, the conflict between individual and communal self-expression finds no solution. Nor will it in Each Man's Son.

Hugh MacLennan portrays his protagonist, Daniel Ainslie, in the opening pages of Each Man's Son chiefly through the eyes of his wife Margaret. By establishing Margaret as a warm, sympathetic, and intelligent human being, MacLennan ensures the credibility of her assessment of Daniel. The picture that emerges is that of a "brilliant" doctor, carrying an almost superhuman work load of operations, house calls, and clinic treatments, yet, who in his spare time spends hours on end puzzling through the Odyssey in order to become a master of Greek; in short, a man who plunges himself in his work in order to escape something in his life. Daniel himself confirms the impression

given by Margaret that he is not working to live, but living to work, by dismissing her protests about his needlessly gruelling schedule with the comment: "'What is there to do but work?'" (38). The answer is, of course, to live. But in the following chapters it becomes increasingly clear that Daniel loses himself in work precisely in order to avoid living, to avoid participating in his own life.

In the author's Prologue, MacLennan explains how the curse of Calvinism functioned as an anti-life force among Daniel's people, the Cape Breton Highlanders. And within the novel, the wise old Dr. MacKenzie expounds more fully on the evils of the Highlanders' religious beliefs:

"I'm a Christian, Dan, but Calvin wasn't one and neither was your father. It may sound ridiculous to say, in cold words, that you feel guilty merely because you are alive, but that's what you were taught to believe until you grew up." (64)

The curse of Calvinism is somewhat of a hobby horse with MacLennan. Warren Tallman argues that it is only a superficial rendering of the novel's more fundamental social concerns, and that the real conflict in Each Man's Son is rooted in the dichotomy between "the civilized façade maintained by Ainslee [sic], and the naive violence of the place represented by Archie MacNeil."<sup>12</sup> While the social ramifications certainly merit consideration, it is worthwhile examining the possibilities of the theological framework as MacLennan presents it. In Chapter 10, at the end of the first major section of the novel, Daniel, in a moment of crisis, states his problematic position in the

following terms:

The face of his father flashed before his eyes. How could he ever hope to win the kind of struggle such a father had bred into his son? The old Calvinist had preached that life was a constant struggle against evil, and his son had believed him. At the same time he had preached that failure was a sin. Now the man who had been the boy must ask, how could a successful man be sinless, or a sinless man be successful. (85)

The phrasing is theological; the sense is the same as that which lies at the heart of Bessette's presentation of Jules "à cheval su' la clôture," and Buckler's image of David standing on the road to Halifax, his head buried in his arm, knowing he can "neither leave nor stay." MacLennan has formulated the insoluble problem which plagues all three protagonists of this chapter, in the specific terms of his fictional world peopled by Calvinist Highlanders. For Daniel, the constant struggle against evil forms itself around two conflicting demands--the need to fulfil his individual talent, and loyalty to the community. More than an identification with his people, Daniel's loyalty to the clan seems almost an obsession, the sole means of expressing his communal self. When he bitterly condemns his wife for what he considers a breach of loyalty in having consulted Dr. McDougall about her childless condition, the older man warns him: "'not everyone in the world is a Highland Scot. To most other people, life is more important than these niceties about loyalty'" (62). But obviously, for Daniel, disloyalty is the greatest evil, and the most flagrant expression of his own disloyalty would be to leave the Cape Breton community in pursuit of his own personal fulfilment.


On the other hand, however, the Calvinist doctrine preaches that failure is a sin. For Daniel this failure would be his refusal to exploit his great individual talent as a surgeon, his refusal to realize his own individual self by breaking out of the chains of loyalty which bind him to the backward Cape Breton mining community. Thus, while the central conflict is clearly phrased in terms of Calvinism, Daniel's final formulation of his problem, "how could a successful man be sinless, or a sinless man be successful?" is merely a restatement of the same dilemma which plagues Jules and David--how can a man be true to his own individual talents, yet at the same time retain his membership in a community where these talents cannot flourish?

Daniel finds himself in a position where either to go or to stay, to be one thing or another, involves either a betrayal of his people or a betrayal of his own inner talents. Like David and Jules, he remains; he stays bound to the routine of a colliery doctor, as incongruous patching up Saturday night brawlers with his brilliant hands, as David is breaking rocks on the family farm while mentally solving problems in binomials, or as Jules is scraping tar out of city streetcars while dreaming of creating a soul for Montreal. Daniel stays, and knows that by staying he has effectively put an end to all of his dreams of individual fulfilment. By the third chapter of the novel he had already given up all hope of finding any individual self-expression. Hope and promise belong to the past, a naïve

boyhood dream:

The whole world had seemed too small to hold his future.

Now that future was the present, and what had it brought? Only an end to seeing ahead. Not even posterity. Just the moment of hard work. The memory of work endlessly hard. The memory of striving, straining, heaving the huge rock up the hill with the feeling that if he relaxed for a moment it would become the rock of Sisyphus and roar down to the valley bottom again. Was defiance all that remained? (40)



For the first ten chapters of the novel in which MacLennan establishes the elements of his protagonist's conflict, Daniel's sense of individual liberty is reduced to a "defiance," which has little but scorn for his less brilliant colleagues, irritation with the childishness of the miners, and resentment against the easygoing optimism of his wife; a defiance which causes him to squander himself in unnecessary work as a kind of indictment of the community which will never appreciate him or the sacrifice he is making for them. He complains to Dr. MacKenzie:

"It's the unnecessary nonsense that I grow weary of," he heard himself saying. "About a third of the work I do is unnecessary. Last night it was a hysterical old woman with indigestion. The night before I was had out by a blackguard who'd gotten into a brawl and wanted me to patch his eye. Och, I could brain them!" (57)

But the older doctor disabuses Daniel of his illusion that the excessive work is forced upon him: "'You can put a stop to that sort of thing any time you want to, and when you stop feeling sorry for yourself, you'll do it!'" (57).

Daniel's problem is, of course, that he is not forced by any external agents to make the sacrifice of his individual talents. He himself sets the terms of his dilemma, by

defining the necessity of loyalty to his "lost people" as the essential expression of his communal identity. If he feels sorry for himself, it is because he believes that no option, no choice is open to him that would not involve a partial self-destruction.

As in La Bagarre and The Mountain and the Valley the most intimate personal relationship of the protagonist amplifies or illustrates the central dilemma. Daniel's feelings for his wife Margaret do not correspond exactly to the attitude of either of the other two protagonists towards the woman(girl) in his life. Yet, one trenchant aspect of this relationship places it in the same category with those of the other two protagonists. Daniel's love for Margaret has become static and sterile. MacLennan even includes the obvious objective correlative for the sterility. In order to save Margaret's life, Daniel performed an operation on her which prevents her from ever bearing any children. Thus he feels locked in a relationship with a woman whom he loves, but who can never give him a child, the one thing which he believes would make his meaningless life worthwhile. Daniel finally focuses all of his frustrations upon this specific lack of a child in his life. As the first section of the novel comes to an end, he turns from the insoluble conflict between individual and communal loyalties to seek an alternative goal for his life:

He wished he had a son. To work as he did now was senseless. To work for a son's future would give purpose to the universe. (85)

The first ten chapters, then, define the terms of Daniel's dilemma: the conflicting loyalties to a community which he feels he cannot leave without betraying their need, and to his individual talents which will never find expression within that community. Like Bessette in La Baqarre, MacLennan elaborates the novel's fundamental conflict between individual liberty and a restrictive communal identity by examining other individuals within the community. Archie MacNeil's career is in a sense the reverse side of the coin to Daniel's life. Daniel stays in Broughton and crushes his individual talents under a gruelling routine of uninspiring and often unnecessary work; Archie escapes the even more terrible fate of the mines that would have been his had he remained in Broughton, and leaves to pursue his individual talents in the wider world. And Archie in his world is, perhaps even more than Gisèle Lafrenière or Augustin Sillery, a representative, archetypal figure. He embodies the spirit of the Cape Breton Highlanders, and shows what that spirit is reduced to when it seeks expression outside of its community:

. . . to the men of Broughton, Archie was a hero. When he gave an exhibition before going away, six thousand Highlanders--men who had been driven from the outdoors into the pits where physical courage had become almost the only virtue they could see clearly and see all the time--paid to watch him fight. They loved him because he was giving significance, even a crude beauty, to the clumsy courage they all felt in themselves. (16)

MacLennan picks up Archie's story at the moment when Cape Breton's hero is facing his last chance to survive in the brutal, dehumanizing world of men exploited and controlled as if they were merely so many pounds of flesh. One of "a string of fighters" belonging to an entirely unscrupulous fight promoter, Archie has been overworked and badly cared for. He is now facing the fight which will most likely finish what is left of his career. Yet MacLennan emphasizes how much natural grace, power, and native talent Archie still possesses, and closes this first section with Archie believing that if he can only win this next fight, his problems will be over. From the vain hope of Archie, the novel returns to the equally vain hope of Daniel. In the three chapters (14-16) which intervene between Archie's dream of victory and the reality of defeat, MacLennan develops the implications of Daniel's dream of a son, even supplying the boy, whom Daniel fixes upon as a possible choice. Interestingly enough these same three chapters also provide the only episode in the whole novel where Daniel has an opportunity to momentarily live up to his full potential as a brilliant surgeon. The two events are not unrelated. On a crude kitchen table in a workingman's house in Louisbourg, Daniel performs brain surgery. MacLennan would have us believe that the operation is qualitatively on a par with work that is being done in the world's great medical centres. For a moment the conflict is solved: Daniel fulfils his potential and he helps one of his own people in doing it.

After the operation he is, for the first time in the novel, a man at peace with himself, because, for the first time in the novel, he has reconciled loyalty and success, reconciled his communal and his individual identities:

Ainslie sat with an impassive face, smoking his pipe and staring across the sloping land to the sea. He was filled with a sensation of peaceful excitement, for today he had fulfilled himself and justified himself, and he knew it. (128)

Yet in this moment when his individual aspirations find full expression within and for the community, Daniel acknowledges the unlikelihood of such an event ever occurring again. Such operations, while daily occurrences in London and Boston, come once in a lifetime in Cape Breton. Tomorrow Daniel will again be tied to the routine of the colliery doctor. Precisely at this moment when he is most aware of the insoluble problem of his own existence, when he is most in need of an alternate solution, he turns to Alan MacNeil, the son of the absent Archie. Although Daniel will eventually find innumerable unselfish reasons for his interest in the boy, his primary attraction to Alan and that which lies at the base of all his interests in him is entirely selfish. Alan can solve a problem in Daniel's life:

The realization began to grow within him that if he had a son like Alan MacNeil he would be content to live and work anywhere, even in Broughton. (135)

Daniel has no difficulty rationalizing his desire to take over Alan's life. The child is not robust, but finely-grained, sensitive and intelligent. A career in the mines would destroy him, and such a future seems to be in store

for him with only his mother Mollie to provide for him. Although Daniel knows that he is infringing upon his own ethical code as a doctor in attempting to influence Mollie about Alan's future, he soothes his guilty conscience with an easy excuse: "let the devil take the rules. The future of a first-class human being is worth more than all the rules in the world" (136). MacLennan ends this brief middle section on Daniel, as he had ended the preceding section on Archie. Each man is fully engrossed by a single goal which he believes, if gained, will resolve the problems of his life.

Despite his greater native talent, Archie loses his crucial fight to the brute force of a round house slugger. His last big chance was an illusion, as everyone knew but himself. In the following chapter, 18, MacLennan switches from the hot humid air of Trenton, New Jersey, to the cool breezes of Cape Breton, but details the same battle, the same defeat, as Daniel pursues his illusion in the form of Alan. The boy's acute appendicitis suddenly precipitates a crisis in Daniel's relationship with him. Operating on Alan and saving his life, Daniel is more determined than ever to claim it for his own. His motivations for tying himself to the young boy's destiny are precisely those of David Canaan in his bid to claim Toby's life for his own, and, to a lesser extent, those of Jules in his attempts to fulfil himself through Gisèle. Immediately preceding the operation on Alan, Daniel has reached a crisis point in his

withdrawal from his own life. A temporary lull in his work deprives him of his usual means of self-evasion and threatens his mental stability. The dramatic and emotionally charged contact that Daniel has with Alan as a result of the operation, precipitates his fixation upon the boy as the solution to his problem. After the operation Daniel admits to himself not only that he wants Alan as his son, but also why he wants him:

A man's son is the boy he himself might have been, the future he can no longer attain. For him, Alan was that boy. (187).

Daniel continues, even more explicitly, to define how, through Alan, he hopes to give expression to his own individual identity, now sacrificed to his communal loyalties:

He saw Alan growing up, year by year moving to manhood in dignity, himself being a companion to him, helping him, teaching him to be the kind of man he himself was not, thereby giving himself a continuance out of the ancient life of the Celts into the new world. (188)

Daniel, it seems, will not be allowed to realize this dream of claiming Alan's life for his own. The boy is too young to resist him, but the combined efforts of the two threatened women--Mollie who will lose her own son, and Margaret who will have another woman's son thrust upon her--effectively force Daniel to relinquish his plans for Alan. The moot point in this novel, however, is whether or not Daniel ever relinquishes the illusion that another can live his life for him. In The Mountain and the Valley David moves from his desperate dream of living his life through Toby to a devastating reality as Toby's train rushes on

into life leaving David to face the barrenness of his own existence. Daniel seems to arrive at a similar confrontation with reality when he faces the future without Alan and confronts once again the insoluble conflict between his individual aspirations and his loyalty to community. Because MacLennan throughout the novel couches this conflict in terms of the Calvinist "curse" which condemns men to feel guilty merely for being alive, Daniel hopes to find a way out of his dilemma in a denial of the Calvinist teaching. If he can overcome the curse and thus cease to associate success with sin, he will be able to pursue his talent, fulfil his great individual potential and not feel any guilt towards those whom he leaves behind. This is precisely the course which Daniel begins to follow. He denies the existence of God; goes on to curse Calvin, Knox, and all of their cohorts as "criminals"; and ends by stripping them of all their power. In other words, he explodes the "curse" which has "hobbled his spirit" (222) all of his life. With the curse, goes, of course, the concept of sinfulness, and the obsessive loyalty which makes leaving Broughton seem a betrayal. Daniel decides to leave Cape Breton and pursue his studies in London.

At the end of Chapter 26, then, MacLennan has apparently solved the problem which blocked both Bessette and Buckler. But Each Man's Son does not end with Chapter 26. It goes on to a bloody conclusion in which Mollie MacNeil and her lover Louis Camire die at the hands of

Archie MacNeil, who also most probably dies, leaving an orphaned Alan deposited conveniently in Daniel Ainslie's lap. Given that through a great part of the novel Daniel saw Alan as a kind of consolation, a substitute for his own frustrated individual ambitions, one must question MacLennan's motive in granting Daniel his "son" at last. If, as the preceding chapters seem to indicate, Daniel finally overcomes his problem by conquering the crippling dogma of Calvinism, and thus freeing his individual talents, then the arrival of Alan who has been presented as "the future" which Daniel "can no longer attain," seems redundant. But the fact that MacLennan in the end awards Daniel his son forces one to question whether, in fact, this final "solution" was not necessary precisely because there never had been any other solution. One can only conclude that Daniel still needs Alan at the end of the novel, because his rejection of Calvinism and his subsequent decision to fulfil his individual ambitions away from Broughton does not solve the central dilemma of his life. MacLennan, no more than Bessette nor Buckler, resolves the opposing demands of loyalty which his protagonist faces. Even when Daniel is supposedly freeing himself from the awful curse of Calvinism he realizes the hollowness of his victory:

He felt as though his spirit had hurled itself against the window of his life like a wounded bat and broken the glass. It had been caught in a prison and now it was free. But its freedom was the freedom of not caring. (223)

From the depths of this existential agony, however, Daniel emerges ready to continue with life. The jump from utter negativism to a positive goal must puzzle some readers who wish for a clear explanation of how the transition comes about. There are of course, philosophical precedents for such a seemingly contradictory position in face of one's destiny. Albert Camus, for example, presents Sisyphus, the archetypal absurd man triumphing over his condition by denying the gods, lifting his rock, and finding in his struggle a justification for existence. Camus can even insist: "Il faut imaginer Sisyphe Heureux."<sup>13</sup> But one cannot imagine Daniel Ainslie happy in his struggle. Because when he purchased his freedom by denying God and facing the emptiness of existence, what was "brimming in his blood" was not only his desire for freedom but a "longing for continuance" (22), that is, a continuance of his identity as a Cape Bretoner, as a Highlander, as a participant in that "ancient life of the Celts." Daniel denies not only God, he denies his people as well; he denies that part of himself which is his people: his communal identity. In the Prologue MacLennan states the conflict of Daniel's life in a metaphor which, like the success versus sin, also rings with religious overtones. Speaking of his protagonist's fate, he states that Daniel:

. . . was forced to discover, as most of us do, that a man can ignore almost anything in his life except the daemon which has made him what he is and the other daemon which gives him hope of becoming more than any man can ever be. (ix)

In denying God, breaking the curse, and thus liberating himself not only from Calvinism but from a small Cape Breton mining town where his talent is wasting away, Daniel attempts to deny the daemon which makes him what he is, the elements, that is, of his communal identity--being born in a certain time, at a certain place, into a certain group of people. On the other hand, by delivering Alan into Daniel's hands at the end of the novel, MacLennan allows his protagonist to ignore that second daemon. For surely, Alan represents for Daniel that "hope of becoming more than any man can ever be." Daniel will remain in Cape Breton, loyal to his heritage and his community; his "son" Alan will venture forth into the world for him, achieving all that he can never now accomplish, living his life for him. It is perhaps the fact that the conclusion to Each Man's Son is based upon this fundamental delusion--that another can have your life for you--which causes the critics' unease with the novel's ending.<sup>14</sup> Daniel's problem, as MacLennan has established it throughout the novel, is insoluble, even as that of David or Jules is insoluble. MacLennan, however, tries first one solution, is dissatisfied with it, and then switches to an alternate solution.

These contradictory and less than convincing attempts at a resolution prove more conclusively than either Bessette's or Buckler's admissions of defeat, that in none of the three novels does the central conflict between individual and communal self-expression find a solution. By remaining in

their communities but not of them, by seeing their roles there not as an expression of self but as a denial of self, Jules, David and Daniel, all arrive at a concept of human freedom which is profoundly negative, and ultimately destructive. Remaining loyal to a community in which they cannot express themselves as individuals, all three protagonists attempt to keep alive their sense of individual self by denying the actual events of their daily lives within the communities. The final enormity of their denial is not merely the sacrifice of individual self-expression, but of all self-expression, since finally the communal identity--simultaneously accepted and denied--is only a mask which covers a hollow man.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Hugh MacLennan, Each Man's Son (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1951), p. 40. All further citations from the novel refer to this edition and will be indicated by page numbers in the text.

<sup>2</sup>G rard Bessette, La Bagarre (Montr al: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1958), p. 189. All further citations from the novel refer to this edition and will be indicated by page numbers in the text.

<sup>3</sup>Ernest Buckler, The Mountain and the Valley (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1952), p. 243. All further citations from the novel refer to this edition and will be indicated by page numbers in the text.

In other sections of the novel, David demonstrates his awareness that there is a marked difference between the people of his world and the city dwellers. Encountering a couple from Halifax he immediately notices the difference between them and his own parents: "These were city people. They didn't seem to permeate each other all the time, like his mother and father did" (168).

<sup>4</sup>In both La Bagarre and Each Man's Son there is specific sociological comment on the exploitation of the people by outside interests. Dr. Dougall MacKenzie, the voice of sage authority in MacLennan's novel, speaks for all Nova Scotians and particularly the Cape Bretoners when he inveighs against Eastern Canada:

"It's smuggled brandy," MacKenzie remarked. "It goes against my principles to drink any other kind. The rule of the majority may be all right, but injustice from a majority is just as bad as injustice from anybody else. Since Confederation, the central provinces in this country have treated us very badly. So--speaking philosophically, mind you--it is no sin for Nova Scotians to drink smuggled liquor." (191)

Bessette allows his protagonist to explain the economic domination of the French Canadian life by the Anglo-Saxon business interests, and the cultural implications of such a domination:

--Avant la guerre, en '39, une action de la compagnie valait, mettons, cent piastres. Depuis elles ont monté dans les \$275. Ça, c'est pas taxable, remarque bien. Capital gain, qu'ils appellent ça. Aujourd'hui, ils se plaignent qu'ils font pas 6% de profit. Mais si tu calcules ce qu'ils ont réellement déboursé, ça fait du 13, du 14, du 15%.

... --Malgré les profits qu'ils entassent, continua Lebeuf, en as-tu jamais vu un, un seul, des gros actionnaires faire un don qui en vaut la peine à nos bibliothèques ou à nos universités? Les musées, j'en parle pas: c'est une honte. (86)

<sup>5</sup> Warren Tallman complains in "Wolf in the Snow: Part I, Four Windows on to Landscapes," Canadian Literature, no. 5 (Summer 1960), p. 18, that "MacLennan never wearies of extolling his [Daniel's] surgical prowess and yet his human savoir faire and yet his intellectual probity. He is the fastest man in North America with an appendectomy . . ."

<sup>6</sup> Lewis S. Feuer, Marx and the Intellectuals: A Set of Post-Ideological Essays (New York: Doubleday and Co., Anchor Books, 1969), pp. 95-96. Feuer obviously is defining alienation from a sociological point of view. There are other possible approaches to the problem of alienation. Israel Joachim in Alienation from Marx to Modern Sociology: a Macrosociological Analysis (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971), pp. 1-2, points out that "the problem of alienation can be analyzed from two points of departure, or on two different levels. It can be considered as a psychological problem and it can be analyzed as a sociological issue." Bernard Murchland in The Age of Alienation (New York: Random House, 1971), examines the problem of alienation as it has appeared throughout the history of Western Civilization. He considers the psychological, political, philosophical, and theological interpretations of the concept as well as the sociological one. His most general definition is that alienation is:

. . . a term used broadly to include such multiple disorders as loss of self, anxiety states, anomie, despair, depersonalization, rootlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, pessimism and lack of community.  
(4)

<sup>7</sup> Wyczynski in "Panorama du roman canadien-français," p. 23, finds that "Jules Lebeuf et Augustin Sillery sont, en réalité, deux idées de Bessette qui vont chercher corps dans la société. Leur devise commune c'est la libération."

<sup>8</sup>In Le Roman à l'imparfait: essais sur le roman québécois d'aujourd'hui, Collection Echanges (Montréal: Les Editions la Presse, 1976), p. 29, Gilles Marcotte interprets Jules's relationship with Gisèle as a refusal on his part to transform himself through her. Gisèle, Marcotte claims, both fascinates and threatens Jules, "comme une possibilité de changement, [dans] le monde immobile et ruminant de La Bagarre."

<sup>9</sup>Marcotte in Le Roman à l'imparfait, argues the impossibility of success, not only for Jules, but for all of the principle characters, in the fictional world created by Bessette:

Dans le monde figé de La Bagarre, une seule action reste possible, départ ou démission: le départ de Ken Weston pour les Etats-Unis, à la fin du roman; l'abandon, par Lebeuf, de ses études et de son projet d'écriture.

Ronald Sutherland in "The French Voice: the Literature of Quebec," Modern Fiction Studies 22 (Autumn 1976): 434, sees more in the novel's very statement of the society's problems, a sign of hope:

La Bagarre has turned out to be remarkably prophetic. Concerning the period of the 1950's just before Quebec is transformed from a static to a dynamic society, it describes labor unrest coupled with indirection and the incapacity to act positively, the lingering hang-over of centuries of ingrained resignation. The reader, however, is left with no doubt that sooner or later the dam will burst.

<sup>10</sup>Another motivation for David's identification with Toby, might be what Warren Tallman in "Wolf in the Snow: Part I, Four Windows on to Landscape," p. 13, describes as the "almost overtly incestuous basis" of David and his sister, Anna's relationship. Toby and Anna will soon be married and David, Tallman believes, by identifying himself with Toby, also casts himself in the role of Anna's lover.

<sup>11</sup>Some critics have chosen to interpret David's accident as a breakthrough in his pursuit of artistic achievement. Claude Bissell in "A Study of Human Relations," Ernest Buckler, ed. Gregory Cook, Critical Views on Canadian Writers, no. 7. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 36, believes that after his accident David "triumphantly casts off" the human bondage of his "primitive and unprogressive" community.

R. E. Watters in "The Mountain and the Valley," collected in the same volume, p. 45, feels that David "begins to discover what he is, about the time he is recovering from

a bad fall . . ." For a discussion of this point see the author's "Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley: 'the infinite language of human relations'," Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa 44 (juillet-septembre 1974): 359-61.

<sup>12</sup>Tallman, "Wolf in the Snow: Part I, Four Windows on to Landscape," p. 20.

<sup>13</sup>Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe: essai sur l'absurde, p. 166.

<sup>14</sup>Even George Woodcock, in "A Nation's Odyssey: the Novels of Hugh MacLennan," in Odysseus Ever Returning: Essays on Canadian Writers and Writing, p. 20, who feels that the bloody ending:

. . . is not entirely inappropriate in a novel so permeated with the ambient darkness of Calvinist guilt, . . .

seems somewhat embarrassed at the convenience of the final solution:

The tragedy is almost grotesquely inevitable. As in his earlier works, MacLennan cannot avoid seeing life running in the lines of Greek tragedy, and the mechanics of a classical destiny grind their pattern all too heavily and harshly on the human weakness of his characters.

Margaret Atwood in Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1972), pp 137-38, is frankly sceptical about the amount of good which can come out of such an ending: "Ainslie gets his 'son,' but it's a dubious victory, bought at the price of blood, and it's clear the child, having been witness to the double murder, will be warped in some essential way."

Moss in Patterns of Isolation, p. 59, is the most emphatic of all the critics in refusing to allow the outcome of the novel to function as a solution to the real problems raised by the story. Speaking from Alan's point of view, Moss comments:

There is no alternative for Alan, in the catastrophic resolution imposed by MacLennan upon his story, but to live with Ainslie . . . Alan has no option left to him but what Ainslie provides. Thus MacLennan resolves the conundrum as if it were the Gordian knot, by destructive might . . . The deaths are not inevitable--dramatically, morally, or thematically. Only superficially do they arise out of the preceding action; but they are consistent with it. And they do not remedy the problems raised, but merely remove their sources.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INDIVIDUAL VERSUS THE COMMUNITY:

#### REBELLION AND STALEMATE

The protagonists of the three books examined in the previous chapter are all unable to break from communities which they feel are oppressing them and preventing their fulfilment as individuals. For a complex of reasons, including loyalty, and perhaps an intuition that their individual identity would not survive an uprooting, they remain within the communities, accepting for better or for worse the limitations that they find there. In the four novels examined in the present chapter: Yves Thériault's Aaron, Mordecai Richler's Son of a Smaller Hero, Jean Simard's Mon Fils pourtant heureux, and John Marlyn's Under the Ribs of Death, the protagonists make the break, rebelling against the traditional communities into which they are born. The chapter considers in turn: the nature of the established order which in each of the four novels supplies the elements of the protagonist's communal identity, the features of the opposing value system which the protagonist affirms in an assertion of his individual identity, and finally the success or failure of the rebellion.

Aaron provides the most satisfactory starting place for this study since, in it, Thériault presents the

protagonist's rebellion against a traditional community in simple and stark terms that endow the work with classic contours. The central conflict of the novel is embodied in the relationships of three characters: Moishe, the grandfather, who represents the traditional community's values of Orthodox Judaism; Viedna, a young Jewish girl who represents the pursuit of individual goals and a total rejection of the communal identity--in this case the Jewish heritage; and Aaron, Moishe's young grandson who is torn between these two individuals and the two conflicting aspects of himself. Moishe and the extreme communal values he embodies dominate the first section of the novel, Viedna and the fulfilment of individual ambition crystallize the conflict in the middle chapters of the novel, and Aaron's choice and its consequences round out the final chapters.

Moishe has only one characteristic--his utter devotion to Orthodox Judaism--yet Thériault succeeds in reducing his personality to a single element without rendering him a caricature. Moishe emerges, rather, as an awe-inspiring figure of a man caught in the passion of a single great truth. In the opening scenes of the novel, however, Thériault emphasizes the extent to which the positive beliefs of the old man function to negate all other possible experiences of life. Thus Moishe can look at the teeming activity of a large city as it passes his window, and neither see nor hear these signs of an external life: "Impassible à la fenêtre, Moishe regardait sans voir,

écoutait sans entendre."<sup>1</sup> This line establishes the basis of Moishe's character. Throughout the novel the old man displays an amazing capacity to ignore all aspects of life which he does not wish to acknowledge. But if Thériault begins with a negative image of Moishe, he quickly lays the basis for the positive values which absorb the old man and cut him off from the world around him. As Moishe reads passages from the Torah to the young Aaron, he reveals "les grandes vérités" of his belief: God's creation of the world, his promise that man should have dominion over all things, and his establishment of an eternal covenant with man in recognition of this promise. Balancing "les grandes vérités" are "les lois premières": the ten commandments. Familiar, even clichéd to many, they are to Moishe the infallible and the only guide for all man's activities. Moishe tailors all of his life on the lines of these grand truths and first laws. Few other members of his world can do the same.

The old man, however, has already retreated from the complexity of needs which plague others. The communal identity which he embodies, and attempts to impose upon Aaron, is a tragically partial one which recognizes no individual needs that cannot be fulfilled within its very narrow limits. A brief flashback to Moishe's younger days in California, where he and his family fled from the ghettos of Europe, shows how incapable he is of appreciating any individual wants not satisfied by the religious freedom his

family now enjoys. When his wife Sarah revolts against their miserable poverty, Moishe replies: "--Pauvre ici, mais libre." For Sarah, however, liberty goes beyond religion: "--Plus pauvres que jamais et moins libres que jamais, dit Sarah. Est-ce que tu ne te sens pas enchaîné? Il y a toutes sortes de chaînes . . ." (28). Sarah's revolt could have opened Moishe's eyes to the breadth of an individual's needs. It did not. Now, many years later, alone in Montreal with his grandson Aaron, the only member of his family who remains to Moishe, the old man is more intransigent than ever in his total devotion to the life of the spirit, in his total denial of the needs of the flesh.

The irony of Moishe's position is that his complete involvement with "les grandes vérités" leads ultimately to a lie; it allows him to deny the reality of the world around him. In one remarkable scene Thériault dramatically juxtaposes the illusory glory of Moishe's world of the spirit with the brutal reality of his and Aaron's physical life. Friday evening after sundown, with the young Aaron by his side in the candlelit kitchen, Moishe says kaddish for the dead Sarah. For the duration of the prayer, reality is transformed:

Dans la cuisine étroite, aux murs tachés, au parquet bosselé et crasseux, la Présence planait au-dessus d'eux et la pièce d'aspect repoussant devenait pour un instant un temple magnifique où la voix grave et chantante de Moishe s'enflait en répétant les paroles:  
Que soit grandi et sanctifié le nom du Maître . . .  
 (47-48)

But when the prayer ends, physical reality reasserts itself with a vengeance:

Puis Moïse soufflait les bougies et la grisaille du crépuscule reprenait possession de la cuisine; une grisaille où se mêlaient les rouges imprécis des lointains néons. Quand le vieux faisait jaillir l'électricité, le flot de lumière crue qui découpait les meubles branlants et sales les repongeait tous deux dans l'absolu de la vie besogneuse, haletante; cette vie misérable dans le logis exigu et jamais nettoyé, et où les cancrelats couvraient les murs jusqu'à ce qu'on leur fît la chasse et qu'ils retrassent dans les interstices des boiseries. (48-49)

The effect that Moïse's "lie," his denial of physical reality, will have upon his relationship with Aaron forms the basis of the first section of the novel (chapters I-VIII), and sets the stage for the boy's revolt. Moïse does not see Aaron as an individual, but as "un fils de la Race," an embodiment of the communal identity who will carry on the tradition of his forefathers. But the old man's attempts to mould his grandson in his own image involve increasingly, not what he can pass on to the boy, but what he must take from him. Still frightened by the memory of his wife's revolt and by the possibility that the seeds of such a revolt might rest in Aaron, the last hope of his life, Moïse tries to insure Aaron's absolute allegiance to the communal tradition by teaching him to consider his day to day life in the physical world as a necessary evil:

--Tu liras le Talmud et la Torah . . . Mais tu continueras à porter le fardeau de ta vie. Toute la science est douce et la sagesse un bienfait. Dehors, la science a péri et la sagesse se voile la face. Ne confonds pas la vie que tu mèneras avec la vie de ton âme et cloisonne l'une contre l'autre. (59)

His grandfather's demands would deny Aaron his own life, would render him a monument to the past rather than a man living in the present. The tradition which Moishe embodies attempts not only the substitution of a partial truth for the whole truth, not only the escape from reality into illusion, but the substitution of ritual for life, the escape from life into art or myth. Aaron's claim, not only to a life of his own, but to life itself, necessitates a rebellion against Moishe. The form and direction that his rebellion takes is provided by Viedna, the third major character in the novel, and the antagonist of Moishe.

In chapters VII and VIII immediately preceding the introduction of Viedna into Aaron's life, Thériault begins to draw a more detailed picture of his young protagonist. At this point in his sheltered life, Aaron hardly has any idea of his individual identity, only the aspiration to achieve a destiny of his own. His dreams for the future are perhaps similar to those of many fifteen-year-olds. He wants to succeed in his life, to make something of himself, in short, to be great. When more worldly wise members of his faith reveal to Aaron the difficulties of reconciling a successful career with an orthodox tradition, he confronts Moishe with the question of his future life, only to find that his grandfather refuses to face the problem:

L'aïeul n'avait suggéré aucune solution réelle à cette orthodoxie dont il admettait par ailleurs--ou feignait d'admettre--qu'elle manquait de souplesse. Il n'avait parlé que de maintenir les coutumes des anciens ghettos . . . (83)

Viedna, the young Jewish girl whom Aaron meets on Mount Royal during one of his daily walks, does not have the answer to Aaron's questions of how to succeed in this world, and at the same time remain an Orthodox Jew, but she does have her own formula for, and definition of, success. Viedna remoulds Aaron's vague adolescent desires for individual achievement into a precise and concrete ambition for riches, luxury, and the physical pleasures of life, an ambition which stands in direct opposition to Moishe's goals of spiritual greatness, fidelity to tradition, and a rigid orthodoxy. She wins Aaron away from Moishe's teaching by offering him an alternate value system with its own "grandes verités" and "lois premières" through which Aaron can satisfy his individual ambitions. Yet Viedna's vision of life is basically as narrow, as rigid, and as exclusive as that of Moishe, because it is formulated like Moishe's out of the suffering of her family and her people; like Moishe's, it is perverted by that suffering. As Viedna explains to Aaron, her precocious outlook on life was gained at enormous cost:

-- . . . moi, j'ai vieilli trop vite. A cinq ans j'étais dans un camp de concentration en Allemagne. On y a brûlé ma mère. Il me reste mon père. Il a cessé de rire depuis bien longtemps . . . A ses côtés, j'ai voyagé . . . Voici ma vie . . . Pourquoi serais-je comme les autres? (125)

Viedna then, like Moishe, and this is crucial to an understanding of the central conflict in the novel, formulates a vision of the world born out of suffering, fear, and the consciousness of an ever present threat.

Aaron's own vague ideas about the route to success are based upon a concept of merit finding its own reward. Viedna quickly disabuses him of what she considers to be his vain illusions on this point:

--Nous vivons dans un pays où tout est possible. Le professeur l'a dit à l'école. Le premier ministre est fils de cultivateur. Plusieurs de nos grands hommes sont partis de rien . . . ,

--De leurs grands hommes, corrigea Viedna. Eux pouvaient monter sans obstacles. Toi, tu restes juif. Si, en plus, tu te heurtes aux traditions, à tes pratiques religieuses . . . (112)

What Viedna, then, offers to Aaron is not a means of achieving individual self-expression but another kind of refuge from life, very different from the refuge of Moishe's religion, tradition, and spiritual retreat, but a refuge all the same. Her advice to Aaron--" . . . souviens-toi. Si tu es pauvre et opprimé, c'est une dure vie. Mais si tu es riche et opprimé? (126)--is based upon a profound deception with life:

--J'ai vu les autres pays. Et j'ai entendu des persécutés, mais des vrais . . . Ils sortaient d'Allemagne, et encore le mois dernier, de Russie. Ils sortaient des camps. Ils y avaient été torturés, ils avaient souffert. Riches, ils auraient peut-être pu fuir, acheter leur liberté. Dans un autre pays il auraient trouvé de nouvelles barrières, mais avec la fortune qu'importe si des gens nous interdisent leur maison, ou leurs amusements? (127)

During the first few weeks of their acquaintance Aaron does not openly agree with Viedna, but slowly he drops his defences against her. "Chaque jour Aaron cédait un peu plus, . . . l'image de sa puissance possible, de sa richesse puissante, comme le disait Viedna, grandissait en lui" (114).

Viedna finally resorts to her strongest argument. Having seduced the boy with her words, she seduces him with her body. And Aaron, who has been brought up to ignore, even to despise things of the body, has his first taste of physical pleasure. More importantly he associates it with the person who has developed a consistent, if simplistic, philosophy for satisfying man's physical needs.

Viedna does not gain an immediate, definitive victory, however. Aaron perhaps has already unconsciously accepted her value systems, but he is not yet prepared to revolt against Moishe. And Thériault once again presents Moishe's case, giving the old man his chance to win Aaron back to his side. But even as one of Viedna's strongest points in Aaron's eyes must be her youthful freshness, so one of Moishe's greatest handicaps in his bid for Aaron's allegiance must be his decrepit appearance:

Moishe; si maigre, long dans sa redingote d'alpaga noir, les cheveux d'un gris sale bouclés devant les oreilles, le chapeau droit sur la tête, la barbe lui descendant sur la poitrine . . . Image des autres âges, détonnant sur le monde moderne. (117)

This image even becomes repulsive when the old man reacts with stupefaction, "bouche ouverte, la commissure des lèvres laissant traîner une sorte de bave blanchâtre" (119), to Aaron's announcement that he intends to begin working. When Moishe does finally speak, it is only to prove his total disregard for the needs of the physical man. As he outlines precisely, for the first time, the future he has planned for Aaron, the vision that emerges is not one of

flesh and blood but of shadows. His grandson will practice the traditional craft of tailoring, following the ancient calling of his line:

--Voilà ton sort. Je vais t'enseigner les secrets. Ensuite tu m'aideras. Il y aura du travail pour deux. Ici, sur la table . . .

--Sur la table, dans la chambre! Toi et moi et l'ombre de tous les autres. (120)

For the moment, Aaron remains silent, suspending his final decision, listening to Moishe's proposals as he listened to those of Viedna.

When, in his next meeting with Viedna, Aaron describes Moishe's plans for his future, she dismisses tailoring as a "métier de pauvre," and rests her final argument on the double foundation of her value system--wealth and physical love:

--L'argent, insista Viedna. Les richesses de la terre. Ce sont les seules qui nous soient destinées. Les richesses de la terre, et l'amour des humains . . . Ton amour, mon amour . . .

--Dis moi que je ne suis pas folle, Aaron! (127)

Aaron does not reply to Viedna, but she has won and his rebellion has begun. The first thing he rejects is the "métier de pauvre." Yet even when he takes a job with a stockbroker, even when he answers Moishe's accusations of deserting his faith by repeating Viedna's formula about the omnipotence of wealth, Aaron refuses to recognize the reality of his own revolt: "--Je renierai rien, mais puisqu'il ne faut pas croire à l'argent et que la Maison d'Aaron n'a ni toit, ni feu . . ." (133). The single most significant aspect of Aaron's revolt is his failure to

recognize it as a revolt. Faced with two extreme positions, each presented unequivocally by its adherent--Moishe on one hand and Viedna on the other--Aaron refuses to recognize their irreconcilable nature. He attempts a compromise between his communal identity and his longing for individual self-fulfilment:

Aaron pouvait répartir les hommages en n'ôtant rien aux deux puissances.

L'une, éternelle, avait été gravée en lui par Moishe, incrustée dans son âme et dans sa chair . . .

L'autre puissance: la richesse. Celle-là sans âme sans exigences de respect, un moyen seulement . . .  
Un outil avec lequel façonner une vie. (137)

Working on this principle of compromise Aaron announces to Moishe that he will not be a tailor; he will not follow the traditional family line; he will not be poor. Aaron believes that he has found in Viedna's value system the crucial element which was missing from Moishe's: freedom to live. For Aaron is convinced that as surely as Moishe's "métier de pauvre" is a prison which will shut him off from life, so Viedna's doctrine of riches is a direct path to life. He confronts Moishe with this reasoning:

--Partout où nous allons, nous les Juifs, fit le garçon, nous sommes punis. Toi qui es pauvre, encore plus que les autres qui sont riches. Manger des mets fins, se vêtir luxueusement, voyager, vivre?

Il repeta en le criant presque le mot-clé de toutes ses ambitions:

--Vivre? Peux-tu vivre? (152)

The rest of the novel is an answer to the question, for Aaron as well as for Moishe. The young man believes that in quitting school and taking a job with a stockbroker, he has taken the first step into a world where he can achieve

his individual ambitions, and fashion a life of his own; yet, he also wants to believe that he has abandoned nothing of his communal identity, his allegiance to the God of his forefathers. Moishe, on the other hand, has given up on Aaron. As the keeper of the communal tradition, the old man is unable to conceive of any compromise. His grandson's refusal to follow the ancestral trade is for Moishe an act of total renunciation--Aaron has gone over to the enemy camp. This whole middle section of the novel (chapters IX-XIV), ends with Moishe's abandonment of all hope for Aaron: "Peut-être pour la première fois depuis qu'il avait été seul avec son petit-fils, Moishe sentit que la partie était irrémédiablement perdue" (153).

The final section of the novel belongs primarily to Aaron and his struggle to maintain a divided allegiance between his individual and communal selves. Viedna, who is travelling with her father, disappears from his life, while Moishe retreats further and further from him each day. But since it is Moishe's intransigence which lies at the heart of Aaron's revolt, Thériault continues his exposition of the grave flaw in the old man's vision of life: "Moishe avait oublié qu'un homme dépasse sa tradition" (155). Aaron's attempts to find an individual life beyond the narrow limits of Moishe's traditional Orthodox Judaism only harden the old man's doctrinairism. More importantly, Aaron himself gains little satisfaction from the new life he begins to pursue according to the principles that Viedna has taught

him. With the money he earns in his new job, Aaron buys a television. While he remains fascinated in front of it each night, Moishe turns his back on what he considers to be images of false gods. Aaron next tries to buy some new clothes for himself and especially for Moishe. The old man, almost hysterically, rejects Aaron's offer, seeing in it a ploy to rob him of his Jewish identity and dress him as a Gentile. But the most profound failure that Aaron experiences in his attempts to follow Viedna's values of "les richesses de la terre et l'amour des humains," is with the latter half of the formula. If the television and the new clothes prove hollow joys, then Aaron's encounter with a prostitute symbolizes to what extent the fruit has turned to ashes in the tasting.

Viedna's materialistic philosophy that Aaron adopts as a means of asserting his individual identity, and the other-worldly communal self which Moishe would impose upon his grandson can never be reconciled. Aaron will eventually have to choose between them. When he meets Viedna after her return to Montreal, he makes that choice, whether he admits it or not. The luxurious apartment which the newly sophisticated Viedna and her father now occupy, confirms Aaron in his belief that his pursuit of a good life is entirely justified. He easily rationalizes away any lingering remnant of Moishe's teaching which might prevent him from enjoying it:

. . . Aaron se souvint que Solomon le juste n'habitait pas une tente de peau de chèvre et que sa Loi avait été sanctionné par Adonai. L'or de Saül? Et de David aux autres, en passant par tous les sangs des rois de Judée? Alors pourquoi aujourd'hui Moïshe nommait-il ignoble la richesse, indignes le désir et l'ambition de la bonne vie? (182)

But even as Thériault from the opening pages shows the grave lack in Moïshe's value system which deliberately ignores the physical aspects of life as it is lived in this world, so he now fully exposes the grave deficiencies in Viedna's value system, which completely disavows the spiritual, and moral realities of life as it is lived, and must be lived, at some non-physical level of man's existence. Aaron begins to learn some of the price which must be paid for the luxury which surrounds him as Viedna rejects his attempts to reestablish their former intimacy, explaining that she now has a lover: "C'est un ami de mon père. Un monsieur très bien, très riche, qui peut nous rendre de grands services" (186). Aaron is disgusted by Viedna--or, as she now calls herself, Céline--but he still fails to make the association between her value system and this act of, more or less, refined prostitution. He does not see one as the inevitable byproduct of the other. Thériault, however, underlines the connection: "D'un certain cynisme de Viedna dans la montagne à cet aveu de saloperie, il n'y avait pas tellement loin. Mais Aaron ne le savait pas" (186).

The story of Aaron's revolt ends, not with Aaron but with Moïshe, because, although Thériault has discredited the deficiencies of the old man's value system as much

as those of Viedna, it is ultimately the rigidity and exclusiveness of the communal identity imposed by Moishe which set the conditions of Aaron's revolt and determined the nature of the values which he adopted in opposition to Moishe's way. Aaron himself is inevitably absent at the end because Thériault has nothing more to say about him. In the penultimate chapter of the novel Moishe ejects his traitor grandson from his home, declaring: "--Il n'y a plus de place pour nous deux dans la maison. Il n'y a qu'une religion, la religion du judaïsme orthodoxe. Les autres . . ." (197). To the last Aaron clings to the possibility of finding a compromise solution which will allow him to pursue his individual self-expression without completely abandoning his communal identity. He plans on changing his name as Viedna did, having been told that such a step is necessary for advancement in the business world. But a change of name does not constitute heresy to the young man. "Aaron avait passé la soirée à se persuader qu'un nom, ça se change, et que sans cesser de croire au Père et sans transgresser toutes les Lois, le mode de vie juif pouvait se modifier" (199). Is Aaron deceiving himself, is a compromise possible, or will he, in changing his name, abandon himself totally to a value system which prostitutes the spirit while satisfying the body? Aaron's fate is left as a question, a question which he poses himself in a moment of full consciousness:

Un rêve, un instant d'irréel, l'examen de conscience.

Me voici qui suis les traces de Viedna. Deviendrais-je comme elle? (199)

Thériault does not attempt to answer the question.

Instead he ends on the one certainty in the story--not Aaron's victory, but Moishe's defeat. And the old man's defeat is both total and devastating in its implications. Having lived with one certitude all his life, having allowed this one certitude to fill his life, obliterating all other possible modes of thought, belief, and action, Moishe in the end is robbed of his one truth. When he ejected Aaron from his house, he rejected the raison d'être of his life. Too late, he wishes to reclaim his grandson, but Aaron, having changed his name is now untraceable. Only a miracle could bring him back, only Adonai. But, as Moishe explains to his friend Malak, even he no longer believes in the possibility of God's intervention:

--Tu comprends, Malak? Voilà le drame. Adonai ne nous entend plus.

Et il répéta en pleurant, déjà le râle de la mort au fond de la gorge:

--Adonai ne nous entend plus . . . (206)

These final words of the novel leave the fate of the rebel ambiguous, but that of Moishe and of the traditional communal values against which Aaron rebelled, definitively sealed.

John Marlyn's Under the Ribs of Death, despite a more fully elaborated fictional world, is basically, like Aaron, an exploration of two conflicting value systems.

Both novels center upon a young man who rebels against the traditional values of his community, substituting alternate ones which he believes will enable him to realize himself as an individual. Like Thériault, Marlyn employs an essentially simple method of exposition. The story of Sandor Hunyadi's rebellion has two distinct phases. Part I of the novel establishes the elements of the traditional community's world view and describes how living within it affects the life of the young Sandor. It also introduces the alternate value system which Sandor will assert in rebellion against his traditional community. Part II details Sandor's life after he has broken with his community to pursue his individual ambitions.

Of all the protagonist rebels dealt with in this chapter, Sandor Hunyadi, son of Hungarian immigrants, is the most aggressive, the most sure of what he is rejecting in his community and what he wants for himself instead. On the opening pages of the novel Sandor surveys the miserable immigrant neighborhood of North Winnipeg which he inhabits with his family, and already envisages a future in which he has escaped from it and all that it represents:

Some day he would grow up and leave all this, he thought, leave it behind him forever and never look back, never remember again this dirty, foreign neighborhood and the English gang who chased him home from school every day. He would forget how it felt to wear rummage-sale clothes and be hungry all the time, and nobody would laugh at him again, not even the English, because by then he would have changed his name and would be working in an office the way the English did, and nobody would be able to tell that he had ever been a foreigner.<sup>2</sup>

Poverty, miserable surroundings, hunger, persecution from the "English," all the circumstances of Sandor's daily life make his ambition to escape his milieu and his foreignness seem eminently reasonable. What frustrates and bewilders Sandor is that his father recognizes nothing distressing in these circumstances and even adopts a line of conduct which perpetuates them. The values by which Joseph Hunyadi steers his life are as unworldly, as ignorant, or contemptuous of man's physical needs as those of Moishe. Thus, when Sandor pleads with his father to change their name so that he will no longer be taunted by the English boys and forced into fights, Joseph calmly counsels his son to reason with his tormentors instead of fighting with them. Sandor tries to impress upon him the ineffectualness of reason on a bunch of boys who are chasing him down the street: "'When they catch me they make me fight. How can I talk to them while they're punching me?'" (19). Joseph does not attempt to answer this trenchant question, instead he goes on to sublimely dismiss the whole theory of national differences: "'In the things of the spirit there is no such barrier!'" (19).

Joseph Hunyadi's vision of the world is situated firmly in the realm of the spirit. The values which dictate his ambitions for his son are highly idealistic. Like Moishe, Joseph does not see the young man in his charge as an individual. Sandor, for Joseph, is a means of perpetuating his ideals and furthering the upward evolution of

the family name. Joseph's father was a peasant, his grandfather a serf, he is a working man, but his son will make a great leap forward: "'You will go to University Sandor, and do great things. You will teach, as Kropotkin has said, that the war of each against all is not a law of nature. You will serve mankind . . .'" (20). Sandor, however, is equally determined that he will not serve mankind, since he sees in his father's own example the results of such a service. Joseph Hunyadi with benevolent magnanimity has collected an assortment of freeloaders in the upper storey of his house. Former countrymen, Hungarians, and Germans fallen on hard times turn to Hunyadi and exploit his humanistic ideals, growing fat on the meat and noodles that Joseph provides for them while his own family eats bologna and potato salad. Sandor never doubts that he is the one who pays the price for his father's admirable works of charity, because he is the one who lives in a physical world, of hard reality, not the elevated realm of ideals inhabited by Joseph. One specific example demonstrates how wide the gap can be between the father's ideals and the son's reality. Joseph, for the second month in a row, allows himself to be talked out of his rent money by inquiring solicitously into the financial affairs of one of his boarders. And yet it is the very lack of this much needed rent money which makes life so miserable for Sandor and arouses the boy's incredulity and disgust:

That Sandor on the following evening had had to stand and humiliate himself in front of Mr. Letzman, the grocer, for a few cents worth of ground meat--that, evidently, meant nothing to his father.

How could he be like that, Sandor wondered. (15)

Sandor very soon develops an alternative to his father's unworldly outlook on life. This alternate or opposing world outlook is embodied by many people in Sandor's eyes: the English (Canadians), the impressive looking men whom he sees dining in the hotel every day, and more immediately and within his reach, Mr. Nagy. As decisive as Sandor is in his rejection of his father, he is equally so in his determination to emulate Mr. Nagy, the Hungarian immigrant notary who looks after the community's business: "When he grew up he was going to be like Mr. Nagy. . . . In this little office were power and prestige and wealth" (22). The first dozen pages of the novel, then, present the fundamentals of two opposing value systems and the two men who embody them. That of Joseph Hunyadi is based exclusively upon an altruistic humanism which sees the good of the community as a whole, while ignoring the individual needs of his son. The value system embodied by Mr. Nagy, on the contrary, concerns itself with satisfying the individual's desire for "power and prestige and wealth." To what extent Mr. Nagy's values might starve man's spirit, Sandor does not yet know, nor does such a question interest him. The final episode in this opening chapter proves once again to Sandor how useless such non-material concerns are in the brutal realities of life. He hears his father "who was wise

and knew four languages and read deep books, who loved all men and whose only thought was to help others, yelled at and ordered around like a dog!" (29) in the steam baths where he earns his living shovelling coal. Sandor has seen only misery and humiliation come from his father's devotion to the spirit and the greater common good; he is determined not to make the same mistake.

The rest of Part I essentially functions to reinforce Sandor's rejection of his father's values, and his choice of the material success he sees in Mr. Nagy. Two episodes embody the basic contrast between the community to which Sandor belongs by birth, and the new world which he hopes to enter by his industry. When Mr. Crawford, the superintendent of the local Sunday School, procures Sandor a job cutting grass in a wealthy section of town, he enters for the first time the world about which he has always dreamed; it surpasses all of his expectations:

It was as though he had walked into a picture in one of his childhood books, past the painted margin to a land that lay smiling under a friendly spell, where the sun always shone, and the clean-washed tint of sky and child and garden would never fade. (75)

Sandor immediately tries to make himself a part of this world so different from his own by telling his new employers that his name is Alex Humphrey. By the end of his first day there, he has acquired not only an English name, but a new English friend in the son of his employer. Ever the realist, however, Sandor does not fantasize about his place in this world. He knows that if he is ever to belong to it

he "would have to fight and push and work all his life--the way Mr. Nagy was doing" (78).

In the next chapter Marlyn presents a very different vision. Contrasting sharply with the cool-eyed and distant English, the Hungarians of Henry Street turn out to participate in a warm, music and laughter filled feast which the Hunyadi family gives to welcome Sandor's magnificent Uncle Janos on his arrival in Canada. In the figure of Janos, Marlyn provides a variation on the traditional value system which was missing from Thériault's simpler presentation in Aaron. Uncle Janos represents all that is unfettered, generous, and spontaneously life-giving, and he enormously charms his young nephew. But the fate of the fabulous Uncle Janos provides a rather mixed lesson for Sandor. On the one hand Janos's inability to find work and his increasing economic dependency on his sister reinforce all of Sandor's associations between poverty and misery. On the other hand, when Uncle Janos sacrifices his ideals and his sense of honour by courting a rich widow exclusively for her money, Sandor sees the terrible price which can be levied upon those who choose material gains over moral or spiritual values. Fraulein Kleinholtz, who eventually becomes Janos's bride, comes closest to caricature of any of the figures in this novel. She appears almost as a power of darkness, the embodiment of an anti-life force which will suck all of the vitality from Janos. Marlyn first presents her through Sandor's eyes:

When she opened her mouth, he had half expected a moth to fly out. Her face was long and angular with sunken cheeks. From the corners of her mouth two deep furrows ran vertically down her chin. And this part of her face, between the furrows, always reminded him of a trap door, hinged at the bottom and likely to spring open at any moment to expose a gullet that would swallow him wholly. (116-17)

Yet horrible as the Fraulein appears to Sandor, his strongest sentiment upon hearing that his uncle will marry her, is joyful anticipation at the advantages of having a rich aunt.

Janos pursues his material interests and abandons the warmth and simple joys of the family only with bitter regrets; Sandor eagerly rejects family and community, convinced that only in pursuing the business ethic embodied by Mr. Nagy and ultimately by the "English," can he achieve individual self-fulfilment. Part II of Under the Ribs of Death follows Sandor's fate after he has left the community, changed his name to Alex Hunter, and begun his relentless pursuit of wealth, prestige, and power. The portrait which emerges of him is decidedly unattractive, as indeed he must be if Marlyn wants to show in him the limitations of a value system which ignores all but the material side of human existence. Alex's career as a young man on the make is a long series of disappointments, deceptions, febrile hopes, moral compromises, and degradations. Yet, in the beginning, his plight elicits some sympathy from the reader. After slaving nine years as Mr. Nagy's apprentice, the twenty-three year old Alex sees the cunning old man put his agency up for sale, completely disregarding the hopes of

successorship he had fostered in Alex. Yet, Nagy's conduct is perfectly consistent with the value system that Alex had always recognized and admired in the businessman, and which he himself has now wholly adopted. By nurturing Alex's hopes to succeed him, Nagy obtained nine years of devoted hard work from the ambitious young man. He only scoffs at Alex's attempts to introduce any feelings of sentiment in what was for him exclusively a business arrangement.

Alex, however, is not at all disillusioned by this first check in his ambitions. Instead of realizing that it was a lack of any spiritual ties or moral concerns in his hero Nagy which caused the man to act so unfeelingly, Alex only sees that he himself must be more aggressive in pursuing every opportunity which will gain him his place in the world. He even provides a formula which justifies his complete pragmatism and opportunism in face of life. When one of his father's friends breaks off a philosophical discussion with Joseph Hunyadi and his younger son Rudolph, to ask Alex what he believes in, Alex replies: "'I just believe in things the way they are. . . . The way things are is all right with me'" (161). Alex's "philosophy" is precisely that of Viedna in Aaron. And, as in the case of Viedna, he uses it to justify actions of a very questionable morality. Following this hard-headed pragmatism, for example, leads Alex into a business association with the abhorred Fraulein Kleinholtz, now Uncle Janos's wife. Alex still finds the woman repulsive, but "the way things are"

dictates an alliance with her. After Nagy's retirement Alex fails to find a new job in the English dominated business world and convincing his aunt to buy Nagy's business and hire him as her agent, is the only practical solution. The means which he employs to insure his end, however, demonstrates to what extent the business ethic has corrupted his human relationships. To convince his aunt that she must buy the agency and put him in charge, Alex shows her that such a move would bring back the straying Uncle Janos who increasingly escapes from his unhappy marriage in all night drinking orgies. Bringing Janos home one night in an alcoholic stupor, Alex liberally sprinkles his uncle's clothing with cheap perfume. That Janos's integrity is sacrificed in Alex's scheme is an unpleasant but necessary detail. The essential point is that Alex's ruse succeeds. His aunt buys the agency and bestows a token presidency on her husband to keep him from straying. Alex has gained his objective and is presumably on the road to wealth, power, and prestige, but he enters it by betraying the man who once represented to him all that was best in his community.

Through Alex's relationship with his aunt and uncle, Marlyn shows to what extent his protagonist has rejected all humanistic values in his pursuit of material gains. And the much more intimate relationship which Alex now enters into with Mary Kostanuk clearly shows how his pursuit of individual self-expression has circumscribed rather than enlarged his life. Alex completely fails to flourish under

the traditionally expansive emotion of love. In pursuing his business interests he has somehow lost whatever capacity it is in man which allows him to see beyond the material, pragmatic aspects of a situation or of a human being. He evaluates people and things in terms of their usefulness, in terms of how they fit things the way they are and has no interest in the way things could or should be. Thus when Mary begins to spin fanciful histories for fellow passengers on a bus, Alex is completely unable to recognize that impulse of a personality which desires to explore beyond the surface reality:

What prompted her, he wondered, to make up these stories. They were interesting, most of them, but they were untrue, so what was the use of them? (208)

Alex's marriage to Mary, however, indicates a certain, if limited, awareness on his part that he needs those values which she embodies. He is, nonetheless, tempted to exploit his wife's air of innocence and freshness by forcing her to wheedle money from his aunt Katherine. Only Mary's refusal forces Alex to admit the place which she occupies in his life:

. . . what he loved in her was her forthrightness, her very inability to do these things--and loved her even more because she was untouched by what he must of necessity do, because she was innocent not only of this but of all that had been ugly or painful in his life. He wanted her to remain as she was, so that there would be this one thing he could hold to that was beyond the strain and turmoil of career, beyond daily fear and ache, yes, and even daily triumph. (225)

Alex needs Mary to retain her innocence, her incapability of betraying ignorance and weakness in others, her honesty,

because he no longer has these qualities himself. By rejecting his communal identity and the values embodied in it, Alex has cut off one whole side of his nature. He is a reduced, a partial, and a somewhat boring man. Marlyn attempts to interject some drama into the portrayal of his one dimensional protagonist by allowing Alex's rejected communal self to resurge at critical moments. In one instance, after tricking a poor labourer into paying an extra five dollars rent from money with which the man was going to feed his children, Alex suddenly, to his horror, begins to pity the man and returns his five dollars:

Suddenly and unexpectedly a wave of pity came over him. And this was not the first time in his business dealings that he had felt it. Something soft within him that he had tried again and again to crush. He had never felt it so strongly. From my blood, he thought wildly. Where else? Not from my head. He had heard about such things. His father's blood in his veins, carrying this weakness--his father's lifelong concern for other people, handed on to his son. (232)

Such a momentary resurfacing of the communal self, however, leads to no reconciliation. In a final scene before the denouement of the novel, Marlyn indicates the full tragedy of the rupture between communal and individual selves. Neither as a boy nor as a man, neither as Sandor Hunyadi in his father's home, nor as Alex Hunter pursuing his destiny in the business world, has the protagonist found self-fulfilment, has he found the meaning of his life, has he understood the meaning of freedom. Pushed by the extremity of his father's position to embrace an equally extreme, if opposite, position, Alex has been a prisoner

of his own individual ambitions for as long as he could appreciate the oppression of his father's communal ambitions for him. In what could be a moment of epiphany right before his world comes tumbling down about him in the 1929 financial crash, Alex glimpses this elusive freedom. It is the first and the last time that the word appears in the novel, but the scene in which it appears is a parable of the protagonist's life. Alex is seated in a restaurant across from the Agency, bolting his lunch with one eye on the front door of his office, when a passing streetcar shakes the dust motes from the shelves:

As though in a weird and frenzied ritual, they strained upward to the sad light of a yellow bulb suspended from the ceiling--until, outside, an alien light changed colour. Then the café grew still; the ritual came to an end and slowly and reluctantly its participants descended to the obscurity of the shadows from which they had come.

But not all. Miraculously a few had torn themselves loose, to soar and wheel in their new-found freedom until they were lost to sight.

Alex laughed quietly to himself. Unknowingly he nodded his head. For several years now he had observed this little ceremony and yet not once in all this time had he become fully conscious of what he had seen. But upon every such occasion, the thought formed itself that there was some hidden and joyful thing in this dance of the dust motes which one day would burst into meaning for him. (263-64)

The hidden and joyful meaning of this dance never does reveal itself to Alex. Overnight the great financial crash crumbles the foundations of his new world and he finds himself back in those very circumstances of humiliating poverty from which he fought so hard to escape. And Marlyn finds himself backed into a corner. The material value system in which Alex placed all his faith fails him, but can Marlyn

convincingly portray a reformed Alex who sees the error of his pragmatic philosophy and now adopts his father's humanistic idealism? Obviously such a conversion is out of the question. The two ideological or philosophical positions, idealism and materialism, have been defined in such extreme terms from the beginning of the work, that neither appears as a viable option for the protagonist in the end. Thus, although all of the evidence seems to support Joseph Hunyadi's condemnation of the capitalist system based upon buying and selling, and his decree that it must not form a way of life or be a source of man's beliefs, Alex remains fundamentally unconvinced. He has committed himself wholly to the business ethic, making it the basis of his beliefs, virtually of his identity; in so doing, he has killed all other beliefs, all other identities:

This way of life his father condemned had taken him to the very threshold of everything he had hoped to achieve. But how could he explain, how tell his father that without it there was nothing left to him? He had started with nothing at all but the belief that this could be accomplished, and if he had not succeeded the fault lay with him and not with what he believed in. (284)

Alex then, at this late stage in the novel, overtly expresses his continuing belief in the values of the business world--buying and selling--and implicitly in the goals of wealth, prestige, and power. It is, therefore, very difficult to credit the final portrait of him which closes the novel a mere four pages later. Looking deeply into the eyes of his newborn son whom he had planned to bring up according to his own pragmatic philosophy, Alex suddenly rejoices to see in

the child a promise of the values he has forever killed in himself:

He was filled . . . with a gladness such as he had rarely known, because in those mild depths, it seemed to him, were all those things, miraculously alive, which he had suppressed in himself; stifled for the sake of what he had almost felt within his grasp, out there, over his son's head, out and beyond in the grey desolation. (288)

By projecting the story into the future, Marlyn closes on a note of hope. But whether or not the child will manage to reconcile the conflicting communal and individual demands remains entirely unknown. What is certain is that Alex himself has not.

The conclusion to Under the Ribs of Death is essentially as negative as that of Aaron. Marlyn clearly shows the limitations of the materialistic, anti-humanistic value system embodied by Mr. Nagy, Fraulein Kleinholtz, and Alex himself. On the other hand, he demonstrates that the humanism of Joseph Hunyadi; the gentle innocence of Alex's wife Mary; and the simple joie de vivre of Uncle Janos, who finally escapes from his wife and starts to enjoy the simple pleasures of life again, are values to be appreciated, perhaps the only values which ultimately have any worth. Yet his support of them in the end can only appear to be somewhat nostalgic or even sentimental, in light of the portrait he has drawn from the opening pages of the young man who finds them inadequate in dealing with the world around him. Human freedom in Marlyn's fictional world, seems as fortuitous, even as quixotic, as the freedom

attained by the dust motes. For certain people, like Joseph, like Uncle Janos, escape from the daily battle is possible; but escape does not solve the problem. The revolt of the protagonist in Under the Ribs of Death ends, as Henry Kreisel points out, "on a curiously tentative and muted note."<sup>3</sup>

Compared to Thériault's Aaron and Marlyn's Under the Ribs of Death, Mordecai Richler's Son of a Smaller Hero is a much more complex work. As in the two former works, the protagonist in Richler's novel rebels against what he considers to be the severe limitations and restrictions placed upon him by the traditional value system of his people. As in the case of Aaron and Alex, Noah Adler belongs by birth to a community which is set apart from the mainstream of Canadian life. Noah's grandfather Melech, the head of the Adler family, does not try to keep his sons and grandsons as divorced from the physical world around them as Moishe does Aaron, but for Noah the Jewish community to which he belongs shuts him off from a larger world:

The ghetto of Montreal has no real walls and no true dimensions. The walls are the habit of atavism and the dimensions are an illusion. But the ghetto exists all the same.<sup>4</sup>

The novel begins with Noah already having openly broken with his family by moving from home into a boarding house in downtown Montreal. Reviewing the reasons for his break he reveals his own future goal, as well as the features of the Jewish community which have pushed him to

the formulation of it. When Noah attempts to explain to his grandfather Melech what he wants from life, and cannot attain within the confines of the traditional Jewish world, he finally comes down to the single word, "freedom." What prevents Noah from attaining his freedom within Melech's domain is his family's blind allegiance to, and its perpetuation of, a whole set of rules which are meaningless to him. Noah, then, formulates his desire for individual freedom in reaction to a kind of arbitrary authority, aggravated by a strong sense of self-righteousness which he observes in his family. The communal tradition against which he rebels goes one step further in its rigidity than those which Aaron and Alex reject; for the Adler family is not characterized by its exclusive loyalty to spiritual over material values, or to humanistic over pragmatic concerns, but by its observance of a set of laws which define no value system, no world view, no ideology, but simply exist to impose restrictions upon individual self-expression--even upon life itself:

The Adlers lived in a cage and that cage, with all its faults, had justice and safety and a kind of felicity. A man knew where he stood. Melech ruled. The nature of the laws did not matter nearly as much as the fact that they had laws. The Jews, liberated and led into the desert by Moses, had wanted nothing so badly as to return to slavery in Egypt. Noah broke the laws and was not punished. He flung open the door to that cage, and said, in effect, follow me to freedom. (Noah, at sixteen, had only understood that the laws were not true and that had seemed all-important. He had not yet known that laws in order to be true only required followers.) (39-40)

Noah then defines individual freedom as his goal and recognizes that revolt against a community which fears and represses individual freedom and which reveres laws for their own sake and not for the values which they uphold, is a necessary first step in achieving it. But it is only a first step. Noah, like Aaron and Alex, needs "to say yes to something;" (31) he needs to assert his individual identity by affirming something outside of--or even opposite to--his own rejected communal self.

The Gentile community which surrounds the Montreal Jewish ghetto strikes Noah as an obvious alternative to his own restricted world. Like Thériault and Marlyn, Richler quickly establishes the serious deficiencies in the alternate life style chosen by his rebelling protagonist. Theo and Miriam Hall, the young professor of English literature and his wife, who take Noah into their home as a kind of exotic protégé, are Richler's representative Gentile couple. Noah even remarks: "She's perfect, that woman. They're Goyim" (55). But while Miriam the first "modern, sophisticated woman whom he had ever met" (49), strikes Noah as highly desirable, her husband Theo makes a less favourable impression. It is initially through Theo that Richler makes his comment upon the Gentile world, a devastating comment. Theo comes very close to caricature. Richler presents him in a series of one-liners which glance off the surface of the character, highlighting the quirks rather than illuminating the inner man:

He was a tall man with tired eyes and a small mouth. His smile was wan, condescending, like the smile of a novice showing a group of peasants through St. Peter's. . . .

Susceptible to the exasperations of spirit which characterize most reformers, he tended to suffer vulgarity in smaller spirits as a personal affront. He was a social democrat. Encounters with almost any amusement designed for the crowd made him choke up and clench his fists. He did not find it easy to cope with society. (46-47)

Although Richler adds more details to Theo's personality he never attempts to probe deeper into his nature. Theo functions largely in this novel as a symbol of the Anglo-Saxon, English Canadian, Gentile world, and if he has no real depth, no vital interest for us as a character, it is because essentially the world which he represents will have no real depth of interest for Noah. Richler presents its culture as painstaking, bloodless, and lacking in spontaneity--Theo and Miriam are listening to all of Beethoven's symphonies in order. Its life force, presumably symbolized in Theo's sexuality, is shaky at best.

While Richler insinuates the sham and sterility of the Gentile world in which Noah is now moving, he continues to reveal more and more of the tyranny and individual repressions operating in the community which he has rejected. Wolf Adler, Noah's father and Melech's eldest son, provides an example of what can happen in the authoritarian community to an individual who has neither the strength to dominate within the communal boundaries, nor the courage to rebel against them. Living in a combination of terror and resentment before Melech, who has only contempt for his

weakness, Wolf makes an abortive attempt to kill his father by dumping scrap metal on the old man's head. Such a desperate act reveals not only the profundity of this weak man's frustration, but the extent to which Melech's seemingly ordered community breeds its own violence. While Wolf is almost entirely a pitiful figure, Leah, Noah's mother, arouses more ambiguous sentiments in both Noah and the reader. As a kind of complement to Wolf, she demonstrates the fate of the strong willed individual who is thwarted and repressed under Melech's authoritarian rule. Suffering all of the humiliation of being married to the hapless Wolf, Leah seeks to escape from her own frustrated ambitions by attempting to lead vicariously the lives of others: her dead father, her only son. When she exhausts the memories of the glorious but dead past of her father, the Zaddich, she turns to her hopes for future glories in her son's life. With a combination of flattery, cajolery, and threats, disguised as self-abnegation, Leah fastens onto Noah's life. Her claim on him is naturally one of love, but it is a love which, frustrated in every other sphere, becomes devouring when it turns on her son.

Noah's feelings for his mother, which are a combination of attraction and revulsion, perhaps best symbolize his ambiguous feelings towards his own revolt at this early stage of the novel. It is precisely this ambiguity that renders Richler's study of the individual in rebellion against his communal identity more complex and more subtle

than either Aaron or Under the Ribs of Death. Unlike Aaron or Sandor, Noah attempts to examine the philosophical implications of his revolt. While Sandor, for example, can only guess at some hidden meaning in the dance of the dust motes--the concept of freedom as a full expression of self, as a reconciliation of idealism and pragmatism, spirit and body, never reaches his consciousness--Noah consciously articulates the dilemma which every protagonist examined in this study faces, or refuses to face, at some point in his bid for freedom:

Noah had renounced a world with which he had at least been familiar and no new world had as yet replaced it. He was hungering for an anger or a community or a tradition to which he could relate his experience. He began to understand that God had been created by man out of necessity. No God, no ethic: no ethic--freedom. Freedom was too much for man. (72)

Noah recognizes instinctively that he will never find freedom--never achieve a full self-expression--until he finds a community in which the individual can flourish.

The Gentile world which at first seemed to offer an answer to Noah's needs, proves to have much in common with the Jewish world he has rejected; both cling to and revere meaningless forms. Noah discovers when he attempts to bring his clandestine affair with Mirian out before the eyes of the world that both husband and wife prefer the covert, face-saving arrangement to a scandalously open liaison:

He sensed that Miriam and Theo were united against him in the same way as Melech and Wolf had joined forces much earlier. Wolf had said: "You can go without a hat. Eat ham. But not in front of the Zeyda." Perhaps, Noah thought, eating ham was not so unimportant after all. Surely this society has as little veracity, if more novelty, than the one that I have sprung from. Noah was exhilarated. He felt that he was no longer merely a rebel. An iconoclast. He was beginning to develop a morality of his own. (119)

Noah at least seems one step closer to achieving his goal of freedom when he is no longer bound by the illusion of perfection in the Gentile world. Yet the freedom which he believes he has found in his love for Miriam is another kind of illusion:

Those first two weeks were the happiest of their lives. Not that there had been any especial afternoon or evening that was so very memorable, but everything, even the most commonplace incident, seemed quite beautiful in retrospect. . . . Noah felt freer than he ever had previously: there was no past and no future. (129-30)

Without past and without future, Noah's love for Miriam is not an answer to his need for community, not a solution to the complexities of his life, but a fleeing from them. This affair functions for the rebelling protagonist as a kind of retreat from battle, and as such it is doomed to fail.

Ultimately, Miriam insists upon coming back to life, to a recognition of the past and the future:

"How long can this go on, Noah? Don't you want to do anything?"

"Are you afraid, Miriam?"

"Of you, mostly. I'm living with you yet I don't know you. You seem to go only so far and then . . . There is a part of you that I can't reach or understand." (134)

That part of Noah which Miriam cannot reach or understand is undoubtedly the part which cannot lose itself in another individual but must find expression within a community. The virtual end of the affair and the call from community come in a single event. When Wolf Adler dies in a fire attempting to rescue a box of his father's, Leah, in the full strength of her new status as widow, lays claim to her only son. Richler, thus, continues to explore the complexities of rebellion not attempted by Thériault or Marlyn, as he brings his protagonist midway through his revolt back to face his responsibilities in the world he had previously rejected. Leah is waiting, ready to establish her priority over Noah:

"He's dead, Noah."

"I know."

"You don't remember when my father died?"

"Not very well."

"You're all I've got left, boyele."

Noah . . . remembered that his mother had made that sound like a threat. (151)

Leah means this as a threat, and Noah's interlude of illusory freedom comes to an end. His life is now more complicated than ever for he has neither escaped the tyranny of the old rule, nor found individual self-expression under a new dispensation, but remains, rather, with one foot in each world. Up until this point Noah's fight for freedom has consisted largely of flights. First a flight from the Jewish community whose arbitrary laws he could no longer obey; then, a flight from the disappointments of the Gentile world into the blissful forgetfulness of Miriam's love. Both flights have resulted in dead ends. Now, one year later,

Noah will have to reassess his position.

In the weeks following his father's death, however, Noah takes very little initiative in defining his role. Rather, he lets himself be shaped by the events and people around him. The first and major event is his father's funeral. Wolf died in his attempt to rescue from the flames of Melech's burning office a box which he believed was filled with money, but which actually contained only a few letters and some transcribed pages from the Torah. The Jewish community's subsequent elevation of him to the status of a hero, the man who "died to save the Torah," functions as a central metaphor in the novel. It represents the community's infinite capacity for self-delusion. Of course, most of the mourners at Wolf's grandiose funeral do not entirely believe in his heroism and do not much care about the real status of the man they are burying. Only the external forms count, not the values which they are meant to express. Apart from Noah, the one individual present who concerns himself with the true significance of Wolf's act is the communist Panofsky. Richler never presents Panofsky's ideological beliefs as the norms of his fictional world, but the very fact that the man believes in something lends a validity to his observations. Panofsky pronounces the ironic summing up of Wolf, placing his act in a historical perspective:

You go talk to the Goyim. You go if you want and tell them Marx and Spinoza, tell them Trotsky too, tell them Einstein and Freud, tell them, tell them that a small man died for nothing in a fire in a time from big, big bombs and made for us a smaller hero than we usually put up. (176)

If, as Panofsky implies, it is difficult for any individual to achieve heroic dimensions in the age of the mega-bomb, then it is almost impossible for him to rebel at this moment in history. Pronouncing the graveside eulogy over Wolf Adler, Rabbi Milton Fishman expounds on the great necessity to observe the covenant that man has made with God. Any rebellion against the ancient tradition threatens not merely the integrity of the Jewish community, but, by extension, the whole "free world." Disloyalty to one's community takes on the dimensions of high treason:

"We are living in very historic times, my friends. Never before has it been of such vital importance to remember that ancient covenant that we made with the Almighty, blessed be He. Never before has the Almighty, blessed be He, been in such dire need of defenders. Today the freedom-loving nations of the world are locked in a life-and-death struggle with the octopus monster communism . . . There is a conspiracy against God. The tentacles of the Kremlin reach into the darkest corners . . ." (173)

For the moment Noah abandons his rebellion, and it might be worthwhile noting the similarities between his position at this stage of the novel and the somewhat similar status of the three protagonists examined in the previous chapter. The major difference is that Noah has left his community and attempted to fulfil his goal of individual freedom in the larger world and then returned to his original community equally disillusioned with both. Like David

Canaan on the road between his Annapolis Valley farm and the city of Halifax, Noah has the impression that he belongs neither to one world nor the other. And, as in David's case, such a position leads to a kind of paralysis of will. Instead of being the rebellious young man, the black sheep of the family, Noah now truly becomes the son of a smaller hero. He allows the stronger of the two women who lay claim upon him to win him by her stratagems. Leah, more knowledgeable than Miriam in how to exploit Noah's guilt feelings, wins out in a battle to which Noah remains a passive witness. And when, ashamed at his treatment of Miriam, he makes one last visit to their cottage in Ste. Adèle to definitively end the relationship, cowardice not heroism characterizes the final scenes of the affair; Noah gets drunk and asks Miriam to marry him because he cannot face the unpleasantness of telling her the truth. Miriam refuses him, knowing that he does not love her, knowing also that there really does not exist a Noah sure enough of his identity to be able to love anyone. The fruit of Noah's initial rebellion from the Jewish community and his subsequent disillusionment with the Gentile world is an awareness of how impossible it is to reconcile individual and communal selves, to find the necessary affirmative: something to say "yes" to:

"It's too bad," he said, "that there is no longer anything that one could wholly belong to. This is the time of buts and parentheses. All that seems to remain are one's responsibilities . . . Oh, Miriam, I wish that most men--me included--were taller and all women lovely. I . . ." (191)

In the final section of the novel, Noah is back in the Jewish community where he faces the task of defining, if he can, his own values in terms of a clearer understanding of the forces which move his own people. Much of this section, then, reaffirms and illustrates those things in the community which first instigated Noah's rejection of it. What Noah encounters again and again is that astounding capacity for self-delusion which underlies the actions of each individual in his relationship with himself and with others. Such delusions can have their comic side, and Richler presents them in this light when he describes Noah's attempt to abandon the struggle for individual self-expression and run with the herd. For once in his life Noah tries to say and do all of the approved things in order to be accepted by his uncle's family. He is a "miserable flop" (204) at it because he has not considered that in this society where everything is based upon partial truths and illusions, even the supposedly absolute conformism of his Uncle Harry's circle is only a partial truth, an illusion kept up by each of the conforming individuals:

Noah was so intent upon conforming that he conformed too much, and was suspected as an eccentric, a non-believer, by all. He finally realized that the secret of their humanity was that each one had a tiny deviation all his and/or her own. None conformed completely. (204)

Finally an accumulation of such perceptions brings Noah to a kind of epiphany in which he realizes a fundamental truth not only about his little world, but about human society in general: its capacity for self-delusion and for evil. The lie of the whole Goldenberg family, including Harvey, about Harvey's suppressed homosexuality like the lie of the Adler clan about Wolf's death, do not seem for Noah to be so dissimilar from the lies perpetuated by terrorist regimes throughout history who have tortured and killed with the tacit complicity of their populations:

At last Noah understood about the concentration camps. About the Goldenbergs and Harvey. The Germans had told the truth when they said that they hadn't known. They couldn't cope with knowing. (211)

What differentiates Noah from all of them is his refusal to participate in the lies. He insists upon honesty and integrity in human relations, even with the dead, even with such a little man as Wolf Adler:

It was only important that they had made a hero out of his father if it mattered that Wolf, one small man, had been swindled even by death. It does matter to me, he thought. In fact, that explains all my differences with them. (212)

This precise belief in the difference between himself and his community prompts Richler's rebel to leave it for the second time, but not as the result of any great apotheosis which finally clarifies for him, once and for all, his individual or communal identity. Noah's second departure is as much a flight as the first--a flight from a community whose values he knows he cannot share, and from a possessive mother who would smother his individual desires to satisfy

her frustrated needs. In preparing for this second departure Noah claims, however, to have arrived at a closer understanding of his goals.

Miriam had asked him what he wanted. He hadn't been able to tell her because at that time he had wanted to love her the way he had at first, and he hadn't been able to. He could tell her now, though. He could tell her that he wanted freedom and that innocent day at Lac Gandon and the first days of their love and many more evenings with Panofsky and the music of Vivaldi and more men as tall as Aaron and living with truth . . . (228-29)

The key word is "freedom." But freedom is precisely the goal that Noah defined for himself at the moment of his first flight from the Jewish community and Melech's rule. This time he leaves for the broader arena of Europe, and not merely the small theatre of Gentile Montreal, but his movement is still one of flight. The difference between this departure and the previous one is perhaps Noah's awareness that he can never entirely deny his communal self, as he once believed he could. When Melech in their last meeting accuses Noah: "You are going from us?" Noah replies: "I am going and I'm not going. I can no more leave you, my mother, or my father's memory, than I can renounce myself. But I can refuse to take part in this . . ." (230).

Thus Noah, in the end, is clear about part of what he is rejecting, but still has not found that community or tradition to which he can relate his individual experience. Perhaps what he discovers of positive worth is that the definitive rebellion, the complete cutting off of oneself from one's community is impossible. He will leave for Europe

but he plans to stay only one year. The novel thus ends upon a hope, but a muted one, for the protagonist to establish his own moral code and live by it to find the system of values within which he can express his individuality.<sup>5</sup> Appropriately the novel ends, like Aaron, not with a vision of Noah sailing off into the future but with the image of the rejected past he leaves behind him. Unlike Moishe who has given up on God, Melech still believes that his God listens to him: "Melech's God, who was stern, sometimes just, and always without mercy, would reward him and punish the boy" (232). But there is no proof that the old man's assurance is not the ultimate and grandest of his self-delusions.

Fabrice Navarin, the protagonist of Jean Simard's Mon Fils pourtant heureux, is a rebel with a difference. In fact, the central question posed by this book is whether or not Fabrice ever manages to rebel against the overwhelming, all enveloping, communal tradition into which he is born. An examination of the novel, however, shows that Fabrice merits a place in this chapter's study of the rebelling individual because Mon Fils pourtant heureux deals with the same basic problem as that presented by Thériault, Marlyn, and Richler: a young man's attempts to free himself from the oppressive grip of a community which is structured on values that have somehow lost contact with the complex realities of the larger world. Mon Fils pourtant heureux immediately establishes itself as different from the three

other novels considered in this chapter in that it has a first person narrator, and the events related during the first five-sixths of the book are reflections on the past. All but the final three chapters which return to the present and the forty year old Fabrice are flashbacks to his childhood and young adulthood. On the opening page of the book Fabrice tells us that he is writing an account of his life, not to provide a biographical statement, but as an aid "ressusciter le passé et à cerner le présent."<sup>6</sup> The novel, then, serves as a kind of examination of conscience for the narrator. Such a narrative technique limits the point of view to that of the protagonist alone, and creates a narrower vision of the world which serves to greatly reinforce the claustrophobic nature of the novel's traditional community.

The first image that the forty year old narrator presents of his younger self is a child who already suffers from the crushing restraints which regulate the interpersonal relationships in his family and who is already aware of "cette gêne paralysante qui me séparait, moi, Fabrice, des miens, et gâchait tous nos rapports" (14). Yet this same child fully appreciates the social status which he enjoys as a member of a distinguished Quebec family:

. . . je me rengorgeais: flatté, quoique j'en eusse, de trôner entre une mère élégante, ornée de fourrures; un père moustachu, haut fonctionnaire dans le gouvernement local. (17)

This initial image of Fabrice remains in our minds throughout the novel. Simard's protagonist may and will suffer

from the repressiveness and perversions that he describes in his community but we are never ~~meant~~ to lose this first view of him, complying only too willingly with the destiny which has allotted him a place in it. Fabrice, then, is not a born rebel; having established this crucial fact about himself, the narrator goes on to describe that world which he will so reluctantly reject.

The most imposing figure in Fabrice's family is his maternal grandmother, Marie-Thérèse de Valauris. As Melech Adler, the patriarch, presides and rules over the Adler family, strictly enforcing the rules of the clan, so Mme. de Valauris, the matriarch, rules over her family with "une poigne de fer" (22). Simard's and Richler's traditional communities share this one fundamental characteristic--they are both authoritarian to an extreme degree. Fabrice represents his grandmother as a spider, spinning a web in which to catch all of the members of the family. His maternal grandfather M. de Valauris is now dead and despite the fact that he left his wife only debts, a mortgaged house, and a pious memory, the old lady's blind admiration for and confidence in her husband never flickers for an instant. This example of his family's capacity to avoid the real, especially when the real threatens an ideal image, leads Fabrice to observe a fundamental flaw in its view of life which it shares with the traditional communities of Aaron, Under the Ribs of Death and Son of a Smaller Hero:

Nous possédons d'ailleurs, dans notre famille, de surprenants talents pour ne point voir les choses déplaisantes. Cela va même jusqu'à nier parfois l'évidence même, qui devrait nous crever les yeux . . . La comparaison classique avec les moeurs furtives de l'autruche s'imposerait ici, n'était que les zoologistes modernes aient fait justice du préjugé qui veut nous la montrer, au moment du danger, la tête enfouie dans le sable. (29)

The combination of authoritarian rule and a willing blindness to reality forms the basis of the traditional community in Mon Fils pourtant heureux. In order to demonstrate the devastating effect that such a regime can have upon the individuals who live under it, Simard, like Richler, focuses upon his protagonist's parents. In Richler's world, ruled by the patriarch Melech, Noah's weak, insignificant father Wolf is the victim, while his forceful but deeply frustrated mother Leah is the victimizer. Simard's world is ruled over by a matriarch but it is her weakly submissive daughter Stéphanie who is the victim in this marriage to the tyrannical Philippe-Joseph Navarin. The difference in the sexes of the oppressor and the oppressed parents is incidental; of fundamental importance is the fact that both authors create an authoritarian regime within which individual self-expression and individual relationships take on a perverted form, inspired by fear and tyranny, rather than love and respect.

Fabrice's portraits of his mother and father are in some ways a portrait of his whole little world. Simard presents Stéphanie and Philippe-Joseph as representatives of their sex and class as they flourished in that small world

of Quebec City's haute-bourgeoisie during the first decades of this century. All the elements of their education, their class, and their occupations had contrived to keep them profoundly unenlightened. Stéphanie and all of the other girls of her age who have attended a convent school return home "dûment diplômées et aussi ignorantes que possible" (32). She is, however, fully prepared to consecrate herself to her main occupation in life--"le ménage, la vie mondaine, la capture éventuelle d'un mari" (32). Fabrice's portrayal of his father, the villain in the relationship is more severe. Philippe-Joseph, according to his son, has arrived in his civil service job at precisely the level which most suits his native abilities:

Un haut plateau . . . convenant parfaitement à son caractère ambivalent: à la fois couard et autoritaire. Car, lorsqu'on craint les hommes, autant devenir leur chef! . . . Ainsi, entre les nuages et la plaine, couvert par le haut et gratifié par le bas, peut-on jouir en sa niche du double avantage de la sécurité et de la tyrannie. (55)

The desire for this same "double advantage" in his family life provides the basis for Philippe-Joseph's relations with his wife. By tyrannizing her he obtains the security of not being tyrannized himself. Fearing her, and her potential to upset his life, the new husband determines to become her absolute master: "Il fallait la mater au plus vite, l'écraser, l'anéantir; et, dans la crainte qu'on ne l'opprime, se ruer le premier à l'attaque. Il y allait de sa vie même . . ."

(56). Philippe-Joseph does not exaggerate; it is a question of his very life. In this world of totalitarian rule, of

arbitrary authority, the individual must either establish his mastery over others, or be mastered by them. Stéphanie's and Joseph's relationship shows in miniature the disease that perverts all relationships in Simard's fictional world, and it delineates the nature of the struggle which their son will engage in with life. The father provides the model for those who tyrannize through their fear of life, while the mother plays the equally important, complementary role of those who allow themselves to be victimized. Later Fabrice bitterly blames his mother for her willingness to submit to her husband's tyranny, finding in it a licence for that very tyranny, as well as the origins of his own difficulty in asserting his individual identity:

. . . elle nous avait donné, à tous les deux, les plus mauvaises habitudes: à son mari celle du despotisme, à son fils celle de la sujétion. (102)

The first six chapters establish the nature of the adults who peopled Fabrice's childhood world and ordered all of the important elements of his young existence. The novel continues with the early history and formation of a non-person, as Fabrice, on the one hand, increasingly abdicates all claim to individual self-expression, and, on the other hand, is refused any share in the communal self-expression. While all of the protagonists examined in this chapter are prevented by the older generation from pursuing their individual self-fulfilment, Fabrice is unique in being the only one among them who is denied any self-expression at all.<sup>7</sup> He is to have neither an individual nor

a communal life. Philippe-Joseph, afraid that some accident might befall his son in the rough and tumble of the quotidian and prevent him from attaining a respectable position in life, bans Fabrice's participation in the childhood games of the neighborhood children. Even public school is forbidden and tutors instruct Fabrice for the first twelve years of his life. The narrator, looking back from the vantage point of middle age, sees a small boy set to one side of his own life:

. . . moi, de la fenêtre du troisième, je regardais s'ébattre les enfants qui ont la chance d'avoir des parents imprudents!

Les miens, pourtant, m'aimaient, j'en suis sûr. Ils m'aimaient selon eux:· petitement, craintivement, d'un amour étriqué qui serrait aux entournures, semblait n'avoir d'autre objet que ma sécurité. Surtout, pas d'ennuis: qu'il n'arrive rien de fâcheux . . .

Qu'il n'arrive, strictement, rien! (75)

While Fabrice's ancestors silently push him towards a retreat from life, while his father prevents him from finding a communal identity and his mother provides a warm refuge from the realities of daily existence, the protagonist himself determines the precise role which he will adopt. Carrying his parents' over-protectiveness to its logical conclusions, Fabrice withdraws from all participation in life. A reaction rather than a rebellion, Fabrice's refusal of all self-expression, of all identity, seems the only freedom available to him. Essentially, it is the freedom not to be. With no Viedna, no Mr. Nagy, no Miriam and Theo on the horizons of his community to represent even an illusory escape route for the individual, Fabrice's drama

is played out within the boundaries of his own closed world. Before reaching adolescence, then, Fabrice adopts a stance towards life which seems the only reasonable attitude given the conditions in which he finds himself. By actually embracing and even intensifying the role that is forced upon him, he achieves a certain illusion, if not of freedom, then at least of autonomy:

Une charette à foin, un tombereau, un boghei--quelles forteresses contre le réel! On m'avait condamné à toutes les tutelles, et voici que je m'y complaisais . . . Désormais, je cherchais d'instinct des équivalents aux véhicules rassurants du haut desquels . . . hors d'atteinte, je pouvais me donner l'illusion d'échapper aux contingences. (92)

It is paradoxically in this state of full retreat that Fabrice takes his first step into the wider world when he enters the collège classique. Nothing that he finds in this institution encourages him to any tentatives of self-expression. The celebrated school founded two hundred and sixty-nine years ago by Mgr. François de Montmorency-Laval de Montigny, only intensifies Fabrice's desire to withdraw from the world around him. Characterized by one word, "la contrainte," the collège classique is merely an extension of the authoritarian rule which ordered his family life. Not only the institutionalized tyranny of the educational system but also the sarcasms of his peers, who instantly spot Fabrice's inexperience with life, his inability to hold his place among them, force the protagonist to retreat. Face to face for the first time with the contingencies of life from which his family and all of his

background have protected him, he reacts by reaffirming his withdrawal, this time in unequivocal terms: "Je n'avais toujours eu en tête qu'une seule idée: m'y soustraire, justement, à n'importe quel prix--être comme oublié par le destin" (117). Fabrice's tragedy is that he almost succeeds in being forgotten by destiny, in subtracting himself from life. Plunging into his father's extensive library he quickly forms the habit of substituting the image of life he finds in books for the real life in which he is so unable to cope. The forty year old narrator looking back on this period of his life and his addiction to a world of words states his predicament in terms very similar to those employed by the narrator in The Mountain and the Valley to describe David Canaan's substitution of words for life. Both young men begin to feel like ghosts in the world of flesh and blood human beings. Even as David envies his brother Chris because things happen to him, so Fabrice envies those around him who participate in a world of action: "Car ils agissaient, eux, ils savaient empoigner la vie à pleines mains, et vivre, vivre! Moi, je ne connaissais de l'existence que son reflet dans les mots imprimés . . ." (136).

David Canaan, of course, never does rebel, never manages to break out of the community which both constrains and supports him. Fabrice does--at least for a time. At the end of his collège classique he makes a claim to that normal feeling of adolescents who have been subjected to

"interdits et empêchements de toutes sortes" (140). After years of accepting the communal mask, and refusing his individual identity, Fabrice is ready for an affirmation of self. But for Fabrice as for Noah, Sandor, and Aaron, individual self-expression ultimately depends upon finding a community or a tradition to which he can relate his experiences. Fabrice never finds it. His rebellion remains entirely negative, beginning with his rejection of the faith of his fathers. The implications and the consequences of such a rejection in the society to which he belongs, provide the focus for the last half of the novel. There has been a measure of disappointment with this final part of the work; a complaint, for example, that it becomes "moins vivante, moins convaincante, plus désincarnée."<sup>8</sup> But the story of Fabrice must inevitably seem somewhat disembodied after he has made his declaration of independence, because Fabrice himself becomes increasingly disembodied. His denial of religion cuts him off from the ruling spirit, the matrix, the inspirational source of every one of his society's institutions. The second half of the novel presents the horror of what a truly monolithic society, in its pure state, can be for the individual who cannot conform completely.

Fabrice's experiences with the army at the outbreak of World War II might at first glance seem somewhat irrelevant to the central thrust of the story, yet there is a decided link between the protagonist's search for self-expression and His Majesty's Armed Forces. Fabrice's contact

with the army reveals to him for the first time the formidable nature of the powers which oppose any claim to individual autonomy in his society. For the first time he recognizes the monstrous collusion which characterizes the monolithic society:

Je ne pouvais manquer d'apercevoir, entre la famille, l'Eglise, l'école et l'armée, je ne sais quelle analogie, quelle honteuse connivence, quelle identité de méthodes proprement intolérables; et consistant, dans la plupart des cas, à briser l'être afin de mieux l'asservir; à le "casser," le réduire, le modeler à l'usage des puissants--le conditionner pour l'esclavage. (173-74)

Fabrice escapes conscription in the army through the connivance of an uncle who is on the medical examining board. Such an escape, fortuitous as it may first appear, gains the force of inevitability as we pursue Fabrice's career, noting how he drifts further and further from all participation in his society without coming any closer to a discovery of his individual identity.

After relating his rejection of his faith and his escape from the army, the narrator describes his early ventures into romance. No longer able to see himself in relation to his community's institutions, Fabrice now details his inability to establish individual personal relationships.<sup>9</sup> Looking back upon the "sorties amoureuses" of his younger self, the forty year old Fabrice's attitude is one of disillusionment and even cynicism. With no system of values, no community or tradition, to serve as a frame of reference for his individual experiences, Fabrice's relations with women fail to provide the significance that

he seeks in his life:

Une jeune femme qui, spontanément, vous tend ses lèvres, puis entr'ouvrant son corsage, vous offre ses seins, et tout le reste, c'est bien sûr, une minute extraordinaire. Cela fait de vous un autre homme. Votre âme en demeure transfigurée, enrichie, comme fertilisée. Mais ne miser que là-dessus, et croire que cela suffise à remplir une vie, n'est-ce pas se tromper lourdement? Car l'amour humain, pour grisant, pour exaltant qu'il soit, n'est qu'un aspect seulement de la condition humaine. (177)

Fabrice's adolescent revolt which rejects all institutions and all individuals within his community finally drives him to barricade himself in his dead father's library--an island of freedom in a hostile sea:

Cellule étrangée, il est vrai, mais opulente: assourdie d'épaisses draperies et de carpettes moelleuses; tapissée de livres aux reliures magnifiques . . . Je lisais immodérément . . . Ou encore, je faisais tourner interminablement "Eine Feste Burg" de Bach . . .

. . . . .  
Je me complaisais à vivre en ermite. Je voulais demeurer libre--libre! (183)

Fabrice's liberty has been reduced to the dimensions of a single room in which he hides from his life.

Because the narrator is only interested in exploring the various illusions of freedom to which he had fallen victim during his period of rebellion, he does not attempt to strictly account for all of the years. Thus, one chapter ends with the nineteen year old Fabrice barricaded in his room, and the following one opens at a point seven years later when, provided with a teaching certificate, he entered into yet another illusion, about the possibilities of attaining any meaningful self-expression within the community. The school which Fabrice enters as a teacher, despite the

passage of time, despite the brand new modern building, proves as relentlessly authoritarian, as determinedly detached from the complexities of the modern world as the one which he attended as an adolescent. Even as the hated smell of cabbage soup greets Fabrice at the door of the school, so the hated regime based upon discipline and constraints and learning by rote awaits him in the classroom. Fabrice persists, partly because he must earn his living, but partly also because he retains some lingering hope that he might combine inclination with necessity in his new profession. If Fabrice, as a kind of fifth column, could change the nature of his community's institutions, if he could, therefore, find individual self-expression within, and for the benefit of his community, his rebellion would prove more successful than that of the other three protagonists:

J'étais tout feu, tout flamme. L'éducation, me semblait-il, ne pouvait mener qu'à l'audace pensante. Il me paraissait significatif que les régimes politiques désireux d'asservir les hommes eussent toujours commencé par juguler l'enseignement; et qu'au long de l'histoire, les attentats à la liberté eussent prélué par des attentats au savoir. (185)

Fabrice, in fact, does achieve a certain personal success in his own teaching experience but he in no way revolutionizes the educational system to which he belongs. The prevailing atmosphere of the school finds its embodiment in the Chanoine Bravachol, head of the teaching staff. As former chaplain in the army, as a priest, and as an administrator of the educational system, the Chanoine perfectly symbolizes

the monolithic authority that tyrannizes Fabrice's community. What renders Chanoine Bravachol the ideal symbol of the whole communal tradition against which Fabrice has revolted is that beneath the militaristic-cum-religious aura of authority lies a profound disregard for and failure to grasp life as it is lived in all of its complexity:

Sacrifiant sans pitié le fond à la forme, le bien-dire, seul, lui importait. Ne ressemblait-il pas, en cela, à ces orateurs qui nous bouleversent à l'audition? Ensuite, à la lecture, on s'aperçoit qu'ils n'ont préféré que des balivernes, des chapelets de platitudes magnifiquement enrobées. (190)

With the account of his entry into teaching, his great hopes for it, his great disillusion with it, the narrator ends his review of the past. He ends also the history of his revolt, such as it was. At this point Mon Fils pourtant heureux breaks once again with the pattern of the three other novels of rebellion by examining the situation of its protagonist at the less than rebellious age of forty. The reason for this difference is obviously the unique nature of Fabrice's original revolt, a revolt which consisted entirely of his denial of the communal mask, but which led to no affirmation of an individual self. The remainder of the novel which describes Fabrice's return to the bosom of the society which he rejected is based upon the simple recognition that he can no longer support the void in which he now exists. He needs to say "yes" to something. In Son of a Smaller Hero Richler closes the novel on Noah's flight to Europe in search of some affirmation. We never know if Noah finds it. The final section of Mon Fils

pourtant heureux also sends its protagonist to Europe searching for some set of values which can give meaning to his life. Everywhere around him in France Fabrice sees individuals who succeed in being happy in affirming the goodness of life despite the terrible ravages of the World War which they have experienced. The happiness of others, the richness of their life-experience, reveals to Fabrice the poverty of his own life:

C'est au milieu de ces gens paisibles et pourtant délurés, visiblement contents malgré les deuils, les privations, la guerre, les misères de toutes sortes, que s'est imposée à moi, tout à coup, une affreuse évidence: Mais je ne suis pas heureux!" Cela m'a été assené--sur ce chemin de Damas qu'est pour nous l'Europe. (199)

The equilibrium that Fabrice has maintained over the years crashes around him as violently as Sandor Hunyadi's world of big business tumbles around his ears. For Fabrice, as for Sandor, there is only one solution: a return; a return because there is no place else to go. The choice as Fabrice sees it is that "entre une philosophie de l'absurde qui est un 'cri de suicide,' et une philosophie cosmique affirmant que 'l'univers est capable de nous rendre l'espérance,' l'hésitation n'est guère possible" (208). Given such alternatives, there is only one choice, but the alternatives themselves should be viewed with suspicion. Fabrice's return to the community he once rejected which is symbolized by his return to the "faith of his fathers," like Sandor's return to his father's world constitutes a pis aller. Fabrice does not suddenly find meaning in all

that had previously seemed meaningless, but his revolt and the type of freedom that such a revolt purchased for him eventually proved insupportable. Fabrice has simply reached a point where being the only "free" man in a world of the enslaved becomes too much of a burden to bear, where it takes on the proportions of a crime. Close to suicide and suffering hallucinations about his own death, Fabrice fantasizes that he confesses to a crime which he did not commit. Imagining that the true culprit turns himself in and that he is set free, he cannot accept his liberty, so certain is he of his guilt: "Je suis relâché--plus inquiet, plus coupable que jamais: encombré d'une liberté que je ne puis considérer autrement que provisoire" (211).

Thus, Fabrice returns; he puts on once again the communal mask because without it he has no face, no identity at all. He returns to the Church as Sandor Hunyadi returns to the idealistic world of his father, because there is no place else to go and he no longer has the strength to keep on saying "no":

Je me suis rendu hier, à bout de forces, chez un prêtre à moi recommandé par une lettre de Gérard.

Et j'ai communié, ce matin.

Rien de bouleversant. Pas trace d'exaltation. . . .

Un "retour" qui n'a rien de glorieux et dont je ne sais, au regard de Dieu, quelle valeur il peut avoir. Une sorte d'option, voilà tout: un acquiescement, une adhésion toute laïque, encore bien méfiante, mesquine, médiocre; comme si, en temps de guerre, je me fusse enrôlé dans celui de deux camps qui me paraissait le plus digne d'intérêt. "Sans patriotisme" ne veut pourtant pas dire: sans foi--mais une foi de si pauvre qualité, et faite surtout d'un désir désespéré de me raccrocher à quelque chose, à l'instant où tout m'échappe! (218)

This note of stark desperation in which Fabrice returns to his religion, as a drowning man might return to the prison ship from which he has escaped, produces a very sombre ending to Fabrice's rebellion.<sup>10</sup> Simard, like Marlyn, seems to need some positive note on which to end the novel. And like Marlyn, he seems to know what values he would like to assert. The individual freedom which his protagonist attempts to find by rejecting his past, his roots, all that make up his communal identity is clearly impossible. The only liberty that an individual can hope to achieve in this community is arrived at by a complete acceptance of what he is, by recognizing his failings and his resources and by making the best of them; so advises the priest who welcomes Fabrice back into the faith.

If Simard does not show us a rejuvenated Fabrice who suddenly finds new meaning in his life by acting upon the priest's advice, he does provide in the figure of a minor character an embodiment of this concept of human liberty. Albert, a valet in the Parisian hotel where Fabrice spends some of his most despairing days before his decision to "return," is a character who in many points strongly resembles Sandor Hunyadi's Uncle Janos. Like Uncle Janos, Albert has suffered physically: passing most of the second World War in German and Russian prison camps and returning after the liberation a bald, toothless, skeletal figure. Like Uncle Janos, Albert has been mistreated by his wife, and finds himself engaged in the humblest

of jobs to earn a small living. But the strongest resemblance of all between the two is that both, despite ample reason for being miserable, are happy men. It is significant, however, that if Albert is supposed to personify the author's philosophical rationale for human freedom based upon an acceptance of one's position in life, Simard also wishes this character to resist close analysis. The valet's happiness appears to come, as does that of Uncle Janos, from a simple joie de vivre which moves into the realm of the mystical. And it is at the quasi-mystical level that Fabrice seems to comprehend it:

--Il est là, devant moi. Il n'a rien, mais il est heureux . . .

Je tournai et retournais cela dans ma tête, subordonnant un secret. Je mis du temps à comprendre.

--Le secret, c'est qu'il n'y a pas de secret! Albert est heureux parce qu'il vit, voilà tout: il est en vie, il est dans la vie; et la vie vaut mieux que la mort . . . (227)

But this "voilà tout" must fail to completely satisfy the reader who has seen how utterly impossible it is simply to live, to be "en vie," and "dans la vie," in the community which Fabrice has rejected and to which he has now so reluctantly returned. Thus, the story of Fabrice's rebellion ends as tentatively as the story of Sandor's, with Fabrice gazing not into the eyes of his first born but into the prospects of some future generation, hoping that it can achieve a happiness and a liberty that he has failed to gain:

. . . chaque génération d'hommes et de femmes désire, à son tour, de mettre au monde des enfants--mieux aimés, espèrent-ils, qu'eux-mêmes ne l'ont été . . .  
(194)

The four novels of rebellion examined in this chapter are all studies in failure of human freedom. The individual fails, whether he returns to his community or leaves it, because in neither case does he arrive at a reconciliation of his two selves. He never finds the community or tradition to which he can relate his individual experiences. The communities in the four novels also fail. The dying Moishe and the aging isolated Melech, both symbolize the death or decay of a rigid communal tradition which lost touch with the needs of its individual members. The communities to which Sandor and Fabrice return in desperation exist as isolated limbs, cut off from the larger social organism, and offering to the protagonists an escape from self rather than an expression of it. With the double failure in each novel, this study of human freedom seems to reach a stalemate. Aaron, Sandor, Noah, and Fabrice might truly represent what George Woodcock has called "our consciousness of deprivation and alienation from meaningful existence, our sense of rebellion without hope."<sup>11</sup> In direct contrast to Riel, however, who embodies this hopeless rebellion, Woodcock places Gabriel Dumont, Riel's lieutenant during the Red River Rebellion. Whereas Riel belonged to a world "more conscious of twilight than of dawn," Dumont's was the "hero's black-and-white world." Woodcock concludes

that "simple and direct people like Dumont embarrass us with the unspoken demand that we imitate their strengths or their virtues."<sup>12</sup> The following chapter examines two novels whose protagonists, like Dumont, belong to the hero's black-and-white world. The central issue to be explored in the study of these figures is not if their strengths or virtue embarrass us, but whether by either strength or virtue the individual can break the stalemate in the problem of human freedom.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Yves Thériault, Aaron, rev. ed. (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1957). This slightly revised edition seemed preferable to the original 1954 edition because of Thériault's choice of the more appropriate Moïshe over Jethro as the name of Aaron's grandfather. All further citations from the novel will refer to the 1957 edition and will be indicated by page numbers in the text.

<sup>2</sup>John Marlyn, Under the Ribs of Death (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1957), p. 9. All further citations from the novel refer to this edition and will be indicated by page numbers in the text.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Kreisel, "Dreams and Reality," Canadian Literature, no. 21 (Summer 1964), p. 66.

Atwood, in Survival, is also very doubtful about the hope which Marlyn holds out at the end of the novel: "Hope for him lies in his baby son, the third generation, . . . Perhaps--though it is by no means certain--the third-generation son will be able to reconcile the spiritual values of the first generation and the material ones of the second; though in Marlyn's book the spiritual and the material seem irreconcilable."

<sup>4</sup>Mordecai Richler, Son of a Smaller Hero (London: André Deutsch, 1955), p. 14. All further citations from the novel refer to this edition and will be indicated by page numbers in the text.

<sup>5</sup>George Woodcock in his "Introduction" to Son of a Smaller Hero, New Canadian Library, no. 45 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), p. ix, sees Noah's departure for Europe as "the second and final break with his past." Certainly it is difficult to imagine the terms on which Noah could return to the Jewish community.

<sup>6</sup>Jean Simard, Mon Fils pourtant heureux (Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1956), p. 9. All further citations from the novel refer to this edition and will be indicated by page numbers in the text.

<sup>7</sup>Even Aaron, despite Moïshe's attempts to protect the boy from the world around him, participates to some degree in the community's activities.

<sup>8</sup> Gérard Bessette, Lucien Geslin, Charles Parent, Histoire de la littérature canadienne-française par les textes (Montréal: Centre Éducatif et Culturel, 1968), p. 559.

<sup>9</sup> Gérard, Fabrice's one intimate friend, becomes a missionary and the friendship is carried on through letters.

<sup>10</sup> The consensus of critical opinion is sceptical about the solidity of Fabrice's final affirmation. See Pierre-H. Lemieux, "L'Oeuvre de Jean Simard ou le mal de vivre" (Maîtrise ès arts dissertation, l'Université d'Ottawa, 1966), pp. 40-41; Gilles Marcotte, "L'Expérience du vertige dans le roman canadien-français," Ecrits du Canada français, vol. 16 (1963), p. 237; and Pierre de Grandpré, "La Satire affute ses traits: Mon fils pourtant heureux," in Dix Ans de la vie littéraire au Canada français (Montréal: Editions Beauchemin, 1966), pp. 116-17.

There are, however, divergent opinions. See Ronald Sutherland, Second Image, p. 151, and Marta G. Hesse, "The Theme of Death in the French Canadian Novel from 1945 to 1965," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1969), pp. 50-52.

<sup>11</sup> George Woodcock, Gabriel Dumont: the Métis Chief and his Lost World (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1975), p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

## CHAPTER V

### RAMPANT INDIVIDUALISM

Given the evidence of the novels so far examined one would have to conclude that the Canadian protagonist of the 1950s did not live in a heroic age. The only "hero" we have encountered so far has been a very small one indeed, Wolf Adler. This pattern breaks, however, with Hugh MacLennan's The Watch that Ends the Night and Yves Thériault's Agaguk. Jerome Martell and Agaguk are, by accepted definition, protagonists of heroic stature. Courage, high position (by birth or by merit), and greater than ordinary skill in their respective professions of surgeon and hunter, set these men apart from the common mold. Moreover, each is acknowledged as preeminent in his world. Harold Lubin, in a study of heroes and anti-heroes, underlines the importance of this last element:

. . . whatever the type of hero, whatever the definition offered, there seems to be one point of general agreement. A hero must be recognized as a hero for whatever qualities significant groups of people esteem.<sup>1</sup>

The following study establishes that Agaguk and Jerome Martell hold this status in their respective worlds.

Of even greater importance than what the hero is, is what he does. In The Hero with a Thousand Faces Joseph Campbell suggests that all heroic action ultimately takes

the form of a quest. He outlines in mythological terms, not at all inappropriate to the characters of Jerome and Agaguk, the path which this quest usually follows:

The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation--initiation--return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth.

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.<sup>2</sup>

The main concern of the following study is not to establish the basic mythic pattern of Agaguk's and Jerome's quest, but to discover if, as heroes, they find the answer to the problem of human freedom which eludes all of the less extraordinary protagonists previously examined. The ritual or mythic passage of the hero described by Campbell provides a useful touchstone for determining this central question. To what extent the hero separates himself from his community, and why he does so; the nature of his encounter with "fabulous forces"; and, above all, what he is and does in his return from his adventure, provide the three main divisions for the following examination of each novel.

The Watch that Ends the Night is narrated by George Stewart, a close friend of Jerome's and the present husband of Jerome's former wife Catherine. Only a small portion of the story, Parts I and VII of the seven part novel, takes place in the present, "the first winter of the Korean war."<sup>3</sup> The substantial middle section of the novel is a flashback

to the nineteen thirties, and to the larger than life figure of Jerome as he appears in the disintegrating world of the Depression years. Who is Jerome Martell? Despite a great deal of information about this character, some of it quite sensational, the question of his identity is perhaps never satisfactorily answered. Jerome himself pleads ignorance on the subject when he confides to George Stewart; "I don't know who I am" (169). Knowing, however, what Jerome is, what qualities he embodies, what strengths and weaknesses he communicates to those around him, is somewhat easier to establish. The picture that emerges of Jerome as he appears to almost every member of the Montreal community who comes in contact with him is one of an individual whose dynamism, whose quintessential energy strains the common human boundaries. Attempts to define him seem most satisfactory when nonanthropomorphic. Describing, for example, Jerome's native recklessness, Catherine talks of "that way he has of jumping out at people like electricity jumping a spark gap" (150). George's first impression of him is one of physical "ruthlessness," as he watches the pack of shoulder muscle shifting under Jerome's dinner jacket, and meeting him face to face George is struck "with an almost physical impact" (138) by Jerome's personality. This physical strength is not attenuated by any great intellectual nimbleness or cunning. When Jerome returns to Canada after having spent more than a decade of physical and mental deprivation in Nazi and Russian camps,

George is convinced that his survival is due to a "passionate, rash and irrefragable strength . . . He was not wise; he was not shrewd; he was not even clever; he had never learned or been taught how to adjust" (23).

Jerome's inability to "adjust" is recognized by all of the characters, although it is not always so gently phrased. One of his former acquaintances of the thirties who now, in the fifties, has made a very successful career out of his ability to adjust, demonstrates a frightened hostility towards Jerome's nonconformism. For Arthur Lazenby, the well-integrated civil servant: "'Martell in the Thirties was a fanatic. Not a crackpot exactly, but absolutely a lone wolf out of line with everyone'" (97). As is the case with Peggy Sanderson and Madeleine Dubois, Jerome does not fit any category; he cannot be labelled. Although he joins the communists to fight in Spain, MacLennan makes it emphatically clear at several points that Jerome is not a Party man. Perhaps only Catherine's assessment of him can sum up the man. When George asks her if her husband is a communist, Catherine replies: "He's just Jerome" (139). Jerome belongs to nothing or nobody but himself, he signs no contracts; he is individualism incarnate. When the cynical Adam Blore sneeringly calls Jerome a primitive, he provides a key to the nature of this individualism. There is about Jerome a strong aura of danger which all who come in contact with him feel. It is the danger of the primitive in the civilized world, akin

to the proverbial bull in the china shop. This primitive force in nature which characterizes Jerome's individuality has little use for the superstructures society erects to regulate human conduct; bluntly and directly, it seeks and destroys all obstacles and never calculates the possibilities of alternative routes to a goal.

In his own way, each character assesses Jerome's capability for destruction and each is frightened by it. Catherine, who presumably knows him best, anticipates the consequences that such a force can have in their lives. She recognizes that Jerome's terrible directness is explosive: "He explodes. Do you realize that, George-- Jerome explodes. It scares me. Sometime he's bound to explode wrong" (152). The more George gets to know Jerome, the more he shares Catherine's fear: "Here was a man to be deeply concerned about if you loved him, for his very vitality--the thing which marked him out from everyone else--made him violently impulsive" (164). The adverb "violently" is the key, as is Catherine's "explode wrong." Jerome, like Madeleine Dubois and Peggy Sanderson, moves in a climate charged with potential violence, but unlike Madeleine and Peggy, Jerome is as apt to destroy as to be destroyed when this violence finally breaks to the surface. As Adam Blore comments, in the least flattering terms:

"He's dumb, but he's dangerous. He's an idealist, and he has five times more energy than any normal man. Push a man like him outside your camp and what does he do? Nine times out of ten he tries to break in and capture it." (132)

Jerome's individualism is allied in another way to that of Peggy Sanderson and Madeleine Dubois. Jerome's force, like theirs has a strongly sexual nature. Adam Blore calls him a "stallion," while Jerome himself seems to excuse his marital infidelities with the surgical nurse Norah Blackwell partly on the grounds of his own rather demanding sexual needs. But these points are details in the overall portrait of Jerome as a kind of embodiment of quintessential maleness which strongly resists domesticity. The most striking evidence for the importance of the male principle in Jerome's life is the strange story of his early childhood in the wilds of a New Brunswick logging camp. In this all male domain Jerome develops strongly ambivalent attitudes towards the two sexes. His mother, the cook and the only woman in the camp, fiercely protects Jerome from any sexual abuse that the men might have inflicted on the young boy, but what he remembers most about her is her power:

She had power over those men, and the power went far past her control of their food. It came out of something inside of her that used to frighten me. (176)

The power that Jerome's mother had was a sexual one and because, according to Jerome, she hated and despised men as a group, she used this power to humiliate them in their maleness. Finally she pushes one man too far, mocking him for his poor sexual performance with "a jeer of unspeakable contempt" (180), and the outraged and hurt man kills her. Jerome overhears the whole encounter between his mother and

her murderer. In this critical moment when a reaction in one direction or the other will mark him forever, Jerome's sympathies are with the humiliated male and against his mother's frustrated femaleness:

He heard the man groan and cry something out, and then he heard his mother mock and scorn him, and Jerome remembered thinking: Don't let her treat you like that, Engineer! Please, please, please do something to make her stop treating you like that! (181)

Jerome's early and traumatic affirmation of his own maleness has inherent in it a denial of the female principle which he associates with a profound threat to his whole sex. Catherine later tells George that it is because of his experiences with his mother that Jerome has an "abnormal fear of displeasing a woman" (176). Jerome, however, will displease and bitterly hurt Catherine herself, because his fear is of women's very femaleness and any attempts that it makes to assert a power over him.

It is in relation to both Catherine, who comes to embody a female principle which opposes Jerome, and to George, who represents another kind of antithesis to Jerome, that MacLennan reveals his hero's status and the status of the community around him. Catherine herself realizes and Jerome comes to realize that for a time she had seemed to represent the end of his quest, a quest that Jerome defines in terms strikingly similar to those employed by Richler's Noah Adler when he tells George: "'A man must belong to something larger than himself. He must surrender to it'" (270). At one point in his life Jerome did belong to

something larger than himself. It is somehow consistent with his heroic stature that the things which happened to Jerome in childhood be of mythic proportions. Thus he escapes the corrupt heritage of lust and murder, and having emerged into a new life falls into the hands of Josephine and Giles Martell. As the little Anglican Minister comments to his wife, the coincidence of the Martells finding Jerome is almost miraculous; even more miraculous is Jerome's finding the Martells. For this unpretentious, somewhat comical little couple practise and teach Jerome a Christianity of such purity that it attains the quality of myth in our twentieth-century civilization. When Jerome goes to sleep the first night in the home of his adoptive parents he looks up at two pictures on the wall: a sailing ship in a storm, and Joshua Reynolds's "Age of Innocence." Jerome's life up to this point has certainly been like that of a ship battered in a storm, but in the Christianity of the Martells' he enters an age of innocence. He enters it with all of the passion and total commitment characteristic of his nature. Josephine later warns Catherine that she will never understand Jerome unless she understands that "while he was with them he had really thought of himself as a soldier of God" (216).

As a soldier of God Jerome goes off to World War I; he returns as a bitterly disillusioned, self-condemned murderer. The innocent Christianity practised by Josephine and Giles cannot survive the brutality, the carnage, the

sickness of a system in which men must murder each other. In particular Jerome loses his innocence when he kills a young German soldier. The rest of his life is an attempt to find something to replace his lost faith, something larger to which he can surrender himself. For a time he finds it in Catherine. She succeeds in filling "the vacuum left by his lost religion" (239). But Catherine is not, cannot be, the end of Jerome's quest, since she suffers the same deficiency, the same lack of a larger context that afflicts him. If Jerome is individualism incarnate, cut loose from any communal ties, an explosive, masculine, primitive force, then Catherine is the individual self, trapped, and isolated within a community that offers no shared values or beliefs to sustain its members. Catherine, or her plight, is, as Norah Blackwell says, "'a symbol of our sick civilization'" (277). MacLennan makes it clear in his whole presentation of this stricken woman, that while her courage, her determination, her sheer will to live despite a gravely damaged heart, are in the highest degree admirable, even heroic in their own right, they are entirely self-absorbing. The difference between Jerome's individual self-expression and Catherine's individual self-isolation is that the former bursts forward from the decaying community, while the latter remains in it and symbolic of it. As MacLennan phrases it, it is the difference between the male and the female principles. Jerome looks to a wider world and sees in it a sickness which is inherent in the very

systems upon which society is based; Catherine turns within herself to face the sickness which attacks every individual within this sick society. For MacLennan, the male and the female visions can never comprehend each other. Jerome is convinced that Catherine's way is completely alien to him:

"That wonderful woman, she loves me. She's a fighter, too. But against her fate, George. And she's a woman all the way through, and that means she's a private person." (270)

Catherine herself corroborates this interpretation of her feminine vision on several occasions. She explains to George that her inability to appreciate Jerome's concern with Fascism and the war in Spain is due to her limited female outlook on life:

He [Jerome] tells me a personal life doesn't matter in a time when millions are going to be killed. I suppose he's right, but I'm a woman and a personal life is all I can understand. (254)

Catherine, then, exists in relation to Jerome as a kind of equal but opposite force of individualism. Like Jerome, she embodies both what is most worthy to survive in her world, and what is so gravely wrong with it. In their equally strong individualism Jerome and Catherine can only be mutually destructive unless, or until, one of them finds the cure for the excess. Jerome, the hero, embarks on the quest for this cure, leaving Catherine in George's care. And it is in contrast to this man who remains behind that Jerome's heroic stature becomes most clearly focused. The antithesis to Jerome in the novel, the embodiment of communal weakness, is not Catherine but George Stewart.

Whereas Catherine represents a force equal but isolated from Jerome's, George represents a total absence of strength. The relationship between the two men is, in fact, one of exact opposites: George Stewart is Jerome Martell's alter ego.

Almost every one of Jerome's strengths finds a corresponding weakness in George.<sup>4</sup> Jerome is the brilliant surgeon, the epitome of success in his career. George is a failure, convinced that he has found his "true level in jobs at Waterloo" (121), a third-rate boarding school. Where Jerome is supremely self-confident to the point of obstreperousness, George as a child was categorized by his Aunt Agnes as "a cross between a muffin and a goblin, with a kindly idiot for a father and no confidence" (56). He never quite overcomes this assessment of his character. Where Jerome's masculinity is supremely virile, George actually admits to a less than normal sexual drive. Deeply in love with Catherine, whose sexual, if not emotional, desire is completely focused upon Jerome, George finds that he "lacked the animal vitality which makes it natural or even healthy for men to desire and make lusty love to women they merely like" (157). And where Jerome is a risk-taker, gambling for life, his own and that of others, George plays it safe. He is appalled at Jerome's ability to leave family, friends, and profession, for the Loyalist cause in Spain:

I asked myself how he could bear to leave all this. I remembered Adam Blore's remark that I was a middle-class man. Jerome had just said the same thing. I knew then better than ever before how greatly I had longed for a home and a family, and how much I would surrender to have them if the chance ever came. (272)

Nothing, in fact, more dramatically outlines the antithesis between these two men than George's attempts to explain Jerome's passionate commitment and his own relative indifference to the causes raised by the Spanish Civil War. Passion, which motivates Jerome, is fundamentally alien to George's nature:

Passion has a way of spilling over into all aspects of the human mind and feelings. It is the most dangerous thing in the world whether it focuses itself on love, religion, reform, politics or art. Without it the world would die of dry rot. But though it creates it also destroys. Having seldom been its victim I have only pity for those who are. (224)

In identifying the malaise of his world as "dry rot" George finds the mot juste for the disease which all of the previous protagonists have had to battle in one form or another as it existed in the world around them or even in themselves. And "dry rot" is precisely the diagnosis for George's own condition. Even as Jerome in his primitive, passionate expression of individual self represents the culmination of all the individual selves striving for expression in Peggy Sanderson, Madeleine Dubois, and the protagonists of Chapters III and IV, so George Stewart, conversely, in his willingness to surrender, in his need for the security of the group, in his cautious, fearful conventionality, represents the culmination of the communal identity

which eventually dominates Jim McAlpine and Alain Dubois; of the psychological barriers which cripple the spirit of Jules Lebeuf, Daniel Ainslie and David Canaan; and of the mixture of blindness, illusion, and tradition-bound values wielded by the authoritarian figures in the four novels of the preceding chapter.<sup>5</sup>

The crucial difference between The Watch that Ends the Night and the other novels is that in this novel MacLennan has separated communal and individual identities in two distinct characters. As in The Loved and the Lost and Poussière sur la ville, we encounter here the individual self completely cut off from communal ties. In the figure of Jerome, however, individualism is not embodied in a vulnerable woman who faces a strongly united community, but in an extraordinarily powerful man who defies a seriously weakened, vestigial community. The balance of power is tipped, for the first time, towards the individual; the community, for the first time, is no longer threatening but openly threatened with extinction as its individual members pursue their own self-interest. The individual self, totally liberated from the fabric of community, embodies the greatest potential evil in the world of The Watch that Ends the Night; Jerome, the embodiment of individualism, is its greatest potential enemy. The problem in terms of human freedom is a double one: Jerome's survival, as he is, represents the destruction of community, yet his extinction would signify the defeat of the individual, and thus the

whole cycle would recommence. MacLennan provides a double solution. Jerome sets out on his quest for a larger commitment, a larger cause within which he can fulfil himself as an individual. He encounters and defeats in his quest a configuration of himself, that aberration of the individual self within him that has found a monstrous form in the Fascists who threaten to destroy the whole world. Having created a hero of mythic proportions, MacLennan provides him with a dragon to slay, and he makes clear at several points that this dragon, the Fascists who are overwhelming Spain in the 1930s, who are employing torture as a standard means of warfare, are an incarnation of the potential evil in the individual. For Jerome they represent not only an evil greater than any specific historical or political movement--"the organization of every murderous impulse in the human being"(244)--they are also the end product of an economic system which is founded upon the supremacy of the individual. If it is the Fascists who are charming out the evil in human nature, "like a cobra out of its hole," it is "the capitalists [who] let them do it because they think it's good for business"(269). Laissez-faire capitalism is the economic system of individualism, and Fascism, the product of a capitalism unchecked, unbridled by any social concerns, is the incorporation of the rampant individualism that threatens all of the community in The Watch that Ends the Night. When Jerome embarks upon his quest for something larger to which he can surrender himself, he sets out

on a mission to purge both from himself and from the world the terrible burden of an individualism grown monstrous in its strength.

Jerome's departure begins a process of redemption that involves the three central figures of the novel: Jerome himself, George, and Catherine. And although he is absent from the scene of the action he remains the prime mover of the key events in George's and Catherine's lives. When news of his torture and death at the hands of the Nazis filters back to Canada several years later, allowing George and Catherine to marry and move into their "green isle" of happiness, the redemption seems complete (320). Yet this happiness, because it is merely an island and not an integrated part of the mainland, is doomed to fail. In marrying, George and Catherine do not form the nucleus of a new community. Catherine warns George that she cannot really give herself to him because she remains locked in her private battle, and George marries Catherine not to find his individual identity but to escape it. Even though Catherine warns George that "love, sought as an escape from the burden of the self, turns rapidly into a captivity" (315), he accepts, indeed welcomes, such a fate. The captivity remains sweet as long as he does not have to face any challenge, does not have to face the self he is trying to escape. But in marrying Catherine, George has inevitably placed himself in a position where he must face the greatest challenge-- Catherine's death and subsequent abandonment of him to himself.

As an embodiment of the feminine principle of the inner life, the isolated individual within the community fighting her private battle against a private fate, Catherine must inevitably lose; George, as inevitably must witness her defeat, seeing in it the defeat of every individual alone on his island of despair, cut off from any communal existence:

In the Thirties all of us who were young had been united by anger and by the obviousness of our plight; in the war we had been united by fear and the obviousness of the danger. But now, prosperous under the bomb, we all seem to have become atomized. Wherever I looked I saw people trying to live private lives for themselves and their families. Nobody asked the big questions any more. . . .

In the Thirties old John Donne had spoken for all of us when he declared that no man is an island entire of itself, that every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. In the bleak years we at least were not alone. In these prosperous years we were. The gods, false or true, had vanished. . . . How private my life with Catherine had become! (323)

Only someone who has gone beyond individual isolation, gone beyond the ultimate private fate of every individual, only someone who has gone beyond death, can resolve the dilemma which George faces. Jerome, who has died and been born again, comes back from his quest with the hero's boon: the secret of life and death which he imparts to Catherine and George.

Throughout the novel MacLennan establishes the three main characters as complementary aspects of the human condition, whose isolation from each other embodies the sickness of their world. Jerome, the male principle, an outward-turning explosive force of individual self, is unable to find expression within the community; Catherine, the female

principle, an isolated inward-turning force of individual self, exists within the community, but is cut off from communal expression, entirely absorbed in her own private battle; finally, George, the empty communal shell, the "dry rot" of the community, lacks the passionate individual identity which motivates the other two. The cure to the disease of divided selves, and thwarted or perverted self-expression, which afflicts the world in The Watch that Ends the Night must necessarily be found in a reintegration of the various facets of humanity isolated in the three characters. MacLennan attempts this by allowing the returned Jerome to integrate spiritually with Catherine, and "physically" with George. Male and female principles fuse; ego and alter ego become one.

In his first meeting with Catherine after his return Jerome explains to her the exact nature of the transformation which he has undergone. During the First World War where he killed men, Jerome lost his faith in Christianity, the system of beliefs to which he had given his allegiance. In the Second World War, where he almost loses his own life, Jerome finds a Jesus who is the personal extension of his own suffering humanity:

"One day I woke up and Jesus himself seemed to be in the cell with me and I wasn't alone. He wasn't anyone I had ever known before. He wasn't the Jesus of the churches. He wasn't the Jesus who had died for our sins. He was simply a man who had died and risen again. Who had died outwardly as I had died inwardly." (330)

Jerome then asks Catherine a question which establishes the basis of their mutual identity:

"You've done that yourself, haven't you?"  
"Yes," she said, "more than once." (330)

Jerome's identification of his battles and his triumphs with the battles and triumphs of Catherine constitutes not so much a welding of these two opposing forces, not so much a reconciliation of the male and female principles which have been at odds since the opening of the novel, as a surrender of one to the other. The incredible male physicality of Jerome's vital energy which was so evident in the earlier presentation of the character is now absent. The Jerome who returns from the battlefields of Spain, the Nazi and Russian camps, and the Chinese prisons, can finally reconcile his force with that of Catherine because he has been chastened, reduced, and refined to an almost spiritual essence. He has found an end to his quest for something larger to affirm in his recognition that the personal fate of each man is the universal fate of Everyman. Jerome had once believed the private battle against one's own fate to be insignificant without a larger context. Individual self-expression, uncommitted, unrestrained by any communal values, was potentially monstrous. But in destroying the monster Fascism, in destroying his own monstrous individual force, Jerome does not pass into community; he transcends his individual identity to become part of a universal self. When he returns to confront Catherine with his discovery, he finds that she has arrived at it before him. The intensity of

Catherine's will to live despite the death that has increasingly threatened her since childhood, has eventually transcended the limits of an individual life force, and become the universal value of Everyman. When Jerome finally meets and joins with George in a fusion of ego and alter ego, it is this female affirmation of life that he passes on to the weaker man.

Pushed to the edge of the void by Catherine's imminent death, George has already arrived at a philosophical affirmation of the life force and the individual struggle:

So the final justification of the human plight-- the final vindication of God Himself, for that matter-- is revealed in a mystery of the feelings which understand, in an instant of revelation, that it is of no importance that God appears indifferent to justice as men understand it. He gave life. He gave it. Life for a year, a month, a day, or an hour is still a gift. . . . the human bondage is also the human liberty. (344)

But such an affirmation is a beginning not an end to George's final transformation.<sup>6</sup> He has arrived only at a personal answer to a personal problem. In a remarkable quasi-mystical meeting with Jerome, George weakened and emotionally drained from witnessing Catherine's harrowing heart surgery, allows Jerome to break down his personal identity:

. . . I became conscious of him coming very close to me even though he did not move. Suddenly he seemed to be inside me, to be me, and I became dizzy and weak. (364)

George's resistance crumbles under the assault of Jerome's personality:

Slowly I turned on the couch and his face swam into focus and again I had this feeling that he was within me, that he was actually myself. (365)

Jerome gives George his own identity. Yet because Jerome has already passed beyond the limits of his individuality, what he offers George is a simultaneous discovery and transcendence of the individual self. He tells George what both he and Catherine have each learned, that he must learn how to crawl inside himself and die, he must lose his life of the individual before he can ever fully affirm the value of life itself:

"You see, George, I've been through all this. Not once but many times. So have millions of people. Each one of us is everybody, really. What scares us is just that. We want so much to be ourselves, but the time comes when we find we're everybody, and everybody is afraid. That's when you must die within yourself." (366)

To die within oneself and become everybody is not, paradoxically, to lose one's sense of individual worth, but the only way to gain it within the terms that MacLennan has established for this fictional world, where individual self-expression posed the single greatest threat to the life of the human community. The nature of this fictional world then imposes a restriction upon the concept of human liberty which emerges in the novel's resolution. At the end, George says "yes" simply to his own and Catherine's lives, seeing in them the foundation of a belief in all life:

All our lives we had wanted to belong to something larger than ourselves. We belonged consciously to nothing now except to the pattern of our lives and fates . . . Life was a gift; I knew that now. And so, much more consciously, did she. (372)

Human freedom is, then, for MacLennan, the freedom to live with the bomb hanging over your head, with death knocking at

the door, with the community disintegrating around you, with all 'isms' proven worthless, and to be free of the fear of these menaces. Human freedom is to transcend both communal and individual limits and affirm the gift of life.

MacLennan, thus, ends The Watch that Ends the Night on a note of high triumph, based upon transcendence. Yet there are ambiguities in such a conclusion, and they centre upon the figure of Jerome. The very fact that he is not present in the ending of the novel, having gone "out west-- or maybe its up north" (368), and Catherine and George are left to voice the final affirmation, suggests that something has been compromised in the merging of the three figures, that the final concept of human freedom itself is based upon a compromise in which the problems of community and individual that cannot be solved are left behind for the pursuit of a higher but very abstract sort of truth. The validity of such a compromise and its relevance to this study of human freedom form the focal point of the concluding discussion to the present chapter where it can be compared with the very similar compromise which closes Yves Thériault's Agaguk.

Agaguk is at once a simpler and a more complex novel than The Watch that Ends the Night. It is more complex in that Thériault presents in his protagonist, Agaguk, the composite of qualities which MacLennan divides between Jerome Martell and George Stewart. Thus, Agaguk has all of George's obtuseness combined with Jerome's vital explosive

force. What Agaguk does not share with George, however, is the acknowledged communal identity. Like Jerome Martell, Agaguk is individualism incarnate which rejects a disintegrating, decadent community. On the other hand, Agaguk presents a more simplified community than that found in The Watch that Ends the Night. Whereas Jerome is a primitive in the sophisticated and diversified world of Montreal, and his interests span the whole globe, Agaguk is a primitive in the primitive world of Eskimo tribal communities, and his interests are entirely focused upon the vast and deserted tundra of the Canadian North. This study contends, however, that in the complex world of Jerome and the simplified world of Agaguk, the protagonist confronts the same basic disease, that he fights and destroys it as it takes form in the external world, and finally that the monster which he conquers is not only an embodiment of the evil in his world, but a reflection of his own monstrous individualism.

The force of Agaguk's individualism lies in three basic aspects of his being--the same three which characterize Jerome Martell. Like Jerome, Agaguk is primitive, is intensely male, and, through his sexual force or physical skills, imposes his will on the world around him. Thériault does not need to establish Agaguk's primitiveness; it is a given of his existence as a member of a certain culture at a certain point in time.<sup>7</sup> But his maleness, of unparalleled importance in this primitive world, is emphasized from the opening pages. Both as a hunter and a husband it is Agaguk's

maleness which allows him to exercise complete individual domination over the animal world of the tundra, and absolute sexual authority over Iriook, the female who shares the tundra with him. At the age of eighteen he is already a "grand chasseur."<sup>8</sup> Listing the numerous animal species which inhabit the tundra, Thériault concludes, simply: "Et pour chacune de ces bêtes un sort fixé par Agaguk" (1:18). No less than the animals Iriook also finds her fate determined by her husband's will. With a primitive brutal force, Agaguk claims his sexual rights over her as he claims his hunting rights over the caribou, mink, wolf, and hare of the tundra. While MacLennan keeps a veneer of civilization in describing Jerome Martell's sexual force, allowing various characters to comment obliquely on it, Thériault emphasizes the primitiveness of Agaguk's. There is nothing oblique in the following description of Agaguk and Iriook's first sexual encounter:

Au troisième jour, quand ils arrivèrent à cet endroit choisi par Agaguk, l'homme délivra la fille de son fardeau, puis il jeta sa propre charge sur le sol. Sans attendre, il renversa Iriook, arracha le pantalon de peau de caribou qu'elle portait, détacha lui-même ses chausses et la prit, silencieusement. (1:13-14)

Agaguk's male force has one other notable aspect which ties it closely to that of Jerome Martell. Agaguk, like Jerome, refuses to accept any check upon his individual self-expression. Like Jerome, he has never learned to accommodate himself to the ways of the world. His refusal to accept any compromise to his absolute mastery over all that falls within his domain is most dramatically embodied in the

rage which overwhelms him when a strong wind whistles around his hut:

Soudain, Agaguk se roula par terre, atteignit des deux mains un sêchoir fait d'os de phoque. D'un geste fou il le brisa en cent morceaux. Et il hurlait sur une note, un son de rage, extraordinaire, nouveau pour Iriook. (1:21)

When a frightened Iriook asks him what is wrong, Agaguk replies with a phrase that reveals the most elemental aspect of his being: "Le vent, criait-il. Il est plus fort que moi! Rien ne doit être plus fort que moi" (1:21). This rage at a natural force which challenges the absoluteness of his own individual authority dramatically demonstrates the profundity of Agaguk's need to dominate, even as his rage at Iriook in the following chapter, when he cannot stop her tears, demonstrates the explosive danger of this primitive male force:

Alors, parce que ces pleurs affolaient Agaguk, parce qu'il se sentait impuissant à les tarir, une rage hystérique s'empara de lui.  
 Il la battit, de ses pieds et de ses poings, à coups furieux, jusqu'à ce qu'elle tombât inanimée.  
 (1:27)

In this act of frustrated power Thériault lays the basis for his portrayal of Agaguk. He is an individual whose superior skills, whose energy, and primitive strength in mastering the most severe of natural environments, prove him to be potentially the best man of his world, but whose individual potential is lost, even perverted, because it can acknowledge no check to its total self-expression; it recognizes no community or tradition which it can affirm.<sup>9</sup> Yet Agaguk is aware that such a tradition, a purer way of

Eskimo life, does or did exist. Leaving behind him the tribe which has fallen into decadence, he sets out with Iriook to seek a new life on the deserted tundra, hoping to find his own individual self-fulfilment in reestablishing there a traditional way of Eskimo life now practised only by the tribes who live far to the north of them. As the novel progresses it becomes increasingly evident that this ancient Eskimo culture of the extreme North, comes to represent a kind of religion for Agaguk, something which he can affirm and which will give a meaning to his individual existence. With the coming of summer and with the expected birth of a son, Agaguk turns to seek a godhead within it. He finds this divinity in the seal, the animal which inhabits the northern waters in the land of the original Eskimos. Listing the virtues of the seal and what it represents to the Eskimo people, repeating over in his mind the litany of the seal which he will pass on to his son, Agaguk arrives at the clearest statement of his goal:

La peau du phoque nous sert, petit. La chair du phoque aussi; elle nous nourrit. Avec les dents du phoque, et ses os, avec ses défenses, on fabrique des aiguilles, des outils . . . Avec la graisse, on alimente le feu, on éclaire l'igloo . . . Phoque-le-Père, le protecteur!

Pour un peu, il se serait jeté par terre en adoration. Et dire qu'il fallait traverser tout un pays pour aller chasser ce phoque!

Ici, on trouverait le caribou, parfois un orignal égaré, le loup, les renards . . . Mais le phoque précieux gîtait plus loin, beaucoup plus loin.

--Ce n'est pas assez, dit-il soudain, suant et soufflant d'effort.

.. . . .  
 --La 'chasse' ici, c'est la chasse des Blancs. Les Inuit, les hommes comme moi, il en faut plus au Nord. Il nous faut aller habiter avec les derniers Esquimaux, ceux du dos de la terre, les Kidlinermeun.  
 (1:112-13)

Agaguk, along with Iriook and his new son Tayaout do go North where Agaguk magnificently confirms his reputation as a great hunter by the quantity and quality of his seal catch. He does not stay to live with the "Kidlinermeun," however, but returns to the tundra, to the transitional frontier world of Eskimo and white cultures which has formed him, and in which he must find his place. The principal conflict Agaguk undergoes centres upon his attempts, on the one hand, to regain the purity of the original Eskimo tradition, and his failure, on the other hand, to realize that such an attempt will force him to reject not only the corrupt community of his birth, but the very same corruption that forms the basis of his own identity. Like Jerome, Agaguk must die within himself and be reborn before he can reach his goal. The necessary first step in this process is his identification of the decadence in the way of life now followed by the other members of his village. The focal point of Agaguk's revolt against his tribe lies in his father's marriage to an Indian after the death of Agaguk's mother. By taking as his wife a despised Montagnaise, Ramook threatens to corrupt the purity of the Eskimo line. That Ramook is chief of the tribe implies also that the decadence goes beyond the personal level, and taints the whole community. The character of Ghorok, the sorcerer, is also indicative of the tribe's moral life. Portraying him as "cruel et déterminé" (1:30), Thériault explains how Ghorok, with Ramook's approval, holds the superstitious members of

the tribe in fear of his powers:

Sorcier d'une façon, complice et acolyte de Ramook de l'autre, toutes choses propres à le faire craindre et même haïr dans la tribu. Mais qui eût osé l'affronter? (1:30-31)

Yet, the adage that a society--or a tribe--usually has the leaders which it deserves, seems to be true in the case of Agaguk's people. Ramook and Ghorok embody rather than originate a general decadence of the tribe. The failure of the village men to take Agaguk's part against a white trader who traffics in contraband alcohol and who blatantly cheats Agaguk of his furs, indicates a breakdown of that tribal solidarity so fundamental to Eskimo life:

Pour beaucoup des hommes du village, c'était un bienfait qu'un Blanc trafiquât de l'eau-de-vie. Prendre parti pour Agaguk risquait de tarir la source de joie. Prendre parti pour le Blanc eût indisposé Agaguk qui pouvait invoquer les traditions, la solidarité tribale . . . . (1:39)

The abandonment of the shared communal values in which each individual finds his greatest good in the good of the whole, clearly indicates the decadence of Agaguk's community. And that such decadence should be represented by the members' preference for drunkenness, reveals quite clearly the disease which afflicts them. Drunk, the individual creates a world of his own fantasy, completely isolating himself from the needs of others. Rampant individualism is the rot at the heart of Agaguk's world. Seeing it in Ramook, in Ghorok, and in the members of his tribe, Agaguk instinctively rejects it, but failing to recognize it in himself, he carries it with him on his quest for a renewed

tradition. And in a final symbolic act, before quitting the tribe definitively, Agaguk reveals that, like Jerome in The Watch that Ends the Night, he is both victim and bearer of the evil in his world. Prompted by Ghorok's promises of a profitable trade with a white man who is staying with the tribe Agaguk returns to his village one last time. In the figure of Brown the white trader, Agaguk confronts the very embodiment of a corrupt and corrupting white civilization which exploits and undermines the Eskimo way of life for its own profit. When the trader insists that Agaguk take alcohol in exchange for his skins instead of the necessary staples which Agaguk demands, and when he keeps the furs and ejects the Eskimo from his tent at gunpoint, Agaguk takes his revenge by burning the white man alive in his hut. Although Agaguk's victim is less attractive than the young German soldier whom Jerome kills in The Watch that Ends the Night, the two murders have a similar significance in the lives of the protagonists. Both Jerome and Agaguk are drawn by the decadence of their worlds into committing a decadent act themselves.

One crucial difference, however, separates the two men: MacLennan's protagonist is immediately repelled by his act, but Agaguk's repugnance is only for the victim, not for the act itself. Although, like Jerome, Agaguk rejects the society in which such an evil as the white trader can thrive, he does not realize, as Jerome does, that he carries part of that evil within himself. Having burnt Brown

in the hut which belonged to him before he left the village, Agaguk departs this second and final time with the belief that he has symbolically and ritually extinguished all trace of himself from his old life:

Agaguk, son ballot au dos, s'éloignait du village à grands pas, en direction de la rivière où l'attendait Iriook.

Comme un vent froid soufflait sur la toundra et que les loups avaient faim, Agaguk oublia vite l'acte qu'il venait de commettre. Rien dans l'esprit, seulement le vide bruissant de la toundra, l'effort des muscles, le hurlement des loups porté sur le vent.

Au village, il ne restait déjà plus rien de la hutte qui, autrefois, avait été la sienne. (1:44)

Agaguk is caught in a trap of evil that corrupts both white and Eskimo society, and he will have a deadly, almost fatal battle to escape from it. In the early stages of the quest, however, events so favour him and so further the realization of his goal that he does not feel his bondage.

A brief encounter with white civilization at the trading post hints at a force able to challenge Agaguk's individual will. But set against this check is a major advancement in his quest. With the birth of his son Tayaout, Agaguk sees himself regaining the place he has lost in the Eskimo tradition:

. . . Agaguk souriat . . . entrant soudain dans un rêve beau et grand où son fils Tayaout devenait le héros de toutes les tribus, l'homme chanté aux soirées d'igloo.

Chasseur légendaire . . .

Puissant comme les blizzards . . .

Plus grand que tous les héros de la tradition . . .

Tayaout, fils d'Agaguk!

C'était un leitmotiv difficile à taire: fils d'Agaguk, engendré de sa semence, son produit à lui, chair de sa chair, issu d'un père que l'on chanterait aussi . . .

Fils d'Agaguk! (1:118-19)

Yet, Agaguk's attitude towards his son reveals the mixed values which are operating upon him. Although he plans, through Tayaout, to reintegrate himself into a community and refind his own communal identity, he would create in his son an exact replica of his own absolute individualism. Tayaout the male, will have mastery of all he surveys; a primitive force of destruction; he will mete out death to any who oppose him. Agaguk wants his son to have a taste for blood. It is precisely when the child, dipping his finger in the wound of a freshly killed hare and sucking the blood, demonstrates such a taste, that Agaguk sees a promise of future glory:

Une image qui le hantait comme quelque joie profonde et originelle et qui chassait le sommeil. Que de rêves à faire! Tayaout musclé, debout devant le grand ours blanc, fusil en garde, tirant, abattant la bête, ne cédent pas un pouce à la frayeur, bravant et défiant l'animal.

.....  
 Tayaout devant vingt loups, les défiant autant qu'il défiait l'ours, tirant à coup sûr, abattant les bêtes, les décimant avant même qu'elles trouvent en elles l'élan pour attaquer l'homme.

Triomphant encore, et toujours! (1:124)

Agaguk, thus, in all of his primitive force, his hunter's pride, and his male mastery of the world, imagines a son who is his reflection and his ideal: fearless, brutal, capable of almost superhuman feats of courage, daring and death.

What is missing from Agaguk's image is the thought which directs the action, the moral sense which judges the worth of fearlessness and force, the love of life which balances the necessity of death. Agaguk cannot teach these

things to his son because he does not possess them himself. They will come from Iriook, from the female principle as it exerts itself against the male principle, demanding its right to exist in a world which completely despises it. Before Jerome Martell in The Watch that Ends the Night could accept Catherine and the female principle of universal life which she represents, his own maleness, his force, his energy, his brutal strength had to be chastened and almost destroyed: he had to die as an individual and be born again as Everyman. Before Agaguk can even see Iriook and the female force of universal life which she embodies, he will undergo a similar struggle which chastens his male strength, and destroys his identity as an individual. Only after he is so reduced can he begin the long process of accepting those values embodied in the female principle. It is clear that Catherine in The Watch that Ends the Night and Iriook in Agaguk are very different characterizations of this female essence. Where Catherine's force is all spiritual, Iriook has a physical vitality that almost matches her husband's. Yet all of Iriook's strength, physical and spiritual, like the spiritual power of Catherine, finds its raison d'être in a single goal--to promote by all and every means, in the face of every and any obstacle, the continuation of life. And even as the society's sickness in The Watch that Ends the Night is symbolized by Catherine's total isolation within her world, so too in Agaguk, the suppression of all female rights, of all female voice, the total rejection

of the feminine principle, is the rot in the body of the disintegrating tribal community. Catherine and Iriook, then, like Jerome and Agaguk, stand in their respective worlds for the same values, the same denied potential. More noteworthy even than this double resemblance, however, is the similarity in the process through which both men go to arrive at an acceptance of the female principle, and an affirmation of life over death.

Thériault, like MacLennan, externalizes all of the evil present in the decaying community and in the protagonist himself, and isolates it in a force so terrible, so monstrous, that only a very special man of an equally monstrous force could meet and overcome it. He gives his protagonist an enemy which he can battle using his own special skills. Agaguk, one of the greatest hunters in his world, fights the terrible white wolf, relying at first on his skill, but finally on the brute strength of his individual forces. From the first appearance of the white wolf in the novel, Thériault leaves no doubt that the creature, much like the Fascism against which Jerome battles, is an embodiment of evil. When Agaguk realizes that the target of this healthy, young, male wolf is his son Tayaout he knows that he is not dealing with any ordinary animal:

Le loup blanc n'était pas un animal de la toundra.  
Il n'était pas une bête de la nature. Il était quelque  
mauvais esprit, un agiortok, venu harceler Agaguk.  
(2:27)

Agaguk can only comprehend such an evil in terms of a punishment for some offence he has committed. Yet he carries

no weight of guilt for Brown's murder. He does not even recognize that the act is in any way morally suspect:

La mort de Brown? Mais l'homme avait tenté de voler Agaguk. Il n'y avait là que la vengeance normale, une revanche que sa conscience d'Esquimaux approuvait pleinement.

Pourquoi les mauvais esprits s'acharnaient-ils contre lui pour avoir, en somme, débarrassé le monde d'un trafiquant malhonnête? Personne n'était venu lui reprocher son geste. (2:27-28)

Agaguk is ignorant of the fact that Henderson, a white RCMP officer, has come to his village to investigate the death of Brown. There are then two external forces which threaten Agaguk:<sup>10</sup> the law of the white world which could take his life in punishment for the murder of Brown, and the outraged force of nature, the evil spirit which threatens Agaguk's life and the life of his precious son.

Against Henderson, Agaguk stands no chance of victory. Naïve, unpractised in the ruses of the other villagers, all of his strength, courage, and special skills would be for nought. But Thériault, like MacLennan, creates a situation in which his protagonist can fight the evil of his world and the evil in his own nature, by using all of the force which is wasted and even destructive when confined to the accepted channels of social relations. As Agaguk details, one by one, the things about the white wolf which so terrify him, the reader becomes aware of the identity between the strange animal and Agaguk himself. The wolf is young, healthy, and would be the uncontested leader of a pack, yet against all laws of nature, he is a solitary, having left his kind to prowl alone on the tundra.

The evil spirit embodied by the wolf is the spirit of absolute individualism--an individualism which Thériault, as the novel progresses, identifies increasingly with the male principle of death and destruction. From the beginning it is clear that the white wolf threatens Agaguk's maleness. Because his prodigious hunting skills seem to be ineffective against the cunning of the animal, Agaguk feels the wolf as a force which he cannot dominate. And Agaguk's peculiarly male individual supremacy depends upon his power to dominate all things in his world:

Il éprouvait une rage immense, la rage qui le possédait chaque fois que devant lui se dressait une puissance invincible. (2:26)

In the final battle, a body to body combat between man and animal, the wolf proves not to be an invincible force. Agaguk's own strength dominates one more time. But the death of the wolf, far from being a triumph of the male principle, is the beginnings of its defeat. In killing the wolf, Agaguk kills a part of himself. Literally losing a portion of his face in the jaws of the animal, he loses the very force which constitutes his maleness, which allows him to impose his individual will on the world around him: Weak, bleeding, his face half gone, his identity destroyed, Agaguk returns to place what remains of his life in the hands of Iriook, the female. He has died as an individual; his rebirth, his new identity, will be that which Iriook fashions for him.

While Agaguk battles and defeats one enemy, his other enemy, the other mirror image of himself, also meets defeat in his battle to outwit the tribe and discover the murderer of Brown. As Gérard Bessette demonstrates in his study of the novel, Thériault carefully parallels these two confrontations, switching back and forth from village to tundra in succeeding chapters.<sup>11</sup> Ramook, in keeping with the moral degeneracy that he has already demonstrated, shoots the departing Henderson in the back, and by castrating the still living policeman asserts the destruction of the other's maleness and the triumph of his own:

--L'homme, disait-il, l'homme est le plus fort . . .  
 Il disait Inuk en parlant de l'homme, il parlait  
 seulement de l'Esquimau. Il ne parlait pas du Blanc.  
 --L'homme est le plus fort.  
 D'un revers du couteau il trancha le sexe et  
 Henderson poussa un cri horrible. (2:37)

In throwing Henderson's genitals to the village women to eat, Ramook inflicts insult upon injury; not only has he destroyed Henderson's maleness, he has given it to females to devour. In the value system of the tribe no worse fate could befall a man. Yet on the tundra Agaguk lies helpless. Although not emasculated in body, he is deprived of the one thing which most constituted his maleness: Agaguk is no longer "le plus fort," he is no longer able to dominate his world. On the contrary, he depends for his very life upon the strength of a female, a strength of which up until this point he is entirely unaware.

The extent to which Agaguk can accept Iriook's strength, building a new identity upon its values, and the

extent to which he rejects it as a threat to his maleness, provide the parameters for measuring his success in the quest to transcend the limits of his individual identity, and affirm something larger than himself. Up to this point in the novel Iriook has appeared as the hard-working helpmate of her husband, his agreeable sexual partner, the mother of his son, and even the wise counsellor during the seal hunt. With Agaguk helpless and near death, her own forces burst into prominence. Not only does she dress Agaguk's wounds and care for his physical needs, she reveals herself as heir to a spiritual power dating back to her ancestors among the original Eskimo people of the far North. Iriook, then, giver of life is also the unsuspected guardian of that tradition which Agaguk so desperately wishes to rejoin:

Chaque jour, elle allait sur le pas de la porte, là où reposait encore la carcasse du loup, pour prendre dans la gueule béante un peu de bave visqueuse, puis elle traçait sur la graisse des signes étranges. En même temps elle murmurait des mots qu'Agaguk ne comprenait pas. Des mots bizarre, au rythme nouveau. Et cela lui rappelait, à lui qui était des lignées de la toundra, qu'Iriook, elle, descendait par ceux venus avant elle, des peuples du dos de la terre, bien qu'elle n'en connût rien sauf ce que lui racontait sa mère quand elle était enfant. (2:47)

Every step that Iriook takes to ensure the livelihood of her family is a major infringement upon Agaguk's traditional rights as a man. When the snows come and she is forced to build the winter igloo, she helps the weakened Agaguk into the new lodging all the time excusing herself for such an unseemly display of strength. As she shoulders

the rifle and departs on the hunt she recognizes that her actions are "contre toute tradition" (2:57). These chapters dealing with Iriook's fight for life on the isolated tundra end by underlining how much greater her fight will be to establish her values of life in the spirit of her husband than it was merely to save his physical life. Iriook is under no illusions about her importance in his eyes:

Il restait sa possession la plus précieuse. Plus précieuse même que ce Tayaout qu'il lui avait fait. Cela cependant resterait son secret car, pour Agaguk, l'enfant était plus précieux que toute femme, elle ne devait jamais l'oublier. (2:64)

While Iriook exercises the force of life on the isolated tundra, the village community openly reveals the force of death which rules it. When a group of RCMP officers arrive to investigate the disappearance of Brown and Henderson, Ramook betrays Agaguk to them in order to save his own skin. He even goes so far in his treachery as to have Ghorok plant in Agaguk's tent the rifle which he himself used to kill Henderson. So profoundly does Ramook's betrayal of his son outrage traditional Eskimo solidarity that even the corrupt Ghorok is shocked by Ramook's act. The reaction of the RCMP officer reveals to what extent the tribe has fallen into decadence:

De toute son expérience de l'Arctique, il voyait pour la première fois un Esquimau trahir l'un des siens d'une manière aussi grossière. Ce qui était plus inconcevable encore, son propre fils! (2:75)

Ramook's action not only reveals his own moral decadence, it also sets the stage for a climactic confrontation on the

tundra between the force of life and the force of death, between the male principle and the female principle.

Ramook leads the police to Agaguk's hut, prepared to deliver him to death or lifelong imprisonment, but the Agaguk whom Ramook and the police come to claim no longer exists.

Agaguk's death, the death of the individual, is overtly acknowledged for the first time. Significantly, Iriook announces it:

--Agaguk n'existe plus, fit Iriook d'une voix sourde. Je ne sais ce qu'il est devenu, mais je sais qu'il n'existe plus. Il est parti de son village, et cela suffit pour qu'il ait cessé d'exister. (2:86)

When the policeman presses Iriook, she becomes even more explicit in detaching Agaguk from his old identity and his tribal ties:

-- . . . Agaguk a quitté son village. Il a cessé d'être Agaguk. Il n'est plus le fils de la tribu, il n'est plus le fils de Ramook. Il n'existe plus. (2:87)

Having definitively rejected Agaguk's old identity, and saved his life in so doing, Iriook faces the task of moulding for him a new identity based upon the affirmation of a universal life force which transcends all individual self-expression. But her progress is painfully slow. There remains within Agaguk a reserve of brute resistance to Iriook's moral reasoning.

Inevitably Iriook's increasing power and Agaguk's abating mastery lead to a clash. Despite the fact that Agaguk is much chastened in his battle with the white wolf, he is not yet prepared to acknowledge a force stronger than

his own, particularly when this force is a female one. Fighting, as a woman, for the right of a female child to exist in this male world, Iriook makes her final stand against Agaguk's maleness. In doing so she lays down the terms for the crucial confrontation between the male and the female principle: her right to keep a female child. Iriook begins her campaign for the life of her unborn daughter with an argument stronger than any Agaguk can offer in opposition. And the woman's strength is what Agaguk's maleness cannot tolerate:

Agaguk se dandina sur une jambe, puis sur l'autre. Il rageait en lui-même. Ramook avait presque raison: pourquoi laisser une femme parler si haut?

--Tais-toi! cria-t-il.

Mais Iriook implorait.

--Je veux garder la fille! Je l'ai gagnée . . .

Le mot était brutal comme une gifle. Ainsi, elle discutait dorénavant . . .

. . . . .  
--Tu parles trop haut! cria-t-il.

Son poing partit, s'abattit sur la joue d'Iriook.

Puis Agaguk fut sur elle, la frappant à coups de pieds, à grands jabs du poing fermé. (2:114)

To underline the appropriateness of Agaguk's instinctive reference to Ramook and tribal values in his attack upon Iriook, Thériault counterpoints this scene on the tundra with one of parallel moral significance in the village. When the police arrest Ramook and Ghorok for the murder of Henderson, the tribe looks for a new chief. The man of their choice, Oonak, because he does not wish the responsibility of the chiefdom, accepts only on condition that the tribe appoint a council of women as well as a council of men to aid in the decision making. His proposal

elicits almost unspeakable contempt from the male villagers. At the mention of women they spit on the ground, laugh, and finally turn their back on him, disgusted. Agaguk's treatment of Iriook seems to place him solidly in sympathy with the corrupt tribal values, but in fact he now exists in a moral limbo, not sure of what values he holds, or of what identity he can claim. Although as yet unable to fully accept Iriook's life values, Agaguk, when he refuses the villagers' offer of the chieftdom, refuses a value system based upon death. His decision not to take the position is instinctive and of mixed motive. Partly, he wishes to spare Iriook the insults and indignities of a woman in the village life; partly, he does not want to share her, his most precious possession, with the other males of the tribe. It is finally Iriook, however, who must articulate for Agaguk precisely what values he has rejected in refusing the chieftdom. She understands, if Agaguk does not, that the tribe only wishes Agaguk as its leader because he has the one quality necessary to a hero in their world; in killing a man--a white man at that--and avoiding punishment for it, Agaguk has reached the furthest limits of individual self-expression which denies life to anything that stands in its way:

Iriook cracha sur la mousse.  
 --Un héros qui a tué, est-ce un héros?  
 Agaguk ne savait pas. Il hésitait soudain.  
 (2:130-31)

Upon this hesitation Iriook begins to lay the basis for their continued life on the tundra. She sets out for Agaguk the conditions by which he can purchase his new identity. To prove that he has totally rejected the moral values of the corrupt community he must adopt a morality that is completely alien to the villagers' understanding: "Pour une vie enlevée, il faut en donner une" (2:137). In demanding that Agaguk allow their female child to live, Iriook asks him, ultimately, to judge the world as a woman does. To feel regret for having killed Brown is "un sentiment de femme" (2:138). With all of the power left in him Agaguk fights this sentiment, fights against the force of life with which Iriook attempts to overwhelm his force of destruction. Despite his promise to Iriook that he will let the child live, he decides to destroy it, for only by retaining his power to deal death can he protect his maleness and resist the female force:

La fille ne survivrait pas, il ne fallait pas qu'elle survive. Ne serait-ce que pour enseigner à la femme la place précise qu'elle devrait occuper dans la vie de son homme.


Femelle, femelle au grand coeur, bonne et laborieuse, rusée aussi et habile à chasser autant que l'Inuk, mais pas plus qu'une femelle.

Le maître, c'était lui. (2:142-43)

Agaguk goes back on his word to Iriook because it is the only way to maintain his supremacy. But he does muster a kind of rationale to support his decision. His last defense against the principle of life which mother and female child embody is a cold logic dictated by the laws of survival. Agaguk reasons that he will not kill his daughter simply to

perpetuate the traditional customs, but for the excellent reasons of holding off the ever present threat of starvation on the empty tundra. If at any time in the next few years the food supply should fail, a girl would be "une bouche inutile."

In not presenting Agaguk as a monster but as a reasoning, rational man who opts for infanticide as the lesser of two evils--immediate death of one rather than lingering famine of four at a later date--Thériault allows us to appreciate the validity of Agaguk's struggle. Like George Stewart who cannot see the point of Catherine's living only to suffer and eventually die, Agaguk is faced with the most fundamental question which ever confronts the individual: what is life worth? George has Jerome to infuse within him a belief in the sanctity of life. Agaguk will have to arrive at this affirmation himself. And eventually he does. After the birth of the daughter whom Iriook predicted, Agaguk is on the point of killing the baby when Iriook intervenes, gun in hand. But although Iriook reasons, argues, and threatens, she leaves the final decision of life and death in the hands of Agaguk himself. Her last weapon in the battle is one that she is entirely unaware of employing. When a look of hatred spreads over her features, Agaguk finally arrives at the question that will allow him to opt for the life of the female child, to opt for life itself:



S'il tuait sa fille, c'était du même coup Iriook qu'il tuait. Ou du moins il tuait tout ce qui chez sa femme lui avait été de la joie, du plaisir.  
(2:156)

By not killing the girl, Agaguk surrenders to Iriook, to the female principle of life. In Agaguk's surrender, in Iriook's victory, Thériault sees Agaguk's own victory. In affirming life, Agaguk fulfils his quest. He says "yes" to something larger than his own individual life.

As George Stewart is finally freed from the society, its politics, and its insoluble problems when he fully accepts the risk of life with Catherine, so Agaguk, in accepting the risk of life in his daughter, finds his final liberation from the community he has left. Redeemed, transformed, his new identity found, Agaguk is touched by the same miracle as that which metamorphosizes George Stewart in the final pages of The Watch that Ends the Night. As Jerome physically transforms George, infusing him with the spiritual force that will allow him to transcend his own individual identity, so Agaguk infused by the female life force physically transcends his own individual limitations--his ravaged face becomes beautiful in Iriook's eyes:

Aux instants sombres de sa grossesse, alors que dans l'étroite enceinte de l'igloo, elle n'arrivait que difficilement à vivre devant la face mutilée de son homme, elle n'aurait pas cru possible que cette hideur pût un jour lui paraître belle. Et c'était pourtant le miracle qui se produisait.

Agaguk devant elle, presque beau?

Il l'aida à s'étendre, la fille à ses côtés. En lui montait une tiédeur, une plaisance toute chaude qu'il n'avait jamais encore éprouvée. Il était heureux. Il ne voulait plus combattre. Il ne voulait plus obéir

aux traditions. La fille vivrait parce qu'Iriook le voulait ainsi. Il touchait à sa femme, ses mains comme une caresse. Et elle touchait à la fille.  
(2:158)

Iriook wonders what she can give Agaguk in return for the daughter he has allowed to live. Minutes later she delivers the infant girl's twin brother. The implication of this male birth cover a variety of possibilities: Thériault's attempt to balance the perhaps overwhelming nature of the female victory? a promise in this twin birth of male and female that the new line will be an equal matching of the two sexes? In any case, the ending of the novel leaves a slight ambiguity, as does the ending of The Watch that Ends the Night. And the concluding discussion of this chapter addresses itself to the ambiguities inherent in each novel and their relevance to the central question of human freedom.

To introduce the discussion, it is worthwhile examining the mixed critical opinion which both novels have elicited. Some critics are prepared to accept the positive note of redemption sung by both Thériault and MacLennan in the concluding passages of the novels. Hermann Boeschstein, while admitting some reservations about both Jerome and George, obviously finds the ending of The Watch that Ends the Night quite convincing: "These final chapters are among the best that MacLennan has written. . . . the impression remains that we are dealing here with deep and genuine human relationships."<sup>12</sup> Robert D. Chambers is even more specific in his acceptance of the final redemption and

regeneration of all three main characters: "Jerome, Catherine, and George find the wellsprings of new life in what is essentially a religious source . . . George Stewart grows beyond a mere expression of his generation, Canadian or otherwise."<sup>13</sup>

In the case of Agaguk, which unlike The Watch that Ends the Night ends with a birth not an imminent death, the redemption is even more easily acceptable. Allison Mitcham feels that in the end, Agaguk's "creative instincts" balance his destructive ones, "partly at least as a result of his "heightened awareness of both Iriook and Nature."<sup>14</sup> Renald Bérubé, after explaining how Agaguk's original rejection of his community does not imply a total demand for independence on his part since he plans to start a nuclear community with Iriook, concludes that the final affirmation of the novel places "En face de l'échec de la tribu, la réussite du couple Iriook-Agaguk."<sup>15</sup> This hyphenation of the two proper names is highly significant. Bérubé sees Agaguk, finally, not as complete individual but as half of a couple. Réjean Robidoux and André Renaud share this interpretation. Although they recognize Agaguk's initial position as one of isolated independence: "Tel qu'il se livre à nous à travers ses actes, et se révèle à ses propres yeux, Agaguk est un être unique: solitaire, conscient de sa personnalité,"<sup>16</sup> they conclude, like Bérubé, with the triumph of the couple, not of Agaguk as an individual. The final liberation in the novel is for them, "l'émancipation du couple lui-même."<sup>17</sup>

To justify this emphasis on the couple at the expense of an autonomous protagonist there is Thériault's own statement of intent towards the final relationship of Agaguk and Iriook: "Si on analyse en profondeur ces deux êtres, il apparaîtra bientôt qu'ils ne font peut-être qu'un Irook [sic] étant une sorte de dédoublement d'Agaguk."<sup>18</sup>

In the case of both Agaguk and The Watch that Ends the Night, however, there are voices which dispute the triumphant conclusions, saying that the price paid for the victories, such as they are, is too high. For Peter Buitenhuis and Patricia Morley the main difficulty in accepting the message of redemption at the end of The Watch that Ends the Night is that it becomes largely disembodied, a kind of abstract philosophizing. Essentially Morley's complaint is against the character of George, since she cannot find him a convincing portrayal of the "Incarnation"--Jerome's spirit in George's flesh--which MacLennan would obviously have us accept him as:

MacLennan cannot believe in the resurrection of the body, only of the spirit. And if there is no resurrection of the body, then spirit appears as the final value. The traditional Christian fusion of body and spirit depends upon the doctrine of the Incarnation. When spirit has penetrated matter and fused to make a new creation, then matter can be the true expression of spirit.<sup>19</sup>

Buitenhuis also blames a weakness at the end of the novel on George, finding him simply too shallow a character to carry the greatness of spirit transmitted to him by Jerome:

"George increasingly becomes a tiresome and insistent dominie, who keeps coming to the reader, grabbing him by the sleeve

and saying 'I tell you. . . .' He goes on to do so at great length and often with quotations from the New Testament to prove his point."<sup>20</sup> The strongest statement of dissatisfaction with George and his supposed redemption comes from Robert Cockburn, who finds George slightly "contemptible," a "broken reed." Cockburn concludes that, because George is a figure with whom we would not choose to identify, "his ultimate regeneration is liable to be taken less seriously than it should be."<sup>21</sup>

Both Robert Larin and André Brochu raise equally serious objections to the ending of Agaguk, refusing to see in it a triumph for the protagonist. Both believe that Agaguk pays too high a price for his redemption. In his "Essai de psychocritique d'Agaguk d'Yves Thériault," Larin discovers something decidedly unhealthy in the final relationship of Agaguk-Iriook, celebrated by the previously mentioned critics. For him, the couple does not represent "l'équilibre que certains ont vu," but a kind of perverted bondage: "En réalité il ne s'agit pas d'un lien d'égal à égal mais encore d'un lien de maître à esclave ou plutôt de maîtresse à esclave."<sup>22</sup> André Brochu, closer to the central interest of this study, examines "Individualité et collectivité dans Agaguk, Ashini et Les Commettants de Caridad," and arrives at essentially the same conclusion as Larin. Starting from the statement of Thériault cited above concerning the Agaguk-Iriook relationship, Brochu expresses a regret at the necessity of such a compromise:

Il est très significatif que, par souci de cohérence, l'auteur doive sacrifier partiellement son personnage principal et compromettre ainsi, malgré tout, l'unité de son livre. Agaguk, comme personnage, n'arrive pas à exister pleinement et de façon autonome, il lui faut le redoublement d'un personnage qui est à la fois lui-même et un autre.<sup>23</sup>

Brochu could equally be describing the Jerome-George-Catherine relationship as well as that of Agaguk-Iriook. In both novels the authors embody the final victory in a figure who is a kind of composite--or compromised--individual. In Agaguk, this figure is that of the couple with Iriook standing slightly in the forefront; in The Watch that Ends the Night it is also ostensibly the couple George-Catherine; in fact, it is a cryptic triangle of Jerome-George-Catherine with Catherine at the head.

One might, of course, see in these composite protagonists the authors' attempts to present a new balance which will serve as the basis of a renewed and healthier community. Yet there is no doubt that in both of these novels the community, as it exists, is not redeemed but rejected. Jerome, his alter ego George, and Agaguk, transcend their individual identities not to rejoin community but to turn their backs upon it. Perhaps such a conclusion conforms to the pattern Joseph Campbell describes when he points out that the hero who has departed from his community and fought the forces of evil "has died as a modern man; but as eternal man--perfected, unspecific, universal man--he has been reborn."<sup>24</sup> In the terms of our study of human freedom, the protagonist's rebirth is not into a communal

self-expression nor into a new individual self-expression, but a transcendence of both communal and individual identities in an affirmation of a universal principle of life. The following chapter turns from these stories of extraordinary individuals to examine the lives of very unheroic, unexceptional, almost banal figures, in order to see if they can find an expression of individual self within their communities.

A handwritten signature or mark, possibly a stylized 'Z' or 'J', located in the lower right quadrant of the page.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Heroes and Anti-Heroes: a Reader in Depth, edited by Harold Lubin (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1968), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Hugh MacLennan, The Watch that Ends the Night (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1958), p. 5. All further citations from the novel refer to this edition and will be indicated by page numbers in the text.

<sup>4</sup>George Woodcock in Hugh MacLennan, Studies in Canadian Literature, no. 5 (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing Co., 1969), p. 109, expresses basically the same idea when he describes George as "a humble foil for the heroic Jerome."

<sup>5</sup>D. G. Jones in Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 158, compares George Stewart with David Canaan and Jim McAlpine, finding all three "intimidated by the world around [them]."

Walter O'Hearn in "A Sense of Wonder Preserved and Shared," Hugh MacLennan, ed. Paul Goetsch, Critical Views on Canadian Writers, no. 8 (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1973), p. 118, describes George Stewart as "the man of average sensuality (and, one is tempted to add, of average intellect) . . ."

<sup>6</sup>George's verbal affirmation is also as dubious as that made by Sandor Hunyadi at the end of Under the Ribs of Death, or Fabrice Navarin in Mon Fils pourtant heureux.

<sup>7</sup>Thériault points out in an "Avertissement" to the novel that the action takes place "chez les Esquimaux tels qu'ils étaient il y a environ vingt ans." This places the action in the nineteen thirties.

<sup>8</sup>Yves Thériault, Agaguk: roman esquimau, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Homme, 1961), vol. 2: p. 13. This 2nd edition of the novel contains the bilingual chapter titles which appear in all subsequent editions and, therefore seemed a more appropriate choice for the present study than the 1st edition. All further citations from the

novel refer to this 1961 edition, and are indicated by volume and page numbers in the text.

<sup>9</sup> [Elizabeth] Allison Mitcham in "The Violence of Isolation: A Theme in Canadian Literature," Laurentian University Review/Révue de l'Université Laurentienne 4 (November 1971): 20, finds that a "calculated violence" is necessary for Agaguk's survival in a wilderness environment, but "when Agaguk's violence becomes uncontrolled, unreasonable and unnaturally destructive" he himself is almost destroyed by it.

<sup>10</sup> It is certainly possible to see an identity between Henderson, the solitary white police officer who comes to threaten Agaguk, and the solitary white wolf. Citing a number of details, Gérard Bessette in Une littérature en ébullition (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1968), p. 169, confirms "des ressemblances globales entre Henderson et le loup: ils sont tous deux très grands, tous deux blancs, tous deux solitaire, loin de leur 'pack'."

<sup>11</sup> See Bessette, Une littérature en ébullition, pp. 167-70, for an exploration of the parallels which exist between Henderson, the white wolf, and Agaguk himself.

<sup>12</sup> Hermann Boeschstein, "Hugh MacLennan, a Canadian Novelist," in Hugh MacLennan, ed. Goetsch, p. 55.

<sup>13</sup> Robert D. Chambers, "The Novels of Hugh MacLennan," in Hugh MacLennan, ed. Goetsch, p. 72.

<sup>14</sup> Mitcham, "The Violence of Isolation: A Theme in Canadian Literature," p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> Renald Bérubé, "La Fuite et le retour aux sources dans Agaguk d'Yves Thériault," Voix et Images du Pays, Cahiers de Sainte-Marie, no. 4 (Montréal: Les Editions de Sainte-Marie, 1967), p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> Robidoux et Renaud; Le Roman canadien-français du vingtième siècle, p. 100.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>18</sup> Yves Thériault, Textes et Documents, chosen and presented by Renald Bérubé, Collection Documents (Montréal: Leméac, 1969), p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Patricia A. Morley, The Immoral Moralists (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1972), pp. 107-108.

<sup>20</sup>Peter Buitenhuis, Hugh MacLennan, Canadian Writers and their Works (Toronto: Forum House, 1969), p. 64.

<sup>21</sup>Robert H. Cockburn, The Novels of Hugh MacLennan (Montreal: Harvest House, 1969), pp. 113-14.

<sup>22</sup>Robert Larin, "Essai psychocritique d'Agauk d'Yves Thériault," Voix et Images du Pays, no. 7 (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1973), pp. 47-48.

<sup>23</sup>André Brochu, "Individualité et collectivité dans Agauk, Ashini et Les Commetants de Caridad," in his L'Instance critique, with a "Présentation" by François Ricard (Montréal: Editions Leméac, 1974), pp. 158-59.

<sup>24</sup>Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, p. 20.

## CHAPTER VI.

### INDIVIDUAL SELF-EXPRESSION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Whereas in Agaguk and The Watch that Ends the Night the heroic protagonists emanate a superhuman vitality, in Sheila Watson's The Double Hook and Anne Hébert's Les Chambres de bois, the force which seems to transcend the natural order of things exists not in the protagonists but in the worlds which they inhabit.<sup>1</sup> Catherine in Les Chambres de bois and James Potter in The Double Hook do not impose their wills upon the world; on the contrary, they seem to have very little will, very little identity, either individual or communal. Neither is a hero; both are, however, the hope of their worlds. Whereas Jerome and Agaguk embark upon a quest which must to some extent involve a loss of their overly assertive individual selves, Catherine's and James's quest is all one of discovery. They begin as nothing but potential. Each has the possibility of becoming a whole person in a world peopled by grotesques. What has prevented the achievement of human freedom by the protagonists in the novels so far examined is a lack of balance. Either communal values were imposed with an absoluteness that suppressed individual self-expression, or individualism existed as a rampant force which prevented communal sharing. This imbalance reaches its apogee in The Double Hook and

Les Chambres de bois. In these two works, individual self-expression has not only destroyed all sense of communal values, it has also attempted to establish a kind of anti-community based upon a perversion of the interpersonal relationships which normally structure human groups. Hébert and Watson place their protagonists in dark, distorted, nightmarish landscapes peopled by individualists who, by allowing one aspect of life to dominate their existence, have become caricatures. The sign of Catherine's and James's health is that they cannot find any identity in such sick worlds. Leaving the nightmare and caricature, both embark upon a quest for self which, if it is to succeed, must be a quest for wholeness, for an identity in which individual and communal self-expression find a mutual outlet. Only the discovery of such a composite or united self will finally deny the distortions of both community and individual which reign in both novels. The present study follows the protagonists' search for self: detailing the features of the anti-communities which they reject, and establishing the values upon which they build their new identities.

The three major sections of Les Chambres de bois identify three distinct stages of Catherine's quest, each portraying a landscape whose physical features externalize the inner states of soul of the people who inhabit them. The first sentences of the novel establish the city of Catherine's birth, presumably in the north of France, as an apocalyptic vision of flame, ash, heat, and eternal blackness

descending on all things in it:

C'était au pays de Catherine; une ville de hauts fourneaux flambant sur le ciel jour et nuit, comme de noirs palais d'Apocalypse.<sup>2</sup>

In this world, nature itself is denatured, its place usurped by the monstrous creations of man: Thus, the heat of summer and the heat of the blast furnaces become confused in one infernal image associated with death:

L'année de la mort de la mère, il y eut un été si chaud et si noir que la suie se glissait par tous les pores de la peau. Les hauts fourneaux rivalisaient d'ardeur avec le feu d'été. (27-28) -

Even the delicate light of a summer dusk is marred by the furnace flames:

. . . il arriva à Catherine de s'asseoir sur le seuil de sa porte, à l'heure où les feux des hauts fourneaux luttent avec la lumière violette des longs soirs d'été! (37)

The total absence of water, traditional symbol of life, from the parched landscape is most indicative of the grave imbalance in this world. Only a black soot--a mockery of refreshing dew--soils everyone and everything upon which it descends.

Hébert peoples this apocalyptic city with characters who sense their coming end and judgement. The women, if they do not die young, as does Catherine's mother, spend their days cleaning "les patines des feux trop vifs de la nuit" (27). And the furnace flames are not the only ones which blacken their lives:

Sous l'abondance d'un pain aussi dur, des femmes se plaignaient doucement contre la face noire des hommes au désir avide. (28)

While the women are passive victims, effaced in the background, the men are an active force of evil: "Les hommes de ce pays étaient frustes et mauvais" (37). Two particular cases illustrate this general condemnation; Catherine's uncle and her father. The most striking characteristic of both men is their withdrawal into themselves, their hostile solitude which defies all sense of community. In his house in the neighbouring countryside the uncle has locked himself away from his fellowmen. Grudging all human communications he allows Catherine and her sisters entry only that they may prepare and provision his stock for the winter months: "l'oncle . . . n'aimait rien tant que de se taire comme s'il espérait à devenir un mur bien lisse, une pierre sourde, un mort renfrongé" (30). While in the uncle's case withdrawal might find its motives in disgust at the conduct of the local seigneur who has ravaged both the girls and the natural resources of the countryside, the hostility of Catherine's father towards all intercourse with the world around him becomes increasingly paranoid and bizarre as his character unfolds. With the death of his wife the father "se retirait en sa solitude" (27). Yet this shadowy figure who speaks only once in the whole novel is a terrifying, almost supernaturally menacing, presence in Catherine's life. A malefic expression of the individual turned in upon himself, he gives voice to the apocalyptic vision of this world:

Le père cria avec une voix qui n'était pas de ce monde. Il grondait très fort contre une terrible girouette rouillée grinçant dans la ville pour appeler les morts. Puis il pria avec sa voix ordinaire qui devenait suppliante, que l'on fermât bien toutes les fenêtres et la porte. (49)

In normal voice or otherworldly voice the message is the same--if Catherine remains in this world she will be cut off from the living. In this city of flame and ash, peopled by black-faced, lusty, coarse men, and submissive, languishing women, where solitude and withdrawal are the norm, and no sense of community is evident, Catherine exists as a "belle innocente" (48). But such innocence can only be a temporary reprieve. Economic exigencies push her towards marriage and an identity with the other submissive women in the city of flame and ash. In rebellion against this identity, Catherine turns to Michel, representative of a world which appears to be entirely unlike her own. Upon the death of his notorious father, Michel has become seigneur of the neighbouring countryside where Catherine's uncle lives. She had first glimpsed this country crossed by canals and lost in the mist during a childhood visit to her uncle. The world of the seigneur's chateau, dominated by water and inhabited by a woman who lives in a "désœuvrement infini" (31), remains with the growing girl--a kind of inner retreat from the harsh realities of her life in the city.<sup>3</sup> When Catherine agrees to marry Michel, she seems to be moving towards the promise of completion, seeing in his world the elements lacking in her own. Yet the one similarity between the city of flame and

ash and the countryside of canals and mist, is more profoundly important than the differences between them: both are only half of a world, but, taking the part for the whole, both pervert all life within them. In marrying Michel, Catherine does not escape the incompleteness of her own native city to emerge as a whole individual in the mist-filled realm of the chateau. This marriage is, on the contrary, as she herself vaguely perceives, a surrender to "ce sombre enchantement auquel, au plus profond d'elle-même, elle se trouvait livrée" (52).<sup>4</sup>

Michel, however, has not married Catherine to deliver her from the desolation of life in her father's home. On the contrary, in this marriage he seeks his own deliverance from the destructive love which binds him to his sister Lia. Since Lia has taken a lover and driven Michel from the chateau, he brings his new bride to his sombre wood-panelled apartment in Paris. There, he plans to impose upon this simple girl of the people a process of refinement which will render her a worthy rival of Lia. Michel marries Catherine both to replace and to revenge himself upon his sister. Whereas Lia is all earth and fire, the "longue fille de terre cuite" (103), whose body is covered with "pistes de feu" (107), Michel supposes Catherine to be completely devoid of any such earthy passions. When she reveals her sexual need for him, her passion for sun, flowers, and fruits of the earth, Michel, the man who was to complete Catherine's existence, begins to reduce it to a

pale, watery image of life. Unlike Catherine's father, whose individualism expresses itself in a schizophrenic withdrawal from the rest of mankind, Michel would reshape humanity to his own very limited individual needs. Aspiring to the ultimate creation and destruction, he would be a god, with Catherine as both acolyte and consort.

Michel tries to purge from Catherine the warmth of all fire, the colour, odour, texture of all things which grow in the earth. Proposing to paint his new wife, he arranges those colours on his palette which express the essence he has chosen for her:

Michel se mit à enlever la peinture séchée à grands coups de spatule et refit une palette fraîche telle une grève mouillée: ciel, eau, sable, perle et coquillage. (73)

Pale, cold, as tasteless and odourless as water, Catherine gradually begins to conform to Michel's image of her. As the constant rain falls outside she amuses herself within the elaborate mirror-lined bathroom, soaking for hours in perfumed water, dressing herself in the lustrous pale gowns which Michel has bought her. Under her husband's prohibitions, she approaches a kind of living death:

--Tiens-toi droite, Catherine. Appuie ta tête au dossier, laisse tes cheveux tomber sur tes épaules. Je ne veux pas que tu pleures, ni que tu ries. (83)

But Catherine is the potentially whole person in this fictional world. In her father's city of flame and soot, she dreamt of the mist-filled world inhabited by Michel; now that Michel tries to deprive her of earth and fire, imposing

upon her a watery, colourless world, she instinctively rebels. In this pale reflection of life Catherine turns to what is most earthy, colourful, and nourishing in the physical world beyond the closed windows. A gesture of pure fantasy registers her deprivation and need:

La servante partie, il lui arrivait de crier, les mains en porte-voix, mordant dans les mots, selon le rythme et la rude intonation du marchand de fraises qui passait en juin sous ses fenêtres:  
 --Des fraises, des fraises, des belle fraises! (78)

Such momentary outbursts as this, or her request to bake a cake for the feast of the Epiphany, meet with Michel's cold disapproval. Little by little Catherine succumbs to her fate, approaching the state of purification which will allow her to enter the chateau at Michel's side. She is now even able to articulate this fate in elegant phraseology worthy of Michel himself: "C'est une petite mort, Michel, ce n'est qu'une toute petite mort" (88).

Catherine, paradoxically, only escapes her fate by the arrival of Lia. In a final monstrous expression of his individual god-like power over Catherine's life, Michel orders his wife to dress in her most luxurious gown, outlines her eyes in black so that she has "l'air d'une idole" (92), and contemplates both his creation and the destruction of it:

Il tenait la tête de Catherine doucement par les longs fils de ses cheveux. Il lui parlait à la troisième personne, avec reproche et fascination. Il disait:  
 --Elle est si belle, cette femme, que je voudrais la noyer. (93)

But with the reentry of Lia into Michel's life, Catherine's importance in the wooden rooms begins to fade as Michel turns his attention from his wife to his sister. With Lia's replacement of Catherine, the rise of the nuclear anti-community begins. Yet this perverted, sterile, couple relationship contains not the seeds of a monstrous dynasty, but only mutual death. Michel and Lia, crippled grotesque individualists can only use and ultimately exhaust their force in an attempt to destroy the force of the other. Thus, while Catherine under Michel's neglect begins her awakening to life and revolt, Lia, now the only focus of Michel's attentions, embarks upon a battle to the death. In retaliation against her brother as well as against Catherine, she removes the colours of sky, water, sand, and shell from Michel's palette, and replaces them with her own:

Elle commença à peindre . . . , après avoir débarrassé la palette que Michel avait faite aux couleurs de Catherine. Lia ne se lassait pas de convoquer l'ocre rouge de la terre des seigneurs dévorée par le coeur noir des pins. Mais elle ne terminait jamais ses grandes toiles chaotiques, sanglantes et charbonneuses. (113)

Lia never finishes the paintings because she increasingly denies the senses which have brought her so much misery in her torrid love affair. She turns towards that tasteless, odourless, colourless world from which Catherine is emerging, but not to fade quietly away under such a regime as Catherine had by succumbing to Michel's will. Lia, all flame, earth, and passion, burns herself out-- and Michel with her. Her purification by fire, by earth,

by her five senses is her last weapon with which to destroy both herself and him. Leaving the apartment to seek out her former lover, she submits herself to a final devastating humiliation of body and soul and then offers it, like a poison, to her brother and enemy:

--Je lui ai été soumise jusqu'à la dernière honte. Tu m'entends, dis, Michel, soumise comme une chienne battue, et je me suis traînée à ses pieds pour qu'il me garde et me prenne encore une nuit, rien qu'une autre nuit . . .

. . . . .  
--Je vais tout te dire, Michel, tout. Cet homme est parti. Il m'a abandonnée comme un vieux pain noir qu'on rejette après l'avoir rompu. (124-25)

Lia and Michel have, in a sense, reached the end of their active lives. Michel finally has the sister whom he both loves and hates: "Lia qu'il comparait au pur tranchant de l'esprit" (119). And Lia herself, denatured, a shell of a woman, "pareille à un corbeau calciné" (119), has destroyed the passion which alone gave her life. The most significant event, however, which marks the end of the brother's and sister's powers, is the sale of the chateau. As part of her ultimate humiliation Lia makes over the seigneurial house to her lover. In doing so she cuts both herself and Michel off from the base of their existence, and seemingly from all of the dark power which fed the force of their individual wills:

--Lia, Lia, comme tout est lointain, abîmé, souillé. Qu'allons-nous devenir maintenant?

--Rien, rien, Michel, nous ne sommes rien, absolument rien, que deux pauvres enfants perdus. Oh! cette fumée me brûle les yeux. Mon pauvre Michel, nous sommes sans pouvoir aucun, vois, tu ne sais même pas faire du feu. (127)

Catherine, whose hands have never lost their power despite Michel's attempts to chain them to pale and elegant needlework, makes the fire for the brother and sister. But the anger that she feels in doing so is the first sign that for her as well as for Michel and Lia, the power of the chateau is ended, the spell of her "sombre enchantement" is broken. Now she can see the wood-panelled rooms for what they are--a tomb. Catherine has not yet learned how to say "yes" to life, never having encountered any affirmation of life in her father's home or with Michel, but she can say "no" to death. Even as she refused the fate assigned to her in her native city, so she refuses the fate chosen for her by Michel. Catherine says "no" to death with all of her senses. She instructs the servant to lock the piano and throw away the key, to remove Lia's and Michel's paintings from the walls, to extinguish the fire around which they build their lair each night. She rejects sound, sight, and smell of the brother and sister. In a final act of denial, her five senses cease operation. Catherine refuses all food and water, the touch of all clothing or covering upon her. Lying naked on her bed she "ferma les yeux, devint muette et appela la surdit e comme un baume, tandis que ses narines se pinaient, refusant toute odeur" (139).

There is, however, still a final "no" to be said. Death presents itself as a tempting lover. Michel's adoring voice reaches Catherine through her delirium, and almost wins her to his side. But in the clarity born from her

revolt Catherine finally realizes that Michel's love means death; it always has. But only now that the spell is broken does Catherine recognize the true nature of her dark enchantment, and the full meaning of the last words of "love" that Michel had spoken to her before Lia's arrival:

La voix de son délire s'éleva de nouveau, nette et précise, montant du fond de son coeur alerté: "Elle est si belle, cette femme, que je voudrais la noyer." (141).

Part II of Les Chambres de bois closes with Catherine winning half the battle for her life as she leaves Michel, his "étrange amour," and the wood-panelled rooms. The other half of the battle remains to be fought, and will consist quite simply of Catherine's saying "yes" to life. Such an affirmation, however, will not be easy. Even as Jerome and Agaguk had to die and be born again before they could affirm life, so Catherine, to claim her identity, her own life, will have to leave the rooms, the womb of death, and be born for the first time.

In the third landscape of Les Chambres de bois, everything is conducive to this affirmation of life. Although Hébert does not specifically identify the countryside where Catherine goes to recuperate from her illness, it is presumably in the south of France. Sun, sea, the strong perfume and vibrant colours of southern flowers, at first almost overwhelm Catherine's recovering senses. Piti-fully, she asks the old servant who has accompanied her from Paris: "Crois-tu que le parfum des geraniums puisse me faire mal?" (146). In the symbol of this one flower, Hébert

captures and redeems earth and fire, those elements which were so perverted and destructive in the previous worlds which Catherine has inhabited. Lia's canvasses of coal and blood-red, as well as the flames and ash of the blast furnaces in Catherine's native city, are reborn in the fruitful earth of this sunfilled country. As a backdrop to all is the sea itself, the life giving element of water upon whose shore Catherine will assert her own claim on life. And in this, the first whole world which Catherine encounters, she has her first experience with community. Despite the vast extent of solitary space which surrounds her house, the one neighbouring building in the district stands right next to hers, as if to acknowledge a basic need for human solidarity: "Les deux maisons en encoignure s'appuyaient l'une sur l'autre, étroitement, ainsi que dans une ville populeuse" (147).

The birth of Catherine's identity is not an instantaneous discovery of self, but rather a slow and sometimes reluctant acclimatization to the living world around her, a world for which nothing in her past experiences has prepared her. She must learn how to live and why she lives and what kind of a self she wishes to build. This learning and growing process has three distinct stages, a kind of primary, secondary, and advanced school of life through which Catherine passes. The first lessons are easy. Catherine willingly accepts the reawakening of her senses: hunger, thirst, and the desire to smell the rich peppery

odour of the geranium. She is even saddened when at first in her convalescent period she cannot take a larger taste of life: "cela lui paraissait infiniment triste de n'avoir plus rien à demander en un jour si beau" (147). But her senses, and her ability to relish the physical world have always been her strong points. What is entirely foreign to all of her experiences, in her father's house or in Michel's, is any kind of normal communication with other human beings. The most basic communal sensibility is the identification of oneself as a member of a human group, even a very transitory group of people taking an evening stroll by the seaside. Pausing in her walk one stormy evening at a deserted café, Catherine becomes suddenly aware of this communal sensibility, of the need to lose herself once again in the crowd of strollers:

Elle désira très vite reprendre sa place dans le cortège des promeneurs battus par le vent, heureuse, inexplicablement, de ce que tout destin lui parût à la fois, anonyme, simple et pathétique. (148)

Returning from her walk she spends the evening contemplating the lighted window in the next door house: "comme si elle eût cherché à toucher le mystère d'autrui dans la nuit" (149).

Very quickly, Catherine's struggle to establish normal human relations takes form around two antithetical figures: Aline, the haughty servant of Michel and Lia, the guardian of the chateau traditions who would protect Catherine from all contact with life, and Bruno, a young man lodged in the next door pension for his seaside holiday.

Aline dismisses Bruno as a peasant. Catherine's own image of him does not negate Aline's accusations, but finds in it the very source of Bruno's attraction: "l'image flambée d'une tête forte, aux cheveux drus, à la nuque puissante de cerf stupéfié, qui revenait devant ses yeux, comme une tache de feu, lorsqu'on a trop regardé dans le soleil" (155). Flame and fire, Bruno appeals to Catherine's sexual desires which were aroused but never satisfied by Michel. Yet Bruno is in every way Michel's opposite, and it is a sign of Catherine's health and desire for life that she should be attracted to this simple "peasant" lying in the sun, rather than the "prince barbare" of the darkened wood lined room. Catherine, however, is not yet ready to accept the simple normalcy which Bruno can offer her.

In portraying her protagonist's humanization as a gradual process, Hébert attempts to achieve a comprehensiveness of character not yet seen in any of the previously examined novels. Thus, in the process of affirming life, Catherine first has to reclaim those human origins which she rejected to follow Michel into the dark enchantment of his world. Now in this country where earth, air, fire, and water create an equilibrium which nourishes life, Catherine accepts in their redeemed form the elements she fled from in her father's world. Walking barefoot all day she blackens her feet with dirt, much to Aline's mortification. And in regarding her blackened hands and feet she finally articulates the goal that escaped her as a girl in her father's house:

"Me voilà noire comme mon père à la fin de sa journée de travail!" pensait-elle. Et elle pria pour que l'honneur de vivre lui soit ainsi rendu, humblement, petit à petit, par l'animation de tout son corps patient. (156)

As if to demonstrate to what extent she has learned how to readjust and reorient her values towards the human community, Catherine immediately shows her awareness that the "honour of living" is not found among the elegant immobility of the aristocratic existence led by Michel, as she had once imagined, but among the people who work with the things of the earth. Thus she shocks Aline by returning from a visit to a peasant's hut with black bread, olives, and the smell of poverty clinging to her clothes. But she completes the reintegration and redemption of her past life when she meets the old servant's outrage with a declaration of pride in her origins: "Catherine répondit avec une sorte de rage joyeuse que cette odeur des pauvres lui rappelait son enfance" (157).

Catherine passes from the primary to the secondary stage of her discovery of self when she and Bruno finally speak after days of covertly watching each other's movements on the beach. What separates the two stages and renders the latter one so difficult is that Catherine's primary tentatives towards identity were largely passive; now she is forced to act. Her inadequacies and inexperience in dealing with flesh and blood human beings in the full light of day are painfully and immediately apparent when Bruno presents himself to her. Perhaps still remembering the charm of Michel's (and) Lia's elegant language, Catherine is irritated

by Bruno's clumsy restraint. Without being aware of it, she is in fact comparing the reality of their relationship--a banal conversation about fishing, and sunstroke--to an ideal communication which she had dreamed could exist between them. But when Bruno announces that he is leaving the next day, and that he has only spoken to Catherine to wish her goodbye, she recognizes the necessity of abandoning her passive world of dreams and entering the world of reality:

Les yeux pâles de Catherine, s'agrandirent dans son visage brûlé. Elle regardait avec une sorte de stupeur cet homme qui allait partir. Le désir se réveillait en elle, alerté, menacé, franchissant la quiétude du songe. Elle balbutia:

--Il ne faut jamais dire adieu, Monsieur, cela porte malheur . . . Nous nous reverrons sans doute, puisque vous ne partez que demain. (162)

That very evening Catherine leaves the house and the servant's protective surveillance, and takes a risk on entering the imperfect world of human communication. Aline's final warning to her before she leaves recalls almost the identical words which Alain Dubois uses about Madeleine. Madeleine was "si belle qu'elle ne pouvait pas continuer d'aller ainsi en liberté."<sup>5</sup> The same phrase describes precisely Peggy Sanderson's position in The Loved and the Lost. Neither Peggy nor Madeleine had any effective reply which could purchase for them the rights to their own lives. Catherine who has emerged from the chambers of death, emerged from the apocalyptic city without any identity at all, having refused the perverted ones of either her father's or Michel's world, can now simply answer by accepting--for the first time--the gift of her own individual life:

--Madame est trop belle.

--Regarde moi en face, Aline, je te prie, et répète un peu . . .

--Madame est trop belle, ça ne pourra durer . . .

--Touche-moi, Aline, je suis vivante et ça durera le temps que Dieu voudra! (168)

The major difference between Les Chambres de bois and the two novels of the previous chapter is that such an acknowledgement of life as a gift is not an ending, but only the first major step in the protagonist's full realization of self. The larger question remains to be answered: what will Catherine do with this gift? Her first inclination is to selfishly guard it. It is because she is ready only to take and not yet prepared to give that she meets Bruno's offer of marriage on their first evening together with such irritation. A simpler sexual union would satisfy her physical needs and leave her private life of the individual untouched. Marriage, however, demands a commitment of the individual to something beyond himself:

Catherine détourna la tête, dit d'une voix à peine perceptible "qu'on lui demandait plus qu'elle ne pouvait donner." Une sorte de rage montait en elle, submergeant toute douceur: "Cela aurait pu être si simple entre nous. Pourquoi faut-il que cet homme parle d'amour et de mariage?" (171)

Catherine, having freed herself from Michel, having, indeed, discovered herself for the first time, is not willing to surrender her liberty. The central issue which arises now, however, is what one does with individual liberty once it has been attained. Hébert goes on from this point in the story of Catherine's discovery of self to show that what Catherine cherishes as freedom is in fact the solitude and

isolation which she has inherited from her past life, both in her father's house and in Michel's. Catherine is not yet free of the anti-life, anti-community force which reigned in both of these worlds and which is symbolized in the shadowy mist-covered world of the chateau. Until this world of the chateau is redeemed, until death itself is redeemed, Catherine's liberation into life will not be complete. Aline, the old servant of Michel and Lia is the embodiment of that last link which still binds Catherine to the dark enchantment. With Aline's death the link is broken; Catherine is released; death itself is redeemed. Aline, like Catherine, has emerged from the land of the living dead into a country of sun and sea and flower-perfumed air and the normal cycle of nature. Her death and burial by the townspeople at the summit of a mountain against "le coeur vif du soleil" (177) teaches Catherine the final lesson she must know before emerging as a whole person. Death of the body is the logical, inevitable, desirable end of life, not a thing of darkened rooms, or mist-shrouded chateaus, but of earth, and sun, and community responsibility. In this seaside country Catherine finds that the communities know how to accept, and even integrate their dead into the continuing life of those who remain behind. Because of the narrow space, and the rocky soil at the mountain's top, the townspeople bury their dead standing. They thus resemble spears in an altar stone, which "conjuraient la foudre du ciel en faveur des vivants" (177).

Thus, when Bruno and Catherine spend the night of Aline's funeral together, Catherine finally steps into the full responsibilities and joys of her womanhood, her adulthood. Bruno carries her to her bed "comme on porte un enfant qui va mourir" (183). Up until this point Catherine has been a child delighting in her new-found life as a child does. Making love with Bruno she becomes a woman. To convey the profound importance of this union of man and woman, this equal meeting for the first time in the novel of male and female, Hébert celebrates Bruno's and Catherine's coming together by declaring the birth of a new world which redeems all of the past ones through which Catherine has travelled in her quest towards discovery of self. After their first night of love, Bruno and Catherine walk in the pre-dawn of a nearby olive grove. The image of the violet sunset sky denatured by flames in Catherine's native city is reborn as a violet dawn which slips among the black and gray olive trees. The black cinders which fell like "une rosée mauvaise" on Catherine's first home, now become "l'herbe nocturne . . . sous la rosée" (184). And finally Michel's frenzied nocturnal piano music which inspired him with visions of Catherine's death, fades forever in the music of the earth at sunrise announcing the birth of this world in which Catherine finally accepts a place as Bruno's wife:

Soudain un grand chant de coqs éclata comme une sonnerie de cuivre, et il sembla à Catherine et à Bruno qu'ils étaient traversés par le cri même du monde à sa naissance.

Le chant reprit plus près d'eux à une seule voix, aiguë, si proche qu'elle parut vouloir se percher à leur épaule. "Je tremble!" pensait Catherine, et cela se passait comme si le coeur de la terre l'eût sommée de se rendre! (184-85)

In accepting to become Bruno's wife Catherine answers the summons of the earth, and gives herself up to life.<sup>6</sup> All that remains is for her to formally reject the world of dreams which she entered by marrying Michel. Interestingly enough, in doing so she employs the word "liberté" for the first time in the novel. Returning briefly to the "chambres de bois," she announces her decision to Michel:

Catherine lui apprit que la servante était morte. Elle lui dit qu'elle aimait un autre homme et qu'elle désirait toute sa liberté. (188)

That Catherine uses her liberty to immediately engage herself in another marriage means that for Hébert individual liberty is the liberty to choose for oneself the nature of one's human relationship, the nature of one's commitment to another. It does not mean that one can remain committed only to oneself. In fact, one might conclude that Catherine is freed into the human community, out of the nightmare worlds of isolated individualism which she inhabited with her father, and with Michel. When she returns her wedding ring to Michel she quotes a line from a poem that he had taught her "'Une toute petite bague pour le songe,' Michel, rien qu'une toute petite bague" (190). Catherine's freedom constitutes her ability to leave a world of dreams and

become a member of the human community.

Unlike Jerome or Agaguk, Catherine has emerged whole from her ordeal; she does not at the end stand as half of a couple as they did. Her alliance with Bruno functions as a symbol of her alliance to the human community. It is the fundamental one-to-one relationship which constitutes the basic unit in the whole network of interpersonal relationships which form the community. Because she was never larger than life, there is no diminution of her stature. In fact, her very unexceptionalness is her triumph at the end. Nothing is more banal than this happy ending. Samuel de Sacy points out that to notice the banality and ignore the deeper significance would be to miss the main point of the novel:

L'aventure de Catherine et de Bruno, si on la résumait sans préparations comme on peut résumer la plupart de nos romans parisiens, apparaîtrait banale; ce serait passer à côté de toute sa signification, sans rien voir de l'intense valeur de libération qu'elle exprime.<sup>7</sup>

In the context, however, of the fate of Jerome and Agaguk, one might conclude that the very banality of Catherine's adventure with Bruno is the main significance of her liberation. Catherine and Bruno in their normalcy, in their uncomplicated wholesomeness are Everywoman and Everyman. They are representatives of the human community which neither Jerome nor Agaguk could ever become. In the story of Catherine and Bruno, Hébert offers us nothing less than a whole world redeemed; a world in which the individual expresses his freedom by choosing freely the terms of his

membership in the human community.

In Les Chambres de bois Hébert brings her protagonist through two worlds of darkness, nightmare, perversion, and death into a third world of normalcy and life. Sheila Watson, in The Double Hook, presents her protagonist with a choice of only two worlds: a small hill settlement, presumably in the British Columbia interior, and a neighbouring town. The barren, sparsely populated hill country in which four fifths of the novel unfolds, is the dominant landscape in The Double Hook. Watson, like Hébert, uses symbol, image, and metaphor to create the physical world of her novel, and as in Les Chambres de bois, the physical landscape in The Double Hook exteriorizes the inner states of soul of the people who inhabit it.<sup>8</sup> Even as the most remarkable feature of Catherine's native city and of the Paris apartment is the kind of perverted nightmare-like distortion of the basic elements, so in James Potter's world everyone and everything is blighted by a fundamental distortion:

The whole world's got distemper, he wanted to shout. You and me and the old lady. The ground's rotten with it.<sup>9</sup>

The distemper, the distortion of elements which holds sway in the land, is the sickness of the people who inhabit it. Explaining the relationship of people to place in her novel, Watson emphasizes this identity:

. . . I would say that what I was concerned with was figures in a ground, from which they could not be separated. I didn't think of them as people in a place, in a stage set, in a place which had to be described for itself, as it existed outside the interaction of the people with the objects, with the things, with the other existences with which they came in contact. So that the people are entwined in, they're interacting with the landscape, and the landscape is interacting with them . . . not the landscape, the things about them, the other things which exist.<sup>10</sup>

In this bleak and blighted land human existence is also bleak and blighted. Watson, like Hébert, turns to the Bible for a frame of reference which can convey the full horror of the world she portrays. Catherine's native city is apocalyptic; the countryside inhabited by the dozen characters of The Double Hook can only be compared in its barrenness to the city of Nineveh which God threatened to make "a desolation and dry like a wilderness" (Zephaniah II:13). But even in comparison with Nineveh, James's world is the less favoured of the two; it has already suffered the fate which only menaced the biblical city:

Even God's eye could not spy out the men lost here already, Ara thought. He had looked mercifully on the people of Nineveh though they did not know their right hand and their left. But there were not enough people here to attract his attention. The cattle were scrub cattle. The men lay like sift in the cracks of the earth. (16-17)

By comparing the people to dust or sift, Watson not only allies them with the prevailing characteristics of this parched land, she underlines the total lack of any communal values tying them together. As in the apocalyptic world of Catherine where the closed house symbolizes the fundamental incommunicability of the people, so in this land of

"desolation and wilderness" there exists no real community, but a potential anti-community which certain of the tormented and perverted individuals attempt to establish and impose upon the other members of their world.

The novel begins with a murder. James Potter kills his mother, thus accomplishing in its absolute form the revolt of child against parent which was the first step to individual freedom for the protagonists of Chapter III.<sup>11</sup> But Mrs. Potter, although dead, refuses to lie quietly. Throughout Part I, her presence, or more precisely her ghost, dominates the landscape: It is important to understand the significance of such a figure, yet Watson ascribes no single value, or consistent complex of values to her. What she embodies becomes clear only as her ghost appears to her neighbours: always standing, fishing in the stream that runs through the settlement. As the individuals who see her reveal their own desires, frustrations, and fears through her, so she reveals her essence through them. And essentially she is a paradox, reflecting the potential both for good and for evil as it exists in the handful of individuals who make up the settlement.<sup>12</sup> To Ara, the barren, lonely woman deserted daily by a husband whose eyes are turned away from his wife and neighbours towards the world outside, the spirit of her mother-in-law reveals itself as her own emptiness and sterility: "As she watched the old lady, Ara felt death leaking through from the centre of the earth. Death rising to the knee. Death rising to the

loin" (15). To the Widow Wagner, the ghost of Mrs. Potter reveals her own impotent old age: "Dear God, she said, the country. Nothing but dust. Nothing but old women fishing" (23). The Widow's use of the plural "women" unconsciously reveals her association with the dead woman. Living in the past, refusing to recognize the life which grows in her daughter Lenchen's body, the Widow is as dead to the present and the future as is Mrs. Potter. When the Widow's boy reports that Mrs. Potter is fishing in their pool, Lenchen, pregnant with James Potter's child, instinctively rebels against this presence of death in the landscape. Guilt and fear combine in a wild desire to escape:

It's enough to turn a person mad, the girl said, to have an old woman sneaking up and down the creek, day in and day out. I can't stand it any longer. . . . I've got to get away, right away from her. (19)

Back in the Potter household where the old lady lies dead in her second floor bedroom, her daughter Greta sees no apparition of her; for Greta, in a sense, has become her mother. At least, she has usurped that part of her mother's identity which functioned as the tyrant of the household. Greta begins to establish herself as a figure of absolute authority. Similar in a way to Michel in Les Chambres de bois, she would impose a living death upon the members of her world, shutting up herself and James in their house, and cutting off all communication with the other members of the settlement:

I don't want you coming Ara. I don't want anything from William. . . . I don't want anyone coming here disturbing James and me. . . . I want this house to myself. Every living being has a right to something. (35-36)

The fifth woman in the settlement, Angel Prosper, is the antithesis of Greta. With her brood of children, and her constant curiosity about the world around her, Angel understands and defends old Mrs. Potter's strange ways. When Greta complains that her mother had no right to blacken lamps, holding them up in broad daylight, Angel replies:

One person's got as much right as another. Maybe she didn't ask you to clean those globes. There's things people want to see. There's things too, she said as she leant on the brush in the wall shadow below the window light, there's things get lost. (25)

Only three of the six male characters in the settlement acknowledge the presence of Mrs. Potter's ghost. James does not; he knows where she is. Theophil does not; his eyes are turned completely inward. William does not because he looks away from the hill settlement towards the outside world. Kip, Felix Prosper, and the Widow's boy Heinrich all see, or sense, or become aware of the old lady's presence after her death. Kip, the settlement's self-appointed messenger, significantly, does not see Mrs. Potter at all, but reports to James that his mother has been seen near the Widow Wagner's place. His information is as ambiguous as he is himself. James is the one person who really knows where his mother is. Kip's information concerning her, as indeed all the messages which he carries to different members of the settlement, contains very little useful information. In

fact, far from establishing communication, Kip's reports serve to emphasize the isolation which exists among the various members of the settlement.

Felix, unlike Kip, definitely sees Mrs. Potter's ghost, but remains unmoved by it, because nothing moves Felix. He sits in his house surrounded by his dogs, a figure of benign passivity. Yet his reaction to the apparition reveals in him a potential force of good, capable of resisting the negative force which Greta exercises in the settlement. Felix contemplates driving Mrs. Potter from his pool when he sees her fishing it, but instead he decides to replace her by going to fish in the pool himself. Felix, then, like Greta, usurps a part of the dead woman's identity: that of the fisherman. Eating his catch, basking in the heat of his stove, Felix experiences a kind of beatitude which holds a promise of possible redemption for the other members of the community if they can make contact with it:

The heat from the stove, the heat crept in from the day outside, anointed his face. Blest, he sat down in the rocker, . . . (18)

For Heinrich, as for Felix, a moment of beatitude comes after his encounter with Mrs. Potter's ghost. Of all the members of the settlement, the boy is the only one innocent of the life experiences which have touched and to some extent wounded all of the others. The boy is innocence and the old lady reveals in him a fearful wonder at life's mysteries:

He looked through the stems of the cottonwood trees, but the old lady had gone. The water caught the light and drew it into itself. Dragonflies floated over the surface as if the water had not been stirred since the beginning of time. (23)

The heat which desiccates the land blesses Felix; the water which means death to Ara promises eternal life to the boy. The possibilities of redemption are inherent in the people of the settlement.

If Mrs. Potter reveals her own symbolic meaning through what she brings out in the other members of the community, then she is clearly a problematic figure. On the one hand, she means death, tyranny, sterility, or rejected fertility to Greta, Ara, the Widow, and Lenchen--significantly all women. On the other hand, she reveals both fecundity and tolerance in Angel, beatitude in Felix, and innocence in the Widow's boy. What each character sees then in Mrs. Potter is a projection of his own individuality, an individuality cut adrift and distorted in this barren world. And the old lady herself, defying her fellowmen, nature, and even God, incarnates a perverted individualism only matched by Michel's in Les Chambres de bois. James kills his mother in an instinctive rejection of this individualism rather than in any assertion of his own individuality such as that demonstrated by Agaguk in his murder of Brown. James, like Catherine in Les Chambres de bois, is the potentially whole person of his world who, at the opening of the work, has no sense of identity at all, only an innate antipathy to the distemper which he sees around him. His

murder of Mrs. Potter like his impregnating of Lenchen are movements towards balance and community. But, even though James Potter is the prime mover in redressing the imbalance of his world, the settlement has inherent in it the seeds of its own redemption--unlike the original members of Catherine's first two worlds in Les Chambres de Bois. Watson, therefore, arrives at her concept of human freedom not by following simply the fate of her protagonist as he moves towards a discovery of self, but by focusing upon the birth of a whole community among the isolated individuals of the settlement. She begins by establishing the importance of the individual's interpersonal relationships, key among these is the male-female one. The couple proves to be the basic unit upon which Watson eventually builds her concept of a community. If Mrs. Potter is, in a sense, the double hook which fishes both the glory and the darkness from the individual, then the union of the two principles, male and female, into the single unit of the couple, is the double hook which catches and holds a community.<sup>13</sup> An examination of how the couple moves from discord and imbalance to harmony and equilibrium reveals the values of Watson's fictional world, and determines exactly what concept of human freedom she posits within this world.

The temporary coming together of Felix and Lenchen, which opens Part II of the novel, holds a certain promise because both of these characters represent positive elements

within the settlement. But Felix and Lenchen are a mismatched couple. Angel, Felix's wife, has left him to live with Theophil, and James, the father of Lenchen's unborn child, has forbidden her to seek him out at his house. Lenchen comes to Felix's place hoping to find Angel there since she is not at Theophil's. But Angel has not returned to her husband, and alone, without her, Felix's potential for good remains entirely passive. He will not drive Lenchen away when she asks to remain, but he offers no aid to her in her troubles:

The girl looked at him.  
 I got no place to go, she said.  
 He'd had his say. Come to the end of his saying.  
 He put a stick on the fire. There was nothing else  
 he could do. (45)

Watson next presents in Ara and William Potter a couple who are not obviously mismatched, who communicate with each other on a verbal, logical level, but who are missing some vital spiritual link in their relationship. They seem to exist in a kind of limbo. What is absent from their life as a couple is life itself. A sterility and barrenness, symbolized rather than caused by their lack of children, disqualifies this couple from serving as a basis for the communal spirit so lacking in their world.

The situation of the couples presented deteriorates as Part II progresses: from the thwarted fruitfulness of Lenchen and Felix, through the sterility of William and Ara, to the complete hopelessness of the Widow Wagner. Like both Felix and Lenchen, the Widow is one half of a couple, but

there is no hope of her ever being reunited with the other half. Her final memory of her husband is "in the big bed under the starched sheets his body full and heavy in death" (49). The next man and woman whom Watson presents, are an actual perversion of the couple relationship. The ménage of Angel Prosper and Theophil creates an imbalance in their world. The frequent presence of the "messenger" Kip in their house underlines what is wrong with the relationship. Angel, open to the world around her and curious to know what is happening to other people must depend on Kip for her information because Theo doesn't want himself or Angel "to get mixed up with others" (50). Angel left Felix because of his passive indifference to the world, but in choosing Theo she went from bad to worse, since the latter is not indifferent but absolutely hostile to all other members of the settlement.

In a continuing degeneration of the couple relationship, the last chapters of Part II outline the two most potentially dangerous couples in the novel: the one which Kip tries to form with Lenchen, and the one which Greta claims with her brother James. In both cases, an individual who embodies an anti-community spirit--Greta and her closed house, Kip and his alienating messenger service--would keep apart Lenchen and James, the couple who hold the greatest hope for the establishment of a community among the settlement people. Kip is moved to proposition Lenchen not by the heat of passion, but a desire to own something which he

thinks that James possesses. His act has one positive outcome, however, in that it forces a confrontation between the four individuals concerned. When the frightened Lenchen escapes from Kip and runs to James's house, she finds not refuge, but another threat. Greta appears at the door with James behind her, blocking his exit and preventing Lenchen's entrance. In justifying to Lenchen her claim on her brother James, Greta reveals the tragic perversion which can sicken the individual who is cut off from a human community:

A woman can stand so much, she said. A man can stand so much. A woman can stand what a man can't stand. To be scorned by others. Pitied. Scrimped. Put upon. Laughed at when no one has come for her, when there's no one to come. She can stand it when she knows she still has the power. When the air's stretched like a rope between her and someone else. It's emptiness that can't be born. The pot-holes are filled with rain from time to time. I've seen them stiff with thirst. Ashed white and bitter at the edge. But the rain or the runoff fills them at last. The bitterness licked up. I tell you there was only James. I was never let run loose. I never had two to waste and spill like Angel Prosper. (60)

While Greta seems to triumph over Lenchen, ordering the pregnant girl to leave, James dramatically takes the upper hand in his confrontation with Kip. Fearing Greta's accusations about their mother's death, he is incapable of breaking the hold which his sister exerts upon him. But in Kip he finds an enemy with whom he can deal. When James blinds Kip he not only eliminates one of the active forces of anti-community which stands between himself and Lenchen, but he also finds the desperate courage necessary to flee the other one. James leaves the settlement for the

neighbouring town, deserting both Greta and Lenchen, freeing himself both from the woman who claims him and the woman who needs him. Part II of the novel ends, thus, with the protagonist's defiant cry of "no." He cannot have Lenchen and he will not have Greta. There does not seem to be any solution to his dilemma within the limits of his world. The position of the couple relationship remains highly equivocal. Greta fails to establish an incestuous relationship with James, but in attempting it she drives him away from Lenchen. At the opposite pole of the settlement Felix, although not yet rejoined with Angel, dreams that she rides back to his house on a donkey. Turning his back on Coyote, the Indian god of fear who haunts the settlement and beckons him to spiritual death, he welcomes his wife. There is, then, reason for hope and for despair as Part II of the novel ends.

Part III moves from ambiguity to crisis. Focusing upon the Felix-Angel-Theophil relationship, and the couple William and Ara, Watson explores, analyses, and anatomizes the male-female relationship, and lays the foundation for a set of values upon which the couple and eventually the community can build. Already in Part II, Angel and Theophil demonstrated a basic personality conflict. Now the differences between them find expression in a mutual complaint that each feels cheated in the bargain he has entered into with the other:

You used to listen and learn from me, Theophil said.  
 Now you just tell. Right from the squeak of dawn.  
 Telling. Telling. A man would be hard pressed to wedge  
 a word into the silences you leave.

You said you wanted to take care of us, Angel said. Now you just want attention yourself. (67)

Angel and Theophil finally come to grief because their relationship has the same fundamental value base as the one which Greta attempts to establish with James, and Kip with Lenchen. In all three cases, people claim what they believe is their individual due, what they have in some way paid for, and have a right to demand from the other. As Greta feels her long years of oppression and deprivation give her a right to keep James for herself, as Kip feels that the "messages" which he has delivered and the information he has gathered are enough to "buy" Lenchen, so Angel and Theophil are both affected by the same poison when each accuses the other of not living up to his or her part of the bargain. The evil of individualism here, as in Under the Ribs of Death, Aaron, and The Watch that Ends the Night, expresses itself as the cancerous outgrowth of a value system which sees human relationships based entirely on the profit motive. Such an evil can only be overcome by finding some value which transcends individual profit.

When Felix appears at Theophil's house seeking Angel he makes no promises of gain, offers no bargains. On the contrary, in his solitude he has examined his life of creature comfort and found something lacking, found a need in himself. It is this need which he presents to Angel. Since Felix exists at the opposite moral pole to Greta in the settlement, embodying the antithesis of evil and the potential for good, one might expect him to provide the key to an

alternate value system upon which to base the couple relationship. Where Greta claims ownership rights, Felix offers his need:

Felix shut his eyes. He could feel the sweat trickling down the furrows of his cheeks.

Angel, he said, I need you.

... What's the matter? she said to Felix. I never in my life heard you call on anyone. (73)

When Felix tells Angel of Kip's blinding, she is desolate, asking "Who'll see anything worth seeing now?" (73). The answer is, of course, that without Kip's eyes to see for them, without him to deliver their messages, the members of the settlement will have to communicate directly with each other. Angel's decision to leave Theophil and return with Felix to nurse Kip, is perhaps the most crucial communication, which is reestablished as a result of Kip's blindness.

If Felix and Angel embody the heart of the communal spirit, instinctively attracting to their door those who are in need--the blind Kip, the pregnant Lenchen--then William and Ara function as the brain of the embryo community.<sup>14</sup> While Felix offers his simple need to Angel, William develops and articulates a rationale of need which not only heals the wounds between himself and Ara, but offers a solution relevant to the whole problem of human freedom as it has been explored in this study. William's recognition of the supremacy of need in human relations does not grow out of a vacuum; he develops it as a direct counterpart to the poison of the profit motive which has spread from Greta and corrupted Ara's vision of marriage. Seeing her relationship

with William as a bargain in which she has failed to render the promised goods, the barren Ara believes that her husband cannot possibly love her. Pity is the only emotion which Ara can imagine arousing in William, since she has fallen beneath her expected value, and as a natural corollary to William's pity for her is her jealousy of him. Given such a value system, she assumes that he must be looking elsewhere for what she has failed to provide, and that as long as she holds him in the bonds of marriage she is denying him a freedom which he has the right to demand. In a metaphor which allows these simple hill people to render abstract concepts in concrete and familiar form, Ara and William discuss freedom in terms of a horse locked in a barn. For Ara, the horse which is strong enough can simply break out of the barn, thus gaining his individual freedom. William responds by outlining all of the negative aspects of such a freedom, and by suggesting that the need to belong to someone is more profound an instinct even than that of individual liberty:

I've seen horses, he said, untie themselves and go walking out of barns. I've seen them knock down fences and kick themselves out of corrals. But I've seen them come wandering back to the barn and the hay. Some, he said, are pure outlaw. But there's the torment of loneliness and the will of snow and heat they can't escape, and the likelihood that some stranger will put a rope on them at last. (70-71)

William here describes the predicament which tormented the protagonists of the previous chapters. To escape one's original bonds is either to suffer the torment of loneliness, as Fabrice Navarin does, to fall into equally constrictive

bonds, as Aaron Cashin does, or to be driven back to the original situation from which one has revolted, as Sandor Hunyadi and eventually Fabrice Navarin are. James Potter, finds himself in a similar predicament, having deserted his settlement and escaped to the neighbouring town. Part IV of the novel describes what he finds there, while the concluding Part V reports his return to the settlement. It seems that the only condition upon which James's return could be viewed as anything but a defeat, would be if the original bonds which confined him and against which he revolted were to disappear, or to be transformed. In Les Chambres de bois, such a transformation or redemption is posited, although Catherine never actually returns to her native city. In all of the previous novels examined, however, the return of the protagonist to his community--or his failure ever to leave it--always constitutes a defeat or a compromise in terms of his search for individual liberty. In The Double Hook, as in Les Chambres de bois, it is precisely the whole fictional world itself as well as the protagonist which undergoes the transformation. The hill settlement is changing its fundamental values and turning into a community.

Now that Felix and Angel are reunited by Felix's need, now that William and Ara have discovered each other's needs, all of Greta's allies and followers have fallen away. With James gone, Kip blinded and in the care of Felix and Angel, Theophil left to comfort himself with his cat, and

Ara cured of her jealousy, Greta finds herself in physical and moral isolation. While she, at one value pole of the settlement, has lost the partner she hoped for, Felix, at the other end, has found his. Greta's self-immolation at the end of Part III, while spectacular and symbolically significant,<sup>15</sup> is ultimately inevitable. She is the spirit of anti-community and now that a community has begun to spring up around her, despite her efforts, she has no place in it. Like Michel and Lia in Les Chambres de bois, Greta's pursuit of absolute individual self-fulfilment, her blindness to the rights and needs of others, finally destroys her. Burnt out by her frustrated passions, she is, like Lia, as insubstantial at the end as a "pur tranchant d'esprit." As a negative entity, a kind of "black hole" within her world, her departure from it amounts simply to the removal of a negation:

She heard Angel's voice: What do you know about moths? You never felt the flame scorch your wings. You never felt nothing.  
 She began to laugh.  
 How much is nothing? she thought.  
 She felt the weight of it in her hands. (78)

In the final chapter of Part III Angel finally puts into words the central problem of her world: What makes a community? what holds men and women together? and given the value structure towards which the novel is moving, it is not surprising that she formulates the question in terms of the male-female relationship:

Take a man and a woman, she said. There's no word to tell that when they get together in bed they're still anything but two people. (80)

The word is that they are a couple, but this word has not yet taken on its full meaning in the budding community. Only if James and Lenchen can establish their relationship, will Angel have her answer. As Part III of the novel chronicles the crisis of the settlement's inhabitants, so Part IV examines James in crisis. Like the members of his world, James must come to terms with the values upon which he is prepared to enter into a couple relationship. When he flees the settlement heading for the nearby town, and ultimately for the train which will take him out of it, he desires only: "To attach himself to another life which moved at a different rhythm" (85). The rhythm at which the town moves is set by the coming and going of money between its inhabitants. James enters into it when he immediately withdraws all of his money from the bank. What he fails to realize is that market values of the townspeople which he now so eagerly espouses are based upon precisely the same profit motive which he has rejected as being so destructive to human relations in the settlement. Money allows one to establish ownership rights over things, and over people; it obliterates all need of others and all obligations to the world around one. Money frees one into irresponsibility, as James discovers when he pays cash for a new wallet:

I'll pay for it, James said, since you seem so anxious on cash business. Besides, when a thing's paid for in money, you've got ownership rights on it and can smash it up if you so choose. I'm beginning to see that a man's always best to deal in cash. (89-90)

With cash in his pocket, James does not need the bartender's friendly warning about Traff, a local townsman who attaches himself to the newly rich man. Having bought a wallet and, with Traff's help, a bottle of whisky, James is ready to buy a human being with his money. Even as the community had to pass through a series of false and perverted couple relationships before arriving at the values which could unite a man and woman as a true couple, so James will go to the brink of the most dehumanizing of all relationships before he recognizes and accepts the same values which now unite the people of the settlement. Felicia, one of the three prostitutes to whom Traff brings James, clearly articulates the terms of the transactions which govern human relations in her establishment: "When pleasure's your business, there's no call to give more than you get" (99). Her statement is a perfectly logical expression of the profit motive where each participant in a business deal cares only for his individual gain and is blind to the needs of the other. James, for his own salvation, rejects the pleasure which can be bought. Freeing himself from the prostitutes is a simple matter of buying himself out of any obligation by leaving ten dollars on their bed. He cannot, however, buy his freedom from Lenchen. Her claim on him is one of need. Because she gave freely what the prostitutes give only for money, Lenchen cannot be dealt with in terms of market values; because she claims no rights over James, he cannot accuse her of infringing upon his freedom. If James returns

to Lenchen then he will do it freely, recognizing it not as a compulsion, but as an expression of his own freedom of decision.

Part IV of the novel ends with two signs of hope for the future of the community. One of the prostitutes and Traff steal the remainder of James's money. With its disappearance, disappears all hope of escape. Without the money James cannot leave the settlement, but with the money he could not have returned to it, since money in Watson's fictional world represents the power to destroy. The second positive note is that James feels for the first time in his life completely alone: "If his mother was there, he could not feel even a vibration of her shadow in the darkness" (101). In his flight from the settlement James saw his mother's ghost--the spirit of individualism--for the first time because in fleeing Lenchen and his communal responsibility, he demonstrated his own nascent individualism. Now, returning to Lenchen and to the community, James finally is free of his mother's evil heritage. The question which remains is what will he do with his freedom?

In Part V James returns home to find that the disparate group of disgruntled individuals whom he had left behind has become a community during his absence. Having already established that it is human beings' need of one another which forms the basis of community life, Watson goes on in this final section to demonstrate how recognition and operation of this need can weld together the settlement's

inhabitants, transforming them from isolated individuals into neighbours. The first sign of the transformation occurs not in the people but in the very elements of which their world is made. The fire which was so destructive when it burned as a jealous rage within Greta, scorching and desiccating all life around her, becomes the fire of purification when it leaps out to destroy both her and the Potter house. And from the purification of the flames springs the very element of life itself, restored to its traditional symbolic value:

Ara sat looking at the smoking doorsill. The door of the house had opened into the east wind. Into drought. She remembered how she'd thought of water as a death which might seep through the dry shell of the world. Now her tired eyes saw water issuing from under the burned threshold. Welling up and flowing down to fill the dry creek. Until dry lips drank. Until the trees stood knee deep in water.

Everything shall live where the river comes, she said aloud. And she saw a great multitude of fish, each fish springing arched through the slanting light.  
(108)

As the river flows through the settlement it does indeed bring new life to all who live on its banks. The community already has its heart in Felix and Angel, now its limbs begin to function. Ara offers to go and help the Widow care for her stock while William and Heinrich remain behind to bury Greta's ashes, and to await the return of James. The Widow herself, as if sensing the new life flowing in the land, has turned from the heavy memories of a dead past to consider the needs of the living future. Thus, Ara finds her cutting out a singlet for her expected grandchild. As heart and body of the community come to life, Watson

finally sets its wandering spirit to rest: Mrs. Potter makes her final appearance in the novel. She is no longer the double hook, fishing out the good and evil that lies hidden in the hearts of people. For good or for evil the members of the community now know the needs and feelings of each other. Even as the dead servant Aline in Les Chambres de bois functions as an object lesson for Catherine, teaching her that the death of the individual is a normal part of nature's cycle and that the spirits of the dead can bless the living community, so old Mrs. Potter now reveals herself to Felix as an integral part of the flow of life in her world. And Felix returning with water from his stream reports the sight to Angel:

I saw James Potter's old mother standing by my brown pool, he said. I was thinking of catching some fish for the lot of us. But she wasn't fishing, he said. Just standing like a tree with its roots reaching out to water. (111-12)

While Felix and Angel tend to the needs of Lenchen and Kip, who have sought refuge at their home, while the heart of the community, that is, performs instinctively its vital life giving function, the brain formulates the moral values expressed in the actions. William, the spokesman of the community, explains to Heinrich the principle upon which the new community is founded:

I did wrong to stop with you, the boy said. A grown man doesn't need someone to sit up with him no matter what the occasion.

A man needs living things about him, William said. To remind him he's not a stone or a stick. That he's not just a lone bull who can put down his head and paw the bank and charge at anything that takes his fancy. (123)

The principle is not yet complete, however. Although William has stated man's need for others, he has not made it clear that man and woman must not only recognize their need for others, but must respond to other's need of them. But Heinrich, having learned his lesson well from the older man, goes on to articulate this complementary need when he considers Felix's position in the community:

I myself doubt that he'd be much help to a person in trouble. . . . He spends all his days lying round like a dog in a strip of sunlight taking warmth where he finds it.

I never heard of a dog brewing himself a pot of coffee, the boy said. The thing about a dog lying in the sunlight is it just lies in the sunlight. Perhaps no living man can do just that. (123-24)

The fact that it is finally Lenchen, and not Angel, who provides Felix with the opportunity to respond to another's need, to take up the responsibility of a "living man," indicates Watson's belief that the couple, although the basic unit of the new community is not an entirely self-sufficient one. Angel and Felix cannot respond to all of each other's needs, no more than Lenchen and James will be able to. With her tough self-reliance Angel could accept Felix's need of her as a bond, but Felix, finding no corresponding need in his wife, never can achieve his full human potential in this unique relationship. Lenchen's weakness calls out a strength in him that Angel's own strength has always overwhelmed. In responding to Lenchen's need Felix fully enters the human community:

Felix thought of Angel. Dark and sinewed as bark. Tough and rooted as thistle. I've never heard her cry, he thought. The folds above his eyes contracted. He bent over and took one of the girl's hands between his thick fingers. It was not until the girl had come battering at his peace that he'd wondered at all about the pain of a growing root.

The girl cried out again and clutched at his hand.

He sat on the edge of the bed. The girl lay still.

If he could only shed his flesh, moult and feather again, he might begin once more.

His eyelids dropped. His flesh melted. He rose from the bed on soft owl wings. And below he saw his old body crouched down like an ox by the manger. (120)

The Christian symbolism which indicates the birth of a saviour who will redeem his world, confirms the argument that Watson has carefully established throughout these final three sections of the book. The birth of Lenchen's baby will be the final fruit of James's first movement of rebellion against the anti-community spirit. With their simple love story James and Lenchen defy this spirit, and out of their love a community and a child are born.

All that remains is for Watson to establish the basis upon which James can return to the community. All of the novels examined in this study bear witness to the difficulty of reconciling individual self-expression and communal responsibility; the two are almost paradoxical. In Les Chambres de bois Hébert settles the problem with a paradox. Catherine demands her freedom from Michel only when she is ready to commit herself to Bruno. Watson also settles the terms of James's commitment to his community with a paradox:

The flick of a girl's hand had freed James from freedom. He'd kissed away escape in the mud by the river. He thought now of Lenchen and the child who would wear his face. Alone on the edge of the town where men clung together for protection, he saw clearly for a moment his simple hope. (115)

The freedom from which James is freed is that which money can buy. It is the freedom to lay claim to and establish rights of ownership on a thing--or a person, the freedom of one individual to limit or infringe upon another's individual freedom. The obligation into which James is freed is that of responding to another's need for him and recognizing in it a reflection of his own need for others. Such a freedom which can accommodate both the individual and the group is the "simple hope" of the new community in The Double Hook. But while Watson recognizes the simplicity of the hope she does not push for a simplistic resolution to the problem of human freedom. As John Moss points out, the members of the community are in the end "reconciled to duality although it is not resolved and cannot be."<sup>16</sup> Freedom, if it is to survive in the new community and in the new individual who is being born into it, will be a constant balancing act. Thus it is Coyote, the voice of fear which has sounded throughout the novel, who both welcomes James's and Lenchen's son into the world, and warns him of the difficulties he will have in maintaining the precarious balance between freedom and responsibility:

I have set his feet on soft ground;  
I have set his feet on the sloping shoulders  
of the world. (128)

The preceding analyses' of what both Catherine and James reject in their worlds, and what they finally affirm, suggests that Hébert and Watson conceive of their protagonists' affirmations as expressions of self. And in both novels this self is a manifestation of those principles so completely lacking in the worlds which they reject--wholeness, harmony, and balance. The totality of existence which both James and Catherine affirm, recognizes the presence of evil as well as good within the self. Thus, although Catherine seeks a pure, wholesome life force in Bruno, she acknowledges that her own experience of a darker force has become an essential part of her: "cette part secrète en elle ou passait parfois l'ombre devastée des chambres de bois" (179). And James, in a similar manner, turns to the new life he has created in Lenchen, without trying to deny his own capacity for destruction: "Out of his corruption life had leafed and he'd stepped on it carelessly as a man steps on spring shoots" (121).

Having brought their protagonists through a long and bitter struggle to free themselves from the grotesqueries of a diminished existence and having affirmed in them a freedom based upon the wholeness of self, it is unlikely that Watson or Hébert would finally create for them a relationship which, by its very nature, implies a reduction of wholeness. The couples, Catherine-Bruno and James-Lenchen, cannot represent a compromise as did those formed by Agaguk and Iriook, or George and Catherine (Stewart), without doing

violence to the total value systems established throughout The Double Hook and Les Chambres de bois. A compromise demands permanent concessions from each member who enters into it: in order to gain a larger good, the individual sacrifices something of himself. A reciprocity, however, demands no such permanent sacrifice. Yet what it requires is perhaps even more difficult to achieve. The very nature of a reciprocal union implies a constant movement backward and forward, a constant sensitivity on the part of each member in it to the needs of his fellow members. In the reciprocal relationship each side retains its integrity only as long as it enhances the existence of the others. It is precisely such a reciprocal relationship in both novels which finally affirms the full expression of self for both Catherine and James. Or, to go one step further, it is precisely this reciprocal relationship, in both novels, which finally liberates the total self: James and Catherine as individuals are made whole in the very act of committing themselves to a community which has itself been made whole by the protagonists' affirmation of it.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Watt Lennox, "The Past: Themes and Symbols of Confrontation in The Double Hook and 'Le Torrent'," The Journal of Canadian Fiction 2 (Winter, 1973): 70-72, has done an interesting comparison of Hébert's short story, "Le Torrent," and Watson's The Double Hook. He finds that, while many striking similarities exist between the two works, they differ markedly in their resolutions: The Double Hook ending on a note of "restoration," while "Le Torrent" articulates the "fragmentation" of the protagonist's personality.

<sup>2</sup> Anne Hébert, Les Chambres de bois, with a "Preface" by Samuel de Sacy (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1958), p. 27. All further citations from the novel will refer to this edition and be indicated by page numbers in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Le Grand considers Catherine's rejection of her own world and her dreams of the chateau as a "recherche d'une impossible innocence." He continues: "La poursuite de l'innocence n'est qu'une fuite devant le mal et débouche toujours sur l'absence au réel." "Anne Hébert: de l'exil au royaume," Etudes Françaises 4 (février 1968): 24.

<sup>4</sup> Adrien Thério follows this concept of "enchantment" to its logical conclusion, seeing the whole novel as a fairy tale. "Vous l'avez deviné, le monde d'Anne Hébert est un monde de contes de fées avortée." "La Maison de la belle et du prince ou l'enfer dans l'oeuvre romanesque d'Anne Hébert," Livres et Auteurs Québécois (1971), p. 277.

<sup>5</sup> Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> There is a lack of consensus among the critics concerning the significance of Catherine's marriage to Bruno. Jean Marmier in "Du Tombeau des Rois à Kamouraska: vouloir-vivre et instinct de mort chez Anne Hébert," Mission et démarches de la critique, Mélanges Jacques Vier (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973), p. 811, finds the whole last part of the novel too facile: "Le triomphe miraculeux de la vie à la fin du roman laisse planer un malaise."

Maurice Blain in "Anne Hébert ou Le risque de vivre," Liberté I. (sept-oct 1959): 329-30, suggests that Catherine, in accepting Bruno, simply resigns herself to the banality of existence rather than joyously affirming a new life: "Cette apparition décevante et ambiguë de la vie--un inconnu

de passage, qui pouvait en faire naître le miracle n'en est plus ici que la caricature lamentable--ne représente-t-elle pas surtout l'exténuement d'une fatalité de résignation plutôt que de révolte?" Blain's use of the word "caricature" is puzzling. A caricature implies a distortion, and the character of Bruno is precisely the opposite of this. It is, on the contrary, his sense of balance, his knowledge of the fundamentals of life and death, which render him one of the only whole individuals in the novel.

On the other hand, Ulric Aylwin, in "Au pays de la fille maigre: 'Les Chambres de bois' d'Anne Hébert," Voix et Images du Pays, Cahiers de Sainte-Marie, no. 4, p. 48, finds the ending of the novel a convincing resolution to the problems of individual existence as they have been phrased in the novel: "Comment trouver le juste milieu entre le rêve morbide et la réalité sordide? Catherine grâce à la servante sacrifiée semble rejoindre en Bruno le personnage avec qui le bonheur sera possible."

Marcotte in "L'Expérience du vertige dans le roman canadien-français," p. 243, despite some reservations, also sees the novel's conclusion in an optimistic light: "Catherine quitte à la fin la vie des songes pour des amours réels, et on a l'impression que la vie va commencer."

<sup>7</sup>Samuel de Sacy, "Préface" to Les Chambres de bois, pp. 22-23.

<sup>8</sup>Moss in Patterns of Isolation, p. 167, makes essentially the same point when he says that, "Sheila Watson populates, makes tangible, a moral universe."

<sup>9</sup>Sheila Watson, The Double Hook (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1959), p. 37. All further citations from the novel will refer to this edition and be indicated by page numbers in the text.

<sup>10</sup>Sheila Watson, "What I am Going to Do," Sheila Watson: A Collection, in Open Letter 3, special issue (Winter 1974-75): 183.

<sup>11</sup>It seems clear that Watson intends this murder, and the blinding of Kip later in the novel, as largely symbolic acts. Rather significantly we do not see James kill his mother; we see him only "at the top of the stairs. His hand half raised." The next image is after the act "James walking away. The old lady falling" (p. 19).

<sup>12</sup>Beverly Mitchell, S.S.A., in "Association and Allusion in The Double Hook," The Journal of Canadian Fiction 2 (Winter 1973): 64-65, also finds Mrs. Potter an essentially ambiguous character: ". . . while Mrs. Potter can be 'associated' with figures from the Old Testament, she cannot be precisely identified--nor can she be considered solely

responsible for the plight of the other characters in the novel."

And Atwood in Survival, p. 203, argues, as does the present study, that Mrs. Potter's significance lies in the eyes of the beholder: ". . . as a ghost she is not necessarily evil, but the characters' attitudes towards her can have life-denying consequences for them."

<sup>13</sup>John Moss in Patterns of Isolation, p. 170, identifies James as "the shank of the double hook." But as Moss himself points out in his analysis of the novel, the work is "a repository for as many interpretations as are plausible--none of which are definitive," p. 169.

<sup>14</sup>John Grube, "Introduction" to The Double Hook, p. 10, also sees William Potter as "the rational aspect of man and society."

An interesting interpretation of Ara's role is suggested by Jones in Butterfly on Rock, p. 85. He ascribes "second sight" to this character.

In the same vein, Annie Hope Lee, "Some Themes of Community and Exile in Six Canadian Novels," (Masters dissertation, University of Toronto, 1966), talks of Ara's role as prophet in the novel.

<sup>15</sup>While the parallel is not exact, the burning of the chateau in Les Chambres de bois, and Greta's burning of herself and the Potter house both signify the destruction of the anti-community forces in their respective fictional worlds.

<sup>16</sup>Moss, Patterns of Isolation, p. 172.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The study of human freedom in the Canadian novel of the 1950s closes on two images--one negative, one positive: Catherine in Les Chambres de bois returning her wedding ring to Michel; and Lenchen's and James's baby in The Double Hook balancing on the sloping shoulders of the world. Catherine rejects a circle of eternal unchanging perfection for the imperfect, mutable, and ultimately transient world of human relations. James's and Lenchen's infant son, the newest individual in the hill community, takes a precarious footing among the members of his world. Precariousness is indeed the sense conveyed by both images. Tenuous, vulnerable, ever on the verge of extinction, such is the freedom achieved by Watson's and Hébert's protagonists. Such, the overwhelming evidence of this study suggests, is the only freedom possible in the fictional worlds created by English and French Canadian novelists of the 1950s. Indeed, the concept of freedom as a balancing act is perhaps the only acceptable conclusion to a study of novels in which the central conflict exists as a tension between the individual and the community.

If human freedom can be defined as an expression of self, then each protagonist in order to achieve it must

arrive at a reconciliation, 'a balancing of his individual self and his communal self--that part of him which he identifies as unique and that part which takes its identity from the human community of which he is a member. In the novels examined, each of these parts finds full expression only in the reciprocal relationship arrived at in The Double Hook and Les Chambres de bois. A reciprocal union, by its very nature of constant backward and forward movement, suggests, at best, a highly delicate stability in which the balance can easily be upset. A lack of balance, a shift in dominance towards either the communal self or the individual self, characterizes the majority of the novels examined in this study. Consequently, the thesis focuses mainly on the distortions, perversions, and destruction which result when either the communal self or the individual self usurps the place of the other and attempts to represent the total human experience rather than merely one side of it.

Chapters II and III establish the problem by defining the terms of the conflict. The protagonists examined in these two chapters all suffer, in one form or another, from a schizophrenia caused by the almost total split between their individual and their communal identities. Each of them becomes, as a result, alienated first from a part, and eventually from the whole of his life. In one important way this split seems more complete for the protagonists in The Loved and the Lost and Poussière sur la ville of Chapter II, since in these two works the expression of the individual

self has a separate, autonomous existence beyond the control, and even the understanding of the protagonists. In rebellion against communities whose values they pretend to despise, Jim McAlpine and Alain Dubois lay claim to an expression of individuality in their support of women who openly defy the communities' social and moral codes. Jim's and Alain's denial of the communal values and of their own communal identities gains a certain credence from their status as outsiders, but it is the basic lie of their existence and ultimately destroys them. It is, as well, the essential drama of both novels: the suppressed, unacknowledged communal self insidiously gains control over the lives of both protagonists, falsifying and perverting their claims to individual self-expression. Madeleine Dubois and Peggy Sanderson are the primary victims of the protagonists' failure to reconcile their aspirations for individual self-expression and their profound identification with the communities' values. But it is Jim and Alain themselves who are the final victims. Each of the protagonists, still believing in his identification with a projection of himself which died with the woman, still unwilling to accept the communal self which ultimately destroyed her, is, at the end of the novel, only the mockery of a man, clinging to an illusory hope of self-expression.

For Jim McAlpine and Alain Dubois, their individual selves remain unknowable and unattainable, embodied in a being whose existence is essentially alien to them, but for

the three protagonists of Chapter III the reverse is true. Daniel Ainslie, Jules Lebeuf, and David Canaan claim, as their distinctly individual identity, the possession of a talent or a potential within themselves that no one else in the community shares. Yet their situations are as problematic as those of Jim McAlpine or Alain Dubois, since the special gift, or vision, which sets each of these three individuals apart, is totally alien to the community and can never find expression within it. Moreover, contrary to both Jim and Alain, the three protagonists of this chapter identify strongly and consciously with the minority communities to which they belong. There is in The Mountain and the Valley, Each Man's Son, and La Bagarre, no strong authoritarian figure such as Mr. Carver of The Loved and the Lost, or Arthur Prévost in Poussière sur la ville, who insists upon conformism to the communal value systems. Instead, in each of these three novels, the protagonist himself identifies a need within his community which commands his allegiance.

If Jim McAlpine and Alain Dubois live a lie by never fully acknowledging the extent to which they share in their communities' value systems, then Daniel Ainslie, Jules Lebeuf, and David Canaan live a terrible and bitter truth by fully recognizing both their communal and their individual selves, knowing that the two can never find a mutual expression. That this truth seems to be in all three cases caused, not by any external pressures upon them, but by their

own projection of a psychological state into an actual unbreachable barrier, does not lessen the tragedy of their position. All three protagonists define their communal identity in terms of a limitation. To be a member of the French Canadian urban poor, the son of a Cape Breton or an Annapolis Valley farmer, seems to preclude for all three men the possibility of fulfilling individual talents which go beyond the ambitions and capabilities of their people as a whole. It is significant that David's verbal facility and mathematical quickness should be set against the profound, almost painful, inarticulateness of his community; that Daniel's gifted surgeon's hands should be counter-balanced by the brutish and brutalized bodies of the miners; that Jules's desire to create a soul for Montreal should be set against his fellow workers' need to keep their bodies alive with the most basic necessities of life. What prevents all three men from ever fulfilling their own individual talent or potential, is the overwhelming guilt each feels for even possessing it. To utilize it seems to them a betrayal of their people, of their own communal identity.

Each of these three protagonists, then, sees himself in such a position that no matter what he does, which way he turns, he will act in a way that is self-destructive. To leave is to betray his communal self; to stay is to cripple and deny what is uniquely individual in him. All three remain within the community, but not of it. The communal identity which each chooses as his means of

self-expression becomes instead the agent of his self-destruction. Because it cannot express his individual self, the communal identity functions only as a mask, an increasingly hollow one, behind which there is finally no self at all. David, Daniel, and Jules, all faced with an absurd choice, abdicate before their own lives. David's death, Jules's sterile robot-like existence, and Daniel's hope of realizing himself in someone else, all represent the failure of human freedom when individual self-expression cannot be realized within the context of one's own community.

Chapters II and III clearly outline one side of the problem of human freedom by showing what happens when individual self-expression is sacrificed to an exclusive communal expression. None of the five books of these chapters envisages any possible solution, or even any plan of action, for reconciling individual and community. In the four novels analysed in the following chapter, however, the conflict between individual and community bursts into open confrontation. Each of these novels details a revolt, a refusal on the part of the protagonist to accept a communal identity which he considers to be a falsification of his individual identity. The initial rebellions of Noah Adler, Fabrice Navarin, Aaron Cashin, and Sandor Hunyadi, are facilitated by one crucial element that was absent from the worlds of David, Daniel, and Jules. All of these four young men of Chapter IV have a very clear-cut figurehead

of communal authority against whom they can rebel. The obvious, even grotesque limitations, the irreality and impossibility of the communal identity is specifically embodied in: the old grandfather Moishe in Aaron; Noah's grandfather Melech in Son of a Smaller Hero; Joseph Hunyadi, Sandor's father, in Under the Ribs of Death; and finally two characters from Mon Fils pourtant heureux, Mme. Marie-Thérèse de Valauris and her son-in-law Philippe-Joseph Navarin.

In Aaron and Under the Ribs of Death, the limitations of the communal identities against which the protagonists rebel are only too clear. Both Joseph Hunyadi and Moishe Cashin, by their single-minded devotion to an ideal--be it religious or humanistic--do violence to the complex realities of life which buffet their progeny. What becomes equally clear is that the identities which Aaron and Sandor adopt in opposition to the limited ones offered by their communities are equally limited, equally falsifying. Both protagonists can only conceive of individual self-expression in terms of that side of life which has been denied them by the uncompromising authorities of their traditional communities, and ultimately in terms of a total and destructive repudiation of these communities' values. Rejecting Moishe's blind involvement in a spiritual world which denies the physical needs of man, Aaron turns to a vision of life which gratifies only the body and ignores the soul. Whether or not he finally, like Viedna, descends into a moral wasteland

which prostitutes all for the sake of worldly advancement, is left an open question. But the prospects for Aaron, cut off completely from his traditional world, no longer even bearing the name of his communal self, seem pessimistic.

Sandor Hunyadi's final fate is more explicit, but perhaps even less satisfying. After rejecting his father's uncompromising idealism, Sandor seeks to fulfil his individual self in a tough business world which operates on principles of pragmatism and opportunism equal to that practised by Thériault's Viedna. When Sandor himself becomes a victim of this inhuman ethic during the 1929 stock market crash, he is forced back to the community he had originally rejected. Yet he does not return as the prodigal son, admitting he has been wrong in his original choice, but only because he has nowhere else to go. Marlyn never bridges the gap between the ideal and the real, between the world of philosophy and that of finance. Sandor does not find individual self-expression back in his own community. Instead, he hopes that his infant son will fare better than he in reconciling the breach that he no longer hopes to close.

The authoritarian figures against whom Noah Adler and Fabrice Navarin rebel stand simply for a repressive authority which arbitrarily legislates the conduct of the individual. Both Fabrice and Noah, then, are essentially rebelling against a communal identity which seems to be completely negative. Unlike Aaron and Sandor, they are not catapulted simply into declaring allegiance to a value

system which automatically denies that of their community, while automatically confirming their own individuality. For both Noah and Fabrice the search for individual self-expression includes the search for some meaningful context within which they can realize their own individuality. Neither of them find this reconciliation of a communal and an individual self by the final pages of the novel. Noah, however, knows more clearly at the end that he cannot deny his community, even if he knows that as an individual he cannot find fulfilment within it. Like Aaron, Son of a Smaller Hero has an open ending, although, in the latter novel, the protagonist seems to have a better chance of achieving his goal.

Fabrice, on the other hand, returns to his community after a terrifying experience in which he discovers that outside of it he faces a yawning void. In search of a community within which he can flourish as an individual, the French-speaking Fabrice leaves the North American continent for the mother community in France. But confronted with the richness and complexity of both individual and communal experience in Europe, Fabrice realizes the absolute emptiness and poverty of his own life experience. Fabrice has no identity, no self. In returning to his community he does not even resume a communal identity, but a mask which hides the inner void. In Mon Fils pourtant heureux, the presentation of human freedom reaches the ultimate perversity which can result when the balance of power between individual and

community is tipped entirely towards the latter pole. In its exercise of absolute control over the lives of its individual members, Fabrice's community has succeeded in arresting all individual expression. In doing so, however, it ultimately prepares its own destruction. Like a body of dead cells, the community in Mon Fils pourtant heureux is moribund, incapable of any expression at all.

If the novels examined in Chapter IV all demonstrate in varying degrees the seriously weakened states of communities which are incapable of dealing with the complexities posed by an individual's expression of needs, then the two novels studied in Chapter V portray communities which have passed from sclerosis into full decay. In both The Watch that Ends the Night and Agaguk, the decadence of the communities finds expression in the assertion of an unbridled individualism, a personal self-expression cut adrift from any meaningful communal experience. The tribal world of Agaguk operates on the principle of every man for himself, even to the extent that a father will betray his son. The white civilization which impinges upon the Eskimo world is, in certain cases, equally rapacious and self-interested. In The Watch that Ends the Night, MacLennan attributes the evils of Western Civilization--the first World War, the Depression, and the rise of Fascism--to the evils of an individualistic capitalist system gone amuck. The presence of such figures as Jerome Martell and Agaguk in these fictional worlds is no accident. The rampant, unbridled,

potentially destructive individualism that each embodies, is the natural corollary of the degeneration in communal values. Potentially leaders of their worlds, endowed with qualities which place them above the common rank, Jerome and Agaguk exist as distortions, perversions of the individual self that cannot be assimilated and used by a community whose values are in decay.

Both Thériault and MacLennan attempt to redeem the communal spirit and the individualist himself, by allowing the protagonist to conquer and destroy a perversion of individualism as it is embodied in his world. Essentially, Jerome and Agaguk destroy the distortions of their own individual selves, thus expiating their past sins. At the end of their ordeals Agaguk and Jerome (through the medium of George) merge with a kind of transcendent life force which goes beyond a communal or an individual identity, and expresses itself simply as a triumph of life over death. Freedom, then, for each of these protagonists is not the reconciliation of individual and communal selves; it is an escape from the excesses of individualism as it manifests itself in him, and in the degenerate community. In the end, he does not so much express his individuality in another, as lose it in the life force expressed by another.

The two novels examined in Chapter VI, Les Chambres de bois and The Double Hook, arrive at a more positive balancing of individual and communal selves than that offered by the compromise unions which end The Watch that

Ends the Night and Agaguk. They start, however, from the most grotesque distortion of the individual-communal relationship to appear in any of the works studied. Whereas the novels of Chapter V portray a disintegrated community and strong but unbridled individualism, Les Chambres de bois and The Double Hook each contains an anti-community, a kind of travesty of communal relations based upon perverted individualism. The active anti-community force is embodied in both novels in a relationship which contravenes an age-old social taboo. From the most primitive to the most sophisticated communities, incestuous relationships are outlawed in order to protect the health of the group. In these two novels, the communities' sickness finds its expression in the incestuous love of Michel for his sister Lia, and of Greta for her brother James.

The problem faced by the protagonists of both novels is, first, how to escape from the nightmare of distortions in which they find themselves. Hébert focuses upon her protagonist's struggle towards health and normalcy which is the discovery of a whole self. Watson takes a broader field of vision which includes the struggle of the whole group of individuals to find a value which will restore them to health, integrating them into a communal life without destroying their individual identity. Both novels resolve the problem in an affirmation of the same value. Both Catherine and James recognize that the expression of an individual self outside of a communal context leads ultimately to the

destruction of life. Absolute individual freedom for James is the power to smash things up; for Catherine, it is the right to sit in the garden under Aline's watchful eye where neither good nor evil can touch her, where life itself will not touch her. To express themselves where expression is creation and not destruction, where it is an entry into life and not a retreat from it, both James and Catherine have to recognize their need for others and others' need for them. In committing themselves to community, James and Catherine find an expression of individual selves at the same time as they give expression to the communities which they affirm.

The foregoing study first demonstrates that the question of freedom as individual, cultural, or national self-expression proved an important theme in the writings of leading English and French Canadian historians, sociologists, and intellectuals during the 1950s. The detailed analysis of thirteen novels undertaken in Chapters II through VI shows that representative novelists of the period writing in both English and French also focus upon the problem of freedom. In each of the novels a tension between communal authority and values, on the one hand, and the desire for individual self-expression, on the other hand, constitutes the main conflict in the quest for freedom. The evidence of the study suggests that the following concept of human freedom finds a common expression in the English and French Canadian novels of the 1950s: if either the

strongly conformist community or the strongly non-conformist individual is allowed to dominate, then human freedom is in jeopardy; only when the two are balanced in a reciprocal relationship can both flourish to their fullest.

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## ABSTRACT

While the problem of human freedom has occupied man throughout Western civilization, at particular moments in the life of a people it takes on a crucial meaning. The 1950s was such a period in Canada, and the novels of the decade reflect this concern. The present study shows how in a significant number of both English and French Canadian novels of the 1950s the problem of human freedom provides the main structuring element of the fictional worlds. The purpose of this thesis is to establish and define the attitude towards and the concept of human freedom common to both literatures. Other ideas or impressions of freedom may exist independently in either or both of the two literatures, but my purpose is to demonstrate that a shared concept of human freedom--of particular importance to our knowledge of ourselves as a people--existed in our fiction at this moment in history.

Both English and French Canadian novelists of the period define the problem in terms of a conflict between individual self-expression and communal self-expression. Chapters II through V of this thesis trace a movement from one of these extremes to the other, beginning with the dominance of community over individual, through open conflict between the two, and eventually arriving at the opposite pole

in the assertion of an individualism freed from all communal ties. Finally Chapter VI, examining two perverted communities formed by extreme individualists, arrives at a concept of human freedom based upon a reciprocity between individual and community.

Chapter I introduces the topic and establishes the concern with human liberty in the Canadian society during the 1950s. Chapter II examines Morley Callaghan's The Loved and the Lost and André Langevin's Poussière sur la ville, two novels in which the protagonists, to resist pressures of strongly conformist communities, identify with an outlawed expression of individualism and deny their own communal ties, only to discover in the end that their lives are based upon a pretence and they are left with no valid self at all. In Chapter III, the protagonists of Hugh MacLennan's Each Man's Son, Gérard Bessette's La Bagarre, and Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley, each acknowledges his strong ties to a minority community, although to do so is to suppress his individual self-expression. Eventually his communal identity maintained at the cost of his individual expression becomes a hollow shell and he is left with no self at all. In Chapter IV, the protagonists of Yves Thériault's Aaron, John Marlyn's Under the Ribs of Death, Mordecai Richler's Son of a Smaller Hero, and Jean Simard's Mon Fils pourtant heureux, revolt in an assertion of individual self against a particularly authoritarian imposition of communal identity. Each protagonist rejects a narrow, falsifying, communal identity and

attempts to find self-fulfilment within an alternate community, or on his own. None succeeds. Revolt and denial are not enough; the individual searches for, but never finds, something larger than himself which he can affirm. Chapter V examines Yves Thériault's Agaguk and Hugh MacLennan's The Watch that Ends the Night, two novels in which communities, destroyed by their very rigidity, have fallen into decadence, giving rise to the worst excesses of unchecked individualism. The protagonists search for a larger context which will give meaning to their individual experiences. They end not by finding a communal identity but by submerging their individual lives into a transcendent life force. Only in Chapter VI does the complete reconciliation of individual and community take place. The protagonists of the two novels examined here, Anne Hébert's Les Chambres de bois and Sheila Watson's The Double Hook, reject the perversions of communities based upon destructive individualism, and find through their own experiences that total self-expression is based upon a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the communal self.

The evidence of the study, which at each stage in the examination of individual or community finds parallel works among English and French Canadian novels, suggests that the following concept of human freedom is common to the French and English Canadian novels of the 1950s: both strongly conformist communities and strongly non-conformist individuals, if allowed to dominate, are inimical to human freedom and to their own viability. Only when the two are in balance can both flourish to their fullest.