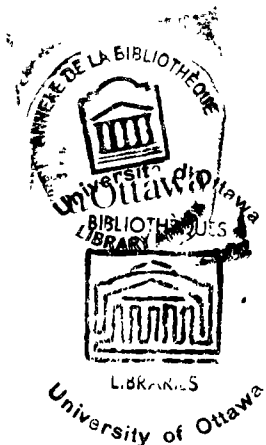


SCHOOL TEACHERS: THEIR IMAGE
IN THE CANADIAN NOVEL
1960-1974

by Lawson C. Stockford



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Graduate Studies of the University
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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Lawson C. Stockford was born August 27, 1928, in Saint John, New Brunswick. He received the Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of New Brunswick in 1960 and the Bachelor of Education degree from the same university in 1967.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	page
INTRODUCTION	vi
PART I	
BACKGROUND	
	1
I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE NOVELS	2
1. <u>The Vanishing Point</u>	3
2. <u>I Heard the Owl Call My Name</u>	8
3. <u>A Jest of God</u>	11
4. <u>Going Down Slow</u>	17
5. <u>Diary of a Dirty Old Man</u>	22
6. <u>In the Middle of a Life</u>	28
7. <u>A Nice Place to Visit</u>	33
8. <u>Bird at the Window</u>	38
PART II	
NOVELS IN WHICH TEACHERS ARE EMPLOYEES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	
	42
II. <u>THE VANISHING POINT</u>	44
1. Presentation of Character	46
2. Analysis of Character	71
3. Summary	76
III. <u>I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME</u>	77
1. Presentation of Character	78
2. Analysis of Character	82
3. Summary	86
PART III	
NOVELS IN WHICH TEACHERS ARE MAJOR CHARACTERS	
	87
IV. <u>A JEST OF GOD</u>	88
1. Presentation of Characters	91
2. Analysis of Characters	123
3. Summary	134
V. <u>GOING DOWN SLOW</u>	135
1. Presentation of Characters	137
2. Analysis of Characters	195
3. Summary	206

TABLE OF CONTENTS

v

VI.	<u>DIARY OF A DIRTY OLD MAN</u>	207
	1. Presentation of Characters	210
	2. Analysis of Characters	288
	3. Summary	297
PART IV		
	NOVELS IN WHICH TEACHERS ARE MINOR CHARACTERS	298
VII.	<u>IN THE MIDDLE OF A LIFE</u>	299
	1. Presentation of Character	300
	2. Analysis of Character	311
	3. Summary	312
VIII.	<u>A NICE PLACE TO VISIT</u>	313
	1. Presentation of Characters	314
	2. Analysis of Characters	328
	3. Summary	333
IX.	<u>BIRD AT THE WINDOW</u>	334
	1. Presentation of Character	335
	2. Analysis of Character	345
	3. Summary	348
	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	350
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	360
Appendix		
1.	<u>ABSTRACT OF: School Teachers: Their Image in the Canadian Novel 1960-1974</u>	362

INTRODUCTION

People can experience much vicariously through television, movies, or reading fiction. From these media, a person may get a very definite image of, for example, the private investigator, although he may never have actually met one. Although most people have not had personal dealings with a detective, the same cannot be said of them in relation to teachers. An acquaintance begins at a young age for the majority of children in our society in which formal education is compulsory. Such acquaintance may fade for a time after graduation, but as the former students move along in life, get married, and have children of their own, the teacher once again comes to the fore in their lives. In the case of the teacher the image many people have of members of the profession may have been based solely or mainly upon real life experiences. Vicarious experience through the media, however, should be considered also as a factor in image formation. One can observe how writers of fiction have represented and interpreted any professional group.

It is one thing to be aware of sociological studies concerning the popular image of a professional or occupational group; it is another to be aware of what image is being projected through fiction. Limitations exist in either case, but of a different nature. The former may be

limited geographically (Marlene Mackie's Edmonton study¹ is a case in point). The latter may be said to lack scientific rigor. Nevertheless, Dorothy Yost Deegan in The Stereotype of the Single Woman in American Novels² states: "Nowhere can social attitude be more easily recognized than in fiction [. . .] Fiction is one of the best sources of social data..."³ Scientific rigor aside, writers of any period writing about contemporary life share with their readers their own feelings as well as the atmosphere of the times. They are, for the most part, observant and intuitive.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether a generalized image of teacher exists in contemporary Canadian novels and, if so, to delineate that image. If not enough unanimity exists to constitute a generalized image (the term "stereotype" is purposely avoided), are there any general observations at all that can be made concerning the projection of teacher attributes? The purpose of the study is not to deal with the product of the writer in its

1 Marlene Mackie, "School Teachers: The Popular Image", in The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 18, No. 4, December, 1972, p. 267-276.

2 Dorothy Yost Deegan, The Stereotype of the Single Woman in American Novels, New York, Octagon Books, 1951, p. xiv-252.

3 Ibid., p. 7.

"reflective" aspect. Whether or not a work such as a novel truly reflects a society or a segment of society will be left to the speculation of literary critics. This study will concern itself, rather, with the "formative" aspect of the writer's product. The writer forms characters, who, in turn, form images in the mind of the readers.

The following definitions will be used for the purpose of this study:

1. "Image" is defined as that certain mental picture formed from "how people see things to be". This mental picture may result in the formation of attitudes and judgments.

2. "Generalized image". This term is similar to what is meant by "stereotype" but replaces that more common term in this study because of the negative connotation usually associated with the latter. An attempt is thus made to avoid any preconceived notions.

3. "Novel". A long work of prose fiction dealing with characters, situations, and scenes that represent those of real life and setting forth the action in the form of a plot.

4. "Contemporary" or "current". In this study the terms refer to the period 1960 to 1974.

5. "Main character". The most important character in the novel.

6. "Major character". An important character in the novel.

7. "Minor character". A character of relative insignificance in the novel.

8. "Character-composite". A hypothetical being created by a number of teacher-characters. The character-composite may be constituted by combination or absorption (these processes to be described) and once created may be analyzed as a unitary entity.

In each chapter of this study (that is, for each novel) the teacher-character or teacher-characters appearing in the novel will be presented. Presentations will be followed by analyses.

The teacher-characters in each novel will be classified as "major" or "minor" depending on their prominence in the work as a whole. Another fundamental observation which will need to be made is whether the character's being a teacher has any real significance or whether the author could just as well have given the character some other occupation or profession without changing his or her function in the story. In other words, is teaching per se an integral facet of the character or is it simply a peripheral activity?

The character analysis of each teacher will be made as concrete as possible. An attempt will be made to

prevent analyses from becoming too "literary" while at the same time trying to arrive at as true a conception as possible through standard questions:

How is the teacher viewed by students?

How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

How does the teacher view himself and his role as a teacher? What is his philosophy, if any?

How does the teacher view the students?

How does the teacher view parents and the community?

How does the teacher view his colleagues?

How does the teacher view administrators?

There will be no preconceived list of attributes such as found in instruments usually used in sociological studies, such as Marlene Mackie's⁴. When, and only when, the analyses of characters have been completed will there be an attempt to generalize concerning attributes. These attributes will be compiled from the analyses themselves. There is justification for this procedure. The analyses will have a uniformity of outlook in that only one researcher will

⁴ Marlene Mackie, op. cit.

compose them. They will not be restricted by preconceived notions.

To prevent an undue weighting no more than one novel by any one author will be selected. From each novel the number of teacher-characters for presentation and analysis will be limited to three. If a novel contains fewer characters than the limit, there will be no difficulty involved. If there are more than three teacher-characters in a novel, a character-composite will be created. This may take the form of a hodge-podge grouping of a number of teacher-characters in the presentation, and the commonalities that emerge from that grouping will be considered attributes of a single character. At times a character-composite may be composed less of a hodge-podge of characters and more as a grouping of characters with more obvious elements of uniformity. All constituent elements of a character-composite will appear in the presentation of that composite in the same manner as elements were put forth for individual characters. A nom de guerre will be assigned and the composite will be analyzed as a single entity.

Two methods by which a teacher character-composite may be constituted are available: combination and absorption. Combination is an additive process, one teacher character being added to the other. The whole then is a group

of persons joined together from which commonalities will be sought. The commonalities give rise to the composite character. A character-composite may be formed by absorption if there is an especially strong character (probably a main character) to do the absorbing. It will be necessary for teacher-characters absorbed to show a high degree of uniformity with the absorbing character before the process can take place. The absorption assumes and assures a unanimity of outlook. Inconsequential incongruities in the characters absorbed will be filtered out during the process. If the incongruities are substantial, the process of combination will be necessary.

Articles on the subject of teacher image in fiction such as one by John Farrell⁵ in the autumn 1970 issue of the McGill Journal of Education have been published. Farrell's article is amusing but lacks sufficient delimitation to be considered a serious study. A content analysis of sixty-two American novels was made by Arthur Foff⁶ in 1953. A rendition of that study appeared as an article in The

⁵ John Farrell, "The Teacher Image in Fiction", in the McGill Journal of Education, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1970, p. 121-132.

⁶ Arthur Raymond Foff, "Teacher Stereotype in the American Novel" (unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Stanford University, California, 1953).

English Journal⁷ in 1958. No evidence has been found, however, that any study has been made specifically on Canadian novels, certainly not with the delimitations set forth in the present study.

Foff⁸ and Mackie attempt to assess what image of teacher exists. Foff, in the article based on his study states, "...the teacher desperately asks not 'Who am I?' but 'Who do they think I am?'"⁹

In Edmonton, Alberta, Mackie had five hundred and ninety subjects from twenty-five organizations answer either an open-ended questionnaire or a semantic differential. Thus, opinions concerning teachers were obtained from a sampling varied as to sex, age, and socio-economic status. The empirical data obtained

[. . .] dispel the pessimistic assumption that the public regards teachers as unattractive, ineffectual people. Teachers were viewed as a hard-working, competent group. The older age categories remarked upon their circumspect behavior.¹⁰

7 Arthur Raymond Foff, "Scholars and Scapegoats", in The English Journal, Vol. 47, No. 3, 1958, p. 118-126.

8 Arthur Raymond Foff, "Teacher Stereotype in the American Novel".

9 Arthur Raymond Foff, "Scholars and Scapegoats", p. 118.

10 Marlene Mackie, op. cit., p. 274.

Nearly forty percent of the subjects answering the open-ended questionnaire mentioned the compassion and dedication of teachers toward those in their charge. Mackie's sampling is rather small, and the applicability of her study has a geographic limitation. The pessimistic assumption that Mackie is quoted as having found evidence to dispel appears to have emanated from opinions of various writers contributing articles to The A.T.A. Magazine.¹¹

Time delimitation in Foff's study on teacher image is generous, spanning a period of over fifty years. He analyzes sixty-two novels. Four of the original sixty-six selected were dropped because each had over twenty teachers, and Foff felt that including them in his study would permit a handful of authors to skew the findings. His conclusions indicate that if fiction is an index of social attitudes, then the public must not think much of the teacher. Also the self-esteem of teachers as a group was found to be extremely low. Teachers were depicted as mostly female, unattractive, sexless, and mediocre citizens. They were expected to behave just as their grandparents had. Since

¹¹ Friesen, J. W., "All is not well in the teaching profession", The A.T.A. Magazine, 1970, 50, p. 12-14.

Seymour, F. J. C., "What is professionalism?", The A.T.A. Magazine, 1963, 43, p. 20-23.

Foff's time span is very liberal and since his study is based on the fiction of another country and since the novels analyzed by him are not contemporary in terms of the present study, no more will be said aside from the point that he does stress the value of awareness on the part of a professional group.

In this study a survey will be made of novels written in English and published in Canada between 1960 and 1974 to determine those in which teachers appear as characters, either major or minor. Copyright is to be no earlier than 1960. To be considered within the terms of the study the teacher-character will have to be active in a public school system in Canada sometime within the period of time specified. This stipulation rules out contemporary novels of the historical romance genre or works of a projective-futuristic bent. The point is to see how the contemporary teacher is portrayed. This is not to say that the character could not have been already teaching before 1960, but it is the portrayal in the contemporary scene that will be the point of concentration.

Teachers in private schools will not be considered, nor will teachers in specialized institutions such as military or police academies. Private tutors will not be considered. Those involved in teaching beyond the secondary

level will also be excluded from the study.

The study will be divided into four parts. Part I will provide an overview of each of the novels selected. The overview attempts to give a brief résumé of a novel as a whole in order to orient the reader. The novels themselves will not be subjected to literary criticism. There will be no qualitative judgment made as to the literary merit of any work. Part II will contain novels in which teachers appear as employees of the federal government. Part III will contain any novel in which a teacher appears as a major character. Part IV will include novels in which teachers appear as minor characters only.

After the analyses (based on the questions posed) of teacher-characters for each novel have been completed, a summary will be made using the responses to each of the eleven questions. The same eleven questions will constitute the format by which the summary will be guided. From this summary, it will be determined whether or not a generalized image has emerged from the novels dealt with in this study. Whether or not a generalized image does emerge, observations will be made concerning the projection of teacher attributes.

PART I

BACKGROUND

This part of the study will include only one chapter. It will provide an overview of each of the novels selected as a result of a survey made to determine the novels published in Canada between 1960 and 1974 in which teacher-characters appear within the delimitations set.

CHAPTER I

AN OVERVIEW OF THE NOVELS

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of each of the novels in which teacher-characters have been found. The novels for overview will be presented in the following order: The Vanishing Point¹, I Heard the Owl Call My Name², A Jest of God³, Going Down Slow⁴, Diary of a Dirty Old Man⁵, In the Middle of a Life⁶, A Nice Place to Visit⁷, Bird at the Window⁸.

At this point, it is not the intent to dwell in detail on the teacher-characters (in some of the novels the teacher-character has a relatively small role to play),

1 W. O. Mitchell, The Vanishing Point, Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1973, 393 p.

2 Margaret Craven, I Heard the Owl Call My Name, Toronto, Clarke Irwin, 1967, 138 p.

3 Margaret Laurence, A Jest of God, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1966, 202 p.

4 John Metcalf, Going Down Slow, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1972, 177 p.

5 H. Gordon Green, Diary of a Dirty Old Man, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1974, 189 p.

6 Richard B. Wright, In the Middle of a Life, Toronto, Macmillan, 1973, 305 p.

7 Hugh Garner, A Nice Place to Visit, Richmond Hill, Simon and Schuster, 1970, 272 p.

8 Jan Truss, Bird at the Window, Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1974, 178 p.

but rather to orient the reader to each novel in toto. Such general orientation will provide helpful background information for ensuing chapters in which teacher-characters are presented and analyzed.

1. The Vanishing Point⁹

W. O. Mitchell's novel The Vanishing Point concerns the problems and frustrations of a school teacher, Carlyle Sinclair, who has gone to teach on an isolated Stony Indian reserve in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies in Alberta. Carlyle becomes very much interested in the fate of the Indians although they do not easily accept his role on their reserve. At first, the Indian parents are reluctant to have their children confined daily in the school building to be instructed in "white ways", and the eager new teacher is forced to hunt his pupils out of the woods, in their cabins, and from the tree-tops. Deciding that this method of compelling school attendance cannot continue, he follows a tip from a shrewd young Stony, his neighbor Archie Nicotine, who advises him to "try the belly"-- to deprive the Indians of their Government of Canada cheques until they send their children to school. This technique proves most effective, as very soon, there is rarely an

⁹ W. O. Mitchell, op. cit.

inexcusable absence from school.

Much about Carlyle's life up to his coming to the Indian reserve has predisposed him to taking a very conscientious view of life, and specifically to his role and function as teacher among the Stonys. His own school days had been punctuated by the harsh words and the stinging cane of his teacher, the severe old Mr. Mackey. His childhood memories appear to focus on events where he has been judged, by some adult, to have committed gross misconduct. His stay with his stern, repressive Aunt Pearl who strongly disapproved of his childhood sexual experimentation, still holds keen remembrance for him, for even now, Carlyle, in his own inner thoughts, addresses himself to his Aunt Pearl: "What do you think of that, Aunt Pearl?" or "To hell with you, Aunt Pearl!" As well as childhood memories of misconduct and what resulted, Carlyle has had many experiences with the death of loved ones: at the age of six, he lost his mother (who died of a lingering disease); during adolescence, his doctor father died in a car accident, apparently as a result of being too inebriated to drive; later, it was his baby daughter who did not survive, and finally his wife.

At the beginning of his duty among the Indians, Carlyle is warned by Fyfe, the Federal Government's local supervisor of Indian affairs, not to become personally involved

in the lives of the Indians. This bit of advice Carlyle knows to be logically sound, but his serious commitment to his work, and his passionate desire to teach the Indians "better" ways, keep him from always remembering to observe it. As well, he becomes increasingly involved in the life of one of his young pupils, Victoria Rider, a beautiful, clever little girl, who seems to be accepting "white ways" and making good progress in her school work.

Ignorance, hunger, lethargy, and disease all make their mark on the lives of the Indians. Carlyle feels acutely his children's trials and deficiencies and very much wishes to teach them ways of coping with their problems. Like so many other people in authority over others, he feels that if the Indians are shown good ways of coping with their difficulties (for example, planting an oats crop), and if they themselves realize the benefits of the new way, then they will be won over to it. This way, involving working for what one gets, however, does not impress the Indians as being consistent with their philosophy and the way things were always done before the white man came bringing with him his colds and tuberculosis germs. Carlyle faces an uphill struggle, causing him much anger, frustration and heartbreak. He is counselled by his good friend, the Indians' doctor, Sanders, that the Indians' basic

feelings will always overpower any reasonable approach that may be drummed into them. Carlyle continues to pit his efforts against the fundamental truth which he knows but cannot accept--that the Indians seemingly cannot recognize the cause and effect aspects of their acts. In their closeness to nature and the very beat of life, they do what, by nature, they do so well: they sense, they feel keenly, but they do not wish to think or plan logically, for this seems foreign to the Indian way. At an Indian meeting to consider a petition to be sent to Ottawa, an old Indian, Ezra Powderface, who has always been concerned with the religious life of his brethern, expresses himself this way:

'[. . .] I would like to say a few words. I want to say the first time--we lost the good life of the Indian. We lost all that now. Before white people come to this country Indian had a good livin'--never hungry for himself--for his horse. Been huntin' in the fall--put up for dry meat and put up for dry berries too. We lost all that now; we lost the Indian good life. Those days we had buffalo-hide wigwam that was wind-proof--cold-proof. Now we haven't. The Indian child get sick out of it. We like to put that sufferin' out of our soul.
[. . .] In the name of Jesus Christ, who died for all of us amen. That's all.'¹⁰

The Indian has always lived close to the earth, and feeling its rhythm, has translated it into the joyful beat of his drumming dances.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 378.

Carlyle's plans have been to change all this. His general plans can be specifically observed in his handling of his specially-nurtured pupil, Victoria, for he wishes to mold her into the model of a white, middle-class young lady. By means of great effort, he manages to get her to pass the provincial departmental examinations (and the supplementals), and then gets her enrolled in a hospital to follow a nursing course. When, instead, Victoria follows her own feelings, she becomes pregnant and reacts in the only way she knows--she tries to escape from those who expect more from her than she can give. Since her leaving the hospital does not coincide with her teacher's code of conduct, he is very much chagrined and hurt. Despite this, he searches everywhere for his "little lost lamb, Victoria", jealously imagining all sorts of fates have befallen her. When he learns the truth, he is sickened, feeling that she has failed him.

Carlyle returns to the reserve from the city where he has found Victoria. Convinced of his complete failure in really communicating with the Indians, he determines to "muddle through" until the end of the term. Shortly after his return to the village, he is called to the dance tent to take the minutes of a tribal meeting. Later the same evening Carlyle is drawn back to the dance tent where he hears the bump of the dance drum, and feels the strong pulse

of the Indian life. It is here that he finally experiences, by way of the senses rather than the intellect, the Indian way of feeling life, so different from his own logical approach. Although, at last, Carlyle directly perceives the Indian approach to life, he still keenly realizes the pain to which it dooms his friends.

2. I Heard the Owl Call My Name¹¹

I Heard the Owl Call My Name is the story of a young priest who comes to Kingcome Village, B. C. to live among the Tsawataineuk tribe of the Kwakiutl band. Although the young ordinand, Mark Brian, twenty-seven years of age, does not realize it, his health is failing and his period of active living may be less than two years. His direct superior, the Bishop, has decided to send him to his hardest parish, to minister to the Indians of Kingcome Village and surrounding area. Here, the Bishop feels, Mark will learn about life, and for this reason will be better able to face death when it approaches. The lesson may be learned with difficulty, however, and at the cost of great loneliness and personal suffering.

Arriving at his post, Mark immediately becomes acquainted with the realities of death, for in the vicarage

¹¹ Margaret Craven, op. cit.

there is a dead child laid out for burial. Although he is met by the Indians with an appearance of polite indifference, his consideration and tolerance for their beliefs make him accepted and trusted in the village. The Indians' most distressing problem is their own conflicting feelings resulting from the integration of their young people into the outside world. Leaving the little school at home in Kingcome Village, many of the tribe's young people go to the residence school at Alert Bay. Occasionally, some continue on to university in Vancouver. Others go to work in villages some distance from the tribe. Because of these contacts with the outside world, the young come home to the tribe with new, differing ideas and habits. They are no longer interested in the myths and stories of how their ancestors lived. Now they know only the English language and are eager to practise the customs they see observed on the outside. This weakening of the ties with the big tribal family greatly disturbs the older generations to the extent that they fear for the survival of their tribe.

Here in this isolated tribe whose peaceful existence and continuation are threatened by the widening gulf between the older and younger generations, Mark lives and ministers. His unassuming attempts to help the Indians in

even small ways, his quiet tolerance of their customs and his stoical endurance of his own discomforts and hardships show the Indians that his concern for them is genuine. The other representative of the white man's world in Kingcome Village is the school teacher whose attitudes and behavior towards the villagers are in contrast to the involvement of the vicar. The teacher is not held by the Indians in the same respectful position as is the vicar, since his main interest seems to be in keeping apart from the villagers. At all the feasts and occasions of significance to the tribe, the teacher is noted as being absent.

Among the Kwakiutl Indians there is a belief that when the owl calls one's name, that person soon will die. Walking up the path one evening from the river bank, the vicar hears the owl from the green spruce calling his name. At least one villager, Mark's old friend and housekeeper, Marta Stephens, has heard the owl's call that evening too, and has recognized the name being called. Next morning the vicar and his Indian assistant, Jim Wallace, are called to go out into the inlet to search for a missing logger. In the evening on their return into Kingcome Inlet, a sudden flash of lightning topples a tree on the top of a nearby cliff causing a tumultuous landslide. As a result, their little boat is destroyed and the vicar, who was at the

wheel, killed. On first inspection, searchers cannot identify the one survivor. Meanwhile, the village waits in a state of apprehension. At last the word is brought: the vicar has been killed in the wreck. Sadly, the tribe receives the vicar's body and in the belief that the vicar belonged with them, prepares to bury him as one of their own.

3. A Jest of God¹²

A Jest of God is Rachel Cameron's story. Rachel is a thirty-four-year-old grade two teacher in the small Manitoba town of Manawaka where wooden houses age fast, and even brick looks worn down after fifty years of blizzard winters and blistering summers. These older houses and the new bungalows, fresh and tasteless, are in the "good" part of town while on the other side of the tracks, weeds grow knee-high about the shacks from which half her young pupils come. The time is the mid-nineteen sixties.

Rachel has been teaching in Manawaka for fourteen years. She had left university to return there after her father's death.

¹² Margaret Laurence, op. cit.

[. . .] I couldn't finish university after Dad's death. The money wasn't there. None of us ever suspected how little he had, until he died. He'd had a good business, or so we thought. Mother said, 'I hate to say it, but there's no doubt where it all went'. If she hated to say it, why did she? Then it was--'Only for a year or so, Rachel, until we see'.¹³

So Rachel stayed, she and her mother, still living over the undertaking establishment as the business changed from "Cameron's Funeral Parlour" to the "Japonica Funeral Chapel" with Hector Jonas, the new owner, contemplating the eventual removal of the word "funeral" altogether. No one in Manawaka ever died, at least not on the "right side of the tracks"; they passed on.

Rachel sees the undertaker's signs change and her students change. The girls, as they grow into their teens, seem like aliens to her. She appears intimidated by them.

I taught them in Grade Two. Now they're about sixteen, I guess. Their hair is incredible. Piled high, finespun, like the high light conical mass of woven sugar threads, the candy floss we used to get at fairs. [. . .]

I've known them nearly all their lives. But it doesn't seem so. Does thirty-four seem antedeluvian to them? Why did they laugh?¹⁴

13 Ibid., p. 11.

14 Ibid., p. 12.

Rachel's invitations out are limited. Occasionally, there is a dinner invitation to her principal's home. "Angela, his petulant do-gooding wife, for ever proffering kindness to the single teachers."¹⁵ Calla Mackie, her colleague, after much persistence, has Rachel accompany her to the Tabernacle but continued invitations are an embarrassment to Rachel as is attendance at meetings of the fundamentalist sect there. At such times it seems not so bad to have the excuse:

'Oh--thanks--that's awfully nice of you, but I'm afraid I can't. Tonight is Mother's bridge night. I always do the coffee and sandwiches. She gets too fussed if she has to do everything herself.'¹⁶

The dependence and servitude of her younger daughter are as essential to Mrs. Cameron as is Rachel's salary and the weekly bridge gatherings. Different expectations are held of her older daughter, married in Vancouver.

Rachel quotes her mother:

'One thing about Stacey,' she says, 'she is always very good about writing. I don't think she's ever missed a week, has she? It can't be easy, with the four children to look after, and that big house.'¹⁷

Rachel hasn't seen her sister for seven years. The last

15 Ibid., p. 8.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., p. 21.

time Stacey had been in Manawaka she said she would be "up the walls" if she extended her stay there for a while longer as Rachel had asked her to consider doing.

Mrs. Cameron uses every trick that cunning, born of self-indulgence and a genuine need, can suggest to keep Rachel at her beck and call. There are a great many things that Rachel wishes not to do that she finds herself doing. Going to church is one of these.

[. . .] When I came back to teach in Manawaka, I told Mother the first Sunday that I didn't think I'd go. She said 'Why not?' I didn't say God hadn't died recently, within the last few years, but a long time ago, longer than I could remember, for I could not actually recall a time when He was alive. No use to say that. I only told her I didn't agree with everything. She said 'I don't think it would look very good.' But I didn't go. I held out three weeks. She didn't reproach me, not openly. She only relayed comments. 'Reverend MacElfrish asked after you, dear. He said he hoped you were well. I suppose he thought you probably weren't, as he hasn't seen you.' I thought what was the point in upsetting her, so I went. And have done, ever since.¹⁸

Rachel worries about her mother's frail heart and Mrs. Cameron ensures that she does so by pointedly not making a point of the matter. Rachel makes excuses for her mother and rationalizes her own swayed decisions or lack of decision-making altogether. "Going to church is a social occasion for her. She hasn't so many. It's mean of me not to

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

want to go."¹⁹ Rachel, with her mother, in the claustrophobic flat, worries about her job, about her erotic dreams, about her special affection for a little red-haired boy in her class and resentment for his mother. Her reactions to everyone and everything are unsure and troubled.

At this point, a catalyst is provided. During the summer holidays from school, Rachel meets Nick Kazlik. Nick had gone to school in Manawaka with Rachel although they had not been close.

[. . .] Mother used to say 'Don't play with those Galician youngsters'. How odd that seems now. They weren't Galicians--they were Ukrainian, but that didn't trouble my mother. She said Galician or Bohunk. So did I, I suppose. She needn't have worried. They were rawboned kids whose scorn was almost tangible.²⁰

Nick is staying with his parents for the summer, on their farm outside Manawaka. He teaches High School in Winnipeg. Rachel feels awkward in his presence. Nick is surprised that she is still in Manawaka. "'What is there to do here in the summer?' Nick asks."²¹ Nick and Rachel find things to do together, though even in her desire Rachel is shamed by the awkwardness of her virginity. Her physical need for

19 Ibid., p. 39.

20 Ibid., p. 63.

21 Ibid., p. 64.

love overcomes her fears. She even finds strength enough to stand against her mother in order to continue her affair with Nick. A bid towards a permanent relationship is not taken up by Nick who returns to the city, apparently leaving problems of his own unsolved. He leaves the tyranny of the land and the shadow of a dead brother, always foremost in his father's mind. Nick also leaves Rachel pregnant, or so she believes.

For the turmoil of mind that this situation creates for Rachel one must appreciate her character as it has been developed by the novelist. Rachel herself is the narrator of her own story. Everything in the novel sifts through her consciousness. Presentation and analysis of Rachel's character is the task of Chapter Four. Suffice it to say here that Rachel's "baby" is really a tumor and a benign one at that. Before this revelation and an operation there are thoughts of suicide, the wanting and at the same time the not-wanting of a child. A touching, yet ludicrous, scene takes place with Hector Jonas, the undertaker, as he proudly shows off his new chapel to Rachel at three in the morning. It is also during this time of trouble that Rachel sees the true worth of a good friend, Calla Mackie.

The affair and the trauma which followed provide Rachel with the strength to free herself from the way in

which she had been living. The resolution of Rachel's story comes existentially out of her life's confusion. With her mother now the "child" she makes decisions for both of them. Rachel and Mrs. Cameron leave Manawaka for Vancouver, Rachel realizing that life will still provide frustrations and troubles, but at least she can now meet these in a more determined fashion.

4. Going Down Slow²²

Going Down Slow, a novel by John Metcalf, is the somewhat picaresque tale of an anti-hero, David Appleby, teacher of English at Merrymount High, a school supposedly under the jurisdiction of the Greater Montreal Protestant School Board. The year is that of space exploration and a Quebec Liquor Control Board strike--1968.

After almost two years in Canada, David is still a "stranger in a strange land". He is from Southbourne, but to strangers claims to be from London since "it was the only English place most Canadians had heard of. If he said Southbourne, they always said, 'That's near London, isn't it?'"²³

22 John Metcalf, op. cit.

23 Ibid., p. 82.

He shares an apartment near Ste. Catherine Street with Jim Wilson, a fellow countryman. The apartment was taken by the two young teachers soon after their arrival from England and at first seemed fine enough after student rooms back home. They discovered only later that many apartments they might have taken were cheaper, cleaner, better furnished, and warm inside.

As the novel opens Dave and Jim have five months to go on their two-year lease and they are finding it more and more difficult to put up with the superintendent, Monsieur "idle sodding", André Gagnon, his smelly hallways, spasmodic garbage collections, and abuse of the "maudit anglais".

It is mid-winter and across the snow-blown roofs the neon garishness of a Canada Tire sign washes the uncurtained living room window red, green, and yellow. The sign, with its alien American spelling, served as a focus for David's xenophobia. In this bloody country of Canada it seemed only a choice between being staked out in a Turkish bath in the summer or hobbling around with frostbite and piles in the winter.

On a Monday morning David struggles to get ready for school. He tries to decide whether he is ill or not. There is no coffee left. He has not done the shopping.

There are no clean dishes. He has not done the washing. Jim is critical. It has been David's turn for three days. David finally gives up trying to scrape old rivet-like Rice Krispies from a cereal bowl and settles for a mug of Chinese tea which he sips while sitting in the bathroom. The rusting scabby radiator beside the flush is the warmest in the apartment. He wonders where two missing exercise books have disappeared, fantasizes about blowing up the Canada Tire sign, and frets about the full implications of Susan's phone call the previous Friday night. Susan's mother had told her she had phoned the school. She claimed to have spoken to Vice-Principal McPhee. God rot the bloody woman! What could he do in McPhee's office under his steel eyes? Susan was denying everything in her mad-house of a home and he was saved by her age from the possibility of statutory rape charges, but where had the girl's mother obtained information about her relationship with a young teacher not long at the school?

Above are found all the plot elements of Going Down Slow. The novel, as it progresses from that cold, late-January morning toward school closing time in June, details all the day-to-day frustrations, trials, and tribulations of David Appleby's life in Montreal and existence at Merry-mount High. Susan Haddad is a grade eleven student at the

school. David's affair with Susan, the pleasure it brings and the worry and trouble it causes, are at the heart of the story.

Through David's thoughts the reader is given flashbacks, both long and short range. He thinks nostalgically on many occasions about his childhood and his home back in England. He remembers an old teacher of French from his own student days and with particular fondness thinks of his father's tobacco-smelling, book-filled study. It is quite evident where David's love of books began. The more recent flashbacks in time acquaint the reader with David's experiences during his first year at Merrymount High. The reader is made aware of how David's only real friendship with a fellow staff member is formed. Garry Westlake and he find common interests through books they both have read. Apart from a Miss Leet (who favored Ayn Rand), David considered Garry to be the only teacher in the school who read books.

There are for David, afterschools in bed with Susan as Jim works diligently with an adding machine in the living room, treating raw scores from stacks of report cards in preparation for writing a thesis. There is the continued concern about Susan's powerful six-foot-two father who, at home, in his many rages, threatens either to have the as yet unidentified "Teacher-shaykh" beaten up by Montreal

thugs or personally to kill him with his own two hands. When calmer, Mr. Haddad would merely pace from room to room, shouting such typical Arab curses as "May ill-fortune befall the camel that favored his mother!" or "A disease like leprosy should eat his face!" Susan's Lebanese-born mother contented herself by aiming toward some state of permanent hysteria. In her saner moments she prayed at St. Joseph's Oratory and left magazine articles such as "Can a Young Woman Find Happiness with an Older Man?" on Susan's bed. There is the continued worry about Mr. McPhee as to what he actually knows about the relationship of his staff member and the student. On one school pay night a close call occurs. The two, on their way to a small restaurant in Jim's car are almost spotted at a parking garage. David huddles in the back seat of the Volkswagen which is driven by an attendant to the upper area of the garage where he has a difficult time explaining his sudden presence in what is a restricted area.

Later that same evening, David, now somewhat inebriated buys a jade pendant for Susan and a stuffed squirrel in a glass box for them both. They go to a folksong center where David disrupts the performance of a black, Blind Foxy John, claiming him to be a phony. Later, more sober, David talks seriously with Susan in front of the McGill University

gates. The girl has her own ideas of what constitutes life as she wishes to live it. She wants no part of university. When the point is pursued by David, Susan hails a taxi and heads home. The episode is a very revealing one which will be mentioned in more detail in Chapter Five.

David's character is fully delineated. John Metcalf has also created a host of other teacher-characters. Some are developed fully, others to a lesser extent; there are many teachers whose appearance in the novel seems only to create a believable fluidity of action in the hustle and bustle of a large school. There are the staffroom scenes, the "come-to-my-office" episodes, the cafeteria and the classroom glimpses. Through the actions and conversations, idle or meaningful, we come to know Merrymount. The school is not merely "the plant"--straight lines, acres of glass, neat brick; it is the teachers and students.

5. Diary of a Dirty Old Man²⁴

In a postscript to his book, Diary of a Dirty Old Man, H. Gordon Green refers to it as "primarily a work of fiction"²⁵. Many novels are to some extent autobiographical.

²⁴ H. Gordon Green, op. cit.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 189.

The author lives on a farm near Ormstown, Quebec, and teaches at Dawson College in Montreal. The diarist is a farmer cum high school teacher somewhere in Quebec's Eastern Townships. It appears that the author does not want the autobiographical aspect of his work to go unnoticed. The diarist's name is obviously "Mr. Green". After judging Landrace swine at an exhibition, he was made a presentation of a stockman's cane.

[. . .] It bore my name and the date, and as the fair secretary explained when he passed it to me, 'And we had it personalized still further by having it painted green.'²⁶

There is other evidence of author-narrator synonymy, but since this is not intended to be a literary exercise, suffice it to mention the other "real" characters in H. Gordon Green's "diary". Some essays submitted as Composition assignments by a Mohawk student, Russell "Moose" Deer, while he was attending Howard S. Billings Regional High School are included. Walter Beattie, outdoorsman and philosopher of sorts, was "real". Schulz, an English pointer, inveterate lover and garbage hound, was "real". The book is dedicated to one of the "real" characters, Sherry, "the wonderful little woman who is still with me and still the beloved

26 Ibid., p. 101.

Pied Piper to all the ridiculous animals of this farm"²⁷.

Since the novel is in diary form, as the title indicates, the reader is given a first-person account of events. These events take place between May, 1967 and April, 1969. Through the diarist's eyes, the reader sees a relatively small school grow to "Regional" status, first by incorporation of Catholic students formerly under the Separate School System and next by "bussing in" students (including four hundred Mohawk Indians) from a greater surrounding area. As teacher, the diarist thinks of the regional high school as a "computerized education supermarket"²⁸ where the awesome genius of IBM has scanned, digested and recorded intelligence and aptitudes, and in token thereof has given each of twenty-three hundred students a code number and a schedule of subjects and classes. As for the diarist himself,

[. . .] after I stomp the heifer dust from my shoes at its yawning portals each morning, I become teacher # 081, duly permitted to dispense Senior English 086-2 and Senior Agriculture 369-1.²⁹

Through the diarist's eyes the reader also sees the seasons

27 Ibid., p. 189.

28 Ibid., p. 134.

29 Ibid.

come and go on the 335-acre farm where that heifer dust accumulates.

Activities of the school and farm have a way of coming together for the diarist. One of the high points of his fifty-fifth birthday is transporting a number of sheep to school for shearing. The "Industrial Arts man", on the spur of the moment quite willingly put together a platform for the operation and "the stunt" was a great success while some rather pressing farm work was accomplished at the same time.

[. . .] 'I always did say that every high school ought to have one teacher from the farm,' he [the principal] said. 'But I'm sure glad I never said there ought to be any more than that.'³⁰

The sheep-shearing enterprise also gave the diarist a good excuse to start the reading of Wordsworth's "Michael" with his senior English class.

The farm shares equal footing with the school as far as space in the novel goes, but in the diarist's life there is no question as to what has top billing.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 14.

[. . .] I have just about everything I've ever wanted and a lot more than I need or deserve. Of course all I've ever wanted really was a farm of my own and a room full of books.

What I have now, ordinary though it must seem, to the ambitious, was the one dream which kept me burning through those long, sleep-yearning nights of my youth. It would be very noble of me, of course, if I could declare that those years when I worked in a Michigan steel mill from midnight till eight so that I could start University classes at nine, proved my insatiable love of learning. The truth is that I wanted those degrees to make the money to bring my dream down from the skies. It would also be very noble of me if I could declare that this high school teaching job the supervisor talked me into four years ago was something I undertook because of my insatiable love of sharing my learning. The truth is that the feed bills were getting a little too high.³¹

Although the diarist's wife is a "country girl", she does not share his love of the farm. A duplex in town would be much more to her liking. Whether this is the root cause of the disenchantment existing between husband and wife, the reader will have to guess. There are, in addition, allusions to past infidelity on the husband's part and in the time covered by the diary, casual sexual liaisons are entered into by him with two of the female staff members of his school. Much of the diarist's time is spent in an old stone house separated some distance from the "big house". Here he has his study, can be near the farm

³¹ Ibid., p. 8, 9.

animals, and can "walk in any hour of the day or night without getting hell for the crap which comes in with my rubber boots"³². His stays at the "big house" are such that appearances will be maintained "for the sake of the children".

The diary form allows not only a recounting of events but also a chance for the narrator to reflect on these events and life in general. The reader is exposed to homilies, observations, and homespun philosophy throughout the book. He is given "words of wisdom" about punishment, the new morality, pushy parents, Indians, the idiocy of school dress regulations, and so on. Many readers will no doubt recognize in all the "meanderings" a tone associated with Canada's "Old Cynic" on cross-country radio. The author, H. Gordon Green, is, of course, the "Old Cynic".

School and the farm overlap in more than sheep-shearing, chick-hatching and muskrat skinning. One of the student-visitors to the diarist's farm on many occasions is a very bright young girl, Sherry McIver. The plot of the novel, apart from the "meanderings", is based on the developing relationship between teacher and student, as it progresses from an anonymous love poem from the young girl to

³² Ibid., p. 8.

the point where she moves to his stone house to stay. To his wife he becomes the "dirty old man" and the farm he has worked for and loves so much may very well be wrested from him through legal machinations. The diarist's lawyer warns:

'You know why the really intelligent women don't bother hollering for equal rights, don't you? Because they know they've got far better than equal rights already! You might as well know it, our courts still believe in chivalry...Yes...I'm afraid that you just might have to give up half that farm....'

'Plus alimony?'

'Plus alimony. And I don't have to tell you about the ridiculous injustice of alimony today, either. It's the screwing you get for the screwing you got. There's more truth than joke to that.'³³

6. In the Middle of a Life³⁴

The title of Richard B. Wright's novel, In the Middle of a Life, is indicative of a now familiar theme, "crisis of the middle years". The "crisis of the middle years" in this instance is being experienced by forty-two-year-old Freddy Landon who lives in a small apartment in one of the older parts of Toronto, slated for demolition to make room for an expanding university complex. It is March, 1971. Freddy has been unemployed for seven months and what savings he does have are dwindling away.

³³ Ibid., p. 179.

³⁴ Richard B. Wright, op. cit.

When the novel opens, several things are converging in Freddy Landon's life. After a general "run around" by employment agencies (Canada Manpower had nothing) in being sent to more and more questionable establishments, he has committed himself to an interview for a real estate sales position--a job for which he is admirably unsuited by temperament. His seventeen-year-old daughter, Ginny, has left Columbia University ("...what good is a degree these days? Everybody has one."³⁵) and has arrived in Toronto in the company of two young American draft resisters. His ex-wife, Vera, who has worked in New York since their divorce, is to follow. She has become disenchanted with conditions in the big American city and has obtained a transfer back to Toronto from the head office of the ad agency for which she has worked for the past ten years. Mother and daughter will be staying with Vera's sister, a well-to-do eccentric woman with a neurotic, homosexual son from a first marriage. Freddy, himself, has become involved in an "affair of the heart" with his upstairs neighbor, a middle-aged school-teacher, Margaret Beauchamp. One snowy evening the previous December, his friendship with Margaret began after he had driven her to the hospital where her mother lay dying.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

He thinks of that incident:

[. . .] Well--it had changed things for him, brought another person into his life. But really it was a bad script; the lonely schoolteacher meets the middle-aged salesman. It came off the same cob of corn that was served up on TV dramas billed as specials on Christmas Eve. Ninety minutes of poop sponsored by some giant corporation that manufactures electronic eyes and bugging devices. Yes, a bad script, though that comically absurd business about the hat was a nice touch. Could he have written a better one? This was doubtful, for when it came to bad TV scripts, Landon was no slouch. He had a closetful of them, yellowing and musty, tied in bundles and secured by grocery string.³⁶

The script that the schoolteacher and the unemployed salesman could provide may not have had much potential but Freddy's relationship with Margaret is the one source of comfort he has at a crossroads in his life. Flashbacks in time through Freddy's reverie show the reader a marriage starting out with a great promise but ending in disillusionment and divorce. Much of the promise in the beginning had been sparked by Freddy's initial success in writing. He did, in fact, sell "sixty minutes of guff" to the short-lived *Première Playhouse*. The play was produced and after a brief moment in the sun there followed years of frustration. Vera had been a sort of girl Friday at the CBC studios trying to gain a toehold in show business.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

The "genius" she thought she had found had to go on to work for a small advertising agency which handled accounts that no one else seemed to want. Eventually, in the spring of 1961, Vera, freshly divorced, went to New York with their child, Ginny, and achieved success on her own in an ad agency there. Her underwear ads were sensational. Freddy continued to write copy for funeral furbishers and undertakers back in Toronto.

Freddy's ad agency took over an account from Caledonia Stationery, a small greeting card firm, unable to afford its own verse writers. The sales manager at Caledonia eventually talked Freddy into leaving the ad agency and coming to work for him on the sales staff of the stationery firm. Here he worked for a number of years before being squeezed out by an American takeover of the business. The sales manager, Earle Cranmer, was fired, and in leaving hinted that Landon would leave too--that they both had other "irons in the fire". On Cranmer's part this boast was wishful thinking and on Freddy's part a downright untruth. Leon Sugarman, the new manager, was quite happy, however, to ease Freddy out of the business in efforts to create a new, youthful image for Caledonia Stationery. Then came the months of being without a job and finding that things had passed him by. The personnel people of companies at which Fred

had interviews were saying that at age forty-two, he no longer fitted in to their pension schemes.

So Freddy Landon entered that crucial period of life when so many people suffer a loss of nerve. They have increasing difficulty in fitting into the new schemes and worse, they discover the unsettling truth that the people who are dying from cancer and heart disease are no longer the friends of their parents but their own contemporaries. It is during this period of time that Margaret Beauchamp has been a comfort to Freddy.

[. . .] After Mass she would walk along to the old red-brick collegiate on Harcourt Street where she taught English literature to the children of Ukrainian and Italian immigrants. Landon had listened to these footsteps every morning and evening for months, never dreaming that one day they would find their way to his own bed.³⁷

Aside from the flashbacks, the novel covers three days in Landon's life beginning with his daughter's arrival in Toronto. They are critical days which involve searching moments as he visits his father in a nursing home, pathetically tries to sell a house near an airport as initiation into the real estate game, meets his wife again, and travels to a small-town jail where his daughter is held on a drug charge with her boy friend--all these incidents

³⁷ Ibid., p. 36.

conveying pressures of life that are so often felt by a middle-aged citizen, father, husband, son.

7. A Nice Place to Visit³⁸

A Nice Place to Visit, a novel by Hugh Garner, is set in southwestern Ontario in 1969. The title of the novel refers to Graylands, a small community of nine hundred people, sixty miles northwest of Toronto. It is to this little factory town that Controversy magazine's editor sends Ben Lawlor, a fifty-nine-year-old alcoholic journalist of declining productivity and diminishing popularity. The purpose of Ben's stay in Graylands is to investigate and report on the feelings of the townspeople two years following the trial of Tommy Hurd, convicted of strangling his young friend, Debby Gratton. It is the contention of Morgan Crayshaw, the owner and publisher of Controversy magazine, and his wife, Penelope, that insufficient evidence to convict the boy had been introduced at the trial, and that Tommy Hurd was actually innocent of the crime. Penelope Crayshaw has been instrumental in setting up the Thomas Hurd Rehearing Committee after the boy's autobiography has been published in some of the province's newspapers.

³⁸ Hugh Garner, op. cit.

Through her husband's magazine, she wants an article written and published which will show that injustice has taken place and will bring about a public outcry for re-trial.

At first, Ben rejects the assignment to go to Graylands, but due to personal circumstances and increasing curiosity concerning the motive for the killing, he undertakes to research the matter. The course of the next week brings him in contact with a wide variety of Graylands' citizenry and acquaints him with many strange circumstances and conditions. It does not take him long to discover two things: that Graylands is a "company town" controlled and directed by one man, Alex Hurd, the convicted boy's father, and that whatever the truth is regarding the murder trial, authorities surrounding the case are not eager to have it exposed. Almost immediately Ben realizes that attempted rape is not a plausible motive for this killing, that other circumstances must be involved.

In the course of his inquiry, Ben finds the people he meets eager to talk about the matter, but only up to a point will they reveal anything actually significant in uncovering the entire situation. It appears that each person interviewed has some personal involvement in the matter, or in some way or other, wants to conceal something about himself or herself which would bring to light some failing or

some painful event or memory. Not until Ben meets Gimp Crawley, the intellectual town drunk (once a dentist who had become addicted to Demerol), does he begin to realize that he was right in suspecting the motive.

Gimp, a voyeur, tells him that it was not Debby Gratton whom Tommy Hurd loved, but rather Eleanor Scantling, for at least four or five times Gimp had spied on their love-making behind the town's seed cleaning plant. He also adds that the night before the killing, Eleanor and Tommy were parked in their usual spot, but were arguing bitterly over Eleanor's mother's forbidding them to see one another again. Gimp saw the girl claw Tommy's face with her finger-nails, a manifestation that had been attributed at the trial to a night later when the murdered girl supposedly fought off her attacker by scratching him. His informer tells Ben that never had he seen Tommy and Debby together behind the seed cleaning plant. Gimp also confides that the father of Debby's unborn baby may well have been Sam Jakiksa, an older man who works as a wood-turner at Alex Hurd's furniture plant.

Among the persons of Graylands interviewed by Ben are two school teachers, Miss Stephanie Holt who teaches Grade Eight and who lives at the Drummer's Rest Hotel and Mr. Orville Wallace, presently vice-principal of an elementary

school at Guelph. Both teachers were acquainted with Tommy Hurd, and objectively express to Ben their opinions on the boy's attitudes and character. Miss Holt, a confirmed weekend drinker, who visits Ben in his hotel room one evening, clarifies one mystery for him, that of Penelope Crayshaw's personal involvement in the Hurd family and her continued desire either to take revenge on Alex Hurd or possibly to try to make amends for the turmoil she has already caused in that family. Stephanie fills in much of the community and family background for Ben, and helps him explore why Tommy may have killed Debby Gratton.

The other teacher, Orville Wallace, who has earlier been acquitted of an incident supposedly involving homosexual behavior, explains Tommy's activities during the early part of the evening of the murder. Orville had previously taught in Graylands. He had made many friends among the young people there, and had obviously been respected and consulted by them when they had problems. The vice-principal verifies Ben's suspicion that Tommy had been very upset on the night of the killing and that he had arrived, along with Debby Gratton, at the teacher's apartment in Guelph with a badly scratched face. Explaining that he could not have been used in Tommy's defence at the trial due to public feeling against him at the time, Orville declines any

further information concerning the cause of the boy's emotions since he feels it will bring up past grief for others in Graylands.

On Sunday, Ben finally visits Alex Hurd who receives him well and fills him in on family details. Later in the day he is confronted at the beach by three of Graylands' younger set including Cissy Gratton, the murdered girl's older sister. This results in bringing him into close contact with the members of the town's constabulary. Despite his being jailed and beaten by police, as a result of his meeting with Cissy and her pot-smoking friends, he is able to solve the mystery of the motive for the killing and write his article. Next afternoon Ben presents a few of the newly-found facts of the case to the Committee which throw it into confusion. At this point, Mr. Alex Hurd arrives, confiscates the as yet unread article, and threatens the staff of Controversy magazine with legal action if the article ever comes to press. The story concludes with Ben feeling satisfied that he has uncovered and reported the truth, but happy that his article, which would have hurt many people, will not be published.

8. Bird at the Window³⁹

Bird at the Window by Jan Truss, is the recently (1974) published winner of the Search-For-A-New-Alberta-Novelist Competition. It tells of eighteen-year-old Angela Moynahan's struggle to cope with life and reach solutions to problems which she feels are honest for herself. The plot of the story begins during Angela's last few weeks in high school. Known as the "school brain", she is faced with a more urgent problem than her final examinations, for she is pregnant. She has great difficulty admitting her physical condition to herself and the reason for this condition, her "clumsy couplings" with Gordon Kopec, her neighbor and former school-mate, in his old 1959 GM truck. She cannot tell her cool, reasonable mother who is forever "sewing out her feelings" in colorful, lively tapestries, nor her loving, steady, Irish father whose life's efforts have been expended in maintaining his prairie farm.

The only person in whom Angela dares to confide is Mr. Olson, her high school English teacher, who she knows will neither become angry with her nor give her a lecture. Barely lifting his head from the pile of exercise books he

39 Jan Truss, op. cit.

is correcting, Mr. Olson tentatively suggests that Angela could have an abortion. He, although already meeting community condemnation for holding and putting forth ideas and values that are not approved in the area, is concerned with his student's "only little life", and that in accepting her pregnancy, she is putting up bars to living which will imprison her. He begs her to do something about it.

Although she respects Mr. Olson and his ideas, Angela cannot act upon his advice. She does not tell her parents, the baby's father, Gordon Kopec, nor any person in the community of her problem. Instead, she finishes school, and carries out her plans for the summer: a trip to England to visit her mother's parents and to work in a neighborhood bakery for two months. Her flight to England and her first two days in London represent a freeing of the spirit for Angela, since she is coping in strange surroundings among "bright" people whom she admires. She feels that she is "in free orbit, flying high"⁴⁰. Her arrival at her aged grandparents' Midlands home brings her sharply back to earth. Although her grandfather is loving and kind to her, her grandmother complains bitterly of the cruel fate which has taken her lovely daughter Dinah away

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 48.

to Canada to become the wife of a middle-aged, Irish farmer. Life here becomes very difficult for Angela. She cannot eat the greasy dishes prepared for her, she suffers from the cold, she worries about her gradually rounding tummy, and she flinches under her grandmother's tirades on her mother's and her own ingratitude.

At the conclusion of her two month stay in the Midlands, Angela returns to London, where she decides she will await the baby's arrival. From a little garret room she goes each day to a back street dry-cleaning establishment where she works as a garment presser. She exists, working, sleeping, and continuing to write her experiences and feelings in a series of exercise scribbles, until one day she is spotted through the dry-cleaner's window by a neighbor couple from home. Her fright brings about the premature birth of a stillborn baby. Angela feels no emotion.

Upon release from the hospital, she learns from her mother's letters that her father is seriously ill. Quickly deciding to end her London stay, Angela flies home to Alberta, arriving in time to speak with her father. She agrees to be a good girl and to settle down now. Joe Moynahan dies in the night.

The months following her return home and her father's death are difficult times for Angela. She idolizes

her dead father, argues with her mother about her father and the farm, is disagreeable with Gordon, but makes up her mind about two things--she must keep her father's farm, and she must express her feelings regarding her "summer" in written words. Throughout the winter, Angela experiences many conflicting ideas and emotions. In keeping with her dying father's admonition, she decides to settle down on the farm and marry good, kind old Gordon. Later, however, at a Community bridal shower that the ladies are having for her, she learns that it was her father who had initiated the petition to ask Mr. Olson, her English teacher, to resign. This revelation about her no-nonsense father makes her realize that she did not really know him and that she cannot marry Gordon, his choice for her. The novel ends with Angela back at the farm, feeling that she is "home free". She says: "Mr. Olson, thank you for my wings. I will never fly away from the cries or the songs or the uncertainties..."⁴¹

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 178.

PART II

NOVELS IN WHICH TEACHERS ARE EMPLOYEES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

In Canada, the powers of education were given to the provinces by the British North America Act. This means that the government of each of the country's ten provinces has independent responsibility for the education of its children except in the case of native peoples. The education of native peoples was accepted as the responsibility of the federal government and teachers engaged in this aspect of public education are employees of the federal government.¹ Today the Indian-Eskimo Affairs section of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is the branch of the federal government through which these teachers operate.²

1 An exception to this occurs in Chapter VI when teachers within a regular provincial education system teach Mohawk children at the secondary level.

2 A transfer of responsibility to a Territorial Department of Education occurred in the Northwest Territories over the 1969-1970 period. This Department is continuing the work of the federal government over this far-flung northern area with a scattered population of Inuit, Indian, and Métis children. Funding is still largely a federal matter.

The 1974 edition of the annual handbook Canada states that effective education as well as economic and community development is now carried out in consultation with elected Indian leaders. The handbook goes on to state:

Indian parents are expressing a new interest in the education of their children and school committees have been formed to ensure that the needs of their children are satisfied. Increasing numbers of Indian people are employed in schools while more schools are providing courses in Indian languages. Language instruction is one of the many ways of passing the long-established Indian culture from one generation to another.³

There are two novels to be presented in this part of the study: W. O. Mitchell's The Vanishing Point and Margaret Craven's I Heard the Owl Call My Name. There is a teacher-character in each of these novels. In each case the teacher is an employee of the federal government. It will be of interest to keep in mind the quotation above from Canada 1974 as background to the reading of Chapters II and III to follow.

³ Statistics Canada, Canada 1974, Ottawa, Information Canada, 1973, p. 40.

CHAPTER II

THE VANISHING POINT¹

Symbolically much can be done with such a title as "The Vanishing Point". What various significances W. O. Mitchell wishes it to have will be left up to those whose raison d'être is literary analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to see what image of teacher emerges from the novel. To this end the term "vanishing point" will be used to describe what is happening to a decade as the story opens. It is spring, possibly the spring of 1959.² Carlyle Sinclair has been teaching on the Stony Indian reserve of Paradise Valley throughout the nineteen-fifties.

The novel pivots on a three week period during that spring of 1959 or 1960 when Carlyle searches for a former student, a young Indian girl, Victoria Rider, in whom he

1 W. O. Mitchell, The Vanishing Point, Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1973, 393 p.

2 That it is spring is certain. That it is 1959 is not so certain. Only one reference in the novel gives an indication of the time of the "contemporary" segment of the story, the base from which reminiscences are launched. An event--that five years before in 1954 an Indian girl, Gloria Catface, won the title of Miss Northwest Fish and Game--could confirm the year as 1959. This would depend on variables such as just when during the year 1954 the title was awarded or just how good the memory is of the person from whom the information came. Perhaps the informant's "five years" is like the farmer's proverbial "country mile".

has taken a special interest. These weeks of search and personal trauma act to trigger memories of nearly a decade of teaching at Paradise Valley as well as other memories that go much further back.

The Vanishing Point was accepted in the present study even though the bulk of the teacher's efforts are seen as occurring in the nineteen-fifties. The novel does bring Carlyle to the threshold of a new decade, the nineteen-sixties, which along with the first four years of the nineteen-seventies form the time delimitation for the study.

The Vanishing Point has been placed first in the presentation of novels because of the chronological factor and because it can so conveniently be grouped with I Heard the Owl Call My Name³ in Part I of this study under the rubric "Teachers with Native Peoples".

The story is related largely from the perspective of the teacher, Carlyle Sinclair, who is the main character in the novel. The fact that Carlyle is a teacher is necessary to the story. It is as a teacher that for many years he attempts desperately to communicate with the Stony

³ Margaret Craven, I Heard the Owl Call My Name, Toronto, Clarke Irwin, 1967, 138 p.

Indians of Paradise Valley. It is as a teacher that he meets frustrations, both general and personal.

Presentation of character in this chapter will describe Carlyle's activities throughout the nineteen-fifties. This description is necessary to understand how Carlyle was. His character is developed. He does change. It is the changed Carlyle, the Carlyle on the threshold of a new decade that the reader observes only briefly. Nevertheless, it is the image of Carlyle at this brief point that must be taken forward for comparative purposes.

1. Presentation of Character

Carlyle Sinclair.--Widowed at age twenty-five, Carlyle Sinclair had come to the Stony reserve of Paradise Valley two years later to teach the Indian children there. Throughout his nine years' teaching on the reserve, Carlyle is very much aware of and troubled by the problem of communication with his Indian charges, their parents and the community as a whole. Since he is the representative of the Canadian Government's Department of Indian Affairs, he feels strongly that he must pass on "white ways", that he must inculcate "civilized" patterns of behavior. One of his more superficial attempts was to

purify the air of the classroom of the strong odor of unwashed children and damp buckskin.

That first year in Paradise--the coffee-can of water simmering on the schoolroom stove, its steam carrying the civilization of carbolic out to conquer twenty-nine active sets of sebaceous glands at their desks.⁴

Carlyle later realizes after his conversation with old Esau, a wise old "chief", that for the Indians the carbolic fumes represent the "bitter authority" they associate with their white controllers. The novel tells in detail Carlyle's struggles among the inhabitants of Paradise Valley to bring about a better life. He is always keenly sensitive to whether anything has been accomplished through his efforts, since he feels the Indians' needs and sincerely wishes to help them towards a better standard of health and living.

At the outset of his teaching career in Paradise Valley, Carlyle is given counsel by his colleagues, including his immediate superior in the Department of Indian Affairs, Ian Fyfe; his predecessor at the school, the Reverend G. Bob Dingle; the Indian Affairs doctor, Peter Sanders, who regularly visits the reserve; and Arthur Sheridan, the Indian agent of Paradise Valley and Hanley,

⁴ W. O. Mitchell, op. cit., p. 6.

another Indian reserve nearby. The greater part of the agent's advice is negative in nature: refrain from lending the Indians anything, don't let them in the agency house, don't encourage them to visit you, don't trust their word, make sure the school house is locked after four, don't allow any lack of respect from the younger adult members of the band, and other cautions. It was not hard for Carlyle to sense that Sheridan did not harbor very warm feelings towards his Indian charges. In contrast to the admonitions of the Indian agent are the idealistic praises of the red folk by the Reverend G. Bob Dingle.

'They're good people--gentle--happy--just children. Mind you.../ . /--in the schoolroom you'll find it difficult to get them to say "please" and "thank you"--actually--in Stony they haven't any expression for "thank you"--when you give them their cocoa and Fyfe Minimal Subsistence Biscuits--you'll find them crowding in--pushing greedily--getting second cups before all have had their first one. I've tried--not too effectively, I'm afraid, to correct that. "Grabbing's for dogs and beasts," I've told them again and again. Now--they haven't "thank you" as we know it but they have another expression virtually the same. "No-watch-es-nichuh." "You please me very much." Isn't that nice?'

'Yes.'

'Just as good as "thank you"--you'll have to keep after them about "please" and "thank you".'

'I will,' Carlyle said a little louder than he'd intended.⁵

Mr. Dingle commends Carlyle for his feat in getting all the

⁵ Ibid., p. 151.

Indian children to attend school. Even though he himself has had indifferent success in teaching the Paradise Valley children, he glowingly recognizes what Carlyle has already done and says that he will keep on doing wonderful things for "their children". Optimistically believing in mankind's progress through the centuries, Mr. Dingle tells the doctor: "We are lucky--you and I and Carlyle--to be able to help these people in that progress."⁶

Peter Sanders, as one working closely among the Indians, does not share his colleague's enthusiastic optimism that the Indians have been and are progressing. Actually, he tends to agree with the viewpoint of old Ezra Powderface, the Indian lay minister, who feels that the Indian "good life" ended when the white man came. While Carlyle and he are resting beside the fishing pond, Sanders communicates a bit of his philosophy concerning their mutual charges:

'[. . .] They are children, but with adult drives--grown-up hungers--mature weaknesses--envy--love of power--of their own children; they have vanity and--what's very--the key--a terrible feeling of inferiority.'⁷

6 Ibid., p. 153.

7 Ibid., p. 130.

Sanders continues:

'If you know that--and that they are child-like-- then you won't give them too much of a load to carry; you won't rant at them because they failed to carry what you piled on them. Don't expect too much of them--don't let them get you angry. They will--don't let them know it. You know what you are--to them?' [. . .]

'Ever wonder what a shock it must be to someone--seeing himself in a mirror for the first time in his whole goddam life? That's what you are--to them. There's a phrase you'll hear them use a lot.'

'What?'

'I'm ashamed. One way that's worked for me-- give them praise--just if they've earned it. Be a good guardian.'⁸

Many years later while he is searching for Victoria Rider, his "lost" protégé, Carlyle has occasion to ponder whether he has acted upon this advice. During the course of his visits to Paradise Valley, Sanders gives Carlyle much practical counsel on the ways and customs of the Stonys, as well as constant assessment of their own and their colleagues' progress in managing the Indians. It is evident that Sanders is motivated to give his best effort to his patients, but has become discouraged by phases of his practice about which he can do nothing other than watch his patients die. While protecting "Poor Dingle", Carlyle's predecessor at the school house, the doctor nonetheless concedes that Carlyle's entrance to the educational scene

⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

of Paradise Valley is the best thing since penicillin.

Ian Fyfe whose position is at the administrative level, rather than handling the day-to-day routine of Indian affairs, is interested in being at the helm of a steady ship and keeping peace with Ottawa. He is concerned with the welfare of the Indians, but not sufficiently so at this stage of his career to initiate himself any new schemes for reforming the Indians' living conditions. When problems do arise, he is often content to wait and see what will "transpire". It appears that he is more interested that the employees under his jurisdiction are content and not worrying themselves unduly about their responsibilities among the Indians. Evidence of this is apparent in Fyfe's indifference to Arthur Sheridan's laissez-faire attitude and less than shoddy work. Fyfe, however, idealistically hopes that there are better days ahead for the Indians, for he tells Carlyle:

[. . .] 'Yours is possibly the most rewarding work there is with these people. If there's hope for them, it lies in their children and--eh--one bit of advice I always give to young men beginning with us--do not let yourself become too personally involved.'⁹

One, at least, of the reserve's members agrees with Dr. Sanders that Carlyle is a suitable teacher for

⁹ Ibid., p. 121.

the Paradise Valley school. Archie Nicotine, whom the Indian agent has cautioned is a shrewd one requiring close watching, has decided soon after Carlyle's arrival that he is the teacher for the reserve's children. As evidence of his confidence in the new teacher, Archie helps him solve his first problem, that of getting and holding the children in school. Archie explains to Carlyle that the Indian loves his children and hates to see them suffer by being shut up in a stuffy school house all day, rather than being free in the open to climb trees and run in the woods. He, himself, admits that it is important that they attend school and suggests that Carlyle try to force the issue by suspending government cheques of any parent who does not see that his child attends school. This strategy, which Dr. Sanders later jokingly terms "Car's Lever" is approved and acted upon by Fyfe, who, however, has to admit that such a procedure is decidedly beyond the Department's power and right. At this interview Fyfe confesses:

[. . .] 'I wanted you for the Paradise School badly. At any cost--even if I had to be--well--if I did not mention some of the harsher aspects of reserve teaching.'¹⁰

It is interesting that this admission follows closely upon

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 142.

Fyfe's sermonizing to Carlyle that he was no great believer in the maxim that the desirable end justifies the unjust means.

Archie Nicotine is the band member who escorts Carlyle to an afternoon meeting in the dance tent organized by the Reverend Ezra Powderface, another Indian supporter of the new teacher. At the meeting, attended by all the reserve residents, Mr. Powderface leads the group in a fervent prayer of thanksgiving for the teacher that Ottawa has sent to them. Through the education that Mr. Sinclair is able to give them, the children will learn to speak English and live the "white way". The prayer thanking God for the wonderful gift of a teacher is concluded by Ezra's arms falling and a loud burst of clapping from those assembled. Then, one by one, they step to the front of the dance tent to meet the new teacher. It would seem that this hearty welcome might indicate support, but on the first morning of school, only one child, Victoria Rider, sat in the school house, and the rest had either hidden in the tree-tops or been concealed in the cabins.

Once the pupils' attendance had improved (assisted by "Car's Lever"), and all the Paradise Valley children were settled in their new routine, lessons could begin. They loved their recess periods when they skipped, bounced

and danced the Prairie Chicken dance in the school yard. Their favorite class was drawing, which ended their school day. With colored chalk each child drew on the blackboard things that he knew and admired. The hardest work was Reading. Timidly, they whispered the strange words of another language: "SUH PIFF PLEE WEEZEEZ BELL" ("See Puff play with his ball"). They liked their cocoa and seemed, at times, even to tolerate the cement-like oatmeal biscuit which was designed to give them all the vitamins and food elements necessary for a twenty-four-hour period of time. Once the children understood that they were to go to school, they put up no active resistance and stoically accepted the inevitable. Much of what they learned was accomplished slowly, seemingly with great difficulty. Their teacher recognized that, before they could progress in spelling or reading, the new words in the English language must have some significance and meaning for them. Often the pupils' response to questioning was slow and almost grudgingly given, as though the answer sought was a secret they did not wish to reveal. Despite all their difficulties, Carlyle concludes that they are all right. He says: "They were lousy, but they were all right!"¹¹

¹¹ Ibid., p. 146.

In the spring the girls brought purple shooting stars to their teacher's desk, sometimes offering them as a token to make amends for a misdeed. Carlyle's first Christmas among the Stonys was an emotional one for him. Christmas morning beautiful hand-made gifts were offered by members of the band--a white doe-skin shirt delicately embroidered with flowers and butterflies, slipper moccasins, beaded gauntlet gloves and a handsome lynx hide intended as a bedside mat. As well, the teacher was invited to the Christmas celebration in the dance tent, where he was ushered to the place of honor, the old, worn-out car seat. At the conclusion of the celebration, his words of greeting to the group were welcomed with strong applause.

During his entire stay in Paradise Valley, Carlyle's chief concern centred upon communication with the people he was sent to help. Always intensely wishing to build a bridge of communication between himself (as representative of "white civilization") and the Stonys, he wonders if he has been successful. He asks himself:

[. . .] Had he ever made it across to any of these people? He had wanted to--from the first he had wanted to. With Victoria, how he wanted to! Oh God how he wanted her to!¹²

¹² Ibid., p. 13.

He worries about the failure of the Indians-- children and parents alike--to look at his face when they are speaking with him, as though they were ashamed or trying to hide something. Although Carlyle insists that his greatest wish is to reach the Indians, he himself does not learn even a few expressions in Stony, since, as he tells Dr. Sanders, there must be some person with whom the Indians are compelled to speak English. The doctor reminds him that communication is not a one-way street, and that the Indians have their method of communication and ways of thinking about things, too. One of Carlyle's chief complaints is the ever-present, lobotomizing drum. Dr. Sanders cautions him not to try to take the drum away, since it is something of their own.

'Christ, Sinclair--let them keep their drum at least!'
'I tell you--it's what we're up against.'
'Maybe. But it is theirs.'
'That makes it all right.'
'It is--at least--one thing we didn't give them-- along with the D. T.'s--TB--V. D. The drum is beautiful.'
'It's lobotomy.'
'Maybe. But their own kind.'
'And you recommend it.'
'Sure--if the torment's too great I do--every human's entitled to a dram of Lethe now and then.'¹³

13 Ibid., p. 204.

Carlyle recalls occasions in his career that the bridge has been made. He thinks of the time he had taken Victoria as a small girl in to the "asphalt slough" to go to the dentist. In her confusion at hearing so many harsh sounds and seeing so many strange sights, she had clasped Carlyle's hand for security, and had held tightly to it. On this occasion, he felt that communication had been made. Another time of pride for himself and the pupils' parents had been the school Christmas concert, unconventional by most standards, but with touches of Indian custom that had been meaningful for those attending. One of the pupils, Gatine Lefthand, had played "Going to Heaven on a Streamlined Train" on his mouth-organ while Joseph and Mary fled the evil Wendigo, aided by Stony angels. Carlyle felt that this presentation, simply carried out by the children, had formed a bridge of communication between himself and the parents who attended the concert.

From the parents' point of view, it is interesting to note that they too were interested in communicating with the teacher of the school. Two months after Carlyle's arrival in Paradise Valley, he attended the Sunday morning church service held in the dance tent. To his surprise, one of the announcements was for a meeting of the Paradise Valley Ladies' Auxiliary, to organize a Home

and School Association.

Carlyle's life in Paradise Valley after the initial struggle to get the children inside the school, was not without its distressing encounters with others. During his first spring on the reserve, the teacher noticed what appeared to be an insufficiency of water coming from the tap, in the agency cabin's kitchen. A few days later he noticed brownish water, and finally, after a few convulsive shakings of the pipes, a lump of horse manure was expelled into his dish pan. At a loss to understand how this could be, Carlyle climbed the hill to the water's source to find a band member, Harold Left-hand, camped by the water supply with his horse tethered within easy polluting distance of the opened reservoir. During the argument which followed this discovery, Archie Nicotine arrived on the scene. It appears that Harold has intended to pollute the Indian agency's water system in order to take revenge upon Carlyle for grabbing his son, Gatine, the previous September, in an attempt to get him into the school building. After this incident, Harold had gotten up a petition bearing sixty names (each signature written by himself and Pete Snow) to get rid of the new teacher, but this document had not been treated seriously by anyone else. Harold's revenge, then, had to be

postponed until spring. Once Carlyle's water supply had been polluted, Harold considered himself revenged.

This incident provides Carlyle with two insights, one regarding the Indian' idea of "evening the score" and also the relative point on the hierarchy of the position of "teacher" and "agent". During the confrontation itself, when Archie and Carlyle are attempting to reason with Harold concerning his lack of rights to camp by the agency reservoir, the following dialogue takes place:

'He don't order me.' Harold said. 'He's just teacher.'
'Maybe you better do what he says, Harold.'
'He's just teacher.' Harold said.
'You get your water from the river like all the others! Don't you draw one more drop from...'
'He's right too, Harold.'
'I'm still usin' it.'
'No.'
'You're not the agent.'
'Right, I am not! But I am the man who is about to kick the living...'¹⁴

A week later Archie mentions the matter to Carlyle saying that he can forget the whole thing now since it's all evened up. He says: "'Harold Lefthand. Your water made it even for him--grabbin' his kid last year.'"¹⁵

The realization that the teacher is second in rank to the Department of Indian Affairs agent responsible

14 Ibid., p. 172.

15 Ibid., p. 175.

for the reserve is borne out by another happening. Carlyle's second year in Paradise Valley made him more aware of his surroundings outside the schoolroom. He sees that the agency livestock is much poorer in quality than that belonging to nearby ranchers. As a result of this, he feels that he should initiate some steps for improving matters, and so he approaches Arthur Sheridan, the Indian agent, with questions and possible solutions. The interfering teacher is immediately discouraged from becoming involved in things outside his realm. Sheridan reminds him that economics has no relationship to the number of horses an Indian keeps.

Carlyle replies:

'I know that.'

'Then you probably know as well--from the time you've spent with them--in the school--that an Indian does as he damn pleases.'

'I understand--Moon [a rancher living nearby] was telling me...'

'Moon is not with Indian Affairs.'

'But he is a pretty fine rancher.'

'Perhaps.'

'He says--summer fallowing--sowing grass--would double the hay and feed.'

'I'm sure it would.'

'Then why...'

'No problem at all--on his own lease.'

'I don't see what difference there is between the Turkey Track [land outside the reserve not belonging to the Department of Indian Affairs/ and...'

'Perhaps it's because you haven't spent thirty-five years working with Indians.'¹⁶

16 Ibid., p. 179.

The discussion becomes more heated when Sheridan tells him that his thirty-five years as an agent have taught him what can be done with the Indians and what cannot, and that he does not know whether Fyfe and Sanders share his views or not--he can speak only for himself. Carlyle accepts this rebuke that he, as teacher, is not in charge of Paradise Valley. As he later confides to his friend, Dr. Sanders, he felt that his questions were good ones since indirectly such matters did concern his pupils, and, for this reason, he had a right to bring them up. In Sanders' opinion, Carlyle has been tactless and lacking in an understanding of the real situation in discussing agricultural matters with Sheridan. As "a minor cog in the civil-service machine"¹⁷, the agent has been able to accomplish very little due to government red-tape and Department and Indian apathy. The reserve, the doctor says, has become like a warm water slough after a dry summer, harboring listless ducks which become so weak that they cannot fly. Sanders observes that this is just their own situation on the reserve. He says:

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 182.

'[. . .] And that's just what you've joined, teacher--the reserve-system slough--tepid with paternal help--the more you do for them the more you sap their strength. Got any helpful questions about that?'

'I don't know.'

'Neither do I--neither did Arthur. But he gets a gold watch for trying. They'll give me a gold sputum cup, of course.'

'Get them off the slough.'¹⁸

Sanders' observation regarding the damaging effects of paternalism is shared by Ian Fyfe. He feels that too much help to the Canadian Indian may explain why the Indian situation in Canada is at least a generation behind that of the United States.

Carlyle's second summer in Paradise Valley was spent looking around the reserve, surveying the condition of the corral, fences, the barn and the telephone line. Archie explains that it is quite reasonable that the situation is very bad since the Indians make use of every easily-available source of kindling and fire-wood for the camp-fire when they are ill-disposed to search further. At the same time, Archie too questions Carlyle's authority to be making such an inspection, saying that it may very well displease Sheridan, the agent, if he oversteps his role. The next summer following Sheridan's retirement,

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 183.

Carlyle is appointed Indian agent of Paradise Valley and inherits all the problems of handling the entire agricultural and economic situation of the reserve as well as the formal education of its children. Putting into practice techniques he has used as a teacher, Carlyle appoints a right-hand man, Archie, who becomes (in his own words) the Paradise Valley "ager-culture-list".

Carlyle's second major lesson regarding his charges occurs in his office as agent. He has convinced the Indians that to plant a larger oats crop would be advantageous to them in feeding their prized horses during the winter season. He has also persuaded Fyfe that the Indians should be paid from agency funds for this endeavor. The oats ripen, but on the very day the beautiful crop should be harvested, the entire band strikes camp and goes to Shelby, a nearby town, for the annual rodeo, the "ager-culture-list" having left the night before.

Carlyle journeys to Shelby to try to urge the band to return home for harvesting before the oats shell out and the crop is lost. Returning home on rodeo days for any reason as remote as having to harvest winter feed for horses is not within the Indian's comprehension. Surely Carlyle did not wish them to miss the chuck-wagon race, or the calf roping or the wild-cow milking. In desperation, the

discouraged agent consults Mr. MacTaggart, chairman of the rodeo, to give over the loud-speaker an official Department of Indian Affairs order for the Stonys to return to their reserve. In the discussion, Mr. MacTaggart who is also mayor of the town and chairman of the School Board, tries to entice Carlyle to come back to the Shelby school as principal. Apparently, word of Carlyle's success as teacher of Paradise Valley has reached Shelby, as Mr. MacTaggart implies that he would make them "one hell of a good principal"¹⁹, the way their kids were becoming. Carlyle, however, declines and returns to the reserve. The Stonys return as well, but they do not leave their cabins for the next three days. They were willing to sacrifice their entire oats crop--nourishment for their horses--in order to "even up" with their inconsiderate agent.

Having her children attend school regularly has become important to at least one mother in Paradise Valley. One June morning it seems likely that Martha Bear, aged fifteen, who has had perfect attendance since last September, has gone off to mountainous Storm and Misty territory with Wilfrid Tail-feather. According to Stony tradition, such an elopement usually precedes a "blanket" marriage,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 199.

a form of trial marriage without religious sanction, which often becomes a permanent living arrangement. When Mrs. Bear persistently begs her husband, Sam, to go find Martha and bring her back home, his reply is either that she is fifteen or "'She wanted him.'"²⁰ The worried mother, on the other hand, is concerned that Martha won't get to school that morning and that will spoil her attendance record. Contending that her daughter must go to school some more, she tells Sam: "'She's got to go to school. She's smart there. You got to go after them. I need her around here.'"²¹ Ezra, the lay minister, and Carlyle come to the Bear tent to try to persuade the father to make a search. Only when Sam realizes that the escape has been made by means of his own valuable horses does he spring to his feet shouting: "'Phone Mounties! Tell Fyfe--tell Ottawa!'"²²

Just such a fate Carlyle fears for his specially-nurtured pupil, Victoria Rider, whom he has coached through her provincial High School entrance examinations, her Departmental High School leaving examinations, as well as the

20 Ibid., p. 227.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., p. 231.

supplementals for the two subjects she did not pass. Through Carlyle's intervention, she has begun nurse's training in the city hospital, one hundred and fifty miles away from the reservation. Her success in the "white man's world" has become the focus of all her teacher's efforts. He has closely watched over her during her years of development, providing her with worth-while activities and discouraging her from dances and games in the school yard which often led to "grabbin'-hold-of-time" (the Stonys' expression for elopements into Storm and Misty country). Victoria, however, was jealously guarded through the early stages of adolescence into nurses' training, despite constant reminders from Sanders that the scheme would not work out as Carlyle believed it would. In reference to Victoria, Sanders says to his friend:

'You keep right on demanding good deeds, don't you?'
'I guess I do.'
'You do. But what if you're pointing her the wrong way?'
'What!'
'Backwards.'
'Oh, for God's sake, you've just come from old Esau...' /a tuberculous patient dying because he refuses treatment/.
'What are you pushing her into?'
'I am not pushing her...'
'Hell, you aren't.'
'I am not! You are not serious!'
'I don't know.'²³

23 Ibid., p. 240.

When Carlyle discovers that Victoria has been missing from the hospital for two weeks and that he has not been informed of her absence, he becomes very agitated both with the hospital matron and his superior, Ian Fyfe. Carlyle closes school for one week and begins a search for Victoria, both in the Storm and Misty territory in which she may be hiding and in the city where she has been training. On Sunday, the final day of his week's search in the city, he caught sight of Victoria on the street. He extends what he believes she will consider help by offering to have her re-instated at the hospital. To his surprise, she refuses to return to the hospital saying that she is ashamed. When she tells him that she is pregnant, he allows her to walk away without trying to prevent her leaving. Returning to check out of his hotel, Carlyle indulges in an orgy of painful thoughts and bemoans his situation:

[. . .] And there was no one to help him. No one could help him. He had never helped them--really--how could he have--without knowing. Till now. His Samaritan role was nothing. What a fool he'd been, just to feed, just to clothe--to keep alive only. They perished and he taught them arithmetic; they thirsted to death on their time desert and he gave them reading and spelling lessons.²⁴

²⁴ Ibid., p. 366.

At this point, Carlyle realizes that what he has been attempting--to mold Victoria into his idea of what a white middle-class young lady should be--has been an impossibility. If he had failed to give to this special one what she needed, he reasons, then he has failed with them all. He had been the mirror for her; she had carried out all the feats he had demanded, for him, but without him, she could not perform. Carlyle draws the conclusion that none of the Indians could or ever would be able to perform the "mirror trick" since the mirror (white civilization) told them that they were different, opposite from white people, "aliens". The message of the mirror for the Indian was "be ashamed" of what you are. Pathetically, Carlyle understands that Victoria could never have matched his inner vision of her, since she was defeated before she started. This realization which Carlyle expands to include all the human race, he confided to Fyfe after old Esau's funeral. The trifling accomplishments of his colleagues and himself are nothing, he states, and funny as well, since they seriously think that they have made a contribution to the progress of the Indian.

In deep discouragement, Carlyle goes to an important tribal meeting in order to write the minutes and record the requests to be sent to Ottawa. Later that evening,

lured by the bump of the dance drum, he returns to the dance tent. There sits Victoria, off from the others. The teacher thinks that she had been his child before the unidentified "he" had taken her. In the dance the "driving drum" asks: "Who cares now?" It seems to say:

[. . .] Ottawa sends us nurses and X-Ray machines for the hart that pants for cooling streams. [. . .] Thir-
ty in the bucket with the agent going bail, the grab-
bing hold of girls and incestuous relations--they are
fun--fun--fun! So we lash the hidden instinct wolf
to life--we club the mirror--the Methodist glass--we
break it--we smash it with disdain!²⁵

Carlyle finally realizes that the only urgent, vital thing which remains to the Indian is the "now". The drum repeats the lesson: NOW--only the NOW. He knows now that by Indian standards, it is he, not Victoria, who has failed. He thinks of her on the city street, far from home, telling him that she had failed and was ashamed. By turning away from her and leaving her on her own, he had destroyed a bridge of communication to another person. Archie Nicotine had not done this. When he saw Victoria on the street, he had talked with her, reasoned with her, and brought her home to Paradise Valley. Archie had not failed in recognizing and meeting another's need.

25 Ibid., p. 389.

The morning following the dance the ruffled grouse awakens Carlyle with its regular drumming. He gets up, declaring to Ottawa, to his stern grade-school teacher, old Kacky, to his long-dead guardian, repressive Aunt Pearl, and to Fyfe that he will marry Victoria, who has been sleeping by his side. Outside he spots the youngest Powderface child wearing only a tight little undershirt and shiny new rubber boots. The little fellow is intent on digging ditches in the mud with an old tablespoon. Seeing the child, Carlyle thinks that he is now ready to "mirror" the Indian with less distortion. He promises the "little bare-bum shaman"²⁶ that he will not destroy him by turning him into a backward person. As he contemplates the future, the loud sound of men's voices reaches him--there, coming up from the river is Tom MacLeod's black team pulling Archie's green truck in an effort to get it started. Carlyle can hardly believe his eyes. At last, after many years, Archie must have withstood the temptation to spend his money on liquor and have bought the rings and rebuilt carburetor necessary to get his truck back on the road again.

26 Ibid., p. 389.

2. Analysis of Character

(The segments of this analysis which are applicable for comparative purposes in this study will be marked in each case with an asterisk.)

1. Major or minor character?

Carlyle Sinclair is the main character in the novel; therefore, major.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

Yes, it has decided significance, since it is in his role of teacher that his problems regarding communication and his own feelings and reactions arise. The novel's main physical struggle, finding the "little lost lamb Victoria", and the psychological conflict, the main character's reactions when the "lamb" is located, both result from his efforts as teacher.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

The pupils of Paradise Valley School timidly accept their teacher. They are eager to please, and to make amends for any minor misconduct.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

The Indian community respects the teacher and shows its thankfulness and appreciation in practical ways

for his help. Individual members among them show their esteem for the teacher by coming to him for help and advice. They feel that this teacher is the right one for their children. At least two community members hold sufficient respect for the teacher to offer him advice and support in dealing with his situation.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

For this novel, "colleagues" must be interpreted as other professionals working with the Stonys, since there is no other teacher appearing in the novel. These include the doctor, the minister who had previously acted as teacher of the Paradise Valley children, and the Indian agent. All these men welcome the teacher's efforts, praise him for his accomplishments, and feel that he is the right person for the position he holds. All of them offer helpful advice, related to their roles among the Indians, which they sincerely hope will save the teacher disappointment and trouble. It appears that none of these men doubt the teacher's serious purpose among those whom they are all trying to help, but, on occasion, question the feasibility of his goals.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

There is only one administrator appearing in the novel, the teacher's immediate superior with Indian Affairs. This man shares the opinions and feelings of the teacher's colleagues. He supports the teacher's efforts, tries to help him by realistically re-stating troublesome situations, and by kindly offering solace in a practical way.

7. How does the teacher view himself and his role as a teacher? What is his philosophy, if any?

The teacher takes his professional role very seriously. He is constantly concerned about his most major problem, communication with his charges and their parents. Until nearly the conclusion of the novel, he sees himself as an authoritarian figure, representing "white civilization" and holding the right solutions for his situation. He has no doubts that logical methods of coping with problems are the best for all mankind. He acts ethically (by standards of his profession), and appears concerned that his behavior should be worthy of respect.

*Circumstances and personal trauma lead him to realize that the models from "white civilization" which he has been holding up to the Indians are ones they can never

match. Understanding this, he resolves to modify his attitudes and techniques in order to help the Stonys progress within their own milieu.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

The teacher is genuinely concerned with the academic progress of his pupils. He wants them to learn English so that they can benefit from their other lessons.

Although not sharing his superior's view of the Indian (that he is terminally ill of an incurable disease), he does feel that his pupils are badly handicapped.

He is acutely concerned over customs of the group which result in deprivations for his children. Sensing their pain, the teacher gives his best effort to improve conditions for them.

*He finally realizes that his concern, real though it has been, has been partially misdirected, and that he has not been meeting the genuine needs of the student. Now he knows that his job must be to help his student become truer to himself, not to force him to match a distorted image.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

The teacher is grateful for the open support from the parents that he is given, but he is constantly concerned about what they are really feeling, and what

they actually do want. He is worried over the lack of forthright communication with reserve members, and disturbed by practices he sees going on in the community of which he does not approve.

*After much personal conflict the teacher at last senses what is real for the Indian, and because of this, recognizes that much of his effort has been mis-directed.

10. How does the teacher view his colleagues?

The teacher feels strongly about the efforts of his colleagues. He has no patience with them when their treatment of problems differs from his own. The teacher does not consider why these men act as they do. His colleagues are much more tolerant and helpful toward him than he is to them. He tends to exercise the same severe judgment over others as he does over himself.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

Although the teacher feels that his immediate superior is too much inclined to let situations drift and wait and see, there is no evidence that he does not respect him. The teacher has openly communicated his problems to his superior who has shown his concern by offering common-sense guidance and sociability.

3. Summary

All that can be taken forward from the novel for comparative purposes in this study of teacher image is the picture of the Carlyle Sinclair standing on the threshold of the nineteen-sixties. He has developed; he has gained insight and understanding. What is more he has determined to forge ahead within this new frame of reference. How he succeeds the reader will never know. The novel has ended. The general reader may make assumptions; this study will not. What now exists for comparative purposes is a teacher who shows a very important attribute, the potential for growth. The image then projected is one in which the teacher realizes that his ways have been unsuited to the situation but is flexible enough to change. He does show a potential of benefiting from mistakes and of modifying his attitudes and behavior in the future.

CHAPTER. III

I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME¹

The second novel with a teacher-character who is engaged in teaching native peoples is I Heard the Owl Call My Name. It is a very simply written tale which communicates much by what has not been said and by understatement. The story revolves about the day-to-day routine and activities of the main character, Mark Brian, a vicar ministering to the inhabitants of Kingcome Village and nearby points during the mid-nineteen-sixties. His stay among the Tsawataineuk tribe of the Kwakiutl people shows him many things about what is genuine in life.

Having coped with the harsh elements of nature and many solitary hours carrying out his work, Mark finally realizes that Kingcome Village is where he should remain. Here he has faithful friends whose way of living he has come to understand. The kind concern unobtrusively expressed by his Indian neighbors for Mark is shown throughout the novel. Their quiet acceptance of him as one of their own is obvious through their many acts of concern. Their lack of the same kind of concern for their school teacher and the reason for it is also obvious--but in ways

¹ Margaret Craven, I Heard the Owl Call My Name, Toronto, Clarke Irwin, 1967, 138 p.

which the reader and the present writer must partially imply from the work. The teacher's presence in the village is not viewed by its inhabitants in the same way that their priest's is. The contrast of what is expressed in the novel about the priest with what has not been said about the teacher communicates much regarding the community's views of the teacher. The particular difficulty encountered in analyzing the teacher-character of this novel is to present a true picture without over-stepping the limits where implication becomes too free.

1. Presentation of Character

The Nameless Teacher.--It was not the name of the teacher which was called in I Heard the Owl Call My Name, for his name is not known. The reader, however, is made aware that it is the same teacher at the end of the novel as it was at the outset. The story begins with a young ordinand, Mark Brian, making his way by boat to his new posting at Kingcome Village, B. C. On the night of the new vicar's arrival, each group of assembled villagers discussed the newcomer. In each house, except that of the teacher, conversations and thoughts centred around the new one.

In the teacher's house the only other white man in the village did not think of the vicar at all. He didn't even know he had arrived; he didn't even know he was coming.²

The year of the vicar's arrival is the teacher's second in Kingcome Village. At the conclusion of the summer holidays of his first year, a seaplane had landed him on the opposite side of the river from the Village. The river was at flood tide. There he stood in the rain among the alder bushes loudly hollering "'Come and get me'"³ towards the inhabited side of the river. The tribe's wise old orator, T. P. Wallace declared: "'If he cannot be more polite, let him stay there.'"⁴ At last, Marta Stephens, the old white-haired genteel lady who was later to become the vicar's housekeeper, poled across the river in her little boat to bring the teacher across to the tribe.

It was not, it appears, for the love of bringing enlightenment to the Indian child "hungering after knowledge" that had brought the teacher to his isolated post. Instead it was the supplementary pay that the posting would bring "which would permit him a year in Greece studying

2 Ibid., p. 24.

3 Ibid., p. 25.

4 Ibid.

the civilization he adored."⁵ That he is concerned with parting with any of this isolation pay is shown by his complaints to the vicar about having to pay for the paper tissues necessary for the children's sniffing noses. On the teacher's first encounter with the new vicar, he begged the priest to request sufficient school supplies from the authorities. According to the school-master, "Even the smallest villages were given more pencils and pads."⁶ While he was on the subject of poor working conditions, the teacher continued his complaints about his own small dwelling: its lacking electricity and the outrageously small dimensions of his bathroom. For the vicar, a bathroom of any dimension would have seemed a luxury, so he offered to trade his own outhouse for the teacher's small bathroom. When he suggested that the teacher could cut two round holes in the bathroom door for his knees to stick through, the latter saw no humor at all in the vicar's idea.

The teacher did not attend or participate in any of the social, religious or community functions of the village. He was not interested in the affairs of the village

5 Ibid., p. 25.

6 Ibid., p. 30.

nor in going to church. On his first meeting with the vicar he dutifully expressed his feelings on Christianity which he considered to be in a state of calamity. As an atheist, the teacher thought "that any man who professed it [Christianity] must be incredibly naïve"⁷, to which the vicar affably agreed, but with the observation that there are two kinds of naïveté. Quoting Schweitzer, he reminded the teacher that a naïve person may be

[.] one not even aware of the problems, and another which has knocked on all the doors of knowledge and knows man can explain little, and is still willing to follow his convictions into the unknown.⁸

It seems that the teacher did not wish to acquaint himself with the Indians' problems nor did he wish to share in their festivals and parties. At the end of March the arrival of the oolachon, or candlefish, in the river marked a season steeped in tradition and ritual for the Indian. The evening before the run of fish was to begin was the occasion of an important feast in the social hall. The entire village attended this celebration "except the school teacher, of course".⁹

7 Ibid., p. 30.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. 65.

One spring afternoon the vicar and his helper, Jim, were summoned to go out into the bay to search for a missing logger. On the way back to the village in the evening, a sudden thunder storm came up. Lightning struck a tree on a nearby cliff precipitating a landslide. For several hours following the landslide which killed the vicar and destroyed his boat, the men of the tribe and the R. C. M. P. searched the waters surrounding the wreck for the body. On the afternoon of the day following the accident, the survivor and the vicar's body were brought back to Kingcome Village. The children called out along the path from the water's edge that they were bringing "him" now. Meanwhile,

In his tiny house the teacher heard the running footfalls on the path to the river bank, and he went quickly to the door and could not open it. To join the others was to care, and to care was to live and to suffer.¹⁰

2. Analysis of Character

1. Major or minor character?

The Nameless Teacher is a minor character in the novel in respect to the fact that he is mentioned so rarely. On the other hand, he is of importance to the novel

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 136.

because he is the only other white man who lives among the tribe at Kingcome Village. As well, his actions and attitude of indifference to all about him are in direct contrast with those of the vicar.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

Yes, it has much significance in the novel. The teacher's role, like that of the vicar's is one of leadership among those of the tribe. He is there as a representative of the white man's world. His interaction with others is shown to be limited to inside the four walls of the school, since he does not participate in any of the tribe's activities, feasts or religious ceremonies. Nothing in the novel tells about his leadership within the school building.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

There is no reference in the novel which would directly answer this question.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

The teacher is treated with cool distant tolerance by the members of the community. They accepted his non-involvement in their activities, and came to expect non-participation from him. They did not approve

of his impoliteness in demanding their immediate attention.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

There are no other teachers in Kingcome Village.

Interpreting "colleague" to mean another professional person working in the same community, one might consider the views of the vicar. The vicar is tolerant of those attitudes of the teacher which appear to be in opposition to his own. There is no evidence that the vicar depended upon his colleague for assistance, friendship or moral support. Also, it does not seem that the vicar actively attempted to make any changes in the teacher's attitudes or behavior.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

There is nothing in the novel which states this.

7. How does the teacher view himself and his role as a teacher? What is his philosophy, if any?

The Nameless Teacher sees his job as beginning and ending at the school house door. He is not interested in becoming involved in any community activities or projects. Throughout the novel, his lack of communication and participation is emphasized. It may be concluded that the teacher saw his role in very narrow terms: as performing certain clearly

defined duties in exchange for a sum of money.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

Nothing in the novel answers this question directly.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

The teacher viewed the parents as people to avoid and the community as a place from which to escape. He did not wish to make friends or acquaintances of the villagers, nor did he wish to become involved in any of their activities. His presence among them seems entirely selfish, to satisfy his need for the extra salary such an isolated post provides.

10. How does the teacher view his colleagues?

It appears that the teacher regards the vicar only as a means to an end, not as a possible friend or companion in an isolated area. He discourages any bond of friendship with the vicar, and so seems to be motivated by a desire to be left undisturbed.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

Subsuming "administrators" under the designation "authorities", they are considered negligent in the view of the teacher.

3. Summary

The image of teacher which emerges from I Heard the Owl Call My Name is a negative one. The teacher-character is portrayed as a person who does not wish to become involved in either the problems or the pleasures of others, because in doing so he would be showing that he cared. By caring he would be living, with the probable consequence of suffering. Because of his avoidance of involvement with others, there is little likelihood that The Nameless Teacher's attitudes or behavior will change. The novel gives no indication that there is potential for personal growth in this character.

PART III

NOVELS IN WHICH TEACHERS ARE MAJOR CHARACTERS

There are three chapters in this part of the study. Each chapter deals with a novel in which at least one teacher-character is a major character. Since this is so, the chapters, particularly Chapters V and VI, are relatively lengthy. There are a number of teacher-characters who are minor characters in the novels as well, but it is the inclusion of major teacher-characters that dictates classification in this part of the study.

The novels presented here are Margaret Laurence's A Jest of God, John Metcalf's Going Down Slow, and H. Gordon Green's Diary of a Dirty Old Man. If the "federal government employee" category had not existed in Part II for teacher-characters, Carlyle Sinclair of W. O. Mitchell's The Vanishing Point would be presented here too for that character is decidedly a major one.

CHAPTER IV

A JEST OF GOD¹

The temptation to indulge in literary criticism is difficult to avoid, but it must be kept in mind that judgment as to the literary merit of the novel is not within the scope of this study. It is not the artistry of the creative act which is of concern here, but rather the product of that artistry and that creation, the five characters who are teachers in the novel.

A Jest of God is an excellent document for analysis because there is such a thorough projection of the main character, the thirty-four-year-old Rachel Cameron, a grade school teacher in the little Manitoba town of Manawaka. The reader meets her in the classroom, as well as outside. The fact that she is a teacher is not simply a peripheral thing, an occupational "tag" for someone, because, after all everyone must do something. In the novel, the occupation of teacher is an integral part of the story as regards Rachel Cameron and as regards two minor characters, her principal, Willard Siddley, and a fellow teacher, Calla Mackie. In this chapter there will be a presentation and analysis of each of these three teacher-characters.

¹ Margaret Laurence, A Jest of God, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1966, 202 p.

The two remaining teacher-characters do not lend themselves to a process of absorption often necessary in the formation of a character-composite; neither can they combine with each other nor with any of the three teacher-characters already designated for presentation and analysis. The alternative to absorption or combination is deletion in order not to exceed the three-characters-per-novel maximum stipulated in this study's delimitations. The deletion of Nick Kazlik and Sapphire Travis can be made without deflecting the thrust of this study.

Nick Kazlik is an important character in the novel but the fact that in Winnipeg he is a high school teacher has little significance. The important fact to the plot is that he is a man and as Rachel's summer lover he is the catalyst that promotes the artistically necessary character development of that main character. For all intents and purposes Nick could just as well have been a lawyer or businessman. This is an over simplification, of course, although not too drastic a one. Admittedly, Nick's being a teacher conveniently explains his free summer time in Manawaka. A teacher, after all, normally does have July and August away from the rigors of the classroom. The summer presence of lawyer or executive from the big city might have been more difficult to rationalize, although certainly

not impossible.

The deletion of the teacher-character, Sapphire Travis, from detailed consideration in this chapter can be made as well. In any event detailed consideration would be impossible since Sapphire, a teacher in the same school as Rachel Cameron, is mentioned only twice, very briefly. Sapphire's simpering tone with her grade one pupils permeates her conversation with adults as well. This, according to Rachel, is one of the dangers of being a teacher of younger grades. Rachel worries about her own voice when it becomes "Peter-Rabbitish". The observation concerning Sapphire Travis, then, will appear in Rachel's character presentation and Sapphire will simply become part of "How does the teacher view her colleagues?" as that question pertains to the novel's main character.

Although A Jest of God offers much material for presentation and analysis, the style presents certain limitations for the purpose of this study. The author, Margaret Laurence, in an interview with fellow Canadian writer Graeme Gibson explains:

[. . .] In my novel, A Jest of God, it's all written from inside Rachel's head. It's in the first person, the present tense, and it is all her viewpoint.²

² Graeme Gibson, "Margaret Laurence", in Eleven Canadian Novelists, Toronto, Anansi, 1973, p. 186.

How the other characters feel about their own situations or about Rachel can only filter through to the reader by way of Rachel's eyes and Rachel's thoughts. Each action, each word, its meaning, its significance is de-coded by Rachel.

1. Presentation of Characters

a) Rachel Cameron.--In the little Manitoba town of Manawaka Rachel Cameron moves between two prisons: a stifling doily-spattered flat on Japonica Street above an undertaking establishment once owned by her father and the classroom of an elementary school where she teaches Grade Two. Her time to be served is indefinite and her sentences have run concurrently. "'Only for a year or so, Rachel, until we see.'"³ This was Rachel's mother speaking after her daughter had returned home from university upon her father's death. Rachel thinks back to that time and to that "sentencing" by her mother.

[. . .] See what? She couldn't be the one to move--I do see that. She'd be lost any place else. Stacey [Rachel's older sister] was already married, and with a child and Mac [Stacey's husband] selling encyclopedias at the westcoast. She said I must see how impossible it would be for her. Yes, I saw, I see. Seesaw. From pillar to post. What could I have done differently?⁴

³ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

All that was fourteen years before.

My great mistake was in being born the younger.
No. Where I went wrong was in coming back here,
once I'd got away. A person has to be ruthless.
One has to say I'm going, and not be prevailed
upon to return.⁵

These are the brave words framed in Rachel's mind, brave words that are not spoken. Rachel's existence can be traced by unspoken thoughts, the "I should have said's" and the "Why didn't I say's". Her life is one great rationalization in the course of which her own wishes and desires are subjected to the wants of others. It is so much easier to give in than make a fuss.

The pattern at home runs in this vein: Rachel's mother hears her mention on the phone that she is going to take an extension course in English.

'I wasn't listening,' Mother says, 'but I couldn't help hearing you mention some course or other: You never told me about it.'

'It's not definitely settled yet. I was only considering it.'

'Well, of course it's your own business, dear. I mean, you don't have to tell me what you're doing. It's just that it seems a little odd, never to mention it.'

'I'm sorry, Mother. It's just that it wasn't definite.'⁶

5 Ibid., p. 11.

6 Ibid., p. 78.

Rachel's mother continues:

'Of course, dear, I quite understand. It's perfectly all right. It isn't as though I expect you to tell me everything you do. I mean, after all, it is your life, isn't it? It's just that it seemed rather a peculiar thing to keep quiet about. I mean, it isn't as though there were any reason to conceal it.'

'Please, Mother. Let's not have a scene about it. Please.'⁷

The ironic part about this particular incident is that Rachel had simply fabricated the English course information to put a fellow teacher, Calla Mackie, "off the track". It was Calla on the phone asking if she would like to go to a movie that night. "'Or any time this week. Or next week.'⁸ Rachel does not want to be bothered with Calla and has tried to give the impression of being busy. The phone call is over and Rachel's mother continues:

'Scene? Of course not. I'm not annoyed. Rachel--You mustn't think that. I couldn't be annoyed over a thing like that. A little hurt, perhaps. But there. It's probably foolish to feel that way. You have a perfect right to keep anything secret if you want to--'

'It wasn't a secret. It was--oh, never mind. I'm sorry. I just never thought, I guess. I'm sorry.'

'Never mind, dear. Everyone's thoughtless at times, I guess. I can't expect--'⁹

7 Ibid., p. 78.

8 Ibid., p. 76.

9 Ibid., p. 79.

Niall Cameron, when still alive, spent a great deal of time downstairs in his business sanctuary with the quiet dead. Upstairs was Mrs. Cameron and her doily-covered furniture. It seems that Mr. Cameron drank a great deal. Mother and daughter now live on Rachel's teaching salary. For Rachel there are movies with her mother, Church on Sunday (at first she resisted attendance but eventually gave in), and seeing to refreshments at her mother's bridge gatherings. There had been dates when she first returned to Manawaka but these petered out. A young farmer had shown attention in those days but Rachel discouraged him when he began to ask her out more than once a week. He had not completed high school. Since then Rachel taught his children, all alert and good looking. In more recent years she had made the mistake of going to the Regal Café for dinner with an embalming fluid salesman who had been calling on the business downstairs. She spent the time in a state of embarrassment for fear of being seen and inwardly cringed when the gentleman told her what nice bones she had.

Rachel is very conscious of her appearance. She sees herself in the hall mirror as a "lank scamperer" as she hurries to the phone. She speaks of herself as a "giraffe woman".

At nights now, in bed, Rachel finds it difficult to sleep. The more she tries, the less she is able. Her head often aches, not an ordinary ache, but more of a pulsing, regular and rhythmical. Her bedroom is the same one she has always had. She considers how girlish it is, how old-fashioned. She would like to change the furniture, the white-painted metal bed, the white spindly-legged dressing table, for something new. Her mother would argue that it would be a waste to do so. Rachel pushes changes to the back of her mind. Soon the night will be one of half-dreams. Sometimes the night feels like a gigantic ferris wheel turning with interminable slowness, Rachel glued to it like a photograph, insubstantial, unable to anchor herself, unable to stop the nocturnal circling. Often in her dreams and half-dreams the phantom male comes, his features blurred but his body distinct, shoulders and arms tanned, belly flat and hard. On her mother's bridge nights voices of the old ladies echo through the insomniac's mind. Rachel "helps out" on those nights. She hears in her mind a playback of her conversation with "the girls" as she looks after the refreshments for her mother. It dependably follows a pattern.

They feel duty bound to address a few remarks to her, remarks which have fallen into a comfortable stability.

[. . .] 'How's school, Rachel?' Fine, thank you. 'I guess they must keep you pretty busy, all those youngsters.' Yes, they certainly do. 'Well, I think it's marvellous, the way you manage'--'I always think that anyone who's a teacher is marvellous to take on a job like that.' Oh, I enjoy it. 'Well, that's marvellous--don't you think so, May?' And Mother nods and says yes it certainly is marvellous and Rachel is a born teacher.¹⁰

What about the realities of school, that other prison? When she had been a very young student in the same school in which she now teaches, she would have been very surprised to know that she was to end up there again "no longer the one who was scared of not pleasing, but the thin giant She behind the desk at the front"¹¹. Rachel, however, is still scared. Visits by her principal rattle her. There is the Rachel who sits at her desk after class dismissal thinking how much she would like to leave the school for good. "How is it I can still be so afraid of losing my job?"¹² There is the Rachel who with difficulty bears the knowledge that she must return to the school each morning. There is the Rachel who worries about developing eccentricities. Is she beginning to talk in that simpering tone like Sapphire Travis, the Grade One teacher? Grade

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 1.

¹² Ibid., p. 25.

school teachers pick it up without realizing. Is she becoming forgetful? Is this one of the days that chair scraping and scrambling for crayons will be particularly unbearable? There are a multitude of fears that permeate Rachel's very being, that often paralyze her.

In class one afternoon Rachel's pupils are drawing pictures. Even though they are free to draw whatever they wish, a number of them have no idea what to draw. Rachel makes suggestions.

'Did any of you go out for a walk, beyond town? Did anyone find any pussywillows?'

My own voice sounds false to my ears, a Peter-Rabbitish voice, and I find I am standing beside my desk, holding a new piece of orange chalk so tightly that it snaps in my fingers. But the children do not seem to have noticed. A small chorus of response goes up--from the girls, of course.

'Me! I did, Miss Cameron.'

'My brother and me, we found about a million pussywillows.'

Interesting creatures, very young girls, often so anxious to please that they will tell lies without really knowing they're doing it. I don't suppose more than a few of them were actually out in the country at all. They only think I'd like to hear it. And yet I feel at ease with them in a way I don't with the boys, who have begun to mock automatically even at this age.¹³

Rachel has taught in Manawaka long enough to have many students pass along from the Grade Two class.

¹³ Ibid., p. 5.

Frequently she sees them about town, teenagers now. In many ways they seem alien to her. They often speak but with what overtones? Rachel at times feels that she is being mocked. Is the giggle of the two sixteen-year-old girls with bouffant hairdos connected with her? Is thirty-four, after all, antediluvian? Rachel dislikes having to go into the Regal Café for cigarettes ("I don't smoke much any more. It is foolhardy to take chances with one's health, after all."¹⁴) Tight knots of teenagers cluster about the juke box.

[. . .] Have I taught any of them, years ago?
I don't want to look directly at them to see who
is recognizable and who is not.

[. . .] I don't like having to shove past them, hav-
ing to endure the confident dismissal of their eyes.

At last I've got my cigarettes. As I'm reach-
ing out for the change, I find myself glancing side-
ways and looking into the face of a girl. Lipstick
a whitish pink like salve, softly shining skin with
virtually no powder, and then everything lavished on
the eyes--bluegreen like the sea, underneath, and
greenblue lids above, with the lashes thickly black.
She is staring at me. What do those plain eyes in
their jewelled setting see? I don't want to know.
It doesn't concern me, what she thinks. Why should
it? What does it matter? Who does she think she is?

'Hello, Miss Cameron.'

'Oh, hello.' I don't know her. Whoever she once
was--that's long gone. Some child I was drawn to, per-
haps and may have shown it, and she remembers and can't
forgive it, . . .¹⁵

14 Ibid., p. 54.

15 Ibid., p. 56.

Rachel Cameron enters her Grade Two classroom early one spring morning to find Willard Siddley, her school principal, looking at her attendance sheets. Her immediate reaction of alarm ("What has he found? Have I done something?"¹⁶) changes to resentment when she sees what he is up to. "Why should Willard pry? He has no right to open my desk."¹⁷ The resentment just as quickly changes to concern. Willard is checking on James Doherty's attendance. Rachel harbors a tenderness for the young Doherty boy. She explains that bouts of tonsillitis account for James's absences; she has phoned the mother. "Willard frowns. 'You did?'"¹⁸ Rachel interprets Willard's look and tone as indicating that the principal thinks her phoning was a curious thing to have done. Now Rachel herself begins to think that perhaps it was. She tries to explain the matter in more detail but finds herself stumbling over her own words and being somewhat incoherent.

The point of the consultation is that James, while supposedly ill, has been seen on three occasions running about in the bushes of the valley beyond town. Willard

16 Ibid., p. 23.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

suggests that a little straight speaking from the school is in order. He advises Rachel to talk with Grace Doherty concerning the mother's collusion in the illegal absences of the child. In the meantime the child is to report to Willard's office. Punishment is in the offing. Under the guise of respectable responsibility and grave concern Willard likes to use the strap. "'It won't do any good.'"¹⁹ Rachel volunteers at the same time thinking to herself that what she says is true and even if she does not feel certain of much, she is certain of this. Willard answers:

'We don't know that, Rachel, do we? [.]
I would venture to put forth the opinion that under the circumstances it is decidedly worth a try. We must not let our emotions get the better of us, must we?'

What of his emotions, Willard's, the ones he would not admit to having? Yet now I can't argue. I don't know whether I only feel the way I do because I care about James, and wouldn't willingly see him hurt? Now I no longer know whether I have the right to feel as I do. How could I be wrong about this, when I feel it so? Or can a person be mistaken about everything? Willard's a good principal. I said so to myself not a moment ago.

'I'll send him in, then.' There's a dullness in my voice. Willard has won. Maybe he is even right. He has two of his own. Could I be expected to know what is best?

'Good girl,' Willard says.²⁰

19 Ibid., p. 25.

20 Ibid.

Rachel feels guilt about her acquiescence.

But when I've sent James in, and he has returned, his face like bone, his eyes staring my betrayal at me, then I want only to go to Willard and tell him to listen, just to listen. I am not neutral--I am not detached--I know it. But neither are you, and you do not know it.

I won't go, though.²¹

At the same time Rachel is angry at Grace Doherty. If she could face the mother there and then Rachel would be able to speak her mind in the heat of that anger. She would demand to know how the mother could be so irresponsible as to let James stay away from school and then give him notes to excuse the absences. It was as though the child did not amount to anything. Certainly the mother ought to know better. The ignorance was appalling. Grace Doherty does not deserve to have him. At that very instant Rachel feels that she could say these things--these things she believes should be said. At the same time Rachel knows that she will put off contacting Grace Doherty and procrastinate saying anything at all. She does put the matter off and is eventually reminded of it by Willard.

The fact that Willard sent a note to her to come to his office rather than personally coming to her classroom is of significance to Rachel. She feels that she is

²¹ Ibid., p. 25.

being summoned like a naughty child. "What right has he? What have I done?"²² In Willard's office Rachel remains standing while the principal fusses with papers on his desk. Rachel thinks that he is not really doing anything but applying a few paper-clips and that she is purposely being kept waiting. She feels that she may blurt out something unpardonable, only to unbind the tension. She watches his hands and thinks:

Once again, his hands on the desk seem to be drawing my eyes. With them he touches his wife, and holds the strap to strike a child, and--
My own stare repulses me, and yet I'm reassured by it. However unacceptable it may be, to want to brush my finger-tips across the furred knuckles of someone I don't even like, at least they're a man's hands.

.
'Now then,' Willard says, glancing up.
'Have you seen that boy's mother yet, Rachel?'
'Oh. You mean--James Doherty's mother?'
'Yes,' he says, with a slight air of impatience.
'That's the one. The boy who comes to school only when he feels like it.'
'He hasn't missed a day, recently.'
'Have you seen her, though?'
'Well, not yet. I thought--'
And now I see, startled, that I have been putting it off. The days seem to have gone by so quickly. I can't explain this negligence, because there is no explanation.
'It would be advisable to see her without delay, Rachel. Summer holidays are coming up, and after two months running wild, he is not likely to be improved. It would be just as well to make the situation eminent-ly clear to the boy's mother right now.'²³

22 Ibid., p. 43.

23 Ibid., p. 44.

Willard states his opinion that whatever the school's shortcomings are, he does not wish it said that theirs is a slack school. He asks Rachel if she would want this to be said about the school. She replies:

'No--of course not. I'm sorry I haven't seen her, Willard. Honestly. I'm been meaning to, and--'
I can hear my own voice, eagerly abject. Probably I would get down on my knees if this weren't frowned upon. I hate all this. I hate speaking in this way. But I go on doing it.²⁴

Rachel says that she will send a note to Grace Doherty via James. Willard questions the advisability of that intention. He questions whether the note will reach its destination and suggests a phone call instead. Rachel at first resents the principal's assumption that James is probably dishonest, unreliable or both. She changes in seconds, however, questioning herself and her own opinions once more.

[. . .] Looking now at Willard's face, I'm certain only of what he says, as though his eyes have the reptilian gift. It is said that a person cannot be hypnotized against their will, but that can't be true.

'I'll phone, then.'

I want only to get away. I would agree to anything. What does it matter?

'Fine. That's settled then,' Willard says, and I see I'm dismissed, permitted to go, let out of school.²⁵

When Grace Doherty arrives at the school for an interview with Rachel concerning James, she is in a new

24 Ibid., p. 45.

25 Ibid.

light-blue spring suit. She has a white straw hat with veiling and is wearing high-heeled shoes. Grace is obviously "dressed up". Rachel wonders:

Why has she found it necessary to get dressed up like this? An interview with the teacher? But the teacher is Rachel Cameron, whom she's known all her life. Is it possible she doesn't think of it like this, and is edgy herself, wondering what I will have to say about James? I can't believe it. She was always self-assured, a girl who never bothered about schoolwork and managed to convey the impression that those who did were laughable or else had nothing better to do.²⁶

Rachel cannot bring herself to call the woman Grace, despite the fact that they had been students together in the Manawaka school. At the same time Rachel feels that it would sound silly to say Mrs. Doherty. She concludes that she will not be able to address her directly at all.

'These absences of James--' my voice sounds distant, cold, a robot's mechanical voice or someone reading from a printed form, 'they've been causing some concern to us.'

'Why?' she asks, as though innocently.

Why? Listen to the woman. She wouldn't care, I suppose, whether he ever got a scrap of education or not. He could grow up illiterate--it would make no difference to her. If ever he decides he doesn't want to follow his father in the garage business, she'll stare at him with total blankness. If he's in a silver ship that one day lands on the moon, she'll write him off sorrowfully as a boy who didn't turn out well. Unless he gets in the papers or on TV for it. Then she would know it was all right to be approving.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., p. 48.

²⁷ Ibid.

It is with a strange mixture of diffidence and defiance that Grace Doherty defends what she feels was a proper decision concerning her child. What she has to say shows much more perception concerning her child than Rachel has chosen to give her credit for. James comes in from the school corridor where he has been waiting and goes to his mother.

[. . .] she brushes his russet hair away from his forehead, as she's been doing for years, no doubt. She has the right to touch him, at least sometimes. She puts an arm around his shoulders, and he squirms away, frowning. She smiles, not displeased that he wants to be his own and on his own.

'Well, that's all okay, then, Rachel?'

Her voice is filled with capability. She gains strength from his presence. This is what happens. I've seen it with my sister. They think they are making a shelter for their children, but actually it is the children who are making a shelter for them. They don't know.

As she goes out with him, I wonder if James has told her he got the strap. He couldn't have. She would have mentioned it. Why didn't he tell? Didn't he know how unfair it was? Or did he know only too well?²⁸

Rachel ends the day tired. She has promised her mother to take her to a movie but once more there is a headache to take to bed.

The school year draws to an end. Rachel is aware of how her patience with her twenty-six pupils fluctuates from day to day, from time to time. She tries to be more

²⁸ Ibid., p. 50.

consistent but some times the slightest snick of a door latch sets her teeth on edge. On one such day the pupils seem to be making a great deal of noise.

Just--noise. The scraping of their feet on the floor. The juggling of books from inside the desk to outside--such an easy procedure--how can it be so complicated for them? The trading of crayons back and forth, someone having a more exotic colour than someone else. The whispering that grows to a hissed largeness until finally in justice I cannot ignore it but have to deal somehow with it, nicely and reasonably, not doing as probably any distracted parent would be bound to do, shouting Shut up! Just shut up, please.²⁹

Instead of shouting, it is in this state of agitation that Rachel begins to check arithmetic. For some inexplicable reason James goes into a huddle over his work, hiding it. There is no explanation, only an indrawing of his arm over the paper. He will not show the work and Rachel becomes more demanding, thus putting herself in a position where she cannot back down, all the time knowing that she is doing just that. Rachel is unable to get a response or establish communication. She imagines caricatures and cannot tolerate the thought that James would draw them. Her imagination whets her frenzy. She must see. In her determination to do so Rachel hits James across his face with her ruler making his nose bleed. Rachel takes the now unresisting

29 Ibid., p. 51.

page from between the boy's fingers. Forcing herself to look at it, she finds no pictures, no obscene caricatures, but two completed arithmetic questions, out of ten, and those two incorrectly done.

I cannot say I'm sorry. Not in front of them all, twenty-six beings, all eyes. If I do say this, how shall I appear tomorrow? Cut down, diminished, undermined, very little left. If I do not say it, though, there's enough gossip for a month or more, to friends and fathers and lovingly listening mothers--You know what Miss Cameron went and did?

· · · · ·
If I could put my hands upon him, lightly, and comfort him. If I could say something. It is not for me to say or do anything. How can one retrieve anything at all? Is it always past the appointed hour?
James--I'm sorry. But I haven't spoken the words aloud.³⁰

Summer holidays finally arrive and are enticing for the first week. After the novelty of being able to rise late wears thin ("I've been late for school in all this time, never once."³¹), Rachel finds it hard to know what to do with herself. She invents duties and expeditions. The children from her last class, seen briefly on the streets from time to time, are too busy running or playing to more than barely notice her.

Rachel' summer changes (and her life as well) when she meets Nick Kazlik, son of old Nestor Kazlik who runs

30 Ibid., p. 53.

31 Ibid., p. 20.

a dairy farm near Manawaka. Nick and Rachel had gone to school together as children but had never been close; Nick was from the "other part of town". Nick now teaches high school in Winnipeg. Rachel seems uneasy in his presence. He, in turn, seems surprised that Rachel is still in Manawaka.

'Oh? You're married, then?'

'No. No--I'm living with my--I keep house for my mother since my father--he's dead, you know. And I teach, of course.'

'I mean--' but I'm fumbling this amendment, 'I'm a teacher--also.'

'Are you? Whereabouts?'

'Grade Two.' I find I'm laughing--tittering, maybe--yes, for Christ's sake, that. 'I wouldn't want to cope with High School.'³²

With Nick the phantom male of Rachel's dreaming seems to have materialized and with that materialization comes direct experience. No longer is it some objective "she" lying on a mossy floor who receives the attentions of the male but the subjective "she", Rachel, who lies with Nick. Rachel's urgency is such that all the fears, all the uncertainties are pushed aside in a rush for the sexual communion that Nick offers. The affair runs the course of the summer, Rachel even finding it within her power to deceive her demanding mother in order to grasp

32 Ibid., p. 63.

what hours she can with Nick. Towards summer's end Rachel has self-confidence, at least with Nick, to hint at some permanent relationship.

'Nick--'

'Mm?'

'If I had a child I would like it to be yours.'

This seems so unforced that I feel he must see it the way I do. And so restrained, as well, when I might have torn at him--Give me my children.³³

Nick disappears after that--back to the city.

He leaves Rachel with the impression that he is married, which later she finds is not true at all. Summer ends and school begins. There is a great feeling of emptiness for her. Rachel observes her new children coming to Grade Two.

They troop in, two by two, all the young animals into my Ark. And I must take an interest in them, because I'm the keeper. It wouldn't be fair to them if I didn't. They trust me very little, but at least they trust me this much--whatever happens, I will take charge, they believe.³⁴

The Grade Two children are somewhat more brave than the Grade Ones, after all it is their second year in the school. Rachel has felt that she would feel no interest but as she sees her new charges and as she speculates, the interest builds. Who will be the one or ones, as it was James last

33 Ibid., p. 148.

34 Ibid., p. 154.

year?

[. . .] All at once I know there will be no one like that, not now, not any more. This unwanted revelation fills me with the sense of an ending as though there were nothing to look forward to.³⁵

Willard Siddley greets Rachel and inquires about her summer. Rachel, for no definite reason, but as is her want, detects innuendo in his remarks.

'Didn't see you around very much,' he is saying. 'We meant to ask you over but Angela wasn't feeling up to scratch, and then we went to the lake in August. I suppose, however, you were probably fully occupied anyway.'³⁶

The same old concerns are with Rachel. She thinks:

What a choice of words. He couldn't have meant anything by it. He could though. He knows. He must. He could not possibly and even if he did, so what? Yet I find myself fumbling, as I've always done, for the pencil on my desk, holding it between my fingers as though I meant to snap it.³⁷

Willard looks forward to a good school year with a full team. Willard is to be disappointed. Rachel eventually has to face the fact that she may be pregnant. As each day goes on this seems more and more of a certainty. The trauma of this for a woman whose very day to day existence is fraught with fear is very great. She goes through

35 Ibid., p. 155.

36 Ibid., p. 156.

37 Ibid.

extreme torment at times contemplating such a drastic measure as suicide. In this time of trouble Calla Mackie remains her friend. There had been an occasion where Calla once showed her affection for Rachel to be that of a lover rather than a friend. Their relationship was always somewhat strained after that incident. Calla's difference always bothered Rachel: her brashness, her carelessness of dress, her membership in a fundamentalist religious sect. Calla is kind and well-meaning, nevertheless.

Eventually Rachel goes to her family physician, old Doctor Raven. He did not even consider it a possibility that Rachel might be pregnant.

'Well,' Doctor Raven is saying in his comfortable and comforting voice, 'at least we know there's no question of one thing, anyway, with a sensible girl like yourself. That at least can be ruled out, eh? Can't say the same for them all, I'm afraid.'³⁸

Doctor Raven suspects a malignancy. Rachel wonders at his ignorance but cannot bring herself to say anything. She allows him to do an internal examination. The doctor is correct and Rachel is not. There is no baby but a tumor. An operation takes place. The tumor is benign. The accumulated shocks have worked a change in Rachel, nevertheless. From her struggle comes strength, a strength that

³⁸ Ibid., p. 178.

Rachel could never muster before. She finds that she can make decisions. She and her mother will leave Manawaka. To some, such a decision may seem a small matter, but to a person such as Rachel this is a big victory. As could be expected, her mother resists:

'Now please don't be silly, Rachel. It's out of the question, dear, I'm afraid.'

'No. It's what we're going to do.'³⁹

There is an extended exchange in which Mrs. Cameron using all her usual wiles and new ones as well tries to dissuade Rachel. This time it is to no avail, Rachel has changed. One prison sentence has ended. The other sentence ends as well. Rachel sees Willard for the last time.

'Ah, Rachel. The moment has finally come, eh?'

'Yes.'

'Well, I just want you to know I certainly do wish you every success in your new--and of course Angela joins me in this wish, most sincerely.'

'Thanks.'

'I must say--I know you won't take it amiss if I say this, Rachel--I must just mention that I was a little taken aback at your decision. It wasn't what I would have expected of you.'

'No.'

'I mean, of course, it's your concern, but I can't help wondering. I'd just like to ask you one thing, quite frankly.'

'What is it?'

'Weren't you happy here?' Willard asks, peering foxily. 'I always thought you got along so well here. Taught well, fitted in with the other staff very harmoniously, and as for myself, we've never had the slightest disagreement, you and I. That's so, isn't it?'⁴⁰

39 Ibid., p. 191.

40 Ibid., p. 196.

Willard presses the point even further:

'[. . .] I always thought you were perfectly satisfied with the way our school is run. I could be quite mistaken, of course, but I always thought so. I trust you don't mind my asking but naturally this is a matter of some considerable interest to me.'

He doesn't want any answer. He wants me to say 'Of course I have always been as happy as a veritable meadowlark in this eminently well-run establishment, Willard, and I can assure you my leaving has nothing whatsoever to do with you, who have been in every conceivable way the best of principals--it is only that my old mother wishes to see her dear little grandchildren, so I am taking off, albeit with the greatest and bitterest regrets.

What am I to say though? Sometimes I was happy here, and sometimes not, and often I was afraid of him, and still am, although I see now that this was as unnecessary as my mother's fear of fate. What good would it do to say that? I couldn't explain, nor he accept.

'I've lived here long enough, that's all. It's got nothing to do with the school.'

And this, like everything else, is both true and false.⁴¹

Rachel and her mother leave for Vancouver where Rachel has taken a teaching position. As Rachel looks from the window of the bus as it speeds along she thinks to herself:

Where I'm going, anything may happen. Maybe I will marry a middle-aged widower, or a longshoreman, or a cattle-hoof-trimmer, or a barrister or a thief. And have my children in time. Or maybe not. Most of the chances are against it. But not I think, quite all. What will happen? What will happen. It may be that my children will always be temporary, never to be held. But so are everyone's.⁴²

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 197.

⁴² Ibid., p. 201.

b) Willard Siddley.--Rachel Cameron tries to rationalize the nervousness she feels in the presence of her principal, Willard Siddley. She feels it is ridiculous for her to have such anxiety but it persists, nevertheless.

[...] He's always very nice to me. I can't claim he isn't. There is no real reason why I should dislike him, none at all.⁴³

In this thought lies embedded the implication that she does dislike him.

On one occasion Rachel is called to Willard's office. She stands by his desk while he fusses officiously with paper and paper-clips. While waiting for him to start discussion, Rachel catches herself doing what she has done on other occasions, watching Willard's sun-spotted hands. She notes that he even has small hairs growing from the knuckles. She is repulsed by an urge that rises within herself, an urge to reach out and brush her fingertips across the furred hands of "someone I don't even like"⁴⁴.

Still on occasion there has occurred in Rachel a feeling something akin to affection for Willard, this only momentarily when he had his glasses with their heavy navy-blue frames off to rub his eyes as if they were sore or

⁴³ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 44.

sleepy. Just at that moment there had been a look of vulnerability about her principal which she rarely saw.

It is difficult to judge others by what Rachel has to say about them. Rachel is a character filled with conflicts and uncertainties. This must be accepted in this study and the reader must see what she cannot see. The reader operates from within Rachel's mind, but also beyond it. One can without overplaying personal judgments, which would distort this study, see that Rachel does believe certain things but fear within herself does not allow her to admit these things, even to herself. Willard's love or strapping is a case in point. Willard says to Rachel:

'I just want you to bear in mind this year-- if you have the slightest trouble with any of them, send them straight to me.'

'I--I'll remember.'

'Positively no need for you to worry,' he says. 'I'll deal with them.'

'Thank you.'

'Not at all,' he says courteously. 'It's a-- it's no bother.'⁴⁵

Of course it is clear enough to the reader what Willard started to say. Rachel thinks:

Willard will never know he yearns to punish. And I will hardly ever be certain whether I am imagining it or not. Only sometimes, when I've betrayed one of them.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 158.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 159.

During the previous school year Rachel felt that she did, in fact, betray a favorite pupil, James Doherty, by turning him over to Willard on demand. James had had some absences from school which the principal decided were unwarranted. In retrospect, Rachel felt that her stand on James's behalf had been too weak. In her own heart, she knew the strap would solve nothing. Willard was of a different mind.

Rachel is an exceptionally tall woman, and Willard hates to be considered a short man. What results in the school situation is Rachel sitting at her desk with Willard standing or Willard sitting at his desk with Rachel standing. Willard makes up for what may seem to him small stature by being much more brisk than anyone really needs to be. He calls this briskness efficiency. His walk is a scurrying as he moves rapidly from place to place. Willard's eyes are a pallid blue and dartingly quick and sly. Rachel feels that there is something lizard-like about his appearance. He is sleek and dapper.

Analyzing her attitude toward Willard is a preoccupation with Rachel. At one point she considers that her feelings may be a result of "that pompous manner of his"⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

Willard has a way of seeming to insist that his slightest word has significant meaning, and if a person is not able to see, the fault is that person's, not Willard's. "He is a good principal though. I don't question that. Everyone says so."⁴⁸ This remark is very typical of Rachel and herein she is guilty of the very thing for which she criticizes Grace Doherty. Grace is the mother of Rachel's favorite student and, while speaking with her concerning her son, Rachel thinks:

[. . .] If he's in a silver ship that one day lands on the moon, she'll write him off sorrowfully as a boy who didn't turn out well. Unless he gets in the papers or on TV for it. Then she would know it was all right to be approving.⁴⁹

As concerns Willard there is a wide approval that obviously means something to Rachel. There are matters that deep down Rachel does not approve of but in which she acquiesces. In her mind she can hear Willard's denial that he is an "old-fashioned disciplinarian" but by the same token she knows that he likes using the strap on boys. One "must restrain the child against his or her own violence"⁵⁰ is part of

48 Ibid., p. 6.

49 Ibid., p. 50.

50 Ibid., p. 7.

Willard's creed. Tripping is forbidden in the school yard. Those guilty of this sort of violence are punished with Willard's strap.

Willard is adamant about disciplinarian matters being attended to. Rachel procrastinates in arranging a teacher-parent talk with Grace Doherty concerning her son's absences from school. The matter does not slip Willard's mind. He reminds Rachel:

'It would be advisable to see her without delay, Rachel. Summer holidays are coming up, and after two months running wild, he is not likely to be improved. It would be just as well to make the situation eminently clear to the boy's mother now. Whatever our shortcomings here, I would not want it said that we were a slack school, would you?'⁵¹

A note via James Doherty to his mother will not do for Willard. It is suggested that Rachel take no chances but contact Mrs. Doherty by phone.

At school opening time Willard recounts some of his summer activities to Rachel. His summer was reasonably entertaining, but he is glad that school is under way again. At school he is happiest. It gives him a certain sense of accomplishment. Willard is optimistic for the coming school year.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 44.

'I think we're going to have a good year. A rewarding year. We haven't had to change any members of the staff, and I always think that's a great asset, if one can carry on with the same team. Provided, of course, that the team is harmonious, which I think I can safely say ours here is.'⁵²

Willard is to be disappointed. It is later on in that very school year that Rachel leaves her post and goes to Vancouver. Willard seems to take the departure personally. He wants to be assured that the departure had nothing to do with him or with his well-run school.

c) Calla Mackie.--After a session with her principal, Willard Siddley, Rachel Cameron goes to the Teachers' Room. It is late in the afternoon but Calla Mackie is still there. Calla has been a good friend to Rachel. She is kind and well-meaning and in the past Rachel has felt guilty about being condescending toward her concerning the way she dressed. Calla is stockily built with strong heavy bones. Her hair is greying and straight. Rachel believes she has never set foot inside a hairdresser's. She cuts her hair with nail scissors, combing it back behind her ears except for a fringe like a Shetland pony's over the forehead.

Rachel assumes that Calla has been waiting for her. Calla would have seen her cardigan still hanging in the

52 Ibid., p. 158.

Teachers' Room and realized that she was still somewhere in the school building. She has tea made. "'Hi,' she says. 'Like a cup of the brew that cheers but does not inebriate?'"⁵³ This is one of Calla's sayings. She has many of them, all of which get on Rachel's nerves.

The relationship between the two women has been somewhat strained since Rachel became aware of Calla's feelings about her. What was seen as the affection of a friend is now seen as the affection of a lover. The revelation came some time earlier after Rachel, much against her better judgment and true wishes, accompanied Calla to the Tabernacle of the Risen and Reborn. Rachel had declined to go so many times with Calla to the Tabernacle that she at last gave in and attended that home of a fundamentalist sect in Manawaka where the hymns were played like jazz and congregation members experienced "speaking in tongues". Rachel was acutely embarrassed once she entered the Tabernacle, not wanting to be seen, regretting her presence there, and being generally appalled by the whole experience. That night in a state of nervous hysteria, she herself uttered gibberish. Calla took her back to her apartment and as Rachel came to herself in a great state of agitation over what had

53 Ibid., p. 45.

happened, Calla began to cry. She put her arm around Rachel's shoulders in an effort to comfort her, then kissed her on the face and afterwards on the mouth.

In the Teachers' Room, as has become their fashion, Rachel and Calla speak in as cheerful a way as possible to camouflage the awkwardness they both feel but cannot admit or even speak about. Calla asks:

'Been seeing the boss, Rachel?'
She pushes the tea cup towards me, across the table. She used to put the sugar and cream in my tea, for me, but she does not do that now. Another thing--she does not say child any more. Only Rachel. As though formality or great care had been forced upon her. I've wanted her to stop saying child or kid for a long time, yet now I feel unreasonably bereft.⁵⁴

Feeling this last thought expressed, Rachel immediately does a mental about turn and thinks to herself, "No, I don't. That's senseless."⁵⁵

Rachel explains why Willard Siddley had wanted to see her in his office. It was about James Doherty and his absences. "'You'd think the reputation of the whole school was at stake.'⁵⁶ Calla answers. This was not entirely true. Her affection for her older "child", Rachel, was

54 Ibid., p. 46.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

a special one. Just before Rachel leaves Manawaka, she sees Calla one last time at school. The fact that Rachel is finally able to speak in the manner she does indicates that Rachel is, in fact, developing and becoming a more decisive person.

'Calla--' Now at last, it had to be expressed and offered, some acknowledgement, because the truth is that she loves me.

'What is it?'

'I'm sorry things weren't different for you. I mean, that I wasn't different.'

'Oh--that,' she says.

She glances away, then looks again at me, meets my eyes. Calla, pillar of tabernacles, speaker in tongues, mother of canaries and budgerigars.

'Not to worry,' Calla says. 'I'll survive.'⁵⁷

With Calla staying at the elementary school in Manawaka, a strong member of the harmonious teaching team that Willard Siddley prides himself in heading remains with him. Calla would have moved from Manawaka with Rachel to help her if, in fact, her suspected pregnancy had been a reality. "'As for the baby, well my Lord, I've looked after many a kid before.'⁵⁸ The kids Calla will look after once more will be a new group of Grade Five poster-painters.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 198.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 175.

2. Analysis of Characters

a) Rachel Cameron

1. Major or minor character?

Rachel Cameron is not only a major character, but the main character in the novel.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

Yes, this fact has significance and more specifically the fact that it is an elementary school in which she teaches. The elementary school provides an involvement with younger children. It is upon this involvement and the feeling of loss it brings as the children move on that a universal theme is developed. It is in the capacity of a Grade Two teacher that Rachel can see the impermanence of childhood and of relationships with "her" children. The elementary teacher loses children not just to an "outside world" but to higher grades where, although the bodily presence may still be in the formal school system, the older child may have come to look back on former dependency and those associated with it with some undefined embarrassment or resentment. At best there is an indifference in the immediate past as all the aspects of maturing are experienced and as new vistas open up.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

For young pupils, especially girls, the teacher is someone to be pleased. There is an eagerness to gain the favorable attention of the giant "She" behind the desk. As students grow older and move on, the earlier teachers are forgotten or if remembered it is with a tinge of sardonic snideness or slight mockery as being part of what they have moved beyond. Even from Grade One to Grade Two the process of change is noticeable.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

There is a dichotomy in the community. Those persons from the more genteel part of town view the teacher with an attitude meant to offer encouragement to, and approval of, that professional in a job they themselves doubt whether they could endure but one that must be carried out to maintain an equilibrium in society. Praise, when given, is so routine that it has become stale and what may be projected is not a genuine or active interest in the schools but an ennui that would be disturbed only if the status quo was disrupted in some unforeseen way. The teacher is thus taken for granted and the very real problems within the teaching situation are not surmised.

On the "other side of town" parents are somewhat diffident as regards teachers. Criticism, if any, would probably center on some overt matter such as a classroom incident that could be vividly described rather than on more intangible aspects of the educational process. The criticism or "story telling" would probably run its course in that segment of the community without reaching the school itself or the school authorities.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

She fits in with other staff members harmoniously. Calla Mackie feels a special friendship and affection for Rachel and a protectiveness as well. She is her "child". There is a tenderness here in contrast to the rough amused affection and irritation which Calla feels toward her actual charges. The Rachel "child" is grown, yet in need of the sympathy and security Calla wants to offer through her differentness.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

Willard Siddley, a principal, is the only administrator mentioned. Within the standards he sets, the teacher is a good one. She is punctual and reliable. She has never disagreed with her administrator, has caused him no trouble and is amenable to his suggestions and

directives. She teaches well and forms a co-operative unit within his "team". Although not directly stated it appears that the principal seeks some affirmation from Rachel, some admiration or reassurance, something, which coming from her might be of special value to his psyche.

7. How does the teacher view herself and her role as a teacher? What is her philosophy, if any?

It is her task to be as equitable as possible with each and every one of her students even though she feels that the outlook that they are all unique is a "pious platitude". The "loners" must be spotted in a search for uniqueness; therein it often lies. She is ambitious for her students, especially those who show a uniqueness, however that may be defined or manifest itself at any particular time. She is the "keeper" of her charges and they must know they can depend on her.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

Rachel believes that students can readily detect falseness. When young they are eager to please, especially the girls, but as they move along in school, attitudes of disdain and mockery are often assumed. The tendency toward this begins to develop in most of the boys even in the earlier grades. Rachel is afraid of being thought

eccentric or a fool by current pupils or by ones she has previously taught.

In the classroom she has a tendency to form favorites in her mind although she "bends over backwards" not to let this show. It would be to the detriment of the ones singled out and they would hate her for it. The search for "unique" students begins with each new group that come to her. Rachel feels some guilt about this and at the same time frustration in that she can neither show special affection nor can the students return it. She wants to be liked or loved by them and any withdrawal, real or imagined, or any unresponsiveness makes her unhappy or angry.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?
Parents can be blind to the uniqueness of their own children. In some cases Rachel feels that she knows more about the children than those parents and can value them more intelligently. In one case there is actual resentment of the mother of a little boy Rachel has mentally claimed as "special". There is some form of jealousy that love is so freely given to the parent, and by circumstances and necessity held from her when she values him so highly and sees his uniqueness.

Elements of the community are capable of gossip and what goes on in a classroom can easily become a topic of idle conversation or active criticism.

10. How does the teacher view her colleagues?

There is no desire on the part of the teacher to have social intercourse with colleagues and yet there is an embarrassment in refusing such exchange when pushed toward it. Rachel is particularly uneasy in the face of one particular female staff member's overtures. She finds herself being condescending in her thoughts of Calla Mackie but at the same time feels guilty about the condescending thoughts. Calla's brashness, uninhibited sloppiness, and offhand manner disturb Rachel. What disturbs her even more is to continue a relationship strained by the fact of Calla's "difference" manifesting itself in an affection for Rachel which goes beyond mere friendship. It is Calla, nevertheless, to whom Rachel goes in time of despondency and trauma.

Rachel sees a propensity among school teachers of early grades to develop simpering tones and childish mannerisms which carry beyond the classroom to become part of the teacher "outside" as well. Teaching in a high school seems to proffer higher status, not that Rachel herself would want to teach older students than

she does.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

There is only one administrator in the novel, Willard Siddley, Rachel's principal. Rachel views Willard with diffidence and, at times, actual fear. She is nervous in his presence and searches his remarks for innuendo, his actions for ominous meanings. Her attitude toward Willard is confused and ambiguous. She believes him to be a good principal because people say he is. Yet she sees in him a desire to punish and feels that this cannot be right. Nevertheless, he is the principal and must know best. An administrator, in Rachel's view, is someone whose function it is to control and Rachel quite readily lends herself to that control, being fearful to criticize even inwardly.

It is only after a period of great personal trauma that Rachel reaches a point where she can make some decisions for herself. One of these decisions is to teach elsewhere. As she leaves, she recognizes that many of her feelings concerning the administrator have not changed but at the same time, there are further insights that may now be closer to the truth. It is possibly that Willard's briskness, his efficiency, his bustling, his penchant for corporal punishment, all

have developed to compensate for shortness of stature, hated glasses at an early age and some previously felt inferiority. It appears to Rachel that Willard's attention directed toward her for many years may not have been a "baiting" at all but some strange appeal for affirmation.

b) Willard Siddley

1. Major or minor character?

Willard Siddley is a minor character. His presence as an administrator in Rachel Cameron's school provides "fear situations" to show how that teacher's fears "outside" extend to her teaching situation as well. His authority position shows her will as a negligible force in the face of real or imagined criticism.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

Yes. The necessary relationship would not exist under other circumstances.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

There is no indication. Any other answer here would be an assumption.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

He is said to be a good principal. There seems little doubt that in an elementary school in a town as small

as Manawaka, a principal would also do some active teaching. There is no indication, however, of Willard Siddley in an actual teaching capacity.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

Rachel is the only colleague who gives views and these at best are difficult to focus. In any event, the views apply to Willard as an administrator.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

Willard Siddley is the administrator (principal). No other administrators are mentioned.

7. How does the teacher view himself and his role as a teacher? What is his philosophy, if any?

His administrative tasks have priority over actual teaching. At least his expressed thoughts are more in line with administrative functioning. He views himself as someone who acts with dignity and dispatch. His intent is to assure that it is never said that Willard Siddley runs a slack school. Slackness cannot be accepted. Discipline is a prime concern and although Willard says of himself that he is not to be thought of as "an old-fashioned disciplinarian" strapping is still his common punishment for misdemeanors. Efficiency is important as well. One should keep up with methods of management.

Willard is happiest when at school. He finds a sense of accomplishment in sorting out day-to-day problems, in heading a harmonious team, and in seeing that nothing gets out of hand.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

There is very little indication. One observation would indicate that he is not inclined to trust them. He feels that corporal punishment is needed often to keep them honest and in line.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

He views members of the community as persons who wish to see a school that is not slack and in which everything is well in hand.

10. How does the teacher view his colleagues?

When they agree with his views and do what he suggests or dictates they are members of his harmonious team. His desires in this regard seem to be fulfilled.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

Since Willard Siddley himself is the only administrator in the novel, how he sees himself (note the answer to question seven) is a propos here. In general terms, then, Willard believes administrators should be strict and efficient.

c) Calla Mackie

1. Major or minor character?

Calla Mackie is a minor character.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

Yes, in that it puts her in a logical situation for a relationship with the main character.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

There is no indication.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

There is no indication.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

The only view is through her fellow teacher, Rachel Cameron. Rachel finds Calla kind, generous, and well-meaning, but is embarrassed by her differences of faith, dress, and attitudes all of which Rachel tends to view as unconventional. She would rather not have social contact with Calla, but is ashamed of herself for feeling so. In a time of trial Calla is viewed as the one friend she can turn to.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

She is viewed as one member of a harmonious team.

7. How does the teacher view herself and her role as a teacher? What is her philosophy, if any?

There is no indication.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

Her students are Grade Five students. She refers to them as "my kids" and is proud of the work they produce. She feels a rough amused affection and irritation towards any or all of them, equally.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

There is no indication.

10. How does the teacher view her colleagues?

She views at least one of her colleagues affectionately. This is not meant to be a snide allusion to her homosexuality. The affection is genuine for Rachel on all levels.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

Not so diffidently as to be afraid to speak up when the occasion warrants it.

3. Summary

A Jest of God provides three teacher-characters to this study. The novel emerges from the inner thoughts of a very insecure and indecisive woman, Rachel Cameron. Through her, the reader forms an image of Willard Siddley, her principal, and Calla Mackie, a colleague. Personal trauma creates a stronger Rachel and potential for growth is seen.

CHAPTER V

GOING DOWN SLOW¹

This chapter presents the characters of John Metcalf's novel, Going Down Slow, in interaction with one another up to a point where analysis can be made. To this end, and to capture some of the novel's tone, quotations are freely used. To catch every nuance, every witticism, every telling remark or action, a presentation of the entire novel would be necessary just as it was written, a virtual impossibility. As regards portrayal of the many characters in the novel, whether they be eventually combined in a composite or characters singly presented, there is little that is chaff. Each page of the novel contains some information concerning teacher-characters.

Three characters will be presented: David Appleby, a young teacher from England, the novel's main character; "Merrymount", a character-composite; and Jim Wilson, David's fellow countryman who shares an apartment with him, but teaches at a different high school. It is because Jim, who will be considered a minor character, is at a school other than Merrymount High as well as the fact that he is the antithesis of David that he is presented here separately.

¹ John Metcalf, Going Down Slow, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1972, 177 p.

"Merrymount" is a character-composite created from all the teachers at Merrymount High mentioned in the novel, David Appleby excepted. An individual treatment for each of the characters would be to no avail in some instances because of a paucity of detail about them. They merely form part of a kaleidoscopic view of a large school. Combined with various teacher-characters who are portrayed in greater detail, they do count for something. An entity should emerge in which some commonality may be reasonably expected to exist. As a teacher-composite "Merrymount" has the status of a major character.

Going Down Slow is so much a novel about school and school activities that teaching is an integral part of what the characters are. Teaching is not peripheral to them. Interaction among the teacher-characters is so close that difficulty is created in "Presentation of Characters" in this chapter of the study. Repetition of incidents cannot be avoided. The same incident, for instance, may tell the reader a great deal about David Appleby; it may also elucidate some facet of "Merrymount's" personality. In such a case the incident may very well be told about in both the "Presentation of Character" of David Appleby and the "Presentation of Character" of "Merrymount". Variations in presentation may ease this necessary repetitiveness. There

is one instance in particular where repetition of incident has not been attempted in the character presentations. Toward the end of the Jim Wilson presentation the reader is asked to refer to the end of the David Appleby presentation.

1. Presentation of Characters

a) David Appleby.--There is a very limited amount of physical description of David Appleby, the young school-teacher, in Going Down Slow. That is not to say that a reader will not have a picture in his mind. If he reflects on the matter, however, he will be aware that whatever physical attributes he has given David Appleby are not ones actually delineated by the author of the novel--unless the hair on David's chest happens to be one of the physical characteristics (Susan Haddad, David's grade-eleven girlfriend, tugs at it with her lips). One also reads that even new clothes would look rumpled five minutes after he had put them on.

The absence of actual physical description of David is significant in reinforcing the point that most of what is in the novel is seen through David himself. There is the outward-directed attitude, the seeing of others and not one's self. Susan struck this chord upon abruptly leaving David on one occasion when she said, "'You shouldn't lie to

yourself."²

The trophy showcase outside Merrymount High School's Main Office is crammed with large cups and shields for football, basketball, hockey and other sports activities; an egg-cup sized thing in the back of that same showcase is the award for Academic Excellence. For David Appleby, teacher of English and lover of books, what is represented by that unbalanced trophy case is anathema to him.

Those associated with physical education in the school are disdained by David. He is nominally a member of Blue House, which, in effect, is to say that he does not bother to participate in sports within a staff or a staff-student setup. The novel brings him no closer to the gymnasium than the rear exit, and this on his way out of the school to watch the "rooks" that for weeks had been building and squabbling in the top-most branches of a big tree just within the corner of the wire-mesh fence dividing the school yard from rows of duplexes. The gymnasium is for gym teachers and when Miss Graves and her cheerleaders are practising outdoors, below David's classroom, he wonders why she and her group are not where they should be. Since the students in his class had been given permission to

² Ibid., p. 80.

carry out elections for a Winter Carnival King and Queen, a matter of which David knew nothing nor cared to know anything, he blanked the proceedings out and continued to gaze out the window at the lady gym teacher and her track-suited chorus line. Eventually his preoccupation with the texture of the window sill's tile and the joinings gave way to fancied sexual gymnastics of having Miss Graves do a backward somersault and knees bend to land appropriately on his prone body.

David finds the male gym teachers overwhelmingly gregarious. To Mr. Hubnichuk, who is also a half-time guidance counselor, he is "Davy-boy". David resents the uncalled for loud familiarity of Hubnichuk's innumerable greetings throughout the school and throughout the day of "What's the good word, Davy-boy?" or "What do you say, Dave?" David's reply is usually a polite smile or mumble but in his mind's eye, he pictures himself turning on the big man and answering:

'What do I say?
What do I say, Mr. Hubnichuk?
I say, Mr. Hubnichuk, that you are a hulking,
mannerless oaf and that I would be vastly obliged,
if, in future, you did not presume to address me
by my Christian name.'³

³ Ibid., p. 43.

No doubt had this fantasy been carried out, the response would have been a raucous "GRARF, GRARF". David would never know for sure since in this regard what he says of another (Mr. Brunhoff, a guidance counselor) applies also to himself: "'He who desires but acts not breeds pestilence.'"⁴

Much of David's life is a fantasmagoria. He desires to tell Hubnichuk off but never actually does so. His fantasies are all he has and these extend to the school administrators as well. The tone of some of the fantasies should be particularly noted. As he drives with his friend, Jim Wilson, to school on the Monday morning following an interrupted warning phone call from Susan Haddad that her mother knew of their "extracurricular activities" and had phoned the vice-principal, David's overt worry is subverted by a fantasy in which he deals sadistically with "Gruppenfuhrer" McPhee. The vice-principal is bound with piano wire, has hot hard-boiled eggs nested in his armpits and electrodes are contemplated for his "majogglers". So deeply involved with his fantasy is he that David is not even aware of his arrival at Merrymount High until Jim speaks.

⁴ Ibid., p. 60.

David's torture fantasies extend to his principal, J. D. Grierson. In a distinct Raymond Chandler vein, David pictures himself as a private eye who has been called out at four on a cold winter morning to an apartment where he finds the naked body of a tall, flabby guy of about fifty-five. It was F. Karno, B. Comm. (David's dream-world alias for Mr. Grierson). "Some boy-scout had been writing on him with an electric barbeque starter."⁵ Who had wanted them introduced and why? After a survey of the murdered man's apartment, David, as the private eye, leaves: "'Teacher,' I said, as I closed the door behind me, 'You're going to be late for school.'"⁶

David was the teacher actually late for school on that particular morning, not that there was anything unusual in his tardiness. Before the school year ended, his late sessions totalled twenty-three or more; his absent days, seventeen; his duties missed, fourteen--placing, as Mr. McPhee pointed out, a heavy burden on the rest of the staff.

Susan Haddad is a beautiful girl with long black hair, light golden skin, and enormous dark eyes. In bed

5 Ibid., p. 23.

6 Ibid.

with her, David's fantasies take the form of verbalized fancies. Susan has an imagination equal to his and between bouts of love-making, they picture "their place" with a tree-lined drive, wild deer, bears, and blueberries for the bears. There would be an old tumble-down barn with a work place (not that David knew anything about woodworking) and lots of rusty boxes full of nails and screws, linseed oil, and wood-shavings. Things to touch. There would be log fires and long cords of wood stacked behind the house.

David respected Susan's intelligence. She was one of the few students, according to David, who read. It should be noted that what defines "reading" for David is the material read. Novels and poetry constitute reading material. The multitude of newspapers, education journals, and so on that Jim Wilson plows through is not really in the same class. As the "phantom raider", David was in the habit of "liberating" unaccessioned books from the library to give to Susan and a few other student "readers". These books were most often ones he himself had suggested be ordered. Left on her own, Mrs. Lewis, the librarian, usually ordered sets. Another consideration on David's part is to remove material from Susan's Kardex file (with the Guidance Department) which he considers to be detrimental to her; after all, she had only been filling up an ink cartridge

with a hypodermic taken from the Biology lab. The Biology teacher must have passed the word on to the guidance people who added "suspected of drug abuse" to her already long list of misdemeanors and transgressions. David warned: "'They keep all that shit and use it against you, you know.'"⁷

Jim Wilson, with whom David shares an apartment, is completely aware of David's affair with Susan; it would be difficult for him not to be, with the noisy bedsprings in David's bedroom so often forming a counterpoint with the clicking of Jim's adding-machine in the living room. Garry Westlake, David's one acknowledged friend on the staff at Merrymount High School, is not aware of the affair, however, and on a Saturday morning when Susan arrives at the apartment with a drunken pharmaceutical salesman she claimed to have saved from arrest in a laundromat, there is much subterfuge to keep Garry from suspecting her familiarity with David's apartment. Garry had been with David going over last minute changes in the blocking of a play to be presented by their drama group. After Susan has departed, leaving the drunken salesman "to sleep it off", Garry says to David,

⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

'If you'd asked me [. . .] which single kid in Merrymount would be most likely to find a transvestite drunk in a laundermat and take him to a teacher's house, Susan Haddad would have been my first choice.'⁸

Garry admits that Susan is probably the brightest kid in Merrymount (she had been in his grade ten history class the previous year), and damn good-looking to boot, but the girl was on a self-destructive pattern. Garry feels strongly about the "waste" and warns David about the vulnerability of his position. "'People talk you know,' said Garry. 'She tells a few kids she was at your apartment...'"⁹

David wants to defend Susan despite the long list of "offences" that Garry is aware of on her Cumulative Record, but he cannot say too much without giving himself away.

The novel shows a changing Garry Westlake, and hence a change in his friendship with David. There is no great rift. It is a subtle growing apart. The Garry giving advice to David about teacher-student relationships is somehow different from the Garry who, in the small hours of a winter morning, climbed the snow-covered steps of the School Board building with him to urinate against its big, brass doors. Garry's wife, June, makes

⁸ Ibid., p. 118.

⁹ Ibid., p. 119.

it increasingly clear that she regards David as an enemy, as a force pulling her husband back towards enthusiasms, late hours, and drinking.

Even before coming to Merrymount High, Garry had created Sir Charles Pharco-Hollister. Sir Charles quickly caught David's fancy and this very versatile, imaginary English aristocrat showed up on school tests, in lessons, and in Staff-Room discussions. He appeared, as suited the occasion, in various capacities ranging from one of the Fredericton poets to military governor of Fort Pharco in Alberta. He was also reputed to be the bastard son of Queen Victoria. David felt certain that he and Garry could work a Sir Charles Pharco-Hollister sham on Mr. Follet, the "obscene little rotundity"¹⁰ who was head of the History Department, the position to which Garry was heir-apparent. Garry was reticent. He kept saying that much careful planning and preparation would be necessary.

It was a month after David's arrival at Merrymount High that he began to engage in Staff-Room conversations with Garry. As the weeks went on, these conversations grew warmer as the two men discovered common interests through movies seen or books read. Friendship grew. It

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

was after a visit to Montreal's "Esquire Show Bar" and other drinking spots that the incident at the School Board's front entrance took place. June had been in hospital that week and Garry was "on his own".

Fresh off the boat from England and new at Merrymount, David had been assigned the task of teaching a class of thirty-three young Canadians the history of their own country of which he knew nothing. It had been a nerve-racking year for David. He survived the Canadian History ordeal by two strategems. One was to play at "one upmanship" with the department head, Mr. Follet. The "pompous flatulent little crapper"¹¹ was an Anglophile. The word "Oxford" alone would hook him. Against Follet's Royal St. Lawrence Yacht Club membership David played "rough shooting" over "the home farm", and so on. The other strategem of survival that carried him through announced visitations was expert lessons prepared by Garry. Of course, there had always been the danger of snap inspections.

In that first year at Merrymount, Garry had indeed been a good friend to David. He had commiserated with him and listened to his complaints. He had talked him out of

¹¹ Ibid., p. 39.

his more risky schemes of revenge and retaliation. The incidents precipitating the schemes of revenge and retaliation of David's first year at Merrymount are not explicated, but his chagrin at the forced bowdlerization of Night Haul, a student play he and Garry are producing for the school during his second spring there, may be typical of frustrations incurred. The principal calls David and Garry to his office where he delivers a diatribe against the filthy language he has found in the script of the play.

After the session with Mr. Grierson, David gives vent to his extreme annoyance by ranting about ignorance, mindlessness, and stupidity. Going to the almost-empty cafeteria for a late lunch ("There's only bologna left"), David continues to resist, to fight against what they have been told to do. Garry shrugs. As for himself he has accepted the edict. He rationalizes his stand to David on the basis of not letting down the students who have already worked hard on the production nor other staff members who have contributed their time. The two friends become heated in their disagreement although Garry tries to remain calm and logical.

'In this particular context, I think you're wrong, David. You've got to...'
'I haven't got to do anything. If you want to sell the play out, you go ahead.'
'But you're prepared to "sell" the kids out?'¹²

Another matter involving bowdlerization annoyed David to the point that he bribed "Twatface", the secretary, to type up and mimeograph all the material expurgated from Hugh MacLennan's Two Solitudes in the school edition of that novel. This he passed out to his students who, with less than five weeks to go before Matriculation examinations, seemed more concerned about doing the "right thing" than feasting on the unadulterated book. They go along with David up to a point but when the matter hinges on examinations, they express concern.

'Mr. Appleby?'
'Yes, Carl?'
'If we use this information on the exam, will we be penalized?'
'What do you mean? Why should you be?'
'Well, we're not supposed to be reading it and maybe the Examiner'll take marks off.'
'And Mr. Appleby?'
'Yes, Mary?'
'What if the Examiner hasn't read the book--the proper one, I mean?'
'Put a note on your answers that you're referring to the complete text.'
'But if we want,' said Carl, 'we can just refer to the school edition?'
David looked down at the wad of purple, mimeographed sheets.
'Yes, Carl,' he said, 'You can do that if you want.'¹³

¹² Ibid., p. 48.

¹³ Ibid., p. 127.

David wondered about Hugh MacLennan, if he cared about what some anti-literary cabal had done to something he must have loved. Had this author acquiesced in the butchery of his novel or had he been betrayed by small print? The picture of MacLennan in David's mind was that of a lonely, old man walking on the university lawns (Garry had told him the author taught at McGill), feeding pigeons and squirrels with breadcrumbs from a paper bag. He did not know exactly why he imagined MacLennan in the fashion he did, but the image in his mind was quite distinct: MacLennan in an old mac, often watching a football practice, a figure apart from the shouting groups of students.

The school play that David was determined to leave in the lurch eventually does take place and David is still a part of the production. On the big night, he works hard within the confines of the stuffy Physics lab applying makeup to the student actors and actresses, and after checking the stage and sending them on their way, he goes to the deserted Staff-Room. He sits there for a while looking at the soiled patches on the empty chairs where heads had rested and at the grey blankness of the television screen. Eventually he makes his way to his Home-Room where he sits smoking cigarettes and tapping ashes into a little boat he has fashioned from the silver foil in his cigarette package.

He looks at his desk and two books he should then be studying. On the following day, he would be attempting his Permanent Certificate examination for the third time. This time it was his intention actually to read the appropriate books to prepare for it. Leaving one of the prescribed texts, Early Days--A Memoir, on his desk ("It seemed to be the maunderings of some senile dreary who'd been an Inspector of Schools"¹⁴), David took The Teacher's Handbook for Use in Quebec Protestant Schools and made his way back to the Physics Lab. There he chucked some liners back into the makeup box. He turned to the section on English Language and Literature in the handbook, read a paragraph, and then turned on a tap and wet a toothpick. He dried the toothpick with a Kleenex and proceeded to write his name in the powder on the bench. He then drew a face with a tangle of curly hair. Then he rubbed the name and the face away with some cotton wool.

Another paragraph was read.

David then wandered about the lab and looked at the balances in their glass cases. All he could remember about physics from his own student days was getting a caning for reading The Golden Bough when he was supposed to have been

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 123.

working on an experiment of some kind or other.

He wandered back to his open book.

Applause sounded from the auditorium. He looked up towards the open door.

And so the evening passed.

On the last day of the Easter holidays David got up early to mark exam papers; Jim had marked all his on the first day. It took him two hours to mark thirteen papers. That left roughly one hundred and forty to go. The day dragged on; pains in his chest; breathing was becoming difficult. Beside his chair sat four more bulging envelopes. Was his throat becoming sore? He began to wish that all his students had done what Susan had done on her English exam paper for Howie Bunceford. Mr. Bunceford was head of the English Department. Most people called him Howie. Could it have been his own poem that he had placed for analysis on the exam paper? Why else would he have been so angry at Susan's response? It was unlike him. "In response to the poem, Susan had written, 'I don't want to waste my time writing about bad poetry.'"¹⁵ The poem was bad, but, then, Mr. Bunceford wrote a great deal of bad poetry.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 86.

Howie Bunceford was to be a factor in an episode of frustration for David on his return to school after the Easter holidays. On his first day back at school David arrives late to find a student, Ronnie Biggin ("Officious little prick. An embryo clip-board man."¹⁶), calling the roll for him and a note from the mad Greek:

Chairs are to place on desks. Windows are to close
and lock by gold thing on top. Floor dirty.
George Dimakopoulos
Janitor.¹⁷

Another first-day discovery was that eight pictures of a series which he had put on display were missing. He had hoped that some of the pictures which he had clipped from The Family of Man would aid his students in composition. It was annoying that the sequences, the comparisons and contrasts of the photographs had been spoiled. David assumed that some student had "lifted" the pictures as masturbation prompts. "Young boys were grubby. Poor sods."¹⁸ Why couldn't the culprit have peered at underwear ads in Cosmopolitan? Even they would have been

16 Ibid., p. 93.

17 Ibid., p. 94.

18 Ibid.

raunchier "than a group of shrivelled, dug-hanging aborigines."¹⁹ David is mistaken about the culprit. The pictures had been removed by the vice-principal, Mr. McPhee, who later takes David to task for the display. The photographs had been considered unwise and in poor taste. The fact that they were from an internationally famous collection and had been sponsored by one of the biggest New York museums made no impression on Mr. McPhee.

'Merrymount High is not New York, Mr. Appleby.'

'What's that mean?' said David.

'Let's return to the matter of this assignment...'
said McPhee.

'Yes,' said David. 'Let's return to that.'

'Mr. Appleby. I don't like your tone.'²⁰

An English assignment given by David to his students before holidays is also reason for chastisement.

'Do you consider it normal to ask students of fifteen to write about undergoing a medical examination?'

'Certainly. Much more normal than asking them their views on capital punishment, or the future of the United Nations or something.'

'So this particular assignment, as far as you were concerned, was a normal and typical part of your composition programme?'

'Well, "programme" suggests rather more organization than...'²¹

Mr. McPhee considers the area of sex to be a sensitive one.

19 Ibid., p. 94.

20 Ibid., p. 98.

21 Ibid., p. 97.

"Sex?" questions David. McPhee responds: "'Photographs. Urine samples. Nakedness. This is a school.'"²² The upshot of the matter is that Mr. Howie Bunceford is to visit David's grade ten class to teach a demonstration lesson in composition. David resists.

'Bunceford!'

'Mr. Bunceford is your Head of Department.'

'And what if our ideas of good writing clash?'

'Mr. Bunceford is older than you. He has been teaching for many years. The Senior Consultant in English and the Board have a high opinion of his capabilities.'

'Well, I'm afraid I don't,' said David.

'Your opinion is more valuable than that of the Consultant and the Board?'

David shrugged.

'Your personal opinion outweighs the Guidelines for Composition laid down in the Handbook?'

David did not reply.

A small blue and gold badge in McPhee's lapel.

'Everyone but you is out of step, Mr. Appleby? Is that it?'²³

Howie Bunceford eventually stands before David's class, hands loosely clasped, looking like a minister inviting a congregation to prayer: "'...for what is life worth,' [. . .] 'if we have no time to stand and stare?'"²⁴ David, sitting on a desk at the back of the room stares down at his shoes.

22 Ibid., p. 99.

23 Ibid., p. 100.

24 Ibid.

A Latin scholar has been partially brought out of retirement to teach what few students are left in this subject by senior year. It is John Gardener's task to bur-nish Howie Bunceford's efforts of earlier years. Old John comes to Merrymount High for one class each day to do this.

Besides Garry Westlake John Gardener is the only one of his colleagues for whom David shows an affinity. He smiles as he greets him ambling through the Common Room. John Gardener answers in his vague, formally pleasant man-ner. Even in very warm weather he wears a suit and waist-coat. David wonders how he can stand to do so. Perhaps at his age one always feels cold, thinks the younger man. Seeing the two at school would give no indication of the fact that David and the old gentleman had fallen into the habit of going out to dinner together a couple of times a month.

After their dinners together David would return with the Latin teacher to his downtown apartment where he lived alone. Here the two would drink cognac and old John would play the harpsichord; later he would talk of his wife whose harpsichord it had been. He talked also of his child-hood in Ontario, his travels, the war. Still later he might recite Latin poets and lecture David on prosody. Still later after his face had reddened and his speech had become

slurred, he would be put to bed by the younger man. David would take off his shoes, pull the socks from his puffy feet, work the false teeth from John's slack mouth, and place them in a glass of water on a bedside table. Before leaving, David would empty the ash tray, wash the sniffers and fill the electric kettle, leaving it beside the old man's bed with a cup containing instant coffee. An affection is reflected here that is evident in David's thoughts on one occasion when, thinking nostalgically of England, he decides that what Canada lacks, apart from widespread eccentricity, is hundreds of quavering, senile, dotty magistrates.

At school if Mr. McPhee, Mr. Follet or one of the gregarious gym teachers talked at him, old John would turn off his hearing aid and simply stare at the person with a bewildered look. Once, in a staff meeting, when the principal was outlining matters concerning dress regulations, John Gardener piped up "out of the blue" in a loud voice: "'Would anyone care for an apple?'"²⁵

Jim Wilson has been taking evening courses in education at McGill University. He has advised David to work toward a second degree as well. David's attitude toward

25 Ibid., p. 150.

such activity is "'I don't know how you stand the boredom of whoring after all that shit.'"²⁶ Jim shrugs. He does not appear to be fascinated by what he is doing but pursues matters, nevertheless, even to the point of attending special lectures. David accepts this drive in Jim, but seems somewhat surprised when Jim tells him of having seen his friend, "the fair-haired guy at Merrymount", at the McGill library. Garry had not told David that he was taking a statistics course nor that he had started on a Master of Education program. Jim, although teaching at a different school, is the one who is aware that Garry is "going into guidance". This is also news to David who wonders why this would be so when the principal, Mr. Grierson, had more or less promised Garry the History Department headship upon Mr. Follet's retirement in June. Jim asks David what a department head earns.

'I don't know.'

'No, you wouldn't. Seven-fifty over scale. Peanuts.'

'Well, why's guidance any better?'

'Don't you ever notice the way things operate?'

said Jim irritably. 'You've worked for the Board for two years now. You get into guidance--and you do some administration in that, right? Kardex cards, time-tabling, organizing photographs for bus-passes--right? And if you're efficient, the Board uses that as a selection process for its vice-principals.'²⁷

26 Ibid., p. 18.

27 Ibid., p. 92.

It is early spring. The cold wind hits David as he steps out of the warmth of a little shop with Susan. "I must be stark bonkers! England'll be knee-deep in bloody daffodils by now."²⁸ David has been drinking. His left hand and forearm feel numb, pins and needles. He thinks it might be his heart and makes a promise with himself to drink less in the future.

Later that night as David and Susan lean against the low wall by the McGill University gates, David reminds her that the Matriculation examinations will be starting in seven or eight weeks. Susan reacts rather irritably to this. It appears that David has pushed the point before, stressing the importance of the examinations. He keeps at Susan trying to sell her on the value of going to university. Her attitude toward university is much like his own toward the education courses that Jim takes at night.

'Susan?'

'What?'

'What are we quarreling about?'

'I don't know. I'm sorry. I just don't like being pushed.'

They were silent.²⁹

28 Ibid., p. 64.

29 Ibid., p. 76.

David resumes:

'But don't you think university'd be interesting?'

'No.'

'But why? I'm not trying to push. I just want to know. O. K.? I mean, you read a lot anyway. You like books.'

'If I was doing just the things I liked the way you did in England maybe I would like it. I don't know. But it isn't like that here. I'm not interested in science and sociology and French and I don't want to sit in classes of three hundred doing crap like Freshman Composition.'³⁰

David remains persistent in his stand to stress the importance of a university education. Susan becomes increasingly petulant in the face of his persistence.

'Look at what comes out the other end,' she said. 'If it meant anything to them, would they be the kind of people they are? Would they kiss ass to work for Sun Life and IBM and go into teaching?'

'Well, you can't...'

'I'm not cashing in my feelings for a piece of paper!' she said.

'What about me?' said David, turning to her.

'I've been to a university and I teach.'

'Well, I think it's different in England somehow--and you're you--you're special.'

'Thank you kindly,' he said, bobbing a curtsy.

'I'm trying to talk to you, David. Stop fooling around. I don't feel like it.'

'O. K.,' he said [sic] 'But you can't expect not to change, can you?'

'No, of course not. But I'm going to become more me. I'm not going to have me changed to fit in with them.'³¹

The argument expanded until Susan broke away.

30 Ibid., p. 76.

31 Ibid., p. 78.

'I'd better go,' she said. 'We're not enjoying ourselves anymore.'

'No, don't go. Don't be silly. We're only discussing something.'

'No, we're not,' she said.

She walked over to the curb and waved down an approaching cab.

'We're not enjoying ourselves and we're not discussing anything, David,' she said as she got into the back seat. 'You shouldn't lie to yourself.'

As he closed the door, something perverse made him say, 'Remember. There's only eight weeks.'³²

June arrives and with it Matriculation examinations.

David had been looking forward to the Matrics and invigilating them as a break from routine. He had forgotten how boring invigilation could be. It was during this period that Mr. McPhee called him to his office. The episode of the alleged call to McPhee by Susan's mother was back in January and David did not even bring that previous concern to mind as he mentally ticked off recent items that Mr. McPhee might possibly want to see him about.

He had faked his register but most people did that. There was still Year Book money that had not been passed in. Perhaps it was the fake additions he had made to the Detention Book? Or was it to be the fact that he had attributed the poem on the grade ten exam to Sir Charles Pharco-Hollister? Perhaps the call to McPhee's office was for showing movies without prior clearance. Perhaps there had been more

³² Ibid., p. 80.

phone complaints. In the course of the interview these "transgressions" were in fact mentioned along with others, such as his peculiar behavior on one occasion on the third floor with a water-pistol. It was, however, the very thing that he felt there was no longer concern about that McPhee really wished to discuss--David's relationship with Susan Haddad. David was caught off guard. McPhee played a very shrewd, waiting game. The vice-principal did not intend to accuse David of something which might be very difficult to prove.

'Teaching,' he said, 'is a delicate profession.'
He started to twist the wedding band on his finger.

'A school...I like to think of a school as an organism--or a fabric--a fabric of which we're all a part. I think you'll be able to understand why we feel we must protect the staff member's confidence.'³³

A "concerned" staff member had, in fact, placed evidence before the administration that David's relationship with Susan Haddad was more than the relationship between teacher and student. McPhee also mentioned the January phone call from Susan's mother. Mrs. Haddad had phoned after all. At that time the information sounded odd to the administration as no name could be given, only the claim that Susan was involved in an undesirable relationship

33 Ibid., p. 141.

with one of the teachers. The more recent information clarified the matter for McPhee up to a point.

'Mr. Appleby,' he said, shaking his head slowly. 'Mr. Appleby. We're not in a court of law here and I'm not accusing you of immoral conduct. Nor was the staff member concerned.'³⁴

Nevertheless, it is made quite clear that David is to end his "relationship with the Haddad girl" and to avoid any such relationships in the future. As usual there is the implied threat.

'I expect,' interrupted McPhee again, seeming to stare at the GMPSEB [Greater Montreal Protestant School Board] Calender [sic] above David's head, 'that you're aware of the mechanics of contract renewal within our system?'

'Yes,' said David.

'That, if by April 30th, no indication to the contrary has been received by either party, then the previous year's contract is automatically renewed?'

'Yes, I know,' said David.

'You are, then, presently under contract for the coming year.'

David nodded.

'Contracts can be terminated by the Board, however, for behaviour which falls under any one of three defined areas.'

'Doubtless,' said McPhee, 'You are aware of the nature of those areas.'

'We are understanding each other aren't we, Mr. Appleby?'³⁵

David's interview with McPhee is revealing in other respects. David's exact age, twenty-three, and the fact that he has

34 Ibid., p. 141.

35 Ibid., p. 143.

finally passed the Permanent Certificate exam, are mentioned. There is still the matter of a final Principal's Report, however. Both Mr. Bunceford and Mr. Follet have spoken highly of his capabilities and his range of knowledge. (Mr. Bunceford, a mild, avuncular man, a man "so benign, as to seem without opinion"³⁶, is forced into the role of colleague assesor by virtue of his department headship. Mr. Follet is a confirmed Anglophile, and David has been aware of this "weakness" in the chap.) McPhee also mentions that from what he has heard and from what is written in the Year Book, David appears to be popular with the students. "'Yet Mr. McPhee adds we must balance against this your behaviour and your attitude.'"³⁷ As a minor example, it is drawn to David's attention that he is doing in Mr. McPhee's office during the interview what most staff members ("men much older and more experienced than you"³⁸) would not do--smoking uninvited.

A comprehensive file exists and from it McPhee itemizes many "transgressions" David felt were not known. A most diligent compilation has been made. McPhee is aware

36 Ibid., p. 88.

37 Ibid., p. 141.

38 Ibid.

of the theft of a substantial number of library books by the "phantom raider". These must be recovered. Mrs. Lewis has given McPhee a typewritten list of the titles. According to Mr. Clements, there has been a lack of co-operation with the Visual Aids Department on David's part. There have been continual complaints from the janitor who claims that David's classroom is the untidiest in the school. Mr. Dimakopoulos has also reported cigarette ashes and butts in David's garbage can despite the fact that smoking in the classroom at the close of school contravenes the Fire Regulations. Miss Leet has complained to Mr. McPhee on two occasions, once weeping, of David's rudeness to her in the Staff-Room. The list goes on. "'But the point at issue,' said McPhee, 'You're the only teacher against whom I have heard complaints.'"³⁹

Back at their apartment, Jim becomes tired of David's tedious emoting, sighs, and finger tapping. The latter has struck a Byronic pose under the threat of Mr. McPhee's ultimatum regarding Susan Haddad. Jim tells him quite clearly that what is really bothering him is the necessity of giving in to McPhee and acknowledging his control.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 142.

'[. . .] You're still going to go on seeing her whatever you say to McPhee. All that, well, it's just mummery. So play it out. You won't mean what you say and he won't believe what you say. Right? And everyone's happy.'⁴⁰

David, as Jim reminds him, is not in a financial position to have any choice in the matter of what he can say. He has only twenty dollars or so in the bank. Another teaching position is considered by David. Jim negates each suggestion from a sound, practical point of view. References would be required. David suggests that he might play the "straight from England" role even if it meant dropping two increments on the pay scale. Jim has to point out that there is more to the matter than that; his papers and record are now held by various groups. "The Department's got you and so has the PAPT. Letters of Standing and your Certificate exam--all that stuff."⁴¹

With another teaching position apparently ruled out as being next to impossible to obtain, David contemplates other job possibilities. Jim tries to bring him to a point where he will accept reality--the reality being that he is prepared to do little other than teach. Jim, scanning the newspaper ads with some amusement, comments

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 146.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 147.

on various employment opportunities.

'Would you describe yourself as "aggressive",
he went on, 'and "customer-oriented"?'

'No,' said David.

'No, I wouldn't either.'⁴²

Jim goes on to suggest that David could put an ad in the paper himself: "UNILINGUAL CHILD-MOLESTER, intellectual interests, seeks opportunities teaching, other."⁴³ Jim, himself, will have his Master of Education degree by summer and a job with Research Associates. He has also been accepted to do a Ph. D. at OISE in the fall. "'What are you talking about? What's oisy?'" asks David.⁴⁴ The OISE offer involves a grant of \$4,200. Earlier, while attending McGill's education courses, Jim had been chided by David, "Have fun!" Jim had answered "'Have fun teaching high school for the rest of your life.'⁴⁵ With his usual attention to detail Jim has planned his own move to Toronto and even has thought of possibilities for David.

'[. . .] But there's no problem. The lease is up here and you can move to a smaller place. And if you moved near Merrymount, you wouldn't have traveling expenses.'⁴⁶

42 Ibid., p. 149.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., p. 91.

45 Ibid., p. 18.

46 Ibid., p. 91.

David gives in to McPhee only to find it hard afterwards to justify his actions to Susan.

On the last day of school Jim shows David his new "Galaxy 500" with its whitewall tires, glittering hub-caps and red upholstery.

'What one needs,' he said, 'is style. That's the thing. None of this threadbare graduate-school stuff. Know why?

· · · · ·
'Because over here, you get largely what you assume you're going to get. And people give you what they assume you're worth. And on what, pray, do they base their assumptions?'

He patted the wheel.⁴⁷

That evening by a strange quirk of fate which he himself cannot completely understand David finds himself in the apartment of the detested superintendent, Monsieur Gagnon. The apartment is unspeakably filthy, but as David continues to consume what he had at first thought to be pernod, then whisky, then whatever one wished to name it, he became less fastidious. Gagnon had added various Steinberg essences to whatever it was his chemist friend at RCA-Victor had given him. The strike of the Quebec Liquor Control workers is certainly not a concern of Monsieur Gagnon.

Later that night a voice somewhere within David is crying, "Help me, Jim!"⁴⁸ He finds himself lying on

47 Ibid., p. 163.

48 Ibid., p. 176.

the floor, his head beside the base of the toilet bowl in his own apartment. "Jim! Jim! I'm dying!"⁴⁹ But Jim is at work with Research Associates at twenty-five dollars an hour, having driven off in his new car. As for David, he is "going down slow".

b) "Merrymount", A Character-Composite.--"Merrymount" as a character-composite is largely the creation of David Appleby's perceptions. In Going Down Slow the reader follows David throughout the entire course of the novel. There is no part of the novel without David's actual presence.

David sees his vice-principal, Mr. McPhee, as a "Gestapo dwarf". The man, no doubt, is short. McPhee's eyes are either ferrety or like steel depending, it seems, upon whether he is watching David track ice and water down a corridor as that tardy teacher proceeds to a noisy class or whether he is interrogating him about some infraction or suspected infraction of school rules.

David sees the dumpy lady vice-principal, Miss Burgeon, as an arid old cow who seeks a daily quota of suspensions for all the lovely, short-skirted, juicy-thighed girls she can get her claws into. Her concern also runs to girls'

49 Ibid., p. 176.

non-regulation-shade blouses. A wad of forms David distinctly remembered having thrown in the garbage before a holiday was sought by Miss Burgeon. Under the circumstances one might well interpret insistence as "harassment". David does.

David's descriptions of school administrators and fellow staff members have already told much about David himself. His friend, Garry Westlake, is the only full-time staff member who is spoken of or thought of in a positive fashion. One of the positive thoughts concerning Garry carries with it a generalized negative thought concerning the rest of the staff at Merrymount High: "Apart from Miss Leet, who favoured Ayn Rand, Garry was the only teacher in the school who read books."⁵⁰

Subjective feelings of David are what brings "Merrymount" as a character-composite into focus. Even though "Gruppenfuhrer" McPhee is not really a "Gestapo dwarf", David Appleby has armed the reader with a connotative thrust strong enough to see clearly that, true enough, "The little shit [. . .] does stand only two feet higher than the REMOVE YOUR RUBBERS sign."⁵¹ David is

50 Ibid., p. 39.

51 Ibid., p. 25. "The little shit stood only two feet higher than the REMOVE YOUR RUBBERS sign."

the creation of the writer, John Metcalf, but in a very real sense, "Merrymount" is the creation of David Appleby.

Vice-principal McPhee stands in the corridors of the school watching and waiting. He haunts David even on his night out "on the town" with Susan Haddad. His sudden appearance at "Pigeon Hole Parking" in black overcoat, jaunty green Alpine hat, and glinty glasses causes David to hide in the back of a Volkswagen so as not to be seen in the company of the grade-eleven student whose mother claimed to have phoned Mr. McPhee concerning her daughter's affair with a young teacher at his school. He arrives at classrooms, at least David's, unexpectedly.

The knock and the opening of the door were simultaneous. In the doorway stood McPhee.

'The class need not stand,' he said.

'Yes, Mr. McPhee?' said David.

McPhee did not answer. In the chill silence, his eyes searched for signs of mutiny.

'Inglis,' he said. 'When I came in, were you out of your seat?'

'Yes, sir. I was getting a book from Mr....'

'We've met before, haven't we, Inglis?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Yes, sir,' repeated McPhee.

There was a long silence.

'Are you chewing, Goldberg?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Get down to my office.'⁵²

52 Ibid., p. 96.

The vice-principal continued to survey the room with ferrety eyes.

McPhee picked up the poetry text, On Wings of Song, from the nearest desk and looked at the name written in the front. He stared at the girl. The girl blushed. Suddenly, he wheeled on the boy behind him and said,

'You! What class is this?'

'llE, sir.'

McPhee nodded slowly as if something had been confirmed for him. He stared round the frozen room again and his gaze came to rest on David's jacket which was hanging over the intercom apparatus.

After long moments, he said,

'Can I have a word with you, Mr. Appleby?'⁵³

Called into the corridor David faced Mr. McPhee's controlled anger. He had been instructed to go to the vice-principal's office at recess but had not done so. David had a habit of not checking his mail or reading bulletins. Mr. McPhee had waited for him. He had felt that his office would have offered more privacy for what he had to say. Now with sparrow cockings of his head he criticized David for his choice of essay topics: "The Medical Examination" and "The Dentist", and a photograph display he had had in his room. McPhee had already removed certain elements of the display: a boy and girl lying in the grass kissing, a sailor with two girls, a pregnant woman lying on a bed, as well as other pictures which he had considered to be in poor taste. The photographs were from an internationally

⁵³ Ibid., p. 96.

famous collection that had been sponsored by one of the biggest New York museums. There had been "'Letters of complaint from three parents.'"⁵⁴ David's justifications for what he had been trying to accomplish were of no avail.

'You don't seem to realize,' said McPhee, 'that I'm trying to help you.'

'I don't even understand what you're complaining about,' said David.

'Urine samples,' said McPhee. 'Fifteen year old girls...'

'Look!' said David. 'I'm merely trying to force my kids into writing about real things and real feelings in a real world. They all have medicals. Here, in school. I don't see what on earth...'

'You haven't yet been granted your Permanent Certificate, have you, Mr. Appleby?'

'No.'

'No, I thought not.'⁵⁵

The upshot of this interview was that Mr. Bunceford, head of the English Department, was sent to visit David's grade ten class to teach a demonstration lesson in composition since David was, according to the vice-principal, in need of some mature guidance at this particular point in his career.

The vice-principal, Mr. McPhee, is more in evidence about the school than the principal, J. D. Grierson, whose commands issue from behind a shining expanse of desktop.

54 Ibid., p. 98.

55 Ibid., p. 99.

His free period [David's], the one following recess, had been taken away by Grierson who had commanded him to muster two hundred kids to form an audience for a visit from the McGill Chamber Orchestra. Grierson, forced by Board policy to suffer these cultural intrusions from time to time, had instructed him not to disturb regular classes but to press only Practical Classes and the basement inhabitants of the Wood, Metal, and Auto shops.⁵⁶

On one occasion, Garry Westlake and David are summoned to the principal's office to face the large, stolid, cheek-chewing presence of J. D. Grierson, (B. Comm.) in his domain. They are "on the carpet" for having made "a serious error of judgement" in the selection of a play, Night Haul, to be presented by the school's drama group. The displeased principal tells of a call from a distressed parent complaining of filthy language in the script. Although he directs the brunt of his criticism toward Garry Westlake as the older and more experienced teacher, it is David who tries to defend the language in the play on the basis of context: the language is an expression of character; it is natural for the characters in the play to talk the way they do. But this is not to be a debate.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

'A school can't encourage this sort of thing. A play, Mr. Appleby, should be a cultural event.'
'But when you use the word "cultural" to....'
'I'm not interested in contexts, Mr. Appleby, and I'm not interested in what is natural. I'm interested in the good name and reputation of Merrymount High.'⁵⁷

Grierson goes on to demand that the play be "cleaned up" and "those words" be taken out. Afterward David is critical of Garry for not "speaking up".

'You think we were called in there to discuss something?' demanded Garry. 'I didn't say anything because there wasn't any point in saying anything.'⁵⁸

Mr. Grierson is a principal who believes that a "Good teacher" can teach anything. When David, freshly arrived from England, protested having to teach Canadian History, he was peremptorily dealt with.

'But Mr. Grierson! The men from the Board assured me in England that...'
'Bit of variety.'
'But I don't know any Canadian History.'
'Read the book.'
'But...'
'Time-table can't be changed.'⁵⁹

The "mad Greek" janitor, Mr. Dimakopoulos; "Twat-face", a school secretary; and the "ethnic" cafeteria woman, all form part of what is "Merrymount-The School", as

57 Ibid., p. 44.

58 Ibid., p. 48.

59 Ibid., p. 125.

do transients such as a MacDonald College lecturer and his student teacher. At times the former three add to David Appleby's annoyances and frustration. It is perhaps conceivable that a composite could be made of all the people having a connection with a school, the janitors, secretaries, cafeteria help, and teachers. By the same token a composite might be made of a segment of the total teaching staff; for instance, the physical education department is well represented in Going Down Slow. It is conceivable, then, that a physical education teacher character-composite could be made. The object here, however, is to create a character-composite of all the teachers at Merrymount High (excluding David Appleby whose character presentation has already been made). Thus "Merrymount--The Teacher" will come into being.

"Merrymount" as a character-composite is made up by a combination process of three administrators (already mentioned in this presentation) and thirty-five⁶⁰ full-time members of the teaching staff at Merrymount High School. Built into this composite are a principal, two

⁶⁰ Possibly only thirty-three. A doubt as to the exact number exists because of the main character's use of nicknames and derogatory "tags". Two teachers referred to by other than their proper names in the novel, could very well be teachers mentioned at an earlier point in the book.

vice-principals, three department heads (Guidance, English, History), a school librarian and seven⁶¹ physical education teachers, one of whom is half-time guidance counselor. Subject areas represented are English, History, French, Latin, Algebra, Biology, Geography, Health, Home Economics, Woodworking, and Auto/Electric. There are twenty-eight males and ten females.

Two teachers, Larkshur, R. and Speers, N., appear only as names on a promotion list at year's end. Five others are not referred to by name at all but simply lumped together in David Appleby's thoughts as "five non-descriptors who taught grades eight and nine".⁶² David had been contemplating who, other than he himself, might fit the description given by Mrs. Haddad to Vice-Principal McPhee, of the teacher who had seduced her daughter and had not been long at the school. Other teachers appear by name, but little else is indicated about them: in the Common Room, Mr. Weiss passes a milk jug and David "fritters" away time chatting with Miss Adams; in the Men's Staff Room, Mr. A. Renfrew busies himself reading the answers in the back of the grade ten Algebra text while Mr.

61 Possibly only five. See Footnote # 60

62 Ibid., p. 16.

Margolis talks of his pension; in the schoolyard, Mr. Davidson and Mr. Montpetit admire Mr. Cherton's new Corvette "Sting Ray". Mr. Cherton is probably a Biology teacher and may be the staff member who reported Susan Haddad's possession of a hypodermic. (The syringes are "great" for refilling empty ink cartridges, so Susan claims.)

Mrs. Kinsella is probably a Home Economics teacher. At any rate, she and Mr. Healey (the woodwork man) have helped David and his friend, Garry Westlake, prepare a school play for presentation. There is concern on Garry's part as to how they will feel if David cancels the play, as he threatens to do after being instructed to "bowdlerize" it by the principal, J. D. Grierson. Mr. Healey is short and fiercely contained. He had originally come from Yorkshire where silence is equated with profundity. He is a man who not only considers remarks very carefully, but also the source of the remarks. Mr. Weinbaum, a history teacher, had forecast Garry Westlake's taking over headship of the History Department. This remark had to be weighed very carefully by Mr. Healey. After all, Mr. Weinbaum was a man reputed to burst into the girls' shower room from time to time, shouting, "Is there someone in here smoking?"⁶³ At year's end, however, it is Weinbaum

63 Ibid., p. 41.

who takes over the History Department while Garry Westlake becomes Guidance Head.

The comings and goings of other minor characters create the atmosphere of a busy school. There is Miss Oldane, teacher of Geography and Health and Welfare in grades eight and nine, who carries a tiny pearl-handled fruit knife in her purse to peel her recess and lunch-time apples. Each year in her first Health and Welfare lesson to the new grade eight girls she advises them never to put bus-tickets between their lips if their hands are filled with books because bus drivers have been known to scratch their private parts. There is the unnamed English-teaching "she" complained about by Mrs. Gowly, an English teacher herself. Mrs. Gowly is displeased that the "she" saw fit to have her class remove the wallpaper book covers that Mrs. Gowly's class had placed on a set of Cue for Treason texts. "'Not, of course, that she hasn't every right,' said Mrs. Gowly."⁶⁴ Nevertheless, her husband had brought that roll of wallpaper to her and, of course, covers are a protection.

Mr. Bunceford, in his position of English Department head, would appreciate Mrs. Gowly's concern. After

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

all, at school, the greater part of his time is spent in the book stockroom implementing the Board's Condition Evaluation System which in effect amounts to making "momentous" decisions about which books should be kept and which discarded. Those to be kept have to be categorized: "Good Condition", "Fair Condition", or "To Be Replaced Within Two Years".

Such agonies of decision occupied Howie three periods per day. He was frequently to be seen standing motionless in the bookroom as though paralysed by his responsibility.⁶⁵

Howie, as Mr. Bunceford is usually called, is flabby and pink. He keeps a bar of soap and a face cloth in his locker. His handshake is limp. As well as English, Howie teaches some Latin and he is traditionally reputed to turn over two pages in Caesar's Gallic Wars to escape an illustration of a naked statue, "thus causing a shipload of mariners on page thirteen to be strengthening the walls of the city against their approach on page sixteen."⁶⁶ In David Appleby's mind, the nation's Buncefords would have a place in that monstrous cabal that tampers with the authenticity of authors' works. Poor MacLennan et al!

65 Ibid., p. 87.

66 Ibid.

The lady gym teacher in charge of Merrymount High's cheer-leader squad is Miss Graves--sturdy knockers, suet thighs. Working outside on a winter day she seems oblivious to the cold. An older female physical education teacher, stringy Miss Britnell, is mentioned briefly in the novel as well. She appears as one of a twittering group of women staff members enthusiastically contemplating a Dude Ranch brochure in preparation for their fast-approaching summer holidays. "All those handsome cowboys!" David Appleby had thought to himself at the time that a stampede was probably too much to hope for.

Mr. Hubnichuk, gym teacher and half-time guidance counselor, is a great looming hulk of a man with a vast moonlike face and a fleshy neck bulging over his collar. His pudgy hands with their sausage fingers are given to knee squeezing and back slapping. He barges or slams through doorways and bellows his side of conversations conducted over the Common Room's wall phone. Any criticism simply meets with a big wink. As gym teacher he squelches about the school rubber-soled and dressed in a shabby blue track suit; in the mornings, more formally attired as guidance counselor, he goes about in black suit and white socks.

Sid, a "junior jockstrap" with "the face that burned a thousand books"⁶⁷, was a keen disciplinarian. At school he always wore a cotton singlet and grey, military-looking trousers, a strip of black braid down each seam. At staff meetings he denounced laxness and spoke much of "shaping up" and "cutting the mustard". A nodded greeting was all that usually passed between David Appleby and Sid, although the latter would expound at great length to other staff members concerning car mufflers, oil additives, automobile wiring and so on. The only car model David could recognize by name and with certainty was the Volkswagen. David played word games--Sid, in a judge's summation--"stupidity allied with enthusiasm"⁶⁸, in profile journalism--"his face conveyed that impression of baffled intelligence often seen in monkeys."⁶⁹ But it wasn't really funny, David decided. Sid was no joke. As a matter of fact, David was somewhat afraid of him.

The Physical Education Department at Merrymount High is rounded out with mention of a "Bill Jockstrap", a "Henry Jockstrap", and "another oaf", although it is possible that "Henry Jockstrap" may be Hubnichuk and the other

67 Ibid., p. 155.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

"oaf" may not belong to that department at all. "Oaf", however, is a word which points in that direction as far as David is concerned. The man in question had been arm-wrestling with "Henry Jockstrap" as David entered the Men's Staff Room on one occasion.

David Appleby's nicknames for many fellow staff members take time to be "brought to heel". "Twatface", the reader eventually finds, is actually Mrs. Simmons, one of the school's secretaries. "V. A." or "Visual Aid" is actually Mr. Clements of the Visual Aids Department. "Henry Jockstrap" is not to be confused with "Henry Stamp-Club" who is Mr. Henry Bardolini, teacher of French, extoller of the virtues of the Wonder Book of Universal Knowledge (which he sells on commission in the evenings to local parents), and reputed owner of an apartment building in Notre Dame de Grace and a smoked-meat shop on St. Lawrence Boulevard.

Mr. Clements of the Visual Aids Department reported David to Mr. McPhee on several occasions for lack of cooperation with that department. At times he admonished David directly with: "'We've all got to pull together, you know.'"⁷⁰ Mr. Clements did not appreciate David's forgetting

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 124.

his duty-day in the cafeteria; after all the proper disposition of wrappers, paper-bags, crumbs, slices of salami, fruit rind and bread crusts had to be looked to. Mr. Clements also busied himself collecting moneys for the Year Book and taking around retirement gifts for appropriate signatures after enforced contributions.

Mrs. Lewis, the school librarian, always headed the recess coffee rush and while ensconced in the most comfortable chair in the staffroom detailing the state of her rheumatism, provided David the opportunity to purloin books from her domain. In this same domain one would find Dewey 800, 810, 820, 890 all combined under 800. Mrs. Lewis, too, was a buyer of Sets and Complete Works as well as a devotee of fat Anthologies and Publishers' Reminders. Mrs. Lewis, nevertheless, was more astute than David suspected. When finally faced with his "crimes", a list of books that he had removed from the library was in Mr. McPhee's possession, having been supplied by the librarian.

Miss Leet, one of the women teachers planning the dude-ranch holiday in Montana, complained to Mr. McPhee on two occasions. On one occasion she was weeping. In explaining the matter to the vice-principal, David put the episode down to a clash of opinion over literary matters.

As Miss Leet's favorite author was Ayn Rand, it appeared that there was perhaps deeper significance to the disagreement.

Garry Westlake has been David's only real friend on the full-time staff at Merrymount High. David thinks it humiliating that a man like Garry should have to take direction from "the vile Follet who had once seriously referred to Shakespeare as 'The Swan of Avon'."⁷¹ Nevertheless, Garry is considered in line for the headship of the History Department upon Follet's retirement. When he and Follet meet, the latter chortles. Garry smiles. The surface relationship seems favorable between the two. David wondered if Follet would believe that his charming, neat and energetic-looking history teacher delivered murderous imitations of him.

[. . .] --Follet lamenting the decline of standards and the barbarian without the gate, Follet deploring the Canadian monotone as compared with the instrumental beauty of English voices, Follet excoriating the intellectual paucity of Canadian universities, Follet confidentially deploring the presence in Montreal of vast numbers of those of the 'Hebrew persuasion'.⁷²

On a Saturday morning, waiting for Garry to arrive at his apartment to go over some last minute blocking

71 Ibid., p. 39.

72 Ibid., p. 40.

changes in the play they are to present, David hopes to "prime" him with some very strong drinks to start him on a series of other imitations he could do: Grierson's speech at Graduation, Grierson explaining to the Board's Regional Officer the necessity of using the per capita library allowance to buy new uniforms for the football team, the janitor trying to seduce the lady vice-principal. This was not to be a morning for drinking or imitations. Garry was anxious to go over his ideas on how to get some spark into the third act of the play. New movements were planned on Garry's rolls of paper. Then came the incident of the drunken pharmaceutical salesman brought by Susan to David's apartment. "'I didn't really know what else to do...' she said."⁷³

Garry is disturbed by the incident; after Susan leaves and while the salesman snores off his drunk in the background, he reminds David of the girl's record of misdeeds at school and warns him to be more careful. David questions Garry's meaning, and his friend replies:

73 Ibid., p. 113.

'Well, coming to your apartment and that sort of thing. She's a student and you're a teacher.'

David pulled a face.

'It puts you in a vulnerable position,' said Garry.

'You were here,' said David.

'People talk, you know,' said Garry. 'She tells a few kids she was at your apartment...'

'Oh, come on!' said David.

'You didn't know Pete Russell, did you? He was at Merrymount three years ago. He went to Ottawa on the bus with the Senior Girls Basketball Team and he was sitting next to one of the girls on the way back. That's all. Chatting to her. But rumours started about him and the Board transferred him at the end of the year. And the next year, his contract wasn't renewed. He'd been inspected a lot and they suddenly discovered he was incompetent.'⁷⁴

David comments, "'Typically shitty of them.'⁷⁵ Garry continues:

┌. . .┐ 'But that's the way it is. And please don't tell me it shouldn't be.'

David said nothing.

'Oh, I know what you're thinking,' Garry said.

'You think I'm being cautious and petty and anti-human and...'

'Look, I didn't say...'

'And you're damn right! I'm married and I've got a kid.'

'Fair enough,' said David.

'It's the one thing,' said Garry. 'A whole career...'

David nodded.

'Christ!' said Garry. 'Some of those guys at Merrymount won't even see kids alone in their classrooms unless the door's wide open. Did you know that? Girls or boys.'⁷⁶

74 Ibid., p. 119.

75 Ibid., p. 120.

76 Ibid.

As head of Guidance, Mr. Brunhoff does see many students in his capacity as counselor. Two girls report to him rather frequently, Susan Haddad and her friend, Frances Campbell, especially Frances. It seems that Mr. Brunhoff feels that a girl who is tired in school and whose work is suffering since "'she couldn't sleep because she had burning sensations between her legs'"⁷⁷ is deeply disturbed. Susan reports to David what Frances said to Brunhoff during an interview along with personal opinion of the guidance counselor, "'He's sort of dirty horny.'"⁷⁸ David adds: "'He's gripped by carnal thingies [. . .] Never trust a man who hangs a copy of "The Light of the World" in his office.'"⁷⁹ Frances continues to report for counselling every gym class and most algebra classes. Brunhoff takes his glasses from his "oyster" eyes and while polishing them with lavender papers says, "I see, I see".

On the Principal's Notice Board toward the school year's end "Brunhoff, G." appears on the transfer list. He is going to Snowdon High. "Westlake, G." is on the promotion list. He is to become Guidance Department head.

77 Ibid., p. 60.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

Vice-Principal McPhee on occasion has said: "'A school...I like to think of a school as an organism--or a fabric--a fabric of which we're all a part.'"⁸⁰ "'We exist,' said McPhee, 'to serve the community.'"⁸¹

c) Jim Wilson.--Jim Wilson shares an apartment with David Appleby but teaches at a different high school. Strangers in a strange land, the two young Englishmen had arrived in ninety-five degree temperature and high humidity of a Montreal summer, lugging suitcases from the docks in the incredible sticky heat. They had spent their first three days in Canada at the "Y". Depressed by Gideon Bibles and naked admirers in the washrooms, they had moved on to sign a two-year lease at an apartment building off Ste. Catherine Street, superintended by Monsieur André Gagon. Monsieur Gagon's lazy approach to maintenance and garbage removal, to any work for that matter, brought daily annoyance to his tenants. Jim's patience is often strained. It is strained, too, by David's irresponsibility in routine matters such as shopping when it is his turn or cleaning the dishes. In less routine matters it is strained at such times as the occasion on which

⁸⁰ Ibid., 141.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 99.

David's girlfriend brings a drunken salesman to the apartment who vomits over the floor.

David has been worrying all weekend about whether or not Susan Haddad's mother had, in fact, contacted Vice-Principal McPhee about his "extracurricular" relationship with that grade-eleven student. There seems little doubt that the worry has been verbalized with Jim enduring much on the receiving end of that verbalization. It is a Monday morning and it appears that David may well keep them late for school again. David decided that he was probably ill. His head and throat ached. His throat was dry and sore, doubtless infected.

He stuck his head through the serving-hatch into the dining room and said, 'Hey, Jim.'

'What?'

'I think I've got inflamed nodules.'⁸²

Jim shrugged his sheepskin coat higher on his shoulders.

A moment or so later David was at the serving hatch again:

'Jim? Do you think she really phoned the school?'

'Oh, Holy Fuck! Not again! I don't know if she phoned. I don't know what'll happen. I don't know if it's serious. You're going to find out, aren't you? This morning.'⁸³

Out into the cold of that January morning, Jim kicked the frozen wheels of his Volkswagen free, bumped

82 Ibid., p. 13.

83 Ibid.

away from the curb, made an illegal turn onto Guy Street, and to make up for lost time drove fast and savagely east along Sherbrooke. David, beside him in the cold car, drifts into fantasies. So engrossed is he in the "torture" fantasy of his vice-principal that he does not even realize that the car has arrived at Merrymount High until Jim speaks.

'What you say?' asked David.

'I said, "Don't admit anything." The burden's on them.'⁸⁴

This practical advice under the circumstances stands in contrast to David's imagined treatment of the "Gruppenfuhrer". "'And don't let the buggers grind you down.'⁸⁵ With that final remark Jim left David standing and watching as the Volkswagen roared down the road and round the corner.

David had scrubbed away at the collar and cuffs of a drip-dry shirt without much success in preparation for the reluctantly anticipated set-to with Mr. McPhee in view of Susan's mother's claim of having phoned the school.

[. . .] How could he say 'I will continue this conversation only in the presence of my lawyer,' when his shirt was grubby? It was all very well for Jim with his dyspeptic-aristocrat face. Jim could doubtless say something bored and weary--'Rather dodgy to prove, McPhee, unless one had been caught in flagrante delicto. Which I don't recall.'⁸⁶

84 Ibid., p. 24.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid., p. 14.

Nothing in the novel gives any indication of what Jim did before he came to Canada. The reader may assume he was a teacher but anything beyond that by way of assumption would be unwarranted. One cannot even be sure that Jim and David were acquainted with each other back in England. The observation of their relationship can only begin from the time of their arrival together in Montreal. It is through this relationship, nevertheless, that Jim's character must emerge for the reader to see. Some physical description, beside that already given, is available for Jim, whereas there was a dearth of it concerning David himself. On the other hand, the reader learns nothing of Jim's own particular England although he does of David's when the latter is overtaken by bouts of nostalgia. Again the reader is not exposed to Jim's feelings about Canada other than through a telling remark which is quoted toward the end of the David Appleby character presentation of this chapter (p. 167). In effect, Jim indicates that "over here" (in North America) one is judged by his material possessions. The type of car one drives is a highly visible status symbol.

It annoys Jim that David seems so oblivious to "the way things operate".⁸⁷ Two years working for the

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 92.

"Board", it seems to Jim, should be ample time to assess "the system". He sees guidance work within a school as a stepping stone to a vice-principalship. It is a much more reliable route than headship of a subject department; after all, in guidance there are such administrative matters to deal with as Kardex Cards, time-tabling, and organizing photographs for bus-passes. Always imbedded in the displays of impatience is advice for David. Referring to Garry Westlake, David's friend at Merrymount High, Jim says:

'He's going into guidance. It's what you'd do if you had any sense. Another degree of some sort, anyway.'⁸⁸

Jim is always buying suits and shoes; he would have looked elegant, David thought, in a sheet of newspaper. His umbrella, the mark of a Britisher, is sometimes put to good purpose as when he uses its handle to leave three dents in the brown paint of the apartment superintendent's door, to reinforce a point concerning garbage disposal. Jim is thin with a nervous energy about him. On one occasion when David calls him a "bloody ectomorph" he simply responds, "'Is there legitimately a noun?'"⁸⁹ On Saturday mornings he is up and away to the

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 92.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 52.

McGill University library while David lounges about the apartment. Each night at eleven-thirty he goes out to buy the next day's Gazette. The thought of an unread newspaper prevents him from sleeping. Sitting cross-legged on the floor he would devour pounds of journalism every week. He read magazines and papers on a multitude of subjects: politics, finance, photography, motoring, cinema, education, sport, scientific research, aviation, psychology. On the first day of the Easter break from school Jim marked all his exams; David didn't even start until the last day.

Jim is usually prepared with statistics. David, thinking of threats made by Susan's father, asks:

'[/ . . /] Is it true you can hire thugs in Montreal to beat people up? Not other thugs--just ordinary people. I mean, is it a regular sort of thing?'

'I should think so. Why?'

'Oh, nothing. Just something Susan was saying the other week.'

'They traditionally use baseball bats, I believe,' said Jim.

'Mmmmm.'

'And a pretty safe line of work it is, too,' Jim said. 'Last year in Montreal general crime solution ran at roughly 21% and crimes of violence at 17%. Which would tend to argue...'⁹⁰

After Vice-Principal McPhee makes it quite clear to David that his relationship with Susan Haddad is to be

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 90.

terminated, David undergoes a struggle within himself. Jim points out to David that he really does not have much choice in the matter if he wishes to continue teaching. In advice to David, Jim suggests an approach to administrators: "'Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full, sir,' and you're away."⁹¹

When the time comes Jim "is away". During the year he had attended with no great intrinsic interest "intellectual feasts" at McGill University arranged by Noddy, who appears to be an administrator at his school.⁹² Upon receiving word of his acceptance to a Ph. D. program at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education and a grant as well, his reaction is:

'Well,' [. . .] 'it's up the bum of the Greater School Board and up the joint bums of Noddy and Big Ears. Up theirs, mate. Right up to the oesophagus.'⁹³

In the introduction to this chapter it was indicated that some repetition of incidents would occur in

91 Ibid., p. 147.

92 Jim Wilson has the same propensity for nicknames as does David Appleby. There appears to be enough evidence to indicate that "Noddy" and "Big Ears" have some administrative function at the school in which Jim teaches, although this is not an absolute certainty.

93 Ibid., p. 90.

the "Presentation of Characters" since the characters involved interact so closely throughout the novel. The approach was that if a facet of a character's personality could be brought out by relating some episode then it would be unadvised to omit that episode because of an "it has already been used" attitude. Hence this chapter is a lengthy one despite the modest length of the novel on which it has been based. Attempts have been made to avoid out-and-out repetition. At times different portions of the same episode were presented in different character presentations up to the point where further tampering might have distorted the view. The writer has now reached a juncture where he must direct the reader to return to pages 164 to 167 of the David Appleby presentation of character. The only alternative to this last portion of the presentation of character of Jim Wilson would be the out-and-out repetition that the writer, thus far, has been able to avoid.

2. Analysis of Characters

a) David Appleby

1. Major or minor character?

David Appleby is not only a major character, but the main character.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?
Yes. That fact is necessary to the very being of the novel. It is significant in that David Appleby encounters problems peculiar to that profession. It is made apparent that David Appleby is prepared either by training or inclination to do little else other than teach. His final capitulation to "the system" is necessitated by this very fact.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?
He is generally well thought of by the students. They work with him in drama, an extra-curricular activity in which his own interest lies. Some skepticism is shown in the classroom teaching situation when he is innovative or goes against routines and procedures that the students have come to expect. By one particular female student he is viewed as someone "special" but the relationship here is one that goes beyond the point where the girl views Appleby simply as teacher. The views become those of friend and lover. As a teacher she considers him "different", not like the others.

4. How is teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?
Complaints from some parents indicate that at least

some question his choice of subject matter and find it unsuitable for their children.

His "special" attention toward one particular female student brings the ire of two specific parents.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

He himself feels, or at least states, that he gets along with his fellow teachers. Herein he may either be deceiving himself or trying to deceive someone else.

"Merrymount" at times considers him contentious and at other times chides him for dereliction of duty and for irresponsibility. At other times "Merrymount" is more acceptive of David and thinks well of his capabilities and range of knowledge.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

He is viewed as inexperienced and in need of mature guidance, but in time, with attitudinal changes it is felt that he will succeed as a teacher.

7. How does the teacher view himself and his role as a teacher? What is his philosophy, if any?

His subject area is English. He does not feel at ease outside this subject area. His job as he sees it is to teach his subject by attempting to stimulate interest by whatever innovative methods he can bring about. He personally does not look at them as innovative, but

simply as an approach that makes common sense in its practicability and applicability. Subject matter should be such that students can see some bearing to it for the real lives that they live. He views himself as an agent to provide an authenticity that is lacking in some aspects of the subject matter. As a "purist" and lover of literature, he resents anything that lessens or warps the intent of an artist.

Formal requirements for confirmation in his job are a source of annoyance. Formal requirements for advancement in the profession are not even considered. He thinks of professional literature or education courses as worse than tedious. As a teacher he feels trapped within a system build on minutiae.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

Not very strong views are expressed. Appleby works with them in an extra-curricular activity which is allied to his subject area and of interest to him. He seems to feel that the students are being short-changed in the curriculum set out for studies in English literature, or led down irrelevant paths.

A pretty female student is viewed as "fair game" for amorous advances.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

There is no indication.

10. How does the teacher view his colleagues?

He views "Merrymount" very negatively for the most part although at times he sees "Merrymount" as victim of a system. "Merrymount" is considered mundane, anti-intellectual, a tale bearer, authoritative in petty ways, materialistic, and more concerned with "outside" and personal matters.

Jim Wilson as a colleague in the broad sense is respected and his advice sought.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

Administrators are included in the "Merrymount" character-composite as are colleagues mentioned above. As a separated segment, administrators are thought of in even more negative terms than colleagues in general. Appleby finds them dictatorial, inflexible, dogmatic and boorish.

b) "Merrymount", A Character-Composite

1. Major or minor character?

"Merrymount" is a major character, constituted by the bringing together (combining) of many minor characters.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

Yes. The story as it is could not take place if the character were in a different occupation or profession.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

Student views are not expressed.

(The one exception is Susan Haddad's reinforcement of David Appleby's comments concerning Mr. Brunhoff, the Guidance Counselor, a constituent of the "Merrymount" composite.)

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

There is no indication; at least there are usually no complaints (see question number seven in this regard). The complaint concerning the language in the script of a school play being produced could constitute one exception. Garry Westlake (an element of the composite) was jointly involved with David Appleby in that enterprise.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

"Merrymount" is unattractive. He is preoccupied with mundane matters. He is anti-intellectual or, at least, not intellectually inclined. He is a tale bearer and one who exercises authority in whatever domain he can find to do so. Sometimes the authoritarianism is under the guise of helpfulness. There is a willingness to resort to intimidation or thinly-veiled threats.

"Merrymount" as a junior grade teacher does not have

the same status as "Merrymount" as a senior grade teacher. There is little concern with professional development on "Merrymount's" part; he is materialistic and more interested in "outside" or "personal" interests. There is an affluence about "Merrymount" or, at least, desire for it.

"Merrymount" abides by the system and has a low tolerance for those who do not. There is the expectation of retribution on those who defy it. "Merrymount" is interested in appearances and is sensitive to vibrations from the "outside". There is a fear of closeness to any student.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

Since administrators form part of the "Merrymount" composite-character, along with teachers, the reply to number seven will suffice as an answer to the present question as well.

7. How does the teacher view himself and his role as a teacher? What is his philosophy, if any?

"Merrymount" believes in survival. Survival is ensured by not "rocking the boat". Those "above" are to be obeyed; those "under" are to obey. Appearances of order and decorum must be maintained.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

On "Merrymount's" part there is a general fear of closeness. Students are to be kept in line. When "rubber-stamped" in their uniformity all is considered well.

There is a status differentiation between students of the Academic stream and those of the Industrial stream.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

The community as represented by the School Board is viewed with trepidation. Individual parents and what they have to say are of concern.

10. How does the teacher view his colleagues?

"Merrymount" takes a dim view of any colleague who threatens his standards of decorum, but at the same time does not want to draw undue attention to himself.

David Appleby sometimes is exposed to that dim view; at other times he is accepted.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

The component of "Merrymount" who act exclusively as teachers view the component who act as administrators as "above" them in the system. Those "above" are to be obeyed; those "under" are to obey.

c) Jim Wilson

1. Major or minor character?

Jim Wilson is a minor character.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

Yes. Contrast with the main teacher-character is thus provided. Also, with "inside" information about teaching Jim can logically act as an advisor.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

There is no indication.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

There is no indication.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

This cannot be answered for fellow teachers at Jim's own school. There is no indication in this regard. In the broad sense, David Appleby is a colleague, but David's view of Jim is more that of a friend. Nevertheless, certain elements of view are common. His "colleague" seeks advice although does not often take it. There is a dependence on David's part and Jim's ability to cope with situations is respected. Jim is seen as an avid and eclectic reader. His range of interests is very wide and he is a storehouse of facts, figures, and statistics.

Jim is ambitious. He is a good judge of character and can readily sum up a situation in an astute manner. These attributes are not mentioned directly by the "colleague". It is even likely that from David's point of view the ambition as evinced through attendance of education courses and special lectures is put down to "waste of time". That the attributes are sensed, nevertheless, is a safe assumption from the seeking of advice.

Jim has aristocratic features and an aristocratic veneer as well (when it is to his advantage). He is a smart dresser and looks well in what he wears. He is seen by David to be capable of handling situations.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

There is no indication.

7. How does the teacher view himself and his role as a teacher? What is his philosophy, if any?

Teaching at the secondary level is a means to an end. What the end may eventually be, the reader cannot say. In the immediate future it is to be work toward a Ph.D. degree and one would assume some position at a tertiary level of education. His approach to life is the approach he brings with him to the teaching situation, and it is what carries him beyond it. He has ambitions and sees teaching as a framework within which he can

work to fulfill these ambitions. He feels that it is important to be able to assess a situation and to move along lines that will lead directly or indirectly to advancement. Hard work is not to be shunned. It is necessary along with a pragmatic approach, a planning ahead, and attention to detail. Appearances are important.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

There is no indication.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

There is no indication.

10. How does the teacher view his colleagues?

In the broad sense David may be considered a colleague. At times Jim shows annoyance and impatience but it is controlled and when balanced against the provocation shows intolerance. There is willingness to help. Details are attended to that, in all probability, would be overlooked by the "colleague". It may be argued that all this is done in the name of friendship and yet there is an analytical and detached manner about Jim which would indicate that this could well be an attitude toward colleagues in general. The consideration might spring as much from a motivation of "having everything attended to" as much as from a motivation of friendship. Whatever the motivation, the view is the same: colleagues

may feel free to consult Jim. Whatever the situation, a detached stoicism is de rigueur on "the way up" when situations may be looked upon in their more trying moments as temporary inconveniences.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

As part of an overall pattern in getting ahead, administrators are to be cooperated with as long as they are in a position to advance one's aims. At the same time one should not be diffident.

3. Summary

In Going Down Slow there are three teacher-characters: David Appleby; the character-composite, "Merrymount"; and Jim Wilson. David Appleby, the novel's main character, is a "sinker". He is one who often openly but ineffectually opposes "the system". He is finally forced to recognize its authority and "goes down slow". "Merrymount" (viewed as male or female) understands the system in which he (she) teaches, and is the "floater". This character accepts his (her) position and does nothing to thwart the authority of those above. Jim Wilson, on the other hand, is the "swimmer". While accepting the power of "the system" he sees what it can do for him. He is not content merely to float. Jim quickly recognizes the levels of authority and

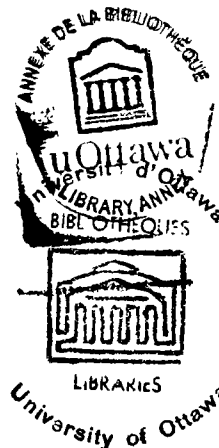
how one progresses. Using this knowledge to his own benefit, and realizing that appearances of success often lead to success itself, he moves with the current, not against it.

SCHOOL TEACHERS: THEIR IMAGE
IN THE CANADIAN NOVEL
1960-1974

by Lawson C. Stockford

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CHAPTER VI

DIARY OF A DIRTY OLD MAN¹

One of the attributes of a personal diary is usually candor. In Diary of a Dirty Old Man this attribute is present in no small degree. The diarist is most forthright in what he has to say although there are some times of actual coyness as when he writes of "a fine old neighbour lady" he is helping to move out of her house.

[. . .] I do not think I should record her real name here because diaries have a sad history of having their privacy invaded and she is the kind of woman who would be embarrassed by publicity, humble though it would have to be. So I will enter her name here as Mrs. MacPherson,²

Does this mean then that a certain Jean Hewittson would not be embarrassed by the publicity given to her robust performance on a motel bed? Certainly this active woman's name must be as fictional as the old lady's.

It is the mixture of candor and coyness that makes H. Gordon Green's diary-style presentation of his novel successful. It is the diary style too that puts forth again an aspect of presentation already encountered in the other two novels in this study's Part III: a main teacher-character is in control. In Diary of a Dirty Old

1 H. Gordon Green, Diary of a Dirty Old Man, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1974, 189 p.

2 Ibid., p. 82.

Man one is caught up in the thought processes of a virile, fifty-five-year-old farmer cum high school teacher who holds firm opinions on a multitude of things, even when these opinions are sometimes contradictory. The farmer-teacher is the diarist and it is through selected excerpts of his diary that the plot of Diary of a Dirty Old Man is carried along. The diary, as diaries are often bound to do, acts also as a vehicle for the diarist's views, observations, and philosophies.

As one would anticipate, the diarist will be the first character presented in this chapter but not before he undergoes a metamorphosis and emerges as a teacher character-composite called "The Humanist". The diarist is such an over-powering character because of the first person narrative control allowed him by the diary form that he absorbs those in some manner like himself. Justification for the absorption process in creation of this main character-composite will be made in "Presentation of Characters".

Diary of a Dirty Old Man will provide two other teacher character-composites, "The Female" and "The Pedagogue". If a negative connotation is detected in these names, it is not unintentional; keep in mind, however, that although the "tags" may come from the present writer, the character-composites are the creation of the diarist's

perceptions. The process is one of combination. In "The Pedagogue" are simply grouped all those "emasculated" young males who seem to represent everything in education that the diarist is against or does not agree with. "The Female" character-composite is constituted by a combination of six women teachers who although emasculated professionally retain an intrinsic interest for the diarist because it would be impossible to do the same thing to them biologically.

1. Presentation of Characters

a) "The Humanist".--The first diary entry to which the reader is exposed in Diary of a Dirty Old Man is one dated May 7, 1967. It is a Sunday and the diarist has taken time on this day before his fifty-fifth birthday to reminisce and to engage in some self-evaluation. He admits that there is no use in trying to fool himself any longer. He must accept the fact that he is now an old man with "hair in his ears". It would befit him to grow older gracefully. Yet, he finds it hard to act his age when he does not feel old. He still gets up before sunrise and works a fifteen hour day. On the farm he owns in Quebec's Eastern Townships he can still flip a calf on its back with ease and although he cannot run quite as fast as he used to when cows have to be chased from the

corn, he can swear better. The "darn" and "shucks" of yesteryear have given way to much more explicit terms. The years have changed his morals, he claims.

[. . .] I'm so broad-minded now I don't know right from wrong anymore. And I'm not so humble as I was in the days when that seemed the only way to get ahead in the world. I don't waste too much time being polite. Don't scare so quick. And I don't believe too many of the things it is allegedly patriotic and proper for a man to believe after Christ and the free enterprise system have both done their best to light up his mind.³

The diarist's mental inventory made "on this day when I reluctantly take my place with the Geritol generation"⁴ is one that is satisfying to him. Although his banker might disagree, he considers himself rich, in that what he does have is all he ever wanted: a farm of his own and a room full of books. The farm had been a life-long ambition driving him, in his youth, to work nights in a steel mill so that he could attend university classes during the day. The degrees, he knew, were necessary to obtain the money to make his dream a reality. That reality now consists of three hundred and thirty-five acres with a lovely maple woods and a herd of over a hundred Belted Galloways.

³ H. Gordon Green, op. cit., p. 7.

⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

The diarist's one regret seems to be that he has been "such a failure with the women".⁵ There is no specific explication of this self-observation in the diary entry but it appears that the diarist and his wife do not share the same interests. As for the books (that formed part of his youthful dream), he has them now. "So many of them that the wife kicked them out of her house several years ago."⁶ They now line the walls of an old stone-house elsewhere on the farm. The diarist uses the old house for his "hideaway". His expectations in marrying a "country girl" were never realized. Edith, his wife, has never liked the farm. Nevertheless, even though the barn needs half a roof, the fences are getting tottery, and taxes and feed bills are still hard to pay, it is his farm and not the government's and "that's more than you can say for most of the places with the big red barns and the fine machinery."⁷

One way the diarist found to cope with the rising cost of feed bills was to take a high school teaching job. Four years earlier he had been "talked into it" by the

5 Ibid., p. 9.

6 Ibid., p. 8.

7 Ibid.

school supervisor. The diarist feels that it would be very noble if he could claim that teaching was something he had undertaken because of an insatiable desire to share his learning. Such was not the case.

The diary entry has been written at the diarist's "hideaway". "If it weren't for the kids I think I might be better off sleeping over here in the stone house with my books."⁸ Diary entries continue until Tuesday, April 8, 1969.

Each weekday the diarist drives the thirty miles from his farm to The School⁹ where he teaches courses in Agriculture and English. It is Monday and his fifty-fifth birthday. The day is beautiful and regretting his obligation to spend the greater part of it in school, especially with at least a half dozen sheep still to shear, he decided to take some of the sheep to school with him and do the shearing there where the city kids could watch.

⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

⁹ Since the school at which the diarist teaches is not mentioned by a specific name in the novel, it will simply be designated in this chapter by means of capital letters, hence, "The School".

Well, why not? A man can be forgiven a little craziness on his birthday, can't he? And if the principal should think my idea a little much and calls me into the office to slap my wrist about it, so what? It will be my first offence.¹⁰

The diarist checked with the Colonel¹¹ beforehand, nevertheless, to make sure he would not be too upset about the sheep shearing venture. He need not have been concerned: the principal was in accord. Actually the Colonel was pleased enough with the idea to have it expanded to include the elementary division of the school. In the diarist's presence he contacted Brockington, principal of that division, by phone. It was not hard to deduce that Brockington was not sold on the idea of letting his teachers take turns sending their classes out to see the shearing.

[. . .] 'Sure, sure,' the Colonel was saying while he kept looking across the desk and winking at me, 'I know it's exam time. Yes, yes, some of them might have to wash their hands after...No, no, I don't think there's any danger of them picking up intestinal parasites.'¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

¹¹ The word "Colonel" will not be placed in quotation marks in this presentation. The principal is an "old army man". It could very well be that the rank designation has been a genuine one that has held even in civilian life. To consider this a nickname in the usual sense seems inappropriate.

¹² Ibid., p. 14.

The Colonel continues:

'I suppose you could warn them not to try eating any of those little black marbles that come out the back end, if that would put your mind at ease about it....Yes I said marbles. What? You didn't know that a sheep shits marbles? Christ man, you better go out and get yourself a lesson in sheepology too!...No I'm not kidding you again....Well they're black marbles, kind of. Got to freeze them before they're serviceable, of course.... You didn't know that?'¹³

The diarist uses two spare periods and his noon hour to shear four sheep. The event is a successful one. As a bonus some biology students snapped a few sheep ticks up during the "undressing" and rushed them back into the school building to put under microscopes. Even Brockington's young students were on hand and many took back samples of wool to their classrooms.

The sheep-shearing enterprise also gave the diarist a good opportunity to introduce Wordsworth's "Michael" to his senior English class and the diary reader to some of his philosophy.

¹³ Ibid., p. 14.

[. . .] Had we followed the order in our text we wouldn't have begun "Michael" for another couple of weeks, but what better time could there be for reading a poem about sheep and shepherds than right now? Couldn't help but think as I opened the book however, that in the brave new school of tomorrow the pupil may be delivered from the tradition of always having to go to his appointed seat in the appointed classroom at the appointed time to await the teacher's coming. That the class may be permitted on occasion to visit the teacher. Now I have no degree in pedagogy. (The great people in this teaching business now call it 'the science of education', thereby joining the astrologers, chiropractics and water-witchers in the effort to convince us that they are for real.) But it seems to me that once we are past the elementary level, education is no longer a mere learning of what is in the book. Communication is the important thing now. The two-way communication between teacher and pupil. But how much easier and more honest that communication would be if the teacher were no longer presiding like a judge in a courtroom--if his pupils could visit with him when he was in slippers and old clothes. The ideal way to read "Michael," for instance, would be after these kids had followed me around the farm some sun-sweated day, had helped me tag a few lambs, pen up the rams, tie a few fleeces; after they had worked long enough to lose some of that physical ferment which is always at war with the discipline of the classroom. Then in the quiet of evening, when they would welcome sitting and reading and thinking, when the smell of wool would still be sharp in their clothes and the gentle calling of the flock in the misty fields beyond was still mellow in their ears, that would be the time for us to wander into Michael's cottage along with Wordsworth.¹⁴

The diarist was careful to remind no one that it was his birthday, but "the news got out nevertheless".¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

At recess in the morning there was an expensive Cuban cigar in his box in the staffroom. He felt that Mac Smiley, the Vice-Principal, had put it there. At his desk, during the remainder of the morning, since he could not smoke the cigar in class, he kept savoring its aroma by running it under his nose. It was with chagrin that he returned to his room for the afternoon to find the cigar crushed. He refrained from saying anything and did not try to find out who had been guilty. "After all, I figured I had no business leaving it out on my desk."¹⁶ Coming back to his classroom for a final class, he found a pleasant surprise awaiting. There were two cigars awaiting him on his desk. Apparently one of the young ladies of the class had been clowning with the cigar and one of the boys had accidentally crushed it while she was doing so. The girl made him take up a collection to buy a new one. Since the collection was more than enough, two cigars of the same expensive brand were purchased for the diarist.

By the end of the day the diarist's birthday was no longer a secret. Some of the girls in the Home Economics department made him a cake and in his staff room box there were half a dozen cards by day's end. In the evening,

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 17.

upon opening his mail, the diarist found that one of the cards was beautifully hand painted, violets in the grass, and contained this poem:

You will never know as you come thru that door,
Smiling as if you owned the place,
How long one gray mouse soul has waited for
That flash of always morning in your face.

And you, so quick to beg a tear
For the pain of lovers long ago,
Will never know how very near
This love that will not let me go.

And since of all the loves foredoomed to fall
And wither on their thirsty vines
Mine is the most impossible of all,
You will never know who sends these lines.¹⁷

Finding the poem's writer becomes a raison d'être for the diarist and he is quite systematic about it as he decides to pursue the matter by process of elimination. He pursues it in the wrong direction for some time, however, assuming that a fellow staff member has written it. His quest takes him through at least two sexual liaisons along the way. It is not until the following spring that the diarist discovers that the writer of the poem was a student, Sherry McIver.

The diarist seems to believe that being a teacher in a formal sense and in a formal situation does impose obligations and does demand a certain stance which may be

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

felt as restrictive as regards one's own inclinations. Teachers are referred to as "we adults who are paid to be proper".¹⁸ In a more caustic mood teachers are referred to as "we who are duly licensed to play God".¹⁹ They are the ones who will

[. . .] separate the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the chaff, and those who will sit at the right hand of the Market Place from those eternally damned to a union wage--or less.²⁰

Despite the quaint notion of a union wage being a thing of small consequence, the point is made. Final examinations are a time of judgment, almost in a biblical sense.

[. . .] The damned are those who couldn't wait until this moment of the Judgement Exam to forget whatever it was that we insisted they should remember. The elect are those who will forget it a few months later.²¹

"Playing God" creates an uneasiness.

[. . .] What mighty and sacred knowledge lies within us that we, the high priests of learning, can so coolly make such awesome judgements on people we may not even know?²²

As for being "proper" Myra Blakely is a case in point. She had been in the diarist's class in her final

18 Ibid., p. 85.

19 Ibid., p. 100.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

year at The School. Towards the end of the October after her graduation she visits The School to "renew old acquaintances" and probably to show some of the teachers who had despaired of her that she was doing rather well. Always a pretty girl with beautiful "gams" she has blossomed even more. Myra now had a very good job with a legal firm. One of the "old acquaintances" she obviously wanted to renew was The Diarist. He finds himself manoeuvred to a quiet little Chinese place "out on the highway" for lunch. Myra is very open in discussion of her personal life. She tries to assess the diarist's reaction.

'[. . .]....I am shocking you, aren't I?

'You're nineteen,' I said. 'And you're on your own.'

'And I'm also taking the pill....Tell me what you really think of me, won't you? You can tell me the truth now. I'm not your pupil anymore--or maybe I still am. Maybe that's why I manoeuvred you into taking me out here where I could pick your brains today.'

'Yes,' I said, 'as long as you keep asking me embarrassing questions, I guess you're still my pupil. Which means that I still have to be discreet.'²³

Myra invites the diarist to a Hallowe'en dinner party to be held at her home a week later. The diarist does not immediately commit himself but tells Myra that he will let her know if he can attend or not. When the time comes he does go to the party and as Myra promised, he does meet some

23 Ibid., p. 59.

lively and personable people from her office. After the dinner party, the people move on to a dance in the city. Myra stays behind to clean the house up before "the old folks" get home. It was quite obvious that the diarist was to stay behind and help. The last guest was hardly out of the door before Myra wrapped herself around him.

'I've been wondering about you long enough,' she said. 'Now I want to know what kind of a man you really are.'

We were one hell of a time getting those dishes washed but I didn't do it! Somehow or other I managed to climb out of that beautiful cleavage of hers and I found my coat and I left her there angry and I suspect, completely disillusioned in me.²⁴

What the diarist did do was visit a female staff member's apartment and relieve her of her virginity. He had made a tentative overture to Debbie Macguire a few nights earlier when she had been at his place to interest him in an encyclopedia for which she was an agent. She had said "'Another time maybe [.] After I have had more time to think about it.'"²⁵ The diarist ponders the two incidents of that Hallowe'en in his diary entry of November 5, 1967.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 61.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 60..

Had I ever, in all my forty years of hairy sin, ever acted so completely without rhyme or reason? Why had I turned my back on the girl who was young and warm and and [sic] searching for the soul of me, and satisfied the urge she had aroused in me in a woman who was homely and cold and who probably wanted nothing more than a hard lesson in mechanics?

I've been pondering the answer to that ever since, and I'm beginning to tell myself now that it must be the teacher in me. Only I never would have believed that teaching could make a guy like me so inexcusably noble. Maybe I'd better get out of this damned profession while I'm still human.²⁶

To have overcome his libido, or, at least, to have sublimated its direction, was no mean feat for a man as virile as the diarist professes to be. The point has significance in indicating that the diarist still looked upon Myra as a student and in the role of teacher there are obvious restrictions felt. Being a teacher also had a somewhat dehumanizing effect in its negation of vital life forces. On a previous occasion during the summer, just after Myra Blakely had graduated, she visited the diarist's farm.

[. . .] she had arranged a picnic of students. Besides Myra and her chauffeur [a boyfriend with a convertible], there were four other High School girls, Sherry McIver among them.²⁷

The fact that the diarist uses the word "other" indicates that he is still thinking in terms of Myra as a student. He was a little embarrassed of the scant attention she paid

²⁶ Ibid., p. 62.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

her boyfriend. Once, when she had managed to be alone with him in his study and sitting across from him "with her delectable legs crossed at the most perfect angle possible"²⁸, he was quite certain that she was "on the make".

[. . .] why should she take such pains to tell me that young men, even those with convertibles, bored her? That she preferred men who were old enough to know what they wanted, and how to get it? And why should she have asked so many questions about my wife, and why I seemed to spend most of my time over here at the stone house, and away from her? She had obviously discovered that I wasn't working very hard at my marriage.²⁹

The diarist, a man who speaks of his "prowess with the women"³⁰ holds back, the restraining factor apparently being his concept of the teacher-student relationship. He writes in his diary: "I hope that I acted and answered with due propriety. [. . .] Damn this teaching job!"³¹

The diarist again expresses some slight concern when Sherry McIver asks him to be her partner for the graduation ceremonies in May of the following year.

28 Ibid., p. 42.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., p. 88.

31 Ibid., p. 43.

"Mr. McFadden [presumably her homeroom teacher or a teacher-official in charge of graduation exercises] told me it would be all right. I must have a partner you see, because I'm giving the valedictory!"³² Sherry had worked with the diarist the previous spring in decorating the gym for that year's graduation class. She and her committee had done an excellent job in providing a country-and-western décor using materials from the diarist's farm. The diarist had nominally been put in charge of the decorating committee by Mac Smiley who indicated when he told the diarist Sherry McIver would help, all that would be necessary was to sit back and watch. Sherry was a bright, pretty and efficient girl.

The invitation to be Sherry's partner for the graduation seems, in the diarist's mind, a rather surprising request to make of a teacher. He cannot help but wonder why it should have been difficult for her to find an escort. He writes:

Whatever the reasoning going through that shrewd little head of hers, I have been thinking lately that I should be just a bit cautious about this. So today I invited my daughter Marcy to go along with me to the graduation. Marcy is twenty now and still close enough to her own high school days, I hope, to enjoy such an evening.³³

32 Ibid., p. 90.

33 Ibid., p. 91.

It was during the course of the graduation evening that the diarist finally determines that the writer of the anonymous love poems to him was not a staff member at all, but Sherry. The diarist's extracurricular concerns now take a turn from quest to the problem of mind his discovery presents.

Immediately after she is discovered by the diarist to be the anonymous poet, Sherry is whisked away as the graduation ceremonies proceed. The diarist does not see her again except as one of a large group undergoing the trauma of examinations, until one early morning toward the end of June. She had bicycled twenty-four miles out from town to see the farm at sunrise. The diarist had been anticipating such a moment, but still had not figured out what to do or say about it. "So I just stood there, trying to be pleasant, I suppose, and as inarticulate as if I were seventeen too."³⁴

The diarist eventually tries to get Sherry to come to his stone house for breakfast but she insists on having her "say" first.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 103.

'Look,' she said. 'I didn't come out here to stay the day or anything like that. Only there's a few things I've got to say now--now that you've found me out.' [. . .] 'Would it sound even sillier,' she asked me as she hung on to the fence, 'if I told you that I'm not really sure there was anything personal in those wild poems I sent you? I mean well maybe it's not you I'm in love with at all!'³⁵

Sherry continues:

'Maybe it's just this place and the way you live, and the fact that for you there seems to be some meaning to it all!'

. . . 'I mean that just about everyone else who's ever come into my life is either uptight with worry or they've got a tiger by the tail! Or, if they're the quiet kind, it's probably because they're so bored with everything they might as well be dead. But you, well I want to know what it is with you anyhow...'

. . . 'I just want to know what it is that you're doing out here that gives you the right to be so infuriatingly satisfied with yourself!'³⁶

At the end of July Sherry is at the farm gate in patched jeans and an old sweater ready to go to work for the diarist for the rest of the summer. The diarist writes:

[. . .] Her mother, who is a very beautiful and gracious woman, drove her out. Just to make sure that she too knew of the arrangements I had made, I repeated that Sherry will set my accounts straight (I have half a feed sack full of bills and receipts waiting for her to untangle); she will also do miscellaneous typing and set my pedigrees in order. For this she is to get \$30 a week plus her board.³⁷

35 Ibid., p. 104.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., p. 113.

The diarist leaves Sherry in charge of the stone house and begins spending his nights back at the main house once more. Despite this the diarist's wife has a few words for him. Apparently his estimate of her was correct. Even though she had given up on him a long time before, she was still capable of resenting another woman. Particularly a clever and efficient one.

'That girl you have working over there,' she said, 'doesn't she even go home on weekends?'

I said that was entirely up to her; that she got no extra pay for staying Saturday and Sunday.

'Don't imagine you're complaining too much about it though,' Edith said. 'You seem to be working a lot of overtime yourself over there these days.'

I said yes, I was getting a lot of work done right now. Said I was at my typewriter a hell of a lot now. After all, there was only another month before I'd have to start back to school again.

She wasn't impressed. 'Maybe I'm not a genius like you,' she said, 'but I'm not blind. I'll just bet you can hardly get your eyes off that typewriter! Not with her in her shorts and those nice busy, busy brown legs of hers! You're just a dirty old man, that's all!'

I didn't bother denying the charge.³⁸

The summer progresses. In many ways it is idyllic for Sherry. She enjoys the animals and getting vegetables fresh from the garden. She learns to bake bread. She frequently goes with the diarist to visit his crony, Walter Beattie. Walter and Sherry agree that man is destroying himself along with his environment. Walter has favorable

³⁸ Ibid., p. 119.

comments to make concerning the Indian life of the past "before the white man came barging in."³⁹ He expressed his belief that man could not act naturally in this day and age because he did not live naturally. "Sherry had an amen for that. 'That's why I'm here right now!' she said. 'Hoping I can learn how to live more naturally.'"⁴⁰ Later, the diarist questions her on this very point. "'And is that the real reason you've come out here? Just to get back to what you think is the simpler life?'"⁴¹

Sherry, before taking the summer job, had already indicated to the diarist that it was possibly his place and his way of life that she was infatuated with rather than he himself. He had never been too happy about that apology of sorts for the "moonstruck" poems that she had written to him. At the end of Sherry's first day at the farm he asks her point blank "'Are you in love with me or not?'"⁴² Once more she speaks of sorting things out for herself. Toward the end of August, when Sherry's confirmation of love is made for the man himself, its suddenness catches

39 Ibid., p. 116.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

him off guard.

'Good of you to tell me just as you're leaving,' I said.

'This way,' she said, 'you'll have more time to think it over before I try to do something rash.'⁴³

At that point Sherry had had one more week to go at the farm before going on to McGill University. The ire of the diarist's wife who sees her watching a stallion breeding a mare ("it just isn't traditional in the country for ladies to watch"⁴⁴) precipitates her earlier departure, however. It also precipitates the diarist's expulsion from the main house.

I don't think there is any point in my trying to set down the unpleasant details of the storm that broke loose when I went over to the big house last night. I hope I have never accused Edith of being the cause of our marital troubles. Maybe I am to blame. Maybe there is no such thing as blame. It will be sufficient to record here that she was as angry as I have ever seen her, and that she ordered me out of the house.⁴⁵

Despite exposure to the realities of farm life during the summer Sherry, at university, clings to the idea that such a life is the only one that has much meaning. By October the diarist appears to be accepted in the main house again but by point of fortune he happens

⁴³ Ibid., p. 124.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

to be at the stone house when Sherry phones him on his private line there. She calls under the pretext of inquiring about his calico cat, the one he rows with when it does such uncalled for things as using a carton of manuscripts⁴⁶ as a substitute sandbox. It is now about time for the calico to kitten and Sherry remembers. The young girl comes from a well-to-do family but she had never been allowed to have a cat herself. In point of fact she is lonely.

'I'm bored,' she said. 'I haven't found one professor there who has anything important to tell me. They all talk as if the world was going to go right on doing the same crazy things. Only more of them. What I'm trying to find is a way back....'⁴⁷

In December a letter from Sherry arrives followed by a Christmas card reminding the diarist that they are to have dinner in the city just after her holidays from classes begin. The diarist's intention is to keep the dinner date so that he may, with logical argument, put an end to what he sees developing. In Montreal they go

⁴⁶ The farmer cum high school teacher is a writer too. In this novel there are many not too subtle indications of author-narrator synonymy made by Mr. Green. One begins to wonder whether a pun is intended when the diarist later writes about those who know the full meaning of freedom in the green outdoors.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 138.

to the Café St. Jacques in the east of the city, a dining and dance establishment that the diarist has known for some time as "the right place to take the wrong woman".⁴⁸ Here his avowed intention of severance suffers a setback as he runs into stiff opposition and a barrage of personally-satisfying words of praise from the very determined young lady. With tears welling up she affirms that she has tried to put the diarist out of her mind but to no avail. She has studied and read as never before. She has attempted to get interested in someone else.

The diarist reminds Sherry that he is nearly forty years older than she, a biological fact that nothing will change. What people think makes no difference to her.

The diarist goes on:

'All right, [. . .] so I don't feel ancient yet, and you've got a weakness for windburned old farmers with hair in their ears. But who knows how many years are left to me? Ten good ones maybe, if the law of averages holds out for me.'⁴⁹

Sherry, calmer now and smiling, assures the diarist that if she knew ten good years with him could be hers she does not think she would feel cheated when they were over. She asks him how many couples he knows of who are really still

48 Ibid., p. 154.

49 Ibid., p. 155.

in love "ten years after".

The diarist continues:

[. . .] 'I probably have more than my share of conceit, but I just can't figure out what it is that you see in me. You've spent a summer with me--long enough to know I can be as miserable and unreasonable as any other man. I must have seemed a proper bastard to you sometimes when you saw me having to fight something.'⁵⁰

Sherry agrees that she has seen him very angry, so angry, in fact, that she feels that if he could have found God, he would have shot Him! She is reminded by the diarist:

'And this life in the country [. . .] you must know by now that it isn't all south wind and pea-green landscapes. You've got to know by now that it's one goddam never-ending battle against a thousand things that are out to get you. Like mud and drought and disease and a world that is always finding new ways to suck blood out of you...!'⁵¹

Sherry does not deny all this but states that she also knows that the diarist is happy, probably the only truly happy man she has ever met. She admits that he has to fight but points out that he is really in love with that battle because it is the kind of fight God intended for a man.

Sherry often seems to use the phraseology of the diarist himself and on this occasion at Café St. Jacques she quotes from Thoreau who, interestingly enough, the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 155.

⁵¹ Ibid.

diarist has recently been reading.

'You know what Thoreau told us once? That the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation? Well you've got to admit that you're not one of the mass. Certainly, you have your fight too, and it gets desperate at times. But you always know why you're fighting. You know what you want and where you're going. For you, Life has a very clear meaning and purpose. For everyone else I know, the struggle seems to be for nothing more than more comfort. They've given up looking for coherence.'⁵²

By the time they part, Sherry has elicited a promise from the diarist that they will not hold themselves apart as they have done all fall. On the way home the diarist, away from the café's music and scotch, begins to feel "a little silly about everything again"⁵³ but at the same time flattered to have been told that in life he had chosen coherence over comfort.

The diarist and Sherry continue to meet. There is a time after that first visit to Café St. Jacques with Sherry when it seems that the diarist seeks confirmation of her love for him personally as an individual rather than as an adjunct of a "primitive" way of life. He knows with certainty that life on the land fascinates this young girl from a beautiful, exquisitely organized home complete with everything. She has already told him that personal love

⁵² Ibid., p. 156.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 157.

is also a fact but reiteration is solicited. As he watches her busying herself about the kitchen of his old stone house making tea, a conversation, on the surface casual enough, takes place.

'I'm also wondering just what it is in that intriguing head of yours that makes you so determined to love a dirty old man.'

She laughed. 'Maybe it's a perversion of some sort. Nobody objects much anymore if a woman has a weakness for another woman. And some love negroes [sic] or Siamese cats.'

'And you just happen to have a weakness for dirty old men with hair in their ears.'

'One particular dirty old man with hair in his ears.'

'But could it be because this particular dirty old man happens to own a farm full of lovesick animals?'⁵⁴

Sherry goes to the diarist and kissing him behind the ears, asks: "'Was that the impression you got of me last night?' [. . .] 'Maybe I could do better next time.'"⁵⁵

It is now time for lawyers. The diarist's wife has hired one who has told her that she can take half of everything he owns, and then some. That includes the farm. She threatens her husband with this information while furiously going over the record of his past and present sins. One accusation after another is added to her long list of

54 Ibid., p. 180.

55 Ibid., p. 181.

grievances, and says the diarist, "they were all true."⁵⁶

It is the threat to his farm that upsets him. In his mind he addresses his wife's lawyer:

[. . .] Now look, you little bastard, that farm is mine! I sweated blood for it! And if you make one move now to take it away from me, the first time I get you in our neck of the woods I'll tack your balls to a stump and push you over backwards!⁵⁷

What he actually says to the lawyer is:

[. . .] 'I don't mind paying alimony. I don't mind giving up the furniture and the house she's living in, but you'll never take that farm from me.'⁵⁸

The lawyer laughed and showed him the door whereupon he consulted a lawyer of his own, an "old army buddy", who after scotch and reminiscences does not offer much solace as regards the diarist's legal position.

The love of farm life and what he believes are the benefits to be derived from such living were instilled in the diarist at a very young age as he followed his father over the acres of the family homestead back in Ontario.

56 Ibid., p. 178.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., p. 179.

[. . .] And while we used to have a saying in those days that a boy's best friend was his mother, it went without saying that a boy's best teacher was his dad.

Certainly it was an education just to be with my father as he went about the day's work. True, many of the skills he taught me are pretty useless now:

[. . .]
But there were other lessons more lasting: like the dignity of work done with your own hands--the harder it was, the greater satisfaction when it was well done. Most important, he taught me a lesson that the computer and the Ph.D's seem to have left out of today's schooling--the meaning of responsibility and the good solid feel of having it trusted to your shoulders.⁵⁹

The diarist sees in schools too great a desire on the part of "incurably conscientious" teachers to boss the job, whatever it may be at any time. He wonders why teachers insist on working so hard. "Give these kids a chance to do things and let them untie their imaginations, and they will teach themselves!"⁶⁰ Specifically he thinks of how Sherry and a group of grade ten students working with her prepared the gym of The School for graduation ceremonies and a graduation dance. They did an excellent job for a total cost of four dollars. The diarist, nominally in charge of the committee stood back and gave Sherry and the students "free rein". He wonders what kind of a job would have been done and how much it would have cost if a couple of worrying

59 Ibid., p. 55.

60 Ibid., p. 29.

teachers had acted as advisors rather than he and Mac Smiley, the vice-principal. Sherry, however, is not an average girl. The diarist refers to her as "not only a genius, but creative and a hard worker."⁶¹

Continuing about his father in the role of teacher on the homestead, the diarist writes:

I wouldn't have you think, though, that my father taught me only how to work. From him I learned the names of the birds that came back to us with every fresh spring. I learned the names of the weeds and the flowers and what they were supposed to be good for. The names weren't always the ones I was to find later in textbooks, and the special properties he talked about were probably little more than country legend. But he did teach me to look and to see, to be aware of the infinite variety beneath my every step. Above all, he taught me the one thing, which, I think, lifts man closest to God: he taught me to wonder.⁶²

Wonder is a precious quality often lost when The Board and the scholarly gentlemen who share the top office with a computer maintain the necessity of exams, homework, and detentions, all proof, writes the diarist, of their belief that "to learn is to suffer."⁶³ Parents can destroy this attribute of wonder too. The diarist's son is brought back to the reality of the fact that the kitchen floor is

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁶² Ibid., p. 55.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 135.

not the Maple Leaf Gardens or the Montreal Forum. The roar is not that of imaginary thousands but that of a mother as her son's puck in the form of a much-repaired plastic ball lands in a bowl of some untouchable delicacy.

The diarist comments:

What mother didn't realize, I'm afraid, was that when she yanked our boy out of his lovely one-man hockey game, she yanked him out of the great world of imagination as well. Out of the only perfect world that any of us will ever come to know.⁶⁴

Although when summer holidays from school arrive and the diarist thinks of himself as a "purebred farmer", his diary entries indicate that he remains a teacher in the same way his father was with the wide outdoors as his classroom. The teacher is latent in the farmer.⁶⁵ His farm is visited frequently not only by students from The School but by visitors from the city as well. His efforts to inform and enlighten are clear as on some occasions is his exasperation. He expresses impatience for the visitor who visits a farm and persists in being in a hurry. "The only person who has any right to be in a hurry on a farm

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁶⁵ The reader may well hark back to what amounts to a philosophy of education at least partially stated in the diary entry made after the sheep-shearing demonstration at The School. (p. 216).

is someone who has to make his living on it."⁶⁶

The diarist has even less love for the person who cannot look at farm life except through the eyes of an economist. There are "those frightfully efficient women the city seems to be mass-producing these days"⁶⁷, who want their children taught all about farming and this teaching job done in an absolute minimum of time. The Belted Gallows the diarist keeps are partially to satisfy an aesthetic sensitivity, as are many of his less than usual kinds of poultry.

[. . .] our whole poultry operation is based on the premise that you can't make money on chickens anyhow these days, so you might just as well have fun with them.⁶⁸

The diarist does his best to explain this to a woman visitor and her children. He points out the beautiful wings of a little Sebright hen and the delicate pattern of a Barred Rock rooster's gorgeous saddle. He runs his finger up under the ruff of a Brown Leghorn's neck to slant the feathers to the sun so that the mahogany shade could be appreciated. The bustling woman visitor with eyebrows arched like dollar signs was only really interested in

66 Ibid., p. 41.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

economics and productivity. No aesthetic appreciation was being transmitted so when she asked the diarist how he got a pair of Japanese Silkies, whose plumage seems like white fur rather than feathers, he gave her the most foolish answer he could think of.

'Oh it's really very simple, madam,' I said. 'We just cross a Bantam rooster with an Angora rabbit.'
'Oh isn't it utterly wonderful what science can do today, children?' she cried, and then out came the notebook. 'And do you get a special market for the eggs?'⁶⁹

Discovery learning can take on real meaning for a person. The diarist allows a young visitor to follow him about the farm all one afternoon as he goes about his work just as he, at one time, followed his father. The visitor was a quiet, wide-eyed little boy of about five or six who bothers the diarist with a minimum of questions. Toward the end of the afternoon the young lad sits down on a log for a moment with the diarist and says, "'You know those round flat things the cows leave all over the field?'"⁷⁰

69 Ibid., p. 42.

70 Ibid., p. 46.

Yes, I knew about them.
'I just found out something about them.'
'Really?'
'I found that when they're hard on top, they
aren't hard at all underneath.'
I helped him wipe his shoe on the grass.⁷¹

The diarist finds that country kids learn that if they will just keep their mouths shut and their eyes and ears open, they will probably be able to figure things out for themselves.

"If you were to make a list of the world's great leaders--the philosophers, the writers, the thinkers who have wrinkled the brow of the world,"⁷² writes the diarist, you would be astonished, no doubt, to discover how few of these have come from the city. He goes on:

[. . .] I have always believed that there is something about man's struggle with the soil which is basic and right. This was the struggle God intended man to have, and I cannot escape the conviction that the farther away we get from this intended struggle, the greater the loss to the nation as well as to the individual.⁷³

Springer spaniels and Samoyeds are pedigree dogs raised for sale on the diarist's farm. A family arrives one day. Potential customers. The father, a bright and friendly man, and his daughter enthusiastically proceed

71 Ibid., p. 46.

72 Ibid., p. 39.

73 Ibid.

to look over puppies, leaving a bored and unsmiling mother in the family station wagon with a melancholy-looking thirteen-year-old boy. Since the father and daughter were taking some length of time in making a choice, the diarist tries his best to interest the boy, who did not want to see the pups, in other things on the farm. At first he does not even want to get out of the station wagon even though the yard is filled with animals. There are Galloway calves about and lambs and goslings. The boy is not interested in anything the barnyard has to offer. Finally, as time stretches out, the diarist manages to get the boy to a corral where his own son is staging a mini-rodeo for neighborhood children. He hoped these proceedings might stir the visitor's interest. After a few minutes the city boy simply slides from the corral rail where he has been sitting and wanders toward the house. Thinking the boy might not be feeling well, the diarist catches up to him and asks.

[. . .] He said no, he was feeling O. K. 'I was just hoping maybe that Sue had picked out her pup by now,' he said laconically.

When he discovered that his father and sister still seemed to be as undecided as ever, he let out a great sigh.

'Mister,' he said to me, 'you wouldn't have a TV set that I could look at while I have to wait, would you?'⁷⁴

74 Ibid., p. 119.

Later in the diary, the diarist writes:

I'm not too sure that teachers, as a breed, are really earning their pay now. Seems to me that these kids who have to be locked up with us for six-and-a-half hours a day are learning far more from television and radio and the newspaper and from one another than they are from us.⁷⁵

The diarist seems to feel that education in a formal sense is simply a necessary evil. As school opens in September 1967, he writes "Tomorrow I'm back in school again trying to make a new bunch of pupils smart--and unhappy."⁷⁶ As school opens in September 1968, he refers to the Mohawk students who have been "bussed in" from the reserve "to the polished halls of this push-button education factory"⁷⁷ (The School has expanded and by this time has "regional" status):

[. . .] They are shy yet, as shy as I must have been when I first found myself subdued and starched by the discipline of the High School. And they look a little skeptic about the worth of it all, as skeptical as I am even today.

Seems to me that for all the great books we pile on his desk, and for all our frenzied efforts to help him torture out the full meanings of those books, we have pitifully little to offer the lad who already knows the full meaning of freedom in the green outdoors.⁷⁸

75 Ibid., p. 134.

76 Ibid., p. 49.

77 Ibid., p. 130.

78 Ibid.

The scholarly gentlemen "in the top offices of education", the diarist writes,

[. . .] remind us that now for the first time we must teach our pupils to anticipate the leisure which will certainly be theirs in a few years. But we go right on holding conventions, endowing research programs, reading special books and attending special classes in the relentless search for ways, and means to make them work harder, harder, harder.⁷⁹

There are other aspects of the formal teaching situation which cause the diarist concern. Strapping is still tolerated as a punishment. The diarist marvels at the fact "that while the strap has at long last lost favour in the home and in our penal institutions, it is still one of the accepted weapons of learning."⁸⁰ School dress regulations are another case in point. It is over the matter of dress regulations that he faced the anger of Myra Blakely while she was still a student in his class. Mini-skirts had appeared upon the fashion scene and spring was in the air. Teachers were reminded that girls in The School were taking liberties in the matter of skirt length. Dress regulations dictated that no skirt was to be worn more than two inches above the knee. To this end, and to the amusement of males in the classes, skirt inspections were carried out.

79 Ibid., p. 135.

80 Ibid., p. 76.

Despite his feelings against such inspections, the diarist always went through the routine as instructed. On the occasion concerning Myra, she had undone her skirt zipper at the waist and attempted to pull the garment down far enough to pass the length inspection. Her face was red with anger. "'Sir!' she said. 'I protest! This is asinine!'"⁸¹ The diarist reminds the reader that he is a man quite capable of losing his temper; he often does so on the farm, but, he goes on to write:

[. . .] I have never lost it in the classroom. I do not think a teacher has any more right to lose his cool with a pupil than a clerk has to lose it with a customer taking two hours to buy a pair of shoes. And above all, I think it is most important to keep cool with the pupil who is angry.⁸²

The diarist pauses, and then tells Myra the floor is hers. She is to state her case. And Myra stated it "beautifully". She thought a school was supposed to get students ready to carry on the democratic life. Was it democratic for them to be told what they were to wear as well as what they were to think? She thought a school was supposed to get students ready for progress and to prepare them to help change the world for the better. Was it getting them ready for progress and change when it was ruled

81 Ibid., p. 13.

82 Ibid.

"that they all had to dress just like their fathers and mothers did or be considered immodest or improper? Not bloody likely, she said."⁸³

What Myra considers to be some of the aims of the school are aims that the diarist himself attributes to The Board and "all the other scholarly gentlemen who share the top office along with the computer."⁸⁴ They are indeed quite noble in their declarations but it seems that the rules and regulations made do not lead to the accomplishment of the end as stated. He writes concerning The Board:

[. . .] They have told us teachers time and time again that if we want to be true to our high calling, we must do our utmost to encourage the development of personality--to encourage our pupils to be individuals. But posted on every classroom bulletin board are the ancient regulations about school uniforms. Boys will wear shirt and tie, navy blue jacket, gray flannels, no beards, no sideburns, no Jeremiah haircuts. Girls to be equally proper in their uniform, "proper" meaning that mini-skirts are out, along with anything else that is new or daring. Or admits the existence of sex.

'Don't forget that you are educating the leaders of tomorrow,' these gentlemen tell us. But they know very well that for every minute of the day, we are leading them and giving them as little chance as possible to make their own decisions.

'Don't forget that you are educating for the future,' they tell us, knowing very well that ninety per cent of the required literature, history and philosophy on the curriculum deals with the musty past.⁸⁵

83 Ibid., p. 13.

84 Ibid., p. 134.

85 Ibid.

In the classroom, the confrontation with Myra continued in this vein. The diarist had answered:

'Regardless of what we may think of the rule, Myra,' I said, 'most of your classmates here have apparently decided to put up with it. Do you think you have your own special reason for rebelling?'

Myra had an answer for that too. 'Maybe it's just because I'm one of the dumb bunnies in this class,' she said. 'I know by now that I can't compete with brains, so maybe the best thing left to me is to compete with--well, you call it. You know what I mean, anyhow!'

'With all due respect for the logic of your arguments,' I said, 'the fact still remains that the dress regulation is on the books, and I think that if you consider the regulation unreasonable or silly, then you should do what you can to get it changed. But as long as that regulation is law, it is my opinion that it ought to be observed.'⁸⁶

The "idiocy" of school dress regulations is referred to on many occasions by the diarist. It is one of his ongoing criticisms of the formal school system that he is part of. Yet he, himself, does not make a move of the type he has suggested in his advice to Myra Blakely. He does, however, chide and tease Esther McIntosh, a strong advocate of "proper" dress, at staff meetings, and he does intercede on behalf of a Mohawk boy who was given a detention for not wearing a tie. Actually the boy had been wearing a thong of buckskin with a bead pendant hanging from it

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

and "By God, that's a tie too"⁸⁷ decides the diarist. He went to see the Colonel about the matter.

I don't bother the Colonel very often. I have never yet sent a pupil to him or any of the Vice-Principals for discipline. I have never yet given a detention. And any time I have something to tell him, it generally doesn't take any more than thirty seconds to get it off my mind. If he doesn't like what I have to say, it generally doesn't take him any more than thirty seconds to cuss me out, either.

So right after the Lord's Prayer this morning I went down to see him.

'God damn it Colonel,' I said, 'about these ties! This shit's got to come to a cease!'

And I told him about the Indian lad with a string tie who got a detention for it.

'There's not a bloody thing in the rules that says a tie has got to be an Anglo-Saxon, Chamber of Commerce job!' I told him.

He agreed and was on the phone when I went out the door. Detention rescinded.⁸⁸

On a previous occasion also concerning the matter of ties, the diarist asked a complaining boy (from his senior English class) who had been sent home for not having worn one, why he had not come to him before school that morning. The diarist always keeps a supply of ties in his drawer, which he had bought at the Sally Ann just for such emergencies. Since the young lad remained angry about the "injustice of it all" and what he felt was pressure

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 137.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

to create a "good little conformist"⁸⁹, the diarist acquiesces in a plan the student felt would give him a chance to "make his point". The boy wanted to borrow a particular tie he had noticed the previous summer when he and a group of students had been rambling about the diarist's old stone house. The tie had been once picked up at a stall on the Left Bank in Paris. It was in lurid pink and yellow and "featured the picture of a little girl squatting on a piss pot, bending over meanwhile to make sure that everything was coming out all right."⁹⁰ The boy's point is that a person might be more improper wearing a tie than not wearing one. The diarist let the boy have the tie on the stipulation that "he damn well better not tell anyone where it came from."⁹¹

The indirect or "underground" approach seems more typical of the diarist than the direct approach he advised Myra to take when she felt "ill done by". The "wink at it" approach was even used with Myra directly after the other advice was given. After she had had her say, he had stated to her and the class:

89 Ibid., p. 136.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

'This court has now heard the arguments and now begs that the case be dropped. I'm not going to send anyone home for a longer skirt today, and from now on I'll do my best to look the other way when a short one breezes by me. But mind now, if some other teacher nabs you for flying a skirt at half mast, don't come to me for help.'⁹²

The diarist, the Colonel, and Mac Smiley show attributes similar enough, along with similarities of age and background, to justify creation of a character-composite. The latter two are delineated to the extent that the diarist wishes them to be; it is his diary. A fuller development of the principal and the vice-principal might have allowed the creation of the character-composite by combination. As it is, the main character, the diarist, is so strong, both because of the novel's first person narrative style and because of the character's positiveness, that the Colonel and Mac Smiley are absorbed. If the diarist acts as blotter, then the others are as ink; they lend themselves to absorption.

The reader is given no account of the Colonel's or Mac Smiley's day by day activities outside the school situation, but the point is made that in the long run each has had or is still having success in a sphere outside the teaching profession. The diarist's background has been

⁹² Ibid., p. 14.

dwelt upon already. Mac Smiley, the vice-principal, is one of the teachers the school supervisor got "from the outside" as he did the diarist who in one diary entry wonders how they were "talked into it" seemingly forgetting in his own regard that he had earlier explained about high feed bills on his farm.

Like the diarist, Mac Smiley is an older man who has experienced the world outside a classroom and a school. He has succeeded in that world. Smiley left teaching many years before to sell cars. Now even though he still operates one of the most successful automobile agencies in three counties he is "at school" once again. The Colonel is an "old army man" and judging from his rank designation which as a term of respect carried over into civilian life, he had success in moving upward in the military hierarchy. It is conceivable that the Colonel may still have active association with the Canadian Army in a Militia capacity. The diarist is also an "old army man" and many terms he uses and many memories he holds stem from the time when he and his compatriots "were making the world safe for democracy".⁹³

93 Ibid., p. 179.

It is to attributes of character shown within the school situation that close attention must be directed since it is a teacher character-composite that is under consideration here. In juxtaposing the unity of "The Humanist" against the unity of "The Pedagogue" much will need to be said in this presentation that also rightly belongs in the presentation of "The Pedagogue", and yet the contrast must be made here since it is the rift between the unities that accentuates each as a unity.

While on the phone to Brockington to have him agree to send elementary classes to watch the diarist's sheep-shearing demonstration, the Colonel, in the face of some trepidation on the part of the younger principal, banteringly suggests that what he needs is a course in "Sheepology" too. The "too" is significant. "Sheepology" may well rank by implication with the "scientific" education courses that Brockington's entry into teaching may have been based upon. In the same vein the diarist speaks of "Pigology". The diarist makes a point of stating that he has no degree in pedagogy and categorizes those who speak of education as a science with astrologers and water-witchers.

Brockington had apparently been concerned about such matters as the danger of picking up sheep ticks

or intestinal parasites from the animals. The diarist affirmed that there would probably be a few ticks. After the Colonel hung up the phone he said to the diarist:

'I'm pretty sure you'll be entertaining his classes too,' [. .] 'He won't say that, of course. Just says he'll have to consult, but after he's made it clear to his teachers that he really doesn't approve of such foolishness, he'll tell them to go ahead. I think it was that bit about the ticks that helped him make up his mind. Brockington likes to think that to learn is to suffer. So oblige him, will you, and see to it that one of his little bastards sits on a tick?'⁹⁴

The diarist writes apropos the incident:

Any doubts I ever had about the Colonel's competence as a principal always disappear when I catch him in one of these irrepressible moods when his grammar as well as his humour goes Army on him. I am always suspicious of the man who is forever the scholar or the efficient administrator.⁹⁵

The Colonel has a parting remark for the diarist who has been in his office throughout the phone conversation:

'[. .] Don't get me wrong about Brockington. He'll make a good teacher someday after he quits taking himself so seriously.'⁹⁶

It is the overly-serious attitude with concomitant misdirections from the diarist's viewpoint of a whole cadre of young male teachers at The School which the diarist

94 Ibid., p. 15.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.

appears to resent. In his entry of September 6, 1967, the diarist writes:

[. . .] I have only one spare a day on my schedule this year, which is all right with me. I'd just as soon teach as sit around in the staff room arguing with these bright people who get so serious about education. It's certainly the easiest job I've ever had and I've tried just about everything now but the ministry.

Speaking of that, one of these serious young teachers who must have been on the sidelines when I was battling the Reverend Esther⁹⁷ yesterday, came to me today with a peculiar question.

'How is it,' he asked, 'that you get along so well with the students when you have such a rough time with the teachers here?'

Which was a very easy question for me to answer. I told him that I was paid to put up with the damfoolishness of the students.⁹⁸

The poles are established: on one hand the older men with experience outside the field of education and on the other hand the serious young men with specific training in education--"The Humanist" and "The Pedagogue".

The diarist often finds himself at odds with the young male teachers usually on behalf of students. Although the following diary excerpt does not directly pertain to the school situation, the implications may be worth consideration. The diarist is thinking of his own attitudes

⁹⁷ A woman teacher at The School. The incident referred to here is discussed in presentation of the character-composite "The Female" in this chapter.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

as a young man.

[. . .] And I suppose that in the days when I was young and thoughtless and oh so clever, I would have done my devilish utmost to tell the old lad how simple-minded and unimportant he really was.⁹⁹

There appears an attitude of offence in relation to the young males. The diarist states "I find myself getting into arguments too often lately."¹⁰⁰ Possibly he believes the military maxim that offence is the best defence. Among the young males the strap is resorted to for disciplinary purposes, detentions are commonplace, and regulations are rigidly adhered to. A young Mohawk lad is given a detention for wearing a buckskin thong with a pendant at his neck. The matter is reported by the diarist. The detention is rescinded by the Colonel.

In referring to a number of Mohawk students who are to be added to the student body of The School, the diarist writes:

My guess is that there's a lot of latent fire in these Mohawk youngsters, and I'm afraid that if they don't act properly inferior some of our teachers are going to have trouble with them.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 54. (The diarist has met a local poet, an old man with a house full of musty manuscripts, who claims his poetry ranks with the best of Yeats or Chesterton.)

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 130.

The diarist feels that most teachers talk far too much, that "verbal diarrhea" seems to be an occupational hazard within the profession. Not so with the Colonel. In a September staff meeting just after arrival of the Mohawk students, he succinctly makes this statement concerning them:

'[. . .] Now, with our expansion into a Regional school, it is only logical that they should all come here. Don't forget that they have every right to be here. Don't forget that they have every right to feel at home here.¹⁰²

When discovering that an Indian student from his own home class has not been attending French classes, the diarist inquires as to the reason. It appears that the French teacher "batted" him. The incident is verified to the diarist's satisfaction. He writes that his first impulse was to go up and see the teacher because he had already typed him as "a bully and a son-of-a-bitch." ¹⁰³ What the diarist does do is go to Jerry Kavanaugh in Guidance and tell him the story. This is the only mention of a guidance person in the novel. The interview with Kavanaugh follows this vein:

102 Ibid., p. 131.

103 Ibid., p. 149.

'It's against regulations for a pupil to change classes this late in the year,' he said, 'but...'

'But a good Guidance man is an expert at twisting regulations.'

He laughed and said he'd manage somehow.¹⁰⁴

At this point Jerry Kavanaugh is absorbed by the character-composite "The Humanist". Brief though his appearance may have been in the novel, it was time enough to align himself with the camp of those pictured as humane and flexible.

The final commonality that appears to give more blotting power to the diarist in the absorption process is the matter of attitude toward The Board. When the diarist was written of earlier in the presentation, he spoke of The Board and its noble declaration concerning education. The Board, of course, with its help, those scholarly gentlemen at the top who share space with a computer, represents the community. The Board's members are of the people and are placed into the position they hold by the people. It is for The Board's employees, the school administrators and teachers to preserve the status quo which The Board may want to preserve or to bring about changes The Board may want brought about. The administrators at The School have learned to rust where they must and bend when they can. There is a gap between The Board's noble declarations and what actually

104 Ibid., p. 150.

goes on in formal education as it is carried out. The diarist appears to blame The Board.

The diarist sees hypocrisy at work in society. On the one hand parents seem not only permissive but actually encourage the mingling of the sexes at an early age: kids of twelve or less go to dances--dances sponsored by the school or by mothers worrying about the fact that daughter seems to be uncomfortable when boys are around. On the other hand, parents act shocked and disillusioned when they discover their children have gone beyond the bounds of what they think of as "proper". As a case in point, then, by way of example, society gets the "boy-girl thing" started as soon as possible by its permissiveness and through its commercial entrepreneurs with their "skin" movies, records, and magazines advertising every device "that will serve as a snare and a delusion for a young male"¹⁰⁵ and, once the hormone fires are kindled, The Board dictates that there will be no "smooching" in school.

The diarist's attitude concerning The Board has been explained. It is in this attitude and in the "wink game" that the fourth absorptive factor is found in justification of the diarist's blotting up his administrators

105 Ibid., p. 68.

to create the character-composite. The Colonel literally winks at the diarist across his desk as he nettles Brockington. The diarist and Kavanaugh are figuratively winking at each other as they agree that a good Guidance man is an expert at twisting regulations. The diarist winks at students when he tells them he will be looking another way when a short skirt breezes by or when he takes a tie from his drawer. The diarist sees in his mind's eye a big smile on the Colonel's face during a staff meeting at which Esther McIntosh "goes on" in her usual manner about boys with long hair and about the "filthy practice" of pasting Playboy pictures on the inside of locker doors. The diarist says of his principal:

The Colonel listens to all this very carefully. He has to be a disciplinarian, of course, and he has to respect the wishes of the good solid citizens who put him in charge of this school, but I think he must have one hell of a big smile under that sober face of his.¹⁰⁶

Again on the occasion of lending a lurid tie to a boy who sets out to prove (by wearing the creation) that it can be more improper wearing a tie than going without one, the diarist observes:

106 Ibid., p. 89.

I must be very careful at times like this not to take sides against the Administration. I reminded him that I wasn't any too sure that the Colonel himself was sold on this jacket-shirt-tie rule, but that the Board had decided the matter for him and he had an obligation to carry it through.¹⁰⁷

The diarist is defensive on behalf of his administrators, attributing the fundamental wrongs to a higher plane, The Board, and thence by implication to the community at large. The Board may indeed dictate certain dress regulations such as skirt length but what the diarist chooses to ignore is that the manner in which these regulations are enforced is a matter of logistics at school level. If the girls are to sit up primly with both feet on the floor while the teacher passes down the aisle, this procedure and the ritualistic character of it (after the Lord's Prayer) would perhaps be peculiar to The School. Other schools would devise methods of their own.

When someone at The Board became very "medical minded" and decided each student would have a medical examination, urine specimens were necessary. Small bottles are to be distributed in class with instructions. As the diarist was about to plunge into a silly speech he had concocted for the occasion, a premonition swept over him. The intercom "squawk box" seemed to be listening. Cutting

107 Ibid., p. 135.

his planned speech to the students very short, he left his classroom and made his way quickly to the main office. Sure enough, there he found Mac Smiley and Ingram (presumably another vice-principal) sorrowfully disconnecting the tape recorder they had set up to capture whatever witticisms would form part of the ceremony opening the great urine campaign. The diarist states:

So we all had a good laugh about that, my laugh being somewhat the best of the three.

Seems to me there can't be too much wrong with an Administration which can take time out like that for a bit of horseplay.¹⁰⁸

Toward the end of the novel the diarist visits the Colonel to tell him that he will be resigning at the end of that current teaching year.

[. . .] 'I hope I haven't caused you any more trouble than you've caused me,' I said.

He got up and gave me his hand. 'It's been fun!' he said. And I thought he could have offered me no better compliment.¹⁰⁹

"The Humanist" has been established. In school he stands directly or indirectly against Esther McIntosh (part of "The Female" character-composite) and the serious young males (of "The Pedagogue" composite). What The Board dictates as "proper" becomes holy writ for such as

108 Ibid., p. 52.

109 Ibid., p. 161.

Esther whose own stance is a prickly one on the matter of morality. The young males follow a hard, inflexible line in matters of rules and regulations as long as no unusual twist occurs. The very boy who was sent home by one of these men for not wearing a tie paraded about the school for days wearing a tie with a vulgar depiction. Nothing was said to him. The regulation covered the absence of ties but apparently did not "spell out" what should be done about a lurid one.

The accuracy of times of the events mentioned in the last few diary entries does not stand up to scrutiny, but it is in these entries that the diarist faces Sherry's father. It is a traumatic time. The diarist promises Mr. McIver that he will take the initiative in ending his relationship with Sherry. She, in turn, is incensed at his having agreed to this.

'Obscene!' she kept saying. 'So they think it would be obscene of you to keep me here! Well, maybe you can tell them for me--tell the whole pious lot of them--that this is the only obscene thing you've ever done to me!'¹¹⁰

It appears that the diarist is willing to play the "wink game" outside of school as well. He tries to placate the angry girl.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 183.

'Maybe we could still see each other once in a while,' [. . .] 'Nobody would have to know if we didn't meet here. And I didn't promise not to see you again!'¹¹¹

Sherry leaves. The diarist is desolate. He curses "the whole ridiculous hypocrisy of a society which insisted it had a right to pass judgment on any aspect of human behavior that threatened to be pleasurable."¹¹²

Sherry returns. The diarist is happy.

She told me I shouldn't put cream in the mint tea. that it was much better straight. She's a bossy little bitch, but I don't hold that against her yet.¹¹³

The diary closes. The novel ends. Words of the diarist linger:

[. . .] But if the years have made no other improvement in me, they have at least convinced me now that what the world thinks of a man isn't half as important as what he thinks of himself.¹¹⁴

The reader of the novel or of this rather lengthy presentation should have some idea of what the main character thinks of himself. There have been many pages devoted to this very matter. In analysis of this presentation of the diarist, the present writer, according to the terms of

111 Ibid., p. 184.

112 Ibid., p. 185.

113 Ibid., p. 180.

114 Ibid., p. 54.

this study and with the diarist's own words in mind, will attempt to keep incidental remarks of his own concerning the character to a minimum. The ones that are made will only appear controversial to those who enjoy controversy for its own sake.

b) "The Female".--"The Female" as a character-composite will be introduced by one of the diarist's observations. The observation was made during a sheep-shearing demonstration he provided for classes at The School.

[. . .] The elementary classes were paraded out one after the other, and the teachers who didn't worry too much about the muss it might make, let each kid take a sample of wool back to the classroom.¹¹⁵

By implication there were at least some teachers who did worry about such matters. To say that these teachers were necessarily women teachers would be sheer speculation. It is of note, however, that one of the apparent points of aggravation between the diarist and his wife is the matter of "muss". His "hideaway", an old stone house some distance from the main house, shelters all his books. "So many of them that the wife kicked them out of her house several years ago."¹¹⁶ He can walk into his "hideaway" any hour of the

115 Ibid., p. 15.

116 Ibid., p. 8.

day or night "without getting hell for the crap which comes in with my rubber boots".¹¹⁷ If there is a tone of perverseness here the reason may be found in further evidence, explicit as well as implicit, throughout the diary of the wife's efforts to keep a clean and orderly house. How such efforts are perceived would be a personal matter. In referring to his "hideaway", the diarist's "I wash the floors once a year, the windows never"¹¹⁸ seems a reaction to what he may consider an undue fastidiousness.

What pertinence does the above have as regards "The Female" as a character-composite? Perhaps a great deal. If the diarist holds a certain view of "woman" in the abstract, it is unlikely that "woman as teacher" will be basically any different from "woman in general". Since characters, for the most part, are seen through the eyes of the diarist, that man's attitudes toward women take on significance in creation of "The Female". A detailed study of these attitudes could be made by considering each and every girl and woman in Diary of a Dirty Old Man. This is not the purpose of the present chapter in which the teacher-character is of prime concern, but since the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

general attitude may be of significance, a few random quotes will be given.

The diarist in reference to his having to carry out skirt inspections (for length) at The School:

Not that I object to looking at young, well-turned legs. As an old livestock judge I suppose I should be highly appreciative of being given such an undeniably Christian reason for looking at them.¹¹⁹

The diarist in referring to his uncles and their activities back in Ontario over three decades earlier:

[. . .] Men who could prophesy the performance of a woman as shrewdly as they could that of a horse. Men who could always be depended upon to do the jobs that no one else would dare tackle. Like raising a bridge or moving a brick house or finding a bottle of genuine Hiram Walker in Prohibition time, or servicing one of those same lovely women up on Crown Hill who were so awfully nice that they wouldn't dream of letting their kids play with us.¹²⁰

The diarist in referring to one of the favorite activities of his dog, Schultz:

[. . .] one of our giddy little Spaniels would be howling for love and Schultz was determined that no mere matter of race should prevent him from putting her out of her misery.¹²¹

The diarist, in describing for a young salesman, a type of barrel he wished to purchase: "'A big bosomy rain-barrel. A topless one preferably, with a sound bottom and

119 Ibid., p. 11.

120 Ibid., p. 109.

121 Ibid., p. 163.

a good tight bung.'"122

The general view of women will be seen to be quite clearly epitomized through the teacher characters forming the composite character, "The Female". "The Female" will have as components only females who are teachers. This delimitation will not alter cases. The fact that the females in the category set by delimitations in forming the character-composite are teachers seems largely incidental other than that occupation puts them in The School where a virile male happens to be "operating". What they share with their like in the broader sphere, their sex, is what is important rather than their profession. Their sex sets them apart from man with their own brand of faults and foibles (such as preoccupation with "muss", for instance) and also provides that biological difference which prompts the diarist to write "and the women still bother me so much on my nights of abstinence that I can hardly roll over in bed."123

"The Female" is made up of six teacher components all of whom are either brought into the novel as "possibles" in the diarist's search for the anonymous writer of love poems to him or as deliverers of compliments. The exception,

122 Ibid., p. 38.

123 Ibid., p. 7.

Esther McIntosh, is strongly set forth as a bigot, fair game for a teasing "liberal" male. On one occasion, after a not unusual staffroom skirmish she approaches the diarist in a school corridor to say, "'I tremble for you sometimes! You're so sacrilegious! You're so utterly, diabolically sacrilegious! I just tremble for you!'"¹²⁴ She was actually trembling. The diarist suggested in retaliation, "'How be we take a night off together?' [.] 'And after you've got me converted we could have a good lay.'"¹²⁵

The first anonymous poem written to the diarist is found by him in his box at school. It causes him a restless night.

I lay awake for quite a while trying to figure that one out. I could sure use a little extracurricular activity these days, and so could some female in that staff room. But who? Which one of them not only paints in water colours but writes poetry?
Well, I intend to find out.¹²⁶

It is no great secret from the reader of Diary of a Dirty Old Man that Sherry McIver, a grade-eleven student at the time, wrote the poem. (Dust jackets promote dramatic irony.) The diarist assumes that the poem has been written by a staff member and his determination to find the poet prods along

124 Ibid., p. 50.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid., p. 19.

what little plot the diary offers. His search is to take the form of a process of elimination. He starts with "a shy little girl built like a clipper ship"¹²⁷, Ann Swan, just out of Teacher's College. Ann readily accepts an invitation to lunch, eats steak and mushrooms, and then proceeds to tell the diarist about her boy friend in the Army. This ruled out choice number one. The reader hears no more of Ann Swan as a female possibly in need of "servicing". As regards Ann Swan as teacher, the reader is told nothing.

Jean Hewittson is next in line. This female staff member is with the school's Art Department. In the alcoholic honesty of a teachers' Friday night party she bemoaned the fact that today's young men seemed discouragingly sexless. Teachers especially.

'When one does finally get around to taking you out, all he wants to talk about is some book or other. What I like is a man who looks you over as if you were being auctioned off on the slave block. Trouble is that the only guy who pays you a compliment like that has already bought somebody else.'¹²⁸

This information is passed on to the diarist on the ensuing Monday by Hartley, at whose place the party had been held. The reader may reasonably assume that Hartley is a

127 Ibid., p. 20.

128 Ibid., p. 25.

staff member of The School although this is not a certainty. The dozen or so at this party were all teachers. Hartley is the only character, other than the diarist, who is given an opportunity to make a direct comment concerning a female. His one comment is brief and by way of guidance for the diarist.

[. . .] 'There's a lot of good material going to waste in that woman. Just your kind too. Dairy type. And you always did believe in giving needy women a full share of Christian charity. So what are you waiting for?'¹²⁹

The diarist did not wait for long. On the very day that he received Hartley's intimations he visited the Art Department, looked Jean Hewittson up and down as she was taking off her smock, in a manner as if he might possibly make a bid, and asked her how she would like to "do the town" with him on the coming Friday night. "'I thought you'd never ask,'"¹³⁰ she replied.

The diarist succeeds in giving the "needy woman" some of his own brand of "Christian charity", something that the young male teachers apparently were not willing or able to do. He writes in his diary on Friday, May 26, 1967:

129 Ibid., p. 25.

130 Ibid.

Paid \$9.00 for the dinner, almost as much for the vodka and orange (an investment I later discovered hadn't been needed at all) and another \$7.00 for the motel room. She exploded three times and was quite disappointed when I decided to throw in the towel. But it was all biology and she chewed gum viciously the whole time, even when she was exploding.¹³¹

Here is a picture of Jean Hewittson as a woman, in a sexual role. Jean Hewittson in the classroom, or in her role as teacher, is not mentioned. As a matter of fact, she is not mentioned again in the novel. The diarist had determined that "she's certainly not the one who wrote that poem"¹³² and moved on with his quest.

The summer intervenes although a second love poem is delivered one moonlit August night directly to the diarist's stone-house study on his farm. He found it in an envelope tucked under the front door. At first there is an inclination to believe that "one or a couple of those cocky younger fellows on the staff"¹³³ are playing games with him. It certainly did seem unlikely that a woman would make her way out to his farm to wander around in the night. Nevertheless, when school opens once again his determination to find out who is "burning for him" is

131 Ibid., p. 26.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid., p. 47.

renewed and again it is toward the female staff members that his efforts are directed.

When Debbie Maguire, who has taught elementary grades ever since The School began, approached the diarist in the staff room concerning the encyclopedia for which she was an agent, he suggested that she bring her sales material out to his place some night. "'How about tonight?' she asked."¹³⁴

The diarist had some trepidation about Debbie having possibly written the poems. He had the suspicion that she was badly in need of a man. At least thirty, far from pretty, colorless in appearance as well as personality, she seemed to be lacking in the courage necessary to make herself more attractive. "Get a woman like that hanging around your neck and a man might have a very painful time getting rid of her."¹³⁵

Very little time was spent discussing the encyclopedia, nor did Debbie Macguire seem unduly disappointed in the diarist's refusal to order a set of her books. The Diarist brewed some coffee but martinis were actually served. Debbie seemed in no hurry to leave. When she was

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 60.

finally at the door the diarist pulled her back in and with a kiss and wandering hands made her know that she would be welcome to stay longer. His growing insistence elicited the warning that he might have a real problem on his hands for she had never yet had a man. The diarist felt this was a foolish confession for her to have made for in so doing a challenge was offered. The two wrestled a bit, but Debbie finally pulled away. "'Another time maybe,' she said. 'After I have had more time to think about it.'"¹³⁶ After Debbie leaves, the diarist once more feels some trepidation.

[. . .] and now I think I played the fool to fire her up like that. She's a very, very intelligent and well-read woman, but something tells me she could get as desperate as any other woman who lets herself get lonely.¹³⁷

"Another time" was only four days off, at Debbie Macguire's apartment. The diarist writes:

I decided that this time, I must take it easy. Give her a chance to warm up. Here she was stiff as an icicle again. When she went over to the buffet to pour the second round of sherry, I pulled her in and kissed her but that was about all. There was lots of time. After all, she had already warned me that she might be a problem.¹³⁸

136 Ibid., p. 60.

137 Ibid.

138 Ibid., p. 61.

The diarist resumes:

So I could hardly believe my ears when all at once she said, 'All right, whatever it is that you do, won't you do it to me? Do it to me now, please? Before I have the time to change my mind?'

Which is the first time I've ever had an invitation as uncomplicated as that.¹³⁹

The woman seemed petrified, yet there was at the same time a strange insistence. "Was it just a wild determination to graduate from the shame of innocence?"¹⁴⁰ The diarist had to ask himself seriously at this very point if this could really be his sought-after writer of verses. How would it be possible for any woman to have so much poetry in her soul and so little in her body? With her hymen disposed of, Debbie came out of the bathroom crying a little but thanking the diarist as if he had "given her eternal life".¹⁴¹

Debbie unfolds after the strained Hallowe'en night encounter. Liaisons with the diarist continue. He speaks of her as becoming quite relaxed and ardent. Later on he states that "She's very good in bed now. Not the least bit shy."¹⁴² She gets a new hairdo and starts using make-up.

139 Ibid., p. 61.

140 Ibid., p. 62.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid., p. 91.

The diarist admits that she is "rather attractive". The following summer, still maintaining a virtuous stance despite his desire for Sherry McIver, now graduated and working at his farm, the diarist wishes for Debbie Macguire's presence, but Debbie is in Europe. By this time, the diarist knows that the poet he has been searching for is Sherry. Some time before, Debbie had assured him that she was no artist--that she did not even try. And he believed her. Poet or not, Debbie had "blossomed". Debbie also assures the diarist on different occasions that "'These are just moments [. . .] And I know very well they'll never add up. So don't be afraid. I won't cling.'"¹⁴³

Another female staff member had been briefly considered as a "possible" by the diarist during his quest for the anonymous poet. Miss Smeltzer taught the "Slow Learner" class in the elementary division of The School. It was she who recounted an amusing anecdote for the diarist concerning her class a few days after his sheep-shearing exhibition at The School. She had been reviewing a Bible Story reading and had asked "'And who is the Good Shepherd?'"¹⁴⁴ One of the brighter-faced boys in the class

143 Ibid., p. 91.

144 Ibid., p. 144.

had answered that the Good Shepherd was Mr. Green. This story was told with what he described as a "special smile". It is probably that "special smile" that is remembered when it occurs to him to ask himself concerning the anonymous poet "Could it be Miss Smeltzer? Wonder why I didn't think of her before."¹⁴⁵ Whether Miss Smeltzer ever received the "benefit" of the diarist's attentions is left to speculation. The diary contains selected excerpts. Not every day is itemized. Nothing is said of Miss Smeltzer as a teacher. Whatever one assumes about her in that role must be drawn from the fact that she did pass on a little anecdote about an incident in her class. Even in this the question might be posed of whether it was primarily to ingratiate herself with the diarist or because of a genuine interest in her students.

Mrs. Jarry, the school librarian, is another bearer of compliments to the diarist, although there is no indication of her being considered a "possible" in the quest for the anonymous writer of verses. The diarist has received an urgent call to one of the school "johns". Dismissing the young messenger who had come to his classroom to get him, he went into a cubicle of the boys' lavatory

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 26.

to free Mark Allister's foreskin from the zippered trap of his fly. Mark was one of the bigger and more troublesome boys of the school. The ordeal was painful in more ways than one. The diarist said nothing about the incident but Mark must have. A few days after the occurrence, Mrs. Jarry, with a knowing smile but no mention of the incident specifically, posed the question "'Why is it always you?'"¹⁴⁶ She indicated to the diarist that he, in fact, had become a sort of father-confessor for The School.

Mrs. Jarry manages the school's huge new library with admirable efficiency. The diarist believes this is undoubtedly due in part to her authoritative voice and her ability to muster a very stern appearance upon demand. She prepares a daily list of delinquent book borrowers and publishes it in an official mimeographed bulletin which every teacher receives to start the day.

Intrigued by an Indian name which topped Mrs. Jarry's list on one occasion and imagining the young girl pleading her case "before the formidable lady who occupies the throne at our library desk"¹⁴⁷ the diarist exercises his wit in penning some silly lines he titled "Peter Pan On

146 Ibid., p. 82.

147 Ibid., p. 144.

The Reserve". The doggerel began with the stanza:

Little Mary Two Axe
Of the Mohawks and the Mixmacs
Is up before the lady with the steel wool hair;
The lady's eyes are steely too,
'Your Peter Pan's long overdue
Though I've wheedled and I've needled and done
 everything but swear!
Your defiance is astounding--
Can it be you relish hounding?
Or am I right in saying that you just don't care?'¹⁴⁸

The stanzas continue and Mrs. Jarry is referred to as "Battle Axe" at one point for sake of rhyme. "Peter Pan On The Reserve" was simply a "tongue-in-cheek" bit of foolishness so its author, the diarist, experienced some disquietude when he found that Debbie Macguire had made a copy of the "poem" and it was now "all around the school" including the library. Mrs. Jarry apparently was not too impressed. A few days later when the diarist received a note in his box asking that he arrange to see her, he drafted some sort of apology to take with him when he went to her office. Mrs. Jarry did not even mention the verses. She had wanted to draw his attention to another matter: the fact that one of his students was skipping French classes by staying in the library under the aegis of a permission slip allegedly signed by the diarist.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 144.

Esther McIntosh (Saint Esther, as she is referred to by many staff members) brings no complimentary tidings to the diarist. It is she who trembles for him and stands aghast at his sacrilege as she sees it.

Esther, who holds an arts degree from a Fundamentalist college, and whose father had been a preacher, was particularly disturbed by the inclusion of about five hundred Catholic students into The School. The School was enlarged to accommodate these students who had formerly been under a separate school system.

'If they want to come and be like the rest of us,' she /Esther/ said, 'that's all right. But as usual, they're asking for special privileges. Imagine! Nuns teaching in our classrooms! Nuns teaching Protestant kids! And worse than that, a priest on the staff to teach them the same old idolatry and superstition! A priest on the staff of a Protestant high school. Oh Calvin! Where are you now?'¹⁴⁹

Esther does not believe in using make-up and her face is old and plain until it lights up with excitement. Such excitement is elicited by the diarist, who, impatient with her "crying wilderness", asked her why she did not emigrate to Northern Ireland if she wanted to live in a country that kept Christ uncontaminated. Esther countered with a demand to know why the diarist was so dead set against her faith,

149 Ibid., p. 50.

to which he replied that it was basically dishonest.

[. . .] 'One minute you're having a spiritual orgasm about the rosy, blond curls of the sweet baby Jesus bringing peace and love to the world,' I said. [sic] 'and the next minute you've joined Billy Graham and Johnson in the holy war against the Vietnamese. And you're arguing for the return of capital punishment and the lash and censorship! Now I ask you, can there be anyone more dishonest than a high school teacher--an English teacher at that--crusading for censorship?'¹⁵⁰

As The School expanded to regional status and four hundred Mohawk students were among those "bussed in" each day, Esther McIntosh once again took a firm stance, made manifest in the "gab" session which followed the traditional staff meeting on school opening day, after the students were enrolled and sent home. Esther's perennial concern about obscenity in The School was sharpened by the presence of the Mohawk students. Here was the added challenge of paganism. She was particularly disturbed that more and more boys were pasting Playboy photos of nude women on the inside of locker doors. She had also observed that the poetry on the walls of the boys' toilets was getting more "daringly dirty".

150 Ibid., p. 50.

'I would remind the staff,' she said, 'that many of these Indians are neither Catholic nor Protestant. They are still unashamed to admit that they are "Long-house"--meaning that they are just as pagan today as their ancestors were. Now I ask you, fellow teachers, what chance does our school have of pointing out the better life to these poor lost kids if it allows a girlie show in every locker and obscene literature on every toilet wall?'¹⁵¹

At this point the diarist winked at Debbie Macguire across the aisle from him and the two went out for a scotch or two and "a quiet but redeeming afternoon of sin."¹⁵²

School dress is another ongoing concern of Esther's. At another staff meeting it was she, with less courageous backing from a half dozen other teachers, who wanted the boom lowered on boys who insisted upon wearing their hair long. The diarist reminded Esther that Jesus Christ and Sir John A. MacDonald both had long hair, but she couldn't see that this had any bearing on the matter in question. The principal listened to the arguments very carefully and the diarist made the following observation about The Colonel as he did so:

[. . .] He has to be a disciplinarian, of course, and he has to respect the wishes of the good solid citizens who put him in charge of the school, but I think he must have one hell of a big smile under the sober face of his.¹⁵³

151 Ibid., p. 131.

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid., p. 89.

In some ways Esther's attitudes seem to reflect The Board's, or at least The Board's as the diarist sees them, with all the paradox that they engender.

[. . .] The Board, the Department Heads and all the other scholarly gentlemen who share the top office along with the computer are indeed quite noble in their declarations. They have told us teachers time and time again that if we want to be true to our high calling, we must do our utmost to encourage the development of personality--to encourage our pupils to be individuals. But posted on every classroom bulletin board are the ancient regulations about school uniforms.¹⁵⁴

c) "The Pedagogue", a Character-Composite.--Many aspects of the teachers who will be combined to constitute "The Pedagogue" have already been mentioned in the presentation of "The Humanist". In justifying the constitution of that character-composite, contrast was used. "The Humanist" is most things "The Pedagogue" is not. The older men teachers with experience outside the teaching profession lent themselves to absorption by the diarist. The constituents composing "The Pedagogue" are young and seemingly have come into the profession directly from whatever establishment taught them to teach. "The Pedagogue" character-composite could conceivably be formed by absorption because of the uniformity of elements but since there

154 Ibid., p. 134.

is no overpowering character to act as the absorbing force, the process of combination is used.

A number of nameless young male teachers plus one for whom there is given only a surname make up the teacher character-composite, "The Pedagogue". The number is indeterminate. While some specific incidents in the novel mention only one young male at a particular time or on a particular occasion, there are other times when all are referred to en masse or as a segment of a whole. Jean Hewittson's ¹⁵⁵ remark, which is the only one made by someone other than the diarist concerning constituents of the character-composite, is a sweeping one. She bemoaned the fact that today's young men seem discouragingly sexless. Teachers especially. When one takes a girl out, his desire is to talk about some book or other. The diarist refers to "those cocky younger fellows on the staff"¹⁵⁶ and at the time a love poem from an "unknown admirer" appears mysteriously under the door of his stone house, he does not appear to be amused at the thought that it may be they who are trying to "strike up a little game" with

155 An art teacher, one of the constituents of the character-composite, "The Female".

156 Ibid., p. 47.

him. He thinks that they may believe him to brag too much about his prowess with women. An incident involving one of the younger men on staff is the strapping by him of three big boys lined in front of his classroom door. Brockington, principal of the elementary division of The School, is the one male in the character-composite, to be named.

The principal of The School speaks with Brockington on the phone about a sheep-shearing demonstration to be given for students by the diarist. The Colonel meets with some reticence on Brockington's part in agreeing to free classes and teachers to take part in the event. Tongue in cheek, but not too far, the Colonel suggests that Brockington needs a course in "Sheepology" too. The significance of this remark has already been mentioned in the presentation of "The Humanist". It would appear that the Colonel, who is actually of the substance of that character-composite, recognizes a difference in the type of training Brockington has had for teaching and the type he himself has had. The older man right there and then goes on to give him a little more basic information about sheep. After expanding on the form of that animal's excrement, the Colonel, in a badgering and playful mood goes on:

'[. . .] I suppose you didn't know a horse makes buns either, did you?...And that a cow makes something that looks like a Tam O'Shanter. Didn't know that either? Well, I guessed as much. Here you are trying to teach those poor kids about everything from the democratic process to the atomic bomb and you don't know bugger-all about shit!'¹⁵⁷

Brockington is not an overpowering character and so "The Pedagogue" composite is created by combination rather than absorption although the serious young males show a great amount of uniformity. This appears to be because of the diarist's tendency to lump them together in his remarks and thinking.

The diarist makes a special point of stating that he has no degree in pedagogy. Later he writes:

I doubt if I can be classified as one of the modern 'gadget-minded' pedagogues, and I rarely ask the administration for anything in the way of teaching equipment.¹⁵⁸

Admittedly the above remark could apply to women teachers as well as men, but such remarks are usually followed by some indication that the diarist has men in mind. In a quotation already given in the presentation of "The Humanist", the diarist comments on the fact that he is pleased to have an extra class to teach. It will take him away from

157 Ibid., p. 15.

158 Ibid., p. 80.

"these bright people who get so serious about education."¹⁵⁹

Immediately after this remark, the diarist quotes one of those serious young teachers:

'How is it,' he asked, 'that you get along so well with the students when you have such a rough time with the teachers here?'¹⁶⁰

The diarist congratulates himself on having let students under the guidance of Sherry McIver go ahead with no interference in their task of preparing the school gym for graduation ceremonies and festivities. He then speculates:

[. . .] I wonder how that decoration job would have looked and how much it would have cost if, instead of Smiley and me, there had been a couple of the worrying and incurably conscientious teachers bossing the job.¹⁶¹

Omnious sounds of strapping in The School remind the diarist that some believe in applied pain as an aid to learning. He writes:

[. . .] I have never been able to believe that any competent teacher will have any use for it [the strap]. Nor can I believe that any incompetent teacher will ever better himself or the troublesome pupil by its use.¹⁶²

159 Ibid., p. 51.

160 Ibid.

161 Ibid., p. 62.

162 Ibid., p. 76.

On one occasion, force beyond the still-authorized strap is used. The diarist in ascertaining why a student of his homeroom has not been attending French class is told:

'Well sir,' he said finally, 'that son-of-a-bitch that tries to teach it, he batted me up against the wall last time I was there! I wasn't doing nothing, sir, except that I just didn't give a damn for learning his lesson, that's all.'¹⁶³

The matter of dress regulations creates a nucleus around which discontent centres. One top student is sent home for not wearing a tie and angry with "the injustice of it all"¹⁶⁴ sets out to prove to the "Christian gentleman"¹⁶⁵ who sent him home for being improperly dressed, that one can be more improper with one. It depends on the tie. The same "dedicated teacher" who precipitated the plan for vindication mentioned above was also the teacher who chose to decree the buckskin thong worn by a Mohawk student not to be a tie and to award the boy a detention.

The diarist states concerning The Board:

They tell us sweetly that the ideal classroom is a happy one; but the exams, the homework and the detentions are all proof that what they really believe is that to learn is to suffer.¹⁶⁶

163 Ibid., p. 149.

164 Ibid., p. 135.

165 Ibid., p. 136.

166 Ibid., p. 135.

When the Colonel's conversation with Brockington concerning the sheep-shearing demonstration ends, he says to the diarist:

'[. . .] Brockington likes to think that to learn is to suffer. [. . .] Don't get me wrong about Brockington. He'll make a good teacher someday after he quits taking himself so seriously.'¹⁶⁷

2. Analysis of Characters

a) "The Humanist", A Character-Composite

1. Major or minor character?

"The Humanist" is a major character, constituted by absorption of three minor characters by the novel's main character, the diarist.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

Yes. It is significant in that a base is formed for the observations and reflections which form a great portion of the novel. It is significant in forming a contrast with another type of work (farming) and in using that other occupation to contrast aspects of informal and formal education. It is significant in that relationships with young people are shown. Being a teacher put "The Humanist" in contact with those young people.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

In a very favorable light. They look upon him as friend both inside and outside the classroom. They look to him for help in a variety of situations. He seems a father image offering advice, sympathy and understanding. He is seen to be "accessible" and as someone who can be relied on in emergencies or as a buffer between students and the vagaries of "the system". His activities outside the regular school system reinforce student interest in him and respect for him.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

There is no indication.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

He is viewed as argumentative by "The Pedagogue". "The Female" may be said for the most part to view him as accommodating and as someone who can be depended upon in difficult circumstances.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

As an asset to the school. As someone who has a sense of humor and who provides interesting interludes in an otherwise routine setup.

7. How does the teacher view himself and his role as a teacher? What is his philosophy, if any?

He teaches within a formal educational system without believing in the efficacy of such a system. Having agreed to work within the system, he abides by its tenets and carries out the duties and responsibilities expected of him. Within this framework, however, he views it his personal mission to mitigate the frustrations and chagrin of the "captives", the students, those within the system not because of a salary but because of what society expects and decrees. His own decreed task is to put forth measured amounts of subject matter each day to certain groups at certain times, eventually examining the persons in the groups on that material. Personally, he believes that it is not the subject matter or a definite order of presentation that is important, but rather a two-way communication between teacher and student allied with flexibility on the part of the teacher. It is vital to empathize, but at the same time there is decorum in the student-teacher relationship to be maintained. He is against the "trappings" of formalized education: examinations, detentions, punishment, homework. He is for many things which he feels are lost or weakened

within a school system: development of responsibility, discovery learning, the preservation of wonder, aesthetic sensitivity, practical "know-how". The destruction of some of these things begins before the child even gets to school beginning with parents who do not understand. These same parents, as part of the community behind a school board, then officially through the organization, go on to destroy what is left of these feelings in the child, in the institutions known as schools. Acceptance of a position within the system makes "The Humanist" accept a responsibility toward it to the extent that he would not advocate its overthrow. What changes do come must come within the framework of what already exists. He is no violent rebel but where and when deviations can be made or remedies found he will resort to them. To "The Humanist" teaching is not a science but an art. That art could best be practised in less formal surroundings and atmosphere than school, as he sees it constituted, now offers. Outdoor education if not too formalized could offer a solution. A sense of clear purpose on the part of educationists is lacking. Such a purpose is found on a farm where man can fight the fight that God intended for him.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

As captives in a system that is hypocritical, professing aims in theory that are not led to in practice. He maintains a humanistic attitude toward them, feels that they are misled and misjudged. He views them as persons with potential but seldom being allowed to use that potential. He has personal confidence in them and feels a closeness to them. At the same time there is a decorum to be maintained in the teacher-student relationship.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

Parents are ambiguous in their desires for their children. The community as represented through The Board reflects a hypocritical society.

10. How does the teacher view his colleagues?

As teachers who, through lack of experience in life and living, tend to be narrow in their approach to matters and inflexible as well. They take themselves too seriously and are conscientious to the point where an enterprise may well decrease in its chance for success because of this very conscientiousness. They are inclined to be harsh or less than humane. A more reasonable approach to students may develop in time and with experience. Female staff members have one positive

attribute: they are females, and with that said, the fact that they are teachers is secondary.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

As employees like himself, caught up by the dictates of a hypocritical society as expressed through a school board. They attempt to maintain a sense of humor, nevertheless, and practise a decorum in their role as overseers.

b) "The Female", A Character-Composite

1. Major or minor character?

"The Female" is a minor character constituted by bringing together (combining) six women teachers.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

No. The significant feature of "The Female" is that she is female. Her sex is more important than her profession.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

There is no indication.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

There is no indication.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

There is no indication of how she is viewed by "The

Pedagogue". She is viewed by "The Humanist" as an object whose function is gratification of the male or the bolstering of his ego. She may also be the butt of his jibes. (Debbie Macguire's being "intelligent and well-read" is cancelled out by Jean Hewittson's disdain of books.)

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

If at all, it is with an air of secret amusement.

7. How does the teacher view herself and her role as a teacher? What is her philosophy, if any?

There is some indication of a philosophy through Esther McIntosh but this is not enough to outweigh the absence of expressed concern by others in the composite about professional matters.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

Sometimes there appears to be a benevolent interest.

At other times students are regarded as being in need of close control.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

There is no indication.

10. How does the teacher view her colleagues?

Older males are held in esteem.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

There is no indication.

c) "The Pedagogue", A Character-Composite

1. Major or minor character?

"The Pedagogue" is a minor character constituted by bringing together (combining) an indeterminate number of young men teachers.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

Yes. "The Pedagogue" epitomizes a type of teacher within an educational system. Contrast is provided for a different type of teacher.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

He is not liked. He maintains an inflexible stance; he is rigid and unwavering in adherence to the rules.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

There is no indication.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

There is some disdain shown for "The Pedagogue's" lack of experience and "know-how". "The Pedagogue" is considered "bookish" and lacking in common sense as regards matters of discipline. He tends to be inflexible. Indication is seen that he will improve in time.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

As taking himself too seriously. There is a feeling, however, that this is a phase that will pass and that

there is potential for growth and development in the profession with time and experience.

7. How does the teacher view himself and his role as a teacher? What is his philosophy, if any?

He takes his job as teacher very seriously. Rules and regulations must be obeyed. The children must learn.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

Students need close supervision and positive guidance. They are to obey rules and regulations and do as the teacher says.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

There is no indication of this other than in the sense that The Board represents the community and both students and teachers must obey The Board.

10. How does the teacher view his colleagues?

As participants in the educational enterprise and as "sounding board" for pedagogical ideas in discussion.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

There is no indication but as The Board is to be obeyed so are administrators acting on its behalf.

3. Summary

From Diary of a Dirty Old Man, there emerge three teacher character-composites, "The Humanist", "The Pedagogue", and "The Female". Of these, "The Humanist", possessing many positive characteristics, is the one major character. It is he who is portrayed as the experienced, flexible teacher concerned more with the welfare of his students than with rigid adherence to the rules of the educational system in which he teaches. "The Pedagogue" while manifesting the opposite traits, inflexibility and inexperience, is, nevertheless, shown to possess potential for growth. "The Female", however, does not emerge as positively in her role as teacher as do the other two composites. The fact that she is female rather than that she is a teacher is predominant.

PART IV

NOVELS IN WHICH TEACHERS ARE MINOR CHARACTERS

There are three chapters in this part of the study. Each chapter deals with a novel in which there is at least one teacher-character. In all cases the teacher-characters are minor characters within the novel. The novels presented here are Richard B. Wright's In the Middle of a Life, Hugh Garner's A Nice Place to Visit, and Jan Truss' Bird at the Window.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE MIDDLE OF A LIFE¹

In The Middle Of A Life recounts three days in the life of Fred Landon, a former greeting card salesman who has been unemployed for the preceding seven months. It is early spring of 1971, and Fred, at age forty-two, has been experiencing feelings of frustration and rejection as he is turned down and politely put off by one prospective employer after another. His savings are gradually disappearing along with his hopes of once again joining Toronto's working population. His small apartment in a dilapidated apartment building due shortly to be torn down seems to provide a refuge for him. A source of comfort, too, during this trying period in his life is Fred's upstairs neighbor, Margaret Beauchamp, a middle-aged high school teacher who had come to Canada from her native Poland before World War II. Although the action of the story covers only three hectic days in the life of the main character, his memories and recollections supply the reader with details of his past.

¹ Richard B. Wright, In The Middle Of A Life, Toronto, Macmillan, 1973, 305 p.

1. Presentation of Character

Margaret Beauchamp.--Despite the fact that Fred Landon no longer has a job to go to, he arises early to start his day with a breakfast of toast and hot Sanka. As he goes about his early-morning routines, he hears in the apartment over him the firm step of his neighbor, Margaret Beauchamp, who had moved in with her ailing mother on the preceding Labor Day. For months he had heard her footsteps overhead in the mornings and in the evenings, and had occasionally seen this "solidly built dark-haired woman"² wrapped in a heavy cloth coat and wearing a plain hat, in the elevator cage or at the front door. He had seen her, too, at dawn on Sunday mornings pushing her aged mother in a wheelchair along the chilling streets to seven o'clock mass. He thought of her as "A luckless creature, alone with her books and her sick old lady and her Church."³ Fred had often seen her, "a good-sized woman with strong heavy bones--Slav bones, solid of leg as a ward nurse"⁴ coming from Kneibel's, the German delicatessen across the

2 Ibid., p. 36.

3 Ibid., p. 37.

4 Ibid., p. 36.

street, with parcels of food. Although he felt this sturdy woman could easily last a hundred years, her neighbor observed that her shy sad look gave her the appearance of a rose past its full bloom.

[. . .] She was often cradling textbooks in her arms too. Also a worn leather briefcase, an old-fashioned article, cracked and weatherbeaten with numerous buckles and straps holding it together.

[. . .] An old maid, he decided, though not so old in years, and foreign, living with her invalid mother, who never appeared to venture out except to dark St. Basil's on Sunday mornings.⁵

On week-days Margaret Beauchamp taught English literature to the children of Ukrainian and Italian immigrants at a collegiate school nearby.

In the preceding December circumstances had brought about a meeting of Fred with his teacher neighbor. Arriving home after another dead-end interview, he noticed an ambulance in front of his house with a crowd gathering around it. The delicatessen owner, Mr. Kneibel, told him that Mrs. Beauchamp had suffered a thrombosis and was being taken to the hospital. Fred observed the old lady's daughter with a kerchief tied over her head, standing on the steps of the house. She looked so bewildered and dejected that Fred offered his assistance. He had taken her into his apartment, mixed brandies and phoned taxi companies in an

⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

attempt to get a cab to make the trip to the hospital. Due to a sleet storm and the supper rush hour, it appeared none was available. The only alternative transportation involved Fred's driving Margaret's car, which had been stored for some time in a nearby garage. The two started off through the storm in a huge maroon DeSoto of mid-fifties vintage. Following an episode on an icy street corner and an encounter with a traffic policeman, they arrive at St. Michael's Hospital. Here Margaret is told that her mother has passed away. The bereaved woman reflects on the suddenness of death:

'You leave in the morning and she tells you to put on your rubbers because the radio said snow. [. . .] My mother treated me like a child... You come back in the evening and she's gone...'⁶

Fred went to the old woman's funeral along with a few of Margaret's teacher friends. Since that day, when Margaret had returned to his apartment for supper and an evening of sharing her childhood memories, their relationship had developed. They had occasionally gone out for dinner and the movies together, and sometimes Fred prepared dinner for them in his own apartment. He found himself charmed by the new person in his life--this

⁶ Ibid., p. 57.

honest-hearted schoolteacher who was his neighbor. One evening after Christmas Margaret whispered: "'Dearest Frederick' [.] 'will you love me?'"⁷ Her forwardness in undressing surprised Fred. In amazement, he observed:

[.] And what breasts and shoulders and deep thighs! And this was his neighbor--the old-maid school-teacher! With her cloth coats and her health shoes. Her bags of delicatessen rolls and sausage. Her old-fashioned satchel from Lodz. He had examined it one day, a fine piece of leather goods too, prewar stuff, all hand-stitched. And its owner? An artful lover whose patient fingers and knowing mouth were seeking out the geography of his own body and laying claims to it.⁸

Often after this, his schoolteacher neighbor came to Fred's apartment, but she was always concerned about having been watched entering it. She would run up the stairs two at a time with a bag of food in her arms, then inside the apartment door, stand breathing hard, with briefcase and grocery bag in her arms, as though listening for overtaking footsteps. Margaret was very anxious that none of their neighbors should think that an illicit relationship existed between them. She insisted upon discretion.

7 Ibid., p. 103.

8 Ibid.

[. . .] Still, she was a teacher of English in a high school and wagging tongues could mean trouble. One had to be careful, she insisted, and so, although she frequently visited him, she was nervous and tense for the first hour, fearful that she had been seen entering forbidden premises.⁹

Margaret's concern with keeping her visits to Fred's apartment hidden from the neighbors is second only to her feelings of guilt for her liaison with him. She could not confess her sin to Father Duffy, her Jesuit friend, so her burden of guilt was great. She admitted to Fred her love for a Jewish high school teacher who had survived the concentration camp at Belsen, but had just recently died of cancer in a Montreal hospital. Their relationship too had inspired her with feelings of guilt.

When Fred's daughter, Ginny, and his ex-wife, Vera, arrive in Toronto from New York, the unemployed salesman's problems increase. He is worried about his disaster-prone daughter who has left Columbia University where she has been a student. She is presently very friendly with a sullen young American draft resister. Fred wonders what his ex-wife will want from him once she has again settled in Canada. To add to his worries, his sister Ellen phones

⁹ Ibid., p. 87.

from Bay City on Georgian Bay to complain peevishly that Fred has not recently visited their bed-ridden father in a nursing home there. Fred promises to come that very week-end.

On Friday evening, he is obliged, in order to placate his female relatives, to attend a party being held at his ex-wife's sister Blanche's home. Here he is bothered by Vera and Ginny's teasing him about his new friend. When Ginny asks the lady's name, Fred replies with a hint of annoyance in his voice which does not escape Vera's quick ears. She comments:

'Now, Fred. Tut tut. Females will be females, you know. These little games. Is that not so, Virginia Ann?'¹⁰

Fred thinks:

The cattiness. The bitchiness. How he sometimes longed to be away from them. Even Margaret. Often gossiping about some other lady teacher!¹¹

The morning following the "circus" at Blanche's, Margaret and Fred set out for Bay City in Margaret's DeSoto. The car is slow to start; she has not yet gotten it fixed. A procrastinator like himself, Fred thinks. He is pleased, though, to have this opportunity to take his friend for a

10 Ibid., p. 209.

11 Ibid.

drive away from the city since "she didn't get out much"¹². Usually they spent their Saturday mornings at Kensington Market where he enjoyed seeing Margaret at the open-air stalls haggling with the vendors for the best bargains.

[. . .] She took no guff from anyone, got wonderful deals. He marveled at her. She was happy here, and beneath the kerchief her eyes shone and her cheeks glowed in the frosty air. The market reminded her of childhood days in Cracow, and she was often terribly animated, grabbing his arm and pointing out a good buy.¹³

Arriving on the outskirts of Bay City, Fred spies the sign for the Blue Moon Cabins, a property owned by his grandfather many years ago. It is now the site of a block-style motel in L-shaped design, but some distance to the rear in a grove of pines are two old run-down cabins from bygone days. Fred stops the car and the two stroll, arm in arm, back to the area behind the present-day motel. Memories of his childhood return as Fred looks for an old path, now overgrown, down to the water, and comes upon a field now grown up with tall burdock, where he and his mother used to pick trilliums. Suddenly, the idea to stay overnight in this spot strikes him--to stay in one of his grandfather's old cabins. Excitedly, he suggests this to

¹² Ibid., p. 219.

¹³ Ibid., p. 220.

Margaret who smiles and jokingly accuses him of luring her into the country with the purpose of seducing her. On second thought, the schoolteacher wonders if this is a wise course of action:

'But how will this look?' asked Margaret. 'I don't think I'm prudish, Frederick, but...Surely your sister will think it strange?'¹⁴

Fred realizes that this would undoubtedly put Margaret in a bad light with his family. They might wonder, Margaret reminds him, what kind of a woman this was whom they had never met, but who was staying with their brother at a motel on the outskirts of town. The appeal to stay in this spot, to get a bottle of wine to accompany a Chinese dinner, and to show his companion around all of his old haunts is very strong. Margaret laughs at his enthusiasm and finally consents to remain that night at the motel.

Before going to the nursing home, the couple stops at Fred's sister's home for a short call. Ellen, a quick little woman, talks nervously of her many projects and a trip to Europe she and her husband, Herb, had recently made-- a tour of seventeen countries in twenty-three days! While she anxiously hurries from one topic of conversation to another, Margaret sits quietly, Fred observes, apparently

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 243.

interested.

[. . .] Oh, Margaret! How he loved her! She wouldn't dream of mocking anyone, hadn't a satirical bone in her body. Instead she looked interested.¹⁵

As they leave, Fred thinks that Margaret's politeness and pleasant manner have "flummoxed" his sister who is more practised in dealing with prolonged silences or open criticism. Fred, though, is unprepared for Margaret's sudden anger back in the car when she tells him that his distant manner toward his sister has made her even more nervous than she already is. Fred thinks that they are already beginning to act like married folks.

A strained visit at Greenhaven House where Fred's father is a patient is interrupted by a phone call from Ellen. It appears that Ginny and her draft resisting American friend have been picked up by the Bay City Police and are being held in the jail. Worriedly, Fred wonders what situation his daughter has jumped into now. He decides to drive Margaret back to the motel before heading down to the jail. When he tells her of Ginny's latest caper, Margaret expresses hope that it is nothing serious. As they arrive in the motel parking lot, though, Margaret appears frightened and begins to cry. Her companion, believing her to

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 253.

be more stolid, tries to comfort her and urges her to lie down and rest for a while. Fred realizes that she is genuinely fearful. When she confesses that she has something she must tell him, Fred feels apprehensive. At this point in his life, the news that he will once again become a father comes as an almost brutal shock.

As he drives back into town, Fred wonders what has happened to the simple life he had awakened to that morning, when his biggest problem had been starting a sluggish car. Now, in quick succession, he is faced with his father pleading to be taken home to his family, the grim tidings that his trouble-seeking daughter is in jail, and the strange news that his friend of five months is expecting his child. At the jail, the worried father learns that Ginny and her friend have been charged with speeding in her aunt's Mercedes-Benz coupe and being in possession of a large quantity of marijuana. Now the problem confronting him is how to raise fifteen hundred dollars bail on a Saturday evening in order to gain the release of his penitent daughter and her friend. After trying to contact various prospering friends by telephone, Fred phones Margaret and tries to reassure her that he is not unhappy regarding their child, despite the complications. She, however, says he does not have to say this, that she does not wish him to feel

under any obligation, but that she is very pleased to be having a child.

'My darling, I am very happy about the child. I want you to know that. I didn't think it would ever happen to me. I'm very happy. But I don't want to ruin your life.'¹⁶

Back at the jail, Fred discovers that Vera and a lawyer friend of hers have already arrived and have arranged bail for both Ginny and her friend. They have all left and are waiting for him at the Chinese restaurant across the street. Choosing not to complete the little family group, Fred goes back to the Blue Moon where Margaret is waiting, happy to see him. They decide to return home where they can leave behind the problems of this town and enjoy the comforts of their own apartment. As they leave, Margaret smiles affectionately at Fred. "'You're a good man, Frederick. You don't give yourself enough credit.'¹⁷ Fred replies: "'Kind words, Margaret, but I'm no prize, believe me.'¹⁸

16 Ibid., p. 292.

17 Ibid., p. 304.

18 Ibid.

2. Analysis of Character

1. Major or minor character?

Margaret Beauchamp is a minor character.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

No. The fact that Margaret Beauchamp is a teacher has no bearing on the plot of the story.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

There is no indication.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

There is no indication.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

There is actually no indication of this. The fact that some teachers from Margaret Beauchamp's school attended her mother's funeral cannot be interpreted that they viewed their colleague in any special way.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

There is no indication.

7. How does the teacher view herself and her role as a teacher? What is her philosophy, if any?

The teacher-character considers that her status of teacher requires that she be concerned with appearances, and that she must avoid any behavior which would cause people

in the community to speculate upon or talk about what she does.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

There is no indication.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

She considers that the community expects decorum of her as a teacher.

10. How does the teacher view her colleagues?

The teacher-character gossiped on occasion about her female colleagues, but the subject of this gossip is not disclosed in the novel; therefore, her views regarding them is not known.

11. How does the teacher view the administrators?

There is no indication of this.

3. Summary

The image of teacher which emerges from In The Middle Of A Life is a limited one. The characteristic of Margaret Beauchamp which comes through most emphatically is her concern with how things look. As a teacher of English, she believes she should maintain the appearances of decorum which the community expects. There is nothing in the novel which reveals how the teacher-character acts in the actual teaching role, how she feels about her teaching situation, or how she views her students.

CHAPTER VIII

A NICE PLACE TO VISIT¹

A Nice Place To Visit recounts the investigations of Ben Lawlor, a Toronto freelance magazine journalist of declining productivity, to uncover more information concerning a murder case. It is August, 1969 when the publisher of Controversy magazine decides to publish an article on circumstances surrounding the alleged rape-murder of sixteen-year-old Debby Gratton two years previously by her boyfriend, Tommy Hurd. The magazine sends Ben Lawlor to Graylands, a small company town with "an air of declining hope"² sixty miles northwest of Toronto, to interview the residents there in the expectation that many facts about the case were not disclosed at the trial. Among those interviewed are Miss Stephanie Holt, a Grade Eight teacher in Graylands, and Mr. Orville Wallace, now vice-principal of a secondary school in Guelph, but once a teacher in Graylands. In the "presentation of character" of these two teachers, only that detail of plot which directly involves these characters will be included.

¹ Hugh Garner, A Nice Place To Visit, Richmond Hill, Simon & Schuster, 1970, 272 p.

² Ibid., p. 34.

1. Presentation of Character

a) Miss Stephanie Holt.--When Ben Lawlor checks into The Drummer's Rest, Graylands' small residential hotel, he is told by the proprietor, Mr. Metcalf, that there are two permanent guests living there, Mr. Crankton who works in a bank nearby, and Miss Holt, a grade school teacher. Both of these guests, Mr. Metcalf said, regularly take their meals at the hotel.

Ben soon learns more about the schoolma'am who smilingly passes his table in the hotel's dining room. The morning following his arrival in Graylands, he calls in at the neighborhood Shoe Repair Shop where the old cobbler, Mr. Wallace, gladly makes conversation. When Ben asks the shoemaker if he thought Tommy Hurd had actually killed the Gratton girl, he replies that he doesn't really know, that Tommy was only a customer. His son, Orville, however, had taught Tommy in his class at school for two years. Ben asks if Orville is still teaching in Graylands now, to which Mr. Wallace replies:

'Who Tom Hurd? Oh, you mean Orville? No. He's down to Guelph now. Been there six years.'
'But he used to teach school here?'³

³ Ibid., p. 75.

The old gentleman answers:

'Yes. He was here till that drunken Stephanie Holt come an' got him discharged an' took his job. Orville's the assistant principal now at Hume Secondary.'⁴

Ben cannot think of the middle-aged lady he has observed at The Drummer's Rest as a drunkard. He continues to question the old man:

'Is Mrs. Holt the one who's staying at The Drummer's Rest?'

'You know her?'

'No. I'm staying there too, and she was eating in the dining room the same time I was last night. Mrs. Metcalf told me who she was.'

'Stephanie's no missus but a miss. She left here years before, but she come back six years ago an' got Orville's job. Anyway he's got a better one now.'

'How'd she get him fired?'

'Dismissed. She bore false witness against him.'⁵

Later the same day the journalist finds himself in the Graylands Veterans Memorial Hall where he meets for the second time Roger Grant, the manager of the bar there. Ben questions "Rog", as everyone calls him, seeking to confirm what the shoemaker has already told him. He asks what Miss Holt had to do with getting Orville Wallace kicked out of the school there. His companion tells

4 Ibid., p. 75.

5 Ibid.

Ben that he does not know, all he knows is that Stephanie came back to Graylands at the time of Orville's dismissal and got his job. He confides: "'They say she went down to the city to have a baby. She's a pushover.'"⁶ When Ben mentions that he is staying at The Drummer's Rest, "Rog" suggests that he talk to Stephanie sometime, that she will be able to tell him what he wants to find out about Orville Wallace. He adds: "'Stephanie's a weekend drunk. [.] She works over at the Rosemount library during the school holidays. She's smart.'"⁷

Friday evening after supper, the journalist drove around the streets of Graylands, then parks on the main street where he can watch the passing crowd and the evening's activity. As he is returning to the hotel, he notices Miss Holt's Ford car passing him and turning in at the hotel. Slowly he himself enters the alley to the parking lot and parks his car some distance from the school teacher's. As he does this, he watches the driver of the other car step rather unsteadily from her car and open the trunk. Without glancing at Ben, she picks up a brown paper bag and enters the hotel. Later the same evening,

6 Ibid., p. 90.

7 Ibid.

as he is perusing the trial transcript in his room, he hears light footsteps passing his door, then returning and pausing outside his door before disappearing up the hall. Remembering that Roger Grant had termed Stephanie Holt a "pushover", he wonders if her hall-way explorations are motivated by confessional or sexual desires. Ben believes that Stephanie fits the category of female who, he has observed, seek out any available male companionship, especially as they approach mid-forties. He thinks of Stephanie:

[. . .] As the spinster mother of a baby, if he could believe what he'd heard, and a weekend lush, she fitted the type. And being a local school-teacher she was forced by small town mores, and what was accepted as correct school ma'am behavior, to indulge her amatory pleasures clandestinely.⁸

Saturday dinner at the hotel was the occasion of more than a culinary surprise for Ben. Miss Holt, "five ounces drunk"⁹, puts on a performance of giggling and elbow-jostling with her confused bank manager dining companion, apparently for the benefit of the journalist dining at the next table. Ben thinks that Miss Holt will never be more ready for interrogation or love-making. As

⁸ Ibid., p. 119.

⁹ Ibid., p. 174.

she passes his table to leave the dining room, her smile in Ben's direction is once more casual and ladylike. Following his meal, while paying his hotel bill for the week, he is told by Mrs. Metcalf that he and Miss Holt will be the only inhabitants of the hotel over Sunday. She adds: "'Miss Holt, as you've probably heard, drinks on weekends. I don't think she'll annoy you though.'"¹⁰

After the Metcalfs and the other permanent guest leave, Ben prepares to go out to post a letter. On his way out of the hotel, he is stopped by Miss Holt "presenting a picture of friendly but arms-length respectability, enchantingly marred by a supposedly vagrant lock of hair hanging over her forehead"¹¹ who wonders if he is coming back soon. She says that she has just run out of liquor and mixes. When Ben informs her that he has something to drink in his room, she coyly replies that she does not often go to a gentleman's room for a drink. Believing that "little miss schoolma'am" was playing the game of "accidental drunk with a heart of plasticine"¹², he decides to counter with an equally teasing tactic--that of

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 175.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 177.

¹² Ibid.

indifference to her charms.

On his return to The Drummer's Rest, Ben finds that Miss Holt has been readying herself to play the role of seductress. When she accuses him of entering her dressing room unannounced, he goes back to his own room to await her next move. Twenty-five minutes later she arrives at the journalist's door. Her first two knocks are ignored but the third is slowly acknowledged. "Virginally clutching her bathrobe to her throat,"¹³ Stephanie accuses him of taking his own good time to come to the door.

During the evening, Ben is surprised by the school-teacher's honest answers and her forthright sharing of her opinions and insights. To test and in all probability to annoy her at the same time, Ben asks her opinion on Shirley Moorhead Kropic's¹⁴ work and writing style. Stephanie quickly admits that she has never before heard of this writer. Ben concludes:

No matter what else she was, he was glad to see, Stephanie Holt was not stupid. Nor had the drinks she had taken so far made her pliantly drunk.¹⁵

13 Ibid., p. 181.

14 Writer of an article on population in Controversy.

15 Ibid., p. 182.

Continuing, he asks:

'How are things at the school, Steph?'
'The same as always. Boring.'
'And you now teach grades seven and eight?'
'Grade eight only this year.' She took a long thirsty drink of her Collins, smacking her lips at the taste.¹⁶

Throughout the evening, Stephanie enlightens Ben on many aspects of the community situation and the Alex Hurd family circumstances before the Debby Gratton murder. She herself had been a friend of Beatrice Hurd, Alex's wife, and had spent time at the family home "Langley House" after Beatrice's marriage. She logically sets forth the reasons for Beatrice's mental breakdown and her subsequent admission to a mental institution, as well as explaining Alex's feelings of disappointment and sorrow in the matter. Ben observes that the more the teacher drinks, the keener her intelligence and ability to argue appear to become. He is also somewhat surprised that she attests to the veracity of Gimp Crawley, formerly a dentist and writer who, due to the effects of drug addiction, had become the town character.

The next morning Ben decides to face the Company boss, Alex Hurd, at his own residence. Before leaving

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 182.

the hotel, he hears Stephanie quietly descending the stairs and going out into the street, probably to church, he thinks. The journalist tells Alex that from all reports he has heard during his stay in Graylands, the Company Chief enjoys popularity with the ladies. Quoting Stephanie, Ben compliments his host:

'[. . .] A woman last night told me she liked you because of your charm.' [. . .]
'She also told me she admired you because you acted towards the women you got into trouble as a man is supposed to do.'¹⁷

Later in the visit, Ben learns that many years ago, before his marriage to Beatrice, Alex had asked Stephanie Holt out on one occasion, but that she had declined his invitation.

The day of his arrival in Graylands, the journalist had learned from the town's cobbler, old Mr. Wallace, that his son, Orville, had been replaced by Stephanie Holt as Grade Eight teacher at the local school. The old gentleman told his customer that "that drunken Stephanie Holt"¹⁸ had borne false witness against his son which had resulted in his dismissal from the school. During his investigation into the murder case, Ben learns further details regarding

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

the Wallace affair. While the shoemaker's son had lived and taught in Graylands, he had also served as choir-master for St. Hilda's Anglican Church. It was Stephanie Holt, shortly after her return from the city, who had surprised the Reverend Desmond Oxley, rector of St. Hilda's, in the choir stalls with her teaching colleague. Presumably, she had brought this "skylarking" (as the incident is referred to by the Reverend Oxley) to the attention of the authorities.

As he leaves Alex Hurd's property on the last full day of his stay in Graylands, Ben decides that of all the people he has interviewed during the week, Stephanie Holt is one of three in whose honesty he can have confidence.

b) Orville Wallace.--One of Ben Lawlor's first interviews with the townspeople of Graylands is with old Pop Wallace, the shoemaker. From the cobbler, Ben learns that his son Orville had been dismissed from the Graylands' teaching staff due to "false witness" brought against him by another teacher, Stephanie Holt. Since then, the old gentleman tells him, his son has gotten a better job, as vice-principal of Hume Secondary School down in Guelph. The visitor asks:

'I suppose your son and his family visit you?'

'Orville ain't got a family. He's a bachelor. My two daughters was called away as infants. Oh, Orville comes here once in a while, but not too much any more.'¹⁹

Later the same day Ben meets Roger Grant, the manager of the bar at the Graylands Veterans Memorial Hall. The big man with heavy jowls is only too glad to provide what information on Orville Wallace that old Pop had not. Ben asks Rog if Orville was dismissed from his grade seven and eight teaching post at the Graylands Public School. The other man replies:

'Yeah. Five or six years ago. Oh, it'd been going on a long time before they caught up to him. It didn't seem to matter down in Guelph. Not that he ever had anything like that to do with the pupils, you understand, but people find out about these things.'²⁰

In desperation, Ben exclaims:

'[.] . .] Why doesn't anybody come right out and say what they mean? What's wrong with Orville Wallace, is he a homosexual or something?'²¹

Roger confirms that this is what people say, although he adds that his two boys who were both students in his class had no trouble. Tommy Hurd, the boy convicted of the

19 Ibid., p. 76.

20 Ibid., p. 89.

21 Ibid.

Debby Gratton murder, as well as his own sons and many other young fellows in the neighborhood, were friends of Orville. Wondering if Tommy had had any homosexual inclinations, Ben speculates on why the defence lawyer at the trial did not call the teacher as a witness for Tommy. He wonders, too, if Tommy had visited the teacher on the night of the murder. Roger agrees that possibly calling Wallace as a witness might have done more harm than good, considering that the members of the jury might already be prejudiced against the teacher.

Friday morning the journalist makes his way to Hume Secondary School in Guelph in order to look for and, if possible, interview Orville Wallace. As he pulls into the school's parking lot, he notices that his car is surrounded by Volkswagens and Renaults. He wonders "if small cheap cars had remained a status symbol among teachers, now that their inflated salaries in relation to working hours and ability no longer made them a necessity."²² Fortunately, Orville Wallace, a "prematurely greying man in his late thirties"²³ is at his desk flanked by piles of papers. His initial reaction when Ben states that he has

22 Ibid., p. 104.

23 Ibid., p. 105.

come to ask a few questions about the Tommy Hurd case is one of impatience. The journalist explains that a committee in Toronto wanted to have the case re-opened in the hope that all the facts would be presented. Seeming to doubt whether he should answer Ben's questions, the teacher patiently tells what he feels the other man should know about the night of the murder. He confirms that Tommy Hurd, nearly hysterical, had come that night to talk to him as an old friend, in the company of Debby Gratton. He also admits that he had been ready to stand as a witness for the defence at Tommy's trial, but that he had not been called, in all probability because his witness might prejudice the jury further against the boy on trial. Orville freely confesses that he was asked to resign from Graylands School as a result of being tried in magistrate's court for having participated in a homosexual act.

'[. . .] The alleged offence did not take place in the school, nor was it with,' he smiled sadly, 'or against a schoolboy, but a consenting adult, I suppose the term is.'²⁴

After what Ben has found to be an embarrassing session, he thanks the teacher for his frankness. When the teacher learns that it was his father who had sent Ben to him for information regarding Tommy, he reminisces

24 Ibid., p. 108.

about Graylands, his old home and his kind father who had worked so hard to get him through school. Sadly the son thinks that he rarely visits "the old gent" any more, but that he knows his father, who has never questioned him about his trial or his "aberration", will still welcome him home. Ben mentions that it was a person other than his father who had told him about the reason for his resignation from the Graylands School. He continues:

'The person who told me, also told me that two of his sons had been in your class, and that you had not shown--what I'm trying to say is that nobody I've talked to so far in Graylands has really ever said anything against you. As a matter of fact, Mr. Wallace, I understand that you are still considered a friend by a number of the children you taught up there in public school.'²⁵

The teacher thanks him for his kinds words, and affirms that his ex-pupils' friendship along with his acceptance by the Guelph Board of Education have enabled him to survive a hard time.

On Saturday afternoon, Ben locates St. Hilda's Anglican Church and finally meets its rector, the Reverend Desmond Oxley, who politely answers his queries in as diplomatic a fashion as possible. In addition, he offers a tour of the church, pointing out the altar pieces, the paintings, and a small organ which he enthusiastically

25 Ibid., p. 109.

praises as a fine little instrument from which Orville Wallace, an excellent pianist and organist, "coaxed some really beautiful music."²⁶ In discussing the exodus of church members from his church, the minister feels that the "choir loft" incident involving Orville Wallace and their resulting court appearance in Rosemount are only partly to blame. He adds:

[. . .] Then there was the fact that Orville Wallace was dismissed from the school here, and left town. That meant that he also left St. Hilda's. He had been very popular with our young people.²⁷

Before drawing any conclusions concerning the case, Ben drives out to "Langley House", Alex Hurd's residence, hoping to get the father's reactions to certain aspects of the murder trial. Ben asks if the defence lawyer, McKissop, had ever explained to him why he did not call to the stand a witness who could have accounted for some of his son and Debby Gratton's movements on the evening in question. Alex says he had never suspected his son to be a homosexual nor did he realize that his son had ever visited Orville Wallace in Guelph. The journalist remarks that he feels there is no evidence of Tommy Hurd being inclined toward homosexuality.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 165.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 166.

'/. . ./ He and a lot of other kids who were in Wallace's class still visit him. I think Wallace is a nice guy. The proof about Tommy is that no boy would take a girl with him when he visited a homosexual unless he was pretty sure of himself.²⁸

As he fits the pieces of the mystery together, the journalist thinks what a strange place he had been sent to examine, where there was "a grade school teacher who was one of the town's weekend drunks but a fine woman as well,"²⁹ an Anglican minister "who had been charged with gross indecency with his choirmaster,"³⁰ and a police chief who received his orders from the town's richest citizen.
Graylands--A Nice Place To Visit!

2. Analysis of Characters

a) Miss Stephanie Holt

1. Major or minor character?

Stephanie Holt is a minor character.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

Yes, to the extent that she apparently feels that she must keep up appearances of propriety and respectability expected of her profession by the community,

²⁸ Ibid., p. 201.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 227.

³⁰ Ibid.

even to a newcomer in town, despite her own inclinations. It is also at least partially because she is a teacher that she is able to supply so much information regarding the town.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

There is no indication.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

All members of the community who appear in the novel affirm and seemingly accept that the teacher is a weekend drinker, and one calls her "drunken". At least one member of the community recognizes that she is smart, which is confirmed by the visiting journalist. The same community member considers her an easy target for gentlemen's attentions. It is seemingly general knowledge that the teacher has spent time away from the community to have a baby.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

There is no indication.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

There is no indication.

7. How does the teacher view herself and her role as a teacher? What is her philosophy, if any?

The teacher says that she considers her work as a

teacher of Grade Eight students boring. She apparently feels and has felt that her profession demands respectable appearances to be maintained. Her temporary absence from the community during a period of time when she could not maintain appearances seems to bear this out. Her drinking is done privately and on weekends.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

The teacher does not seem to hold any great interest in her students. When questioned by the journalist regarding them, she answers briefly between large gulps of the drink she is holding.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

Her actions would seem to indicate that she considers the community to have the right to expect discreet, respectable behavior from its teaching staff.

10. How does the teacher view her colleagues?

There is no indication of this.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

There is no indication of this.

b) Orville Wallace

1. Major or minor character?

Orville Wallace is a minor character.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?
Yes, it does. The fact that he has the confidence of his students makes his position in the novel one of importance.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?
The teacher is popular with his students. He is considered as their friend whom they can consult in time of trouble.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?
It appears that no one in the community has any unfavorable comment about the teacher in reference to his care and treatment of their children. As a teacher, he seems to be liked and admired.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?
Only one other teacher is mentioned in the novel in connection with the teacher-character under consideration. This teacher did not approve of his behavior with another male adult member of the community.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?
In his former teaching post in his home town, the administration does not approve of his alleged homosexual behavior, and shows this displeasure by asking him to resign. In his new teaching post, the teacher

is accepted and treated impartially by the administrators. He is given further responsibility of an administrative nature at this school.

7. How does the teacher view himself and his role as a teacher? What is his philosophy, if any?

All evidence seems to indicate that the teacher-character regards teaching as involvement with students.

His main concern seems to be their welfare. He occupies himself in activities benefiting young people.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

He shows interest in and concern for the students.

He is sympathetic towards them, and tries to help and encourage them when they have problems.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

He accepts the standards and customs of the community in which he works.

10. How does the teacher view his colleagues?

There is no indication of this.

11. How does the teacher view administrators?

He accepts the demands of his former School Board, and does not think vindictively of them. He is grateful to his new School Board for accepting and promoting him.

3. Summary

A Nice Place To Visit includes two teacher-characters, one male and one female, who have both confronted personal problems in a small-town community. The female character, while appearing not to be challenged by her teaching position there, has, nonetheless, remained in the town. She seems to view her teaching post objectively, and has a detached attitude when away from school. She accepts the expectations of the community for her public personal actions, but makes adjustments in her behavior in her private life. Her weekend drinking habit appears to compensate for what she has stated is a boring existence at school.

The male character appears to be acting positively in his teaching situation. He accepts, without bitterness, the fact that his previous School Board had asked him to resign from his post, and their reasons for their request. He is grateful that he is able to teach in a new situation, and that the authorities treat him impartially. He has not been defeated or turned aside in his desire to work among young people; therefore, he emerges as a teacher-character who is surviving and working effectively in his situation.

CHAPTER 1X

BIRD AT THE WINDOW

Bird At The Window, the last novel to be considered in this study recounts the difficulties of eighteen-year-old Angela Moynahan in coping with her pregnancy and her feelings for those near to her. Soon to graduate from a small high school in Gladden in the foothills of the Rockies, she has plans for one year's work and travel in England and on the continent. The time is not definitely stated, although it is beyond 1967, Canada's Centennial year. Without actually making up her mind to do so, Angela reveals her problem to her High School English teacher, Mr. Olson. Throughout the novel, she thinks of Mr. Olson's counsel and mentally questions him and addresses him. Much of the one teacher-character emerges from the workings of Angela's mind and from her memories of what Mr. Olson did and said. Other students and young people make their appearance in the novel, but none of these are mentioned in connection with the teacher-character or as giving any comments or opinions regarding him.

¹ Jan Truss, Bird At The Window, Toronto, Macmillan, 1974, 178 p.

1. Presentation of Character

Mr. Olson.--When Angela Moynahan, the bright girl in her graduating class from Gladden High School had an impossible problem confronting her, she went to her English teacher, Mr. Olson. In retrospect, she had not intended telling him of her pregnancy, but then she reasoned, he probably was the only one to tell since he would neither become angry nor moralize. She had found him in his classroom, alone, seated behind a pile of exercise books with red marking pencil in hand. Rubbing his finger along the line where his beard and greying sideburns meet, the teacher wonders why he had to be the one entrusted with such a confidence, and why it had to be this girl confiding in him. The personal aspect of the confidence makes him feel uncomfortable. He suggests to Angela that the course of her life need not be detoured if she were to have an abortion. Concerned about her plans for a year in Europe, he concedes that there is nothing stopping Angela from making the trip, but adds:

[. . .] 'It's just that I find it less than romantic to think of your hard-earned summer weighed down with a big belly.'²

² Ibid., p. 4.

Angela realizes that she has "blown it" and that her personal failure must be discouraging for her teacher. He admits: "'Oh, I suppose it's just part of the teacher's job to want to see the bars come down for some of you.'"³ In urging his student to do something about her physical condition, Mr. Olson realizes that he should not be encouraging a student in this way and that "He was running right into the blind wall of community condemnation even by letting her talk. She shouldn't be talking to him about it."⁴ When he tries to give Angela practical advice--to talk to her mother, the school nurse or her family doctor--she persists in stubbornly refusing to confide in anyone else or to get an abortion or to marry Gordon Kopec.

'You're not fair,' she choked, and steadied her dignity with a lift of the head. 'I am not being melodramatic. And I am not going to tell my mother. And I am not going to get an abortion. And I would never get a baby adopted.'⁵

Recognizing these words as an outpouring of the brave morality of the young, the teacher resists the impulse to put his arms around the girl in an effort to save

3 Ibid., p. 4.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 7.

her proud spirit. Wearily he thinks:

[. . .] She'll marry him and he won't have the brains to know what he's got. Committed with their bodies, they always end up marrying--these serious girls.⁶

By telling Mr. Olson her problem, Angela feels that she has made it real. She continues going to school, studies for her final examinations, prepares the valedictory address, and looks forward to her approaching trip to England. At school, she tries to appear cool and in control of the situation for Mr. Olson's benefit. She sees her teacher watching her, assessing her behavior. One Friday, before a Saturday date with a classmate, Damion Good, Angela feels exhilarated. She resents her teacher's attention and how he is possibly interpreting her interest in Damion. In order to disclose her true feelings Angela answers her teacher's questions more cleverly than usual. Mr. Olson, like the majority of his pupils, is feeling the pressure of the week's work.

It was Friday for Mr. Olson too; teachers' Friday. He felt the tired hostility. Minds had slipped away into the weekend's sociabilities, far from the rarefied decency of literature. He had lost his poets. On Friday he had lost the battle.⁷

6 Ibid., p. 7.

7 Ibid., p. 27.

The weary teacher thinks:

[. . .] On Monday they will be getting over it all, dull eyed and laughing coarsely. But Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday are his, to open cage doors, sometimes let a rare bird out.⁸

As Angela sits at her desk writing a critique on Death of a Salesman, her mind is on another "track" where she debates following her teacher's advice: to get an abortion. She thinks:

[. . .] He is certain I should get an abortion. He doesn't know what we're really like. We're good people. Crucifixion we toy with. After all, that was good enough for Jesus. But infanticide! Dear little bloodclot of a baby, cuty by-bies. Us-ums wouldn't hurt-ums, would-ums?⁹

Angela doubts that her teacher knows how the situation really appears to his student:

Mr. Olson, baby innocent Mr. Olson, you don't know nothing. Slay me but not motherhood. Nothing is private here. Maybe I could get it done in England. The magazines say it is easy in England. Nobody need know then. When I get off the plane, I could find a clinic in London, before I go to my grandparents'.¹⁰

Back to her paper before her on her desk, she comments that once one has known Willie Loman¹¹, he can be observed

⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

¹¹ The main character in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman.

in one's own community. To end her essay, she writes:

[. . .] 'Literature makes us critics of our own society, therefore it behooves the sensible community to rid itself of the subversive activities of all literature teachers.'¹²

Little does Angela know that her father, Joe Moynahan, really believes the words that she has flippantly penned. Joe thinks a girl with Angela's brains should be a credit to her family, not turn herself into a tramp by hitch-hiking across a foreign country. Her "highfalutin ideas" he blames on Mr. Olson. When his daughter says she would love to get as far as Crete on her journeys, Joe considers that her ideas are "bloody big" for a poor farmer's daughter. He readily places the blame, however.

'[. . .] It's that teacher, that Olson, filling country kids' heads with ideas beyond their stations. It's time somebody got rid of him. He's no good for ordinary folks the likes of us. Him and his highfalutin' ideas.'¹³

Angela does get away from her prairie farm home. Following her graduation from high school, she flies to London where she spends two carefree days. Feeling that she is free once she is flying over new territory with a world of different people who do not know her, Angela is

12 Ibid., p. 28.

13 Ibid., p. 19.

elated by being "in free orbit, flying high."¹⁴ She thinks back to her last days at school, to her teacher who had stopped her in the corridor with an offer of help. She thinks of her mother and compares her qualities to those of her teacher, Mr. Olson. Now she feels that her mother too would have advised her to get an abortion.

As she meets the challenges of a huge new city and feels the stimulation of new sights, Angela mentally tells her teacher that there are so many experiences to make words for. She realizes that Mr. Olson was so right when he said that a Canadian city such as Calgary was not a city like the old world cities. The young girl wishes to translate all her experiences and new sensations into assignments for her teacher. Whenever she meets new people she quotes what Mr. Olson has felt or said. In the company of Sam Lubinkoff, a young musician whom she has met at a lunch counter, Angela strolls across St. James Park. She is impressed by the cool green grass of the lawns, and comments to Sam: "'I had a high school teacher who used to tell us about the touch of English lawns.' [. . .] 'Soft and cool.'"¹⁵

14 Ibid., p. 48.

15 Ibid., p. 57.

Angela's life settles into the prosaic at her grandparents' home in the Midlands. Each day she goes to work as a sales clerk at a nearby bakeshop. Back home in her mother's old bedroom, she spends her evenings writing her impressions and feelings in exercise scribblers. Toward summer's end she receives a note from Damion Good, her former classmate, who remarks that it was too bad about Mr. Olson, wasn't it? Angela does not understand Damion's comment until somewhat later when her mother simply states at the close of a letter that Mr. Olson will not be returning to the school.

At the conclusion of two difficult months with her grandparents, Angela returns to London where she gets a job as a steam presser at a back street dry-cleaners while awaiting her baby's birth. One day a parcel containing a book, Women Poets of Canada, arrives from Mr. Olson. The inscription, "'for more than one springtime'"¹⁶ written under the title, takes Angela back to the previous May when she stood with flat stomach in Mr. Olson's classroom. The note from Mr. Olson states that she has been one of his last students for he has finished with teaching.

16 Ibid., p. 132.

He confesses:

'Enough is enough in this one little life!' [. . .]
'My wife and I have decided to spend a year bumming
round Europe remembering our springtime, when we
did it once before.'¹⁷

Angela thinks of her teacher's concern for her one little life and wryly conceded that he was right in wondering how she would manage to tour Europe with her "big belly".

On the day that Angela is released from hospital following the birth of a stillborn daughter, she receives a letter from home telling her that her father is seriously ill in Calgary. Aboard the plane returning to Canada, her mind is plagued by torturing thoughts. Addressing Mr. Olson whom she pictures as laughing at her with mocking eyes as he strokes his beard, she admits that she has hated her father and that she had run from home, glad to be free of his restrictive attitudes. Now, because she wishes to relieve feelings of guilt for rejecting her loving father, she is hurrying home. Before her father dies, Angela promises him that she will settle down now and be a good girl.

The months following Joe Moynahan's funeral are difficult ones for his daughter. She feels that her mother is rejecting her father's many years of toil by

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 132.

expressing the wish to sell the farm. Angela interprets her mother's contentment at her work on her tapestries, and her excitement at the possibility of going to London to study as happiness at being freed from her stolid husband. While working hard herself to weave her summer experiences into a novel, Angela does the farm chores and resolves to keep her father's farm. Occasionally, she confides at least her more superficial feelings to her mother. While wondering what Mr. Olson would think of her first serious attempt at writing, she tells her mother that she misses her former English teacher. Her mother agrees that Angela was very lucky to have had Mr. Olson as a teacher all through her years of high school. She adds: "'He lasted very well, a man of his calibre, for this community.'"¹⁸ Angela realizes then that her teacher must have been asked to leave.

[. . .] 'You mean they petitioned him out,' she said and knew she was right. It had happened before, so many times, the petitioning out of free thinkers, on some little excuse, like they didn't fit the community values.'¹⁹

Angela's mother explains that she herself had not approved of the petition, but that the community as a whole was

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 167.

¹⁹ Ibid.

suspicious of the excellence exemplified by the teacher and had mistaken it for worldly evil. Very annoyed by the ignorance of the community that she feels this attitude reveals, Angela returns to her typewriter, determined that she will survive "because of the debt Mr. Olson had given her."²⁰ To write would "sting out" the injuries so that they would heal.

To repay her own debt to the father of her childhood and to compensate for what she feels is indifference for her dead father on her mother's part, Angela decides to marry Gordon Kopec, her father's choice for her. The date of the small ceremony is to be February 27, before her mother's flight to England to start an Art course. The ladies of Gladden plan a shower for the bride-to-be in the community hall. At this function, Angela meets the wife of the new teacher who has come to replace Mr. Olson. This lady greets her warmly and is only too ready to gossip about the previous teacher. "'He sure left a mess for my husband to take over,' [. . .] 'and he sure doesn't seem to have taught the kids much.'²¹ The name of the former English teacher is the focus of attention

²⁰ Ibid., p. 167.

²¹ Ibid., p. 175.

in another conversation. The ladies talk about "poor old Joe", of how proud he would be if he had lived to see this day, and how he must have suffered. One lady recalls:

'But he sure did this community a service when he made the move to get rid of that Olson. Oh yes, didn't you know, it was him who got the petition started?'²²

Now Angela realizes that it was her father not her mother whom she never understood. Startled by the news that her father had been one of the group to discourage independent thinking, she knows that she cannot continue with her plans to marry Gordon Kopec in order to keep a promise to her dying father. She understands that her mother, like Mr. Olson, has been trying to keep the cage doors open for her. Angela feels grateful to her mother for doing this, and to her teacher, Mr. Olson, for her wings.

2. Analysis of Character

1. Major or minor character?

Mr. Olson is a minor character.

2. Does the character being a teacher have significance?

Yes. The fact that Mr. Olson is a teacher is very important to the development of the main character. His role of teacher accounts for his influence over

²² Ibid., p. 176.

this character.

3. How is the teacher viewed by students?

He is viewed by the main character as a person worthy of respect, as the only person she can consult for advice in time of trouble. Confidence is expressed in his judgment as well as in the values he upholds. The main character approves the teacher's promoting independent thinking among his students. The teacher's praise and approbation are sought. One other character, a friend of the main character, seems to have held favorable views of the teacher. No other student views are expressed in the novel.

4. How is the teacher viewed by parents and members of the community?

He is viewed as a disruptive influence. The standards and values he supports are considered not in keeping with those of the community. The parents consider that the teacher is filling their young with ideas which are not appropriate to their stations in life. They feel so strongly about the teacher not fitting the community values that they petition him to leave his high school teaching post.

5. How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?

There is only one other teacher who is mentioned in

the novel as having any connection with Mr. Olson-- the High School English teacher who comes to replace him. He himself does not appear in the novel, but his views of teaching are expressed through his wife's conversation. The new teacher does not share the other's approach to teaching or his philosophy. It is apparent that the colleague considers that Mr. Olson had taught the students very little since they had not learned a great deal of factual information.

6. How is the teacher viewed by administrators?

There is no indication of this.

7. How does the teacher view himself and his role as a teacher? What is his philosophy, if any?

The teacher takes his professional duties very seriously. He understands that the standards of the community in which he teaches are very narrow and restrictive for all. He knows that the members of the community are very intolerant of anyone holding ideas which do not coincide with theirs, but he feels that it is his duty to introduce his students to new experiences and to encourage them to think things through for themselves. He feels that this aspect of his work is very demanding and very fatiguing.

8. How does the teacher view the students?

He views them as unfortunate pawns of their community, victims of all the traditions and customs of their elders. He seriously tries to release them from what he considers to be the bondage of community expectation for them.

9. How does the teacher view parents and the community?

He realizes that they hold standards and values which differ from his own. These he considers to be restrictive and narrow. He knows that the community is quite capable of acting against him, and he is wary of incurring any open displeasure.

10. How does the teacher view his colleagues?

There is no indication of this.

11. How does the teacher view the administrators?

There is no indication of this.

3. Summary

The image of teacher which emerges from Bird At The Window is one of a person seriously involved in attempting to carry out what he believes. He knows that the philosophy motivating his teaching is in direct opposition to community opinion. He appears to have been quietly putting his ideas into practice for at least three years without arousing open hostility. When an ultimatum in the form of transfer

to another school is presented, the teacher-character admits that "enough is enough" and that the battle for him must be conceded.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a generalized image of teacher exists in contemporary Canadian novels and, if so, to delineate that image. If not enough unanimity could be found to constitute a generalized image, the study's purpose was then to make whatever observations possible concerning the projection of teacher attributes.

A survey of eight novels provided fifteen teacher-characters for analysis. Four of the teacher-characters were character-composites, three being created by a process of combination and one by a process of absorption. For all intents and purposes these composite teacher-characters were treated as unitary entities regardless of the number of characters that went into each one's creation. For the purpose of analysis each of the character-composites had the same status as each of the eleven other teacher-characters.

In four of the eight novels teachers were not only major characters but the main character in each of those novels. There was a total of five teacher-characters who were considered major, "Merrymount", a character-composite being the fifth. Ten teacher-characters were considered to be minor characters in the novels. No differentiation between "major" and "minor" was made in analysis. A character being "major" was simply reflected in the amount of

information that could be presented concerning him. Fuller answers for questions posed were possible in the case of major characters and in that sense "major" had a weighting, but a natural one, not one superimposed.

Of the teacher-characters, nine were male and five were female. "Merrymount", a character-composite, was considered male and female. This is not to say that there were two "Merrymounts", but rather the same character considered twice for balancing where attributes possibly associated with sex difference were being considered.

Of the fifteen teacher-characters, eight taught at the high school level, two at the junior high school level, and three at the elementary level. Two teacher-characters taught in schools for native peoples. Where subject specialization in teaching was part of the school system, it was found that more of the teacher-characters taught English than any other subject. For thirteen of the fifteen teacher-characters, being a teacher had significance in that another occupation could not have been substituted for teaching without changing the teacher's function in the novels in which they were characters.

Teacher-characters were distributed across Canada in this manner: British Columbia, one; Alberta, two; Manitoba, three; Ontario, three; Quebec, six. No novels

dealt with teachers in Saskatchewan or any of the Atlantic provinces. Five teachers were in city schools, five in small towns, three in a Regional School, one in an Indian village, and one on an Indian Reserve.

Besides asking whether a teacher-character was "major" or "minor" and whether or not being a teacher had significance, this study was guided by nine other questions asked about each character analyzed.

It is of note that for only six out of fifteen teacher-characters were student views indicated. This tended to argue that although teachers had been included in novels, they were not being shown to any great extent in the classroom situation with those whom they were meant to teach.

The teacher for the most part was viewed favorably by students who appeared to form their opinions on the basis of a willingness of the teacher to advise or help. His voluntary accessibility to students was noted. The teacher was someone to turn to in time of trouble or frustration. A sympathetic understanding was anticipated. Most of the problems were problems outside the classroom situation in the usual sense. It was usually "after school" that rapport was sought and the willingness of the teacher to give of his time "above and beyond" the teaching day seemed of consequence.

On occasion a "special" friendship or relationship developed that moved beyond traditionally held teacher-student bounds. That bounds do exist was a fact realized as indicated by subterfuge or soul searching of those involved in such relationships. In the case of three males the relationship was or became a sexual one. One female who had a penchant for seeking out "unique" students compounded her frustrations by becoming deeply concerned about a boy in her Grade Two class.

There was no inclination which could be considered indicative of any particular view of the teacher by parents and community members. Certainly a strongly positive or negative view was ruled out. Attitudes when held, ranged from acceptance to rejection, but in the overall picture there was a balancing. Lack of expressed opinion concerning the teacher as viewed by the community could be said to indicate apathy on the part of the latter. It could also be considered a more "positive" attitude, one of acceptance, for very often, if nothing is said, then nothing is felt to be amiss. It is only when one "rocks the boat" that waves occur. Teacher-characters such as "Merrymount" do their best to see that the boat is not rocked and hence maintain the apathetic or acceptive view of themselves on the part of the community. The only two teachers in the

study viewed negatively by parents and community were David Appleby and Mr. Olson, the former a teacher in a big city, the latter in a small town. In each case parents were unhappy about the teacher's approach to teaching his subject, English. In one case the "sensitive" area of sex was brought to the fore, or so some parents claimed, in composition assignments and a photograph display. In the case of the other teacher, Mr. Olson, independent thought was promoted, an anathema, apparently, to values held in a small Alberta town.

There was an ambivalence in regards to how the teacher was viewed by colleagues. Favorable views were seen to be held usually on the basis of personal friendship rather than a respect for prowess in the profession. In one case the female teacher was viewed favorably simply because she was female and in one way or another satisfying to a male. When negative views were held of the teacher by a colleague, they tended to be strongly negative and directed toward the teacher as teacher, although in one case there is a suggestion by the colleague that perhaps the future did hold hope of improvement for the criticized character. The positive and negative views of the teacher tended to cancel each other out leaving the "view of teacher by colleagues" in a "grey" area.

There were enough positive views of the teacher by administrators to accept this favorable attitude as the common one. This was accentuated by the fact that no actually negative views were expressed and in many views showing some ambivalence there was often the conclusion that the teacher would improve in time. Favorable view of the teacher by administrators seemed assured most readily by the teacher's co-operation and by a refraining from "boat rocking".

Even two of the three teachers most rebel-like in act or attitude are not viewed unfavorably by administrators. The third teacher, Mr. Olson, is forced to resign his job but through the insistence of "The Board". No mention is made of administrators.

"The Humanist" had a great deal to say against "the system" and formal education. Despite this he is viewed most favorably by his administrators. In point of fact, "The Humanist" was a character-composite made by the absorption of those very administrators. If there was blame to be placed in the school it was considered to be the fault of those at some higher echelon. At any rate, most complaints were entered in a diary and the self-styled rebel was in fact no rebel at all, except in the most trivial ways and always "covering" himself in the process. He was really

concerned about appearances.

David Appleby despite his agitating and complaints is given favorable recommendation by department heads and after reprimand by his vice-principal is told his career could be a promising one if his attitude would change and another matter involving appearances was settled. It seemed that "Merrymount" was sensitive to drawing undue outside attention to the school and wanted to maintain proper appearances. David Appleby was caught in a bargaining situation and gave in to "the system". Proper outward appearances were maintained and no undue attention was drawn to the school.

"The Humanist" was the only teacher-character who put forward enough of his beliefs and feelings concerning education to indicate anything comprehensive enough to be regarded as a philosophy of education. It was basically an Ivan Illich attitude of "deschooling society" and setting free the "captives". Considering the question as to how the teacher viewed himself and his role as a teacher, a balance was struck between those teacher-characters who saw their role in a positive light and those who viewed it in a negative way. Balanced against the teacher-characters who saw themselves trapped by their profession or who looked at it in mercenary terms were those who viewed their role

as the fulfillment of a serious mission of involvement with young people. There are also the teacher-characters who have experienced trauma in relation to teaching but who have learned to benefit from their mistakes and who look forward to improving as teachers.

The female teachers take stock of themselves and their role of teacher even less than the males. None of the female teacher-characters put forward an approach to education that could be considered a philosophy although Rachel Cameron attempted to do so at times.

One commonality that did emerge from how teachers look upon themselves was a sensitivity about appearances. This was particularly true of the female teacher-characters. Appearances were indicated as being important to over half the total number of teacher-characters considered, and to all but one of the female teacher-characters.

Generally, the teacher was seen to view his students in a positive manner. Although there are exceptions the most common attribute among teacher-characters is an interest in students and a desire that they do well.

There was at least some indication from twelve out of fifteen teacher-characters analyzed about how the teacher viewed parents and the community. Numerically, this was the category of greatest response. The tenor of

response indicated that the teacher respected, accepted, or acquiesced to the expressed or sensed dictates and wishes of the community and felt it was right that he should do so. The one teacher-character coming out most strongly against not only a community, but society as a whole, was "The Humanist". "The Humanist", however, had a tendency to misplace or at least shift blame. Much of his criticism is written in a diary rather than directed outwardly. Be that as it may, some of the criticism directed at The Board, and hence, community or society, rightly belonged with his administrators but was not directed there because of close ties and a feeling of identity with those administrators. A feeling of concern for appearances was once again noted in consideration of this question.

A repetitiveness existed in the posing of the question "How does the teacher view his colleagues?" Except for some small details where "colleague" was given a broad interpretation, information obtained here had already been obtained from the question "How is the teacher viewed by colleagues?" The matter has a reciprocal aspect.

Where views of administrators were given by teachers, they tended to be favorable in that the teacher recognized that the administrator's task was demanding and that he was expected to help him fulfill his role by being

co-operative. For most of the teacher-characters, however, no indication of view was put forward.

In the contemporary Canadian novel a generalized image of the teacher has emerged. The teacher is seen as a person viewed favorably by students, who, in turn, expresses an interest in them. Although he wishes the best for students, the teacher does not give a great deal of thought to the development of a personal philosophy of education.

The teacher is a well-meaning person who accepts the community's values and standards and their implications for his own conduct. He, and especially she, considers appearances to be important. The profession demands decorum.

The teacher holds a respect for or feels a diffidence toward his administrators who in turn think highly of the teacher as one who carries out their wishes.

The contemporary Canadian teacher as portrayed in the novels tends toward a blandness. If innovation and reform are to come to the whole field of education, it will have to be from "outside" the "grass-roots" area of the teaching profession, perhaps outside the teaching profession altogether. No doubt the teacher will accept and do his best to implement what is passed on to him in education once it is properly sanctioned "from above".

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APPENDIX 1

ABSTRACT OF: School Teachers: Their Image
in the Canadian Novel 1960-1974

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School Teachers: Their Image in the Canadian Novel 1960-1974¹

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a generalized image of teacher exists in contemporary Canadian novels and, if so, to delineate that image. If not enough unanimity could be found to constitute a generalized image, the study's purpose was then to make whatever observations possible concerning the projection of teacher attributes.

Novels published in Canada between 1960 and 1974 with a copyright no earlier than 1960 were surveyed for teacher-characters actively teaching during that period of time in a public school system in Canada not beyond the secondary level. Eight novels were found having teacher-characters within the delimitations set. To prevent skewing a limit of three teacher-characters per novel was set. This necessitated in two of the novels the formation of character-composites, that is many teacher-characters being brought together and in presentation and analysis treated as a unitary entity.

¹ Lawson C. Stockford, master's thesis presented to the Faculty of Education of the University of Ottawa, Canada, 1975, xvi-365.

A presentation of each teacher-character was made in which the character was shown in action with other characters in the novel to the extent that attributes would be projected. Analysis was avoided at this point as were personal evaluations. After each presentation a character analysis was carried out according to eleven specific questions. Information for each analysis was drawn from what appeared in each presentation.

Finally the analyses of the fifteen teacher-characters were analyzed for commonalities using the same eleven specific questions as a guide.

A generalized image of teacher emerged indicating the teacher as a person seen favorably by students and, in turn, viewing students favorably. Although the teacher wishes the best for students, he does not give a great deal of thought to the development of a personal philosophy of education. The teacher is a well-meaning person who accepts the community's values and standards and their implications for his own conduct. He, and especially she, considers appearances to be important. A decorum must be maintained.

The teacher holds a respect for or feels a diffidence toward his administrators who in turn think highly of the teacher as one who carries out their wishes.

The contemporary Canadian teacher as portrayed in the novels tends toward a blandness. If innovation and reform are to come to the whole field of education, it will have to be from "outside" the "grass-roots" area of the teaching profession. No doubt the teacher will accept and do his best to implement what is passed on to him in education once it is properly sanctioned "from above".