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Intersecting Orbits: A Study Of Selected Story Cycles By Hugh Hood, Jack Hodgins, Clark Blaise, And Alice Munro, In Their Literary Contexts

John Russell Struthers

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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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INTERSECTING ORBITS:

A STUDY OF SELECTED STORY CYCLES
BY HUGH HOOD, JACK HODGINS, CLARK BLAISE, AND ALICE MUNRO,
IN THEIR LITERARY CONTEXTS

by
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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Western Ontario
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ABSTRACT

Too often, Canadian story cycles have been dismissed as failed novels or have simply been ignored. In my view, Canadian story cycles, as well as the sketch books that feed into this tradition, represent a remarkable achievement. A broad gradation of story cycles stands between the boundaries delimited by the short story miscellany on one side and the novel (or the discontinuous, but single, fictional narrative) on the other side. Such works signify the emergence in Canada, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, of a valuable form that has not yet attracted sufficient critical attention.

The introductory and concluding chapters of this dissertation present a general view of the Canadian story cycle. The introduction draws together the scattered critical remarks that have been made about this form, and comments on its history, the literary influences on the four main authors whom I discuss, Forrest L. Ingram's theories about the story cycle, and some matters of composition relating to my principal authors. The conclusion considers the story cycle in the context of related forms such as quasi-fictional collections, autobiographies, and discontinuous long poems. Numerous

examples of Canadian story cycles are also mentioned, and their common features are identified.

The four central chapters of my dissertation offer detailed analyses of a reasonably representative range of contemporary Canadian story cycles: Hugh Hood's Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life, Jack Hodgins' Spit Delaney's Island: Selected Stories, Clark Blaise's A North American Education: A Book of Short Fiction, and Alice Munro's Who Do You Think You Are?. These analyses, and the more general commentary in my introduction and conclusion, are supported by relevant information derived from interviews and correspondence with Hood, Hodgins, Blaise, Munro, and other figures such as Kent Thompson, John Metcalf, and Douglas Gibson. Each of my analyses gives special emphasis to the overall design of the individual book, to what Munro terms "the buried links between the stories," and to the relations between parts of each cycle and the whole.

for Marianne Micros
with all my love and joy

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My interest in story cycles began with studies of works by Faulkner, Welty, and Joyce in graduate courses taught by Virginia J. Rock and R. G. N. Bates, to whom I remain grateful for their guidance and continued support. From Carl F. Klinck I received both my initial instruction in Canadian literature and a strong sense of the importance of literary history and of the high standards of professional scholarship. I am deeply indebted to the thought and the critical work on the whole of literature in English by many professors at Western, some of whom are cited in the bibliography of this study. James Reaney, Richard M. Stingle, Catherine Sheldrick Ross, Joseph M. Zezulka, and, in particular, Stan Dragland, have enriched my understanding of Canadian literature in many ways.

I would also like to thank the friends who inspired my early study of Canadian literature and culture, including Steve Ashworth, Dave Saunders, Peter Neary, and Steve Higgins. I am especially grateful to the editors who for many years have encouraged and directed my writing on Canadian literature: Norm Ibsen of The London Free Press; and Jack David and Robert Lecker of ECW Press. I have also enjoyed numerous conversations with William Butt, John Orange, Lawrence Mathews, Louis K. MacKendrick, and Winston Schell, whom, in many respects, I consider to be my joint-labourers.

The composition of this work was greatly stimulated by the positive reactions of Hugh Hood, Jack Hodgins, Clark Blaise, and Alice Munro to my early reviews of their work. I wish to thank them warmly for these responses and for their subsequent generosity in complying with many kinds of requests. This study has also benefitted from the critical scrutiny of Joe Zezulka; and it has taken form as a result of the thoughtful direction and great care of my chief advisor, Stan Dragland. I am especially indebted to Stan for encouraging me to focus on contemporary Canadian literature and for developing my approach to literary criticism and writing.

Many other individuals have assisted me directly. Wayne Grady provided a copy of the first version of Who Do You Think You Are?. Kent Thompson, Peter M. McEntyre, John Metcalf, and Douglas Gibson discussed Canadian story cycles with me. I also appreciate the courtesy of the people who allowed me to read and to quote from unpublished work and

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As well, I would like to thank George Robinson of the D. B. Weldon Library, who gave me the right advice when I needed it most. Finally, I would like to mention my profound gratitude for the love and encouragement of my parents, Jack and Jean Struthers, my friends the Higginses, the Safrans, the Butts, the Berners, the Kemps, and the Hammertons, and, pre-eminently, my wife, Marianne Micros, to whom this work is dedicated, and our daughters, Eleni and Joy.

NOTES ON TEXTS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The texts of Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life, Spit Delaney's Island: Selected Stories, A North American Education: A Book of Short Fiction, and Who Do You Think You Are? used in this study are the first Canadian editions. In every case except Who Do You Think You Are?, the pagination in these editions is identical to that in the later paperback editions.

I have used the following abbreviations for these books:

<u>Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life</u>	<u>AM</u>
<u>Spit Delaney's Island: Selected Stories</u>	<u>SDI</u>
<u>A North American Education: A Book of Short Fiction</u> ...	<u>NAE</u>
<u>Who Do You Think You Are?</u>	<u>W</u>

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I recognize the Rhine, see the towns I once
hitchhiked through, and bask in the strangeness
of it all, the orbits of India and my early
manhood intersecting.

--Clark Blaise, "Going to India,"
in his A North American Education

. . . what they are they were designed to be.

--Charles Dickens, "Preface to the
First Cheap Edition 1847," in his
The Pickwick Papers

The third eye saw through order like a glass
To concentrate, refine and rarify
And make a Cosmos of miscellany.

--Jay Macpherson, "The Third Eye,"
in her The Boatman

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:

ALMOST A PATENTED CANADIAN TECHNIQUE

I

During the two decades between 1960 and 1980 remarkable changes occurred in the Canadian short story. Ethel Wilson, Ernest Buckler, Sinclair Ross, Malcolm Lowry, Robertson Davies, W. O. Mitchell, Mavis Gallant, George Elliott, Norman Levine, Margaret Laurence, Hugh Hood, Eugene McNamara, Alice Munro, Leon Rooke, Rudy Wiebe, W. P. Kinsella, Alistair MacLeod, Audrey Thomas, Beth Harvor, Kent Thompson, Lawrence Garber, Dave Godfrey, John Metcalf, Jack Hodgins, W. D. Valgardson, Clark Blaise, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Ray Smith, Don Bailey, and Matt Cohen,¹ to name thirty of the most accomplished short fiction writers in these decades, each published one or more collections that revealed a high level of technical achievement. Through CBC Radio, The Tamarack Review, and a series of short story anthologies, Robert Weaver actively encouraged short story writing. Magazine editors like Kent Thompson at The Fiddlehead (1967-70) and Geoff Hancock at Canadian Fiction Magazine (1975-), anthologists like John Metcalf and Rudy Wiebe, and publisher Michael Macklem, who established Oberon

Press in 1966, also made major contributions to the development of the short story form. As a result of such creative and editorial efforts, the Canadian short story passed from the "neglected" and "declining" state that Hugo McPherson lamented in the first edition of the Literary History of Canada (1965)² to the point where Wayne Grady, in The Penguin Book of Canadian Short Stories (1980), could describe the short story as "Canada's healthiest and most versatile literary genre."³

During this period publishing houses like Oberon Press and short story writers themselves showed increasing interest in ways that the short story could be expanded into longer forms such as multi-part stories, trilogies, sequences, and especially story cycles. Hugh Hood's The Fruit Man, The Meat Man & The Manager, the first of nine books that he published with Oberon Press, opens with what Hood describes as "a deliberately-related triptych"⁴ of stories, in which human art and human love, the subjects of the second and third stories, are treated as models of immortality, the subject of the first story. Leon Rooke's collection The Love Parlour, which was selected and arranged for Oberon Press by John Metcalf, closes with a sequence of three stories--"For Love of Madeline," "For Love of Eleanor," and "For Love of Gómez"--which Metcalf says that he placed at the climax of the volume because in his view they represented Rooke's writing at its "most

powerful."⁵ Other sequences, short of book length, include Kent Thompson's trilogy "What Costume Shall the New Man Wear?", published in The Fiddlehead,⁶ Ray Smith's three-part stories "Peril" and "The Dwarf in His Valley Ate Codfish" in Cape Breton Is the Thought Control Center of Canada, and Gwendolyn MacEwen's three-part story "The Second Coming of Julian the Magician" in Noman. Mavis Gallant's "Linnet Muir" sequence, first published in The New Yorker and Canadian Fiction Magazine, contains six stories.⁷ John Metcalf's sequence "The Geography of Time," which appeared in Prism international, consists of eight stories.⁸

At their fullest extent, such groupings expand into book-length units, into story cycles like the four individual works that I examine closely in this study: Hugh Hood's Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life, Jack Hodgins' Spit Delaney's Island: Selected Stories, Clark Blaise's A North American Education: A Book of Short Fiction, and Alice Munro's Who Do You Think You Are?. It might be argued that, through such works, the Canadian short story made its greatest impact in the two decades following 1960. According to William H. New, in the second edition of the Literary History of Canada (1976), such extended forms were, at least, "the most characteristic use of the art form at this time."⁹ The combined precision and coherence that typifies the story cycle appealed at once to writers, editors, publishers, readers, and critics.

II

Awareness of the entire history of Canadian story cycles, which is quite lengthy if the background of fictional and quasi-fictional sketch books is considered, has developed very slowly. Single-author studies have analyzed works by Susanna Moodie, Stephen Leacock, Frederick Philip Grove, Ethel Wilson, Ernest Buckler, Sinclair Ross, Malcolm Lowry, Robertson Davies, Mavis Gallant, Margaret Laurence, Hugh Hood, and Alice Munro.¹⁰ Illuminating but short commentaries have been written on the form of individual works by Duncan Campbell Scott, George Elliott, Dave Godfrey, and Ray Smith.¹¹ In Among Worlds: An Introduction to Modern Commonwealth and South African Fiction and in the second edition of the Literary History of Canada, New has remarked on the evolution of the story cycle in contemporary Canadian literature.¹² Linda M. Leitch has examined about twenty-five Canadian story cycles, necessarily quite briefly, in Chapter I of her thesis, "Alice Munro's Fiction: Explorations in Open Form."¹³ Yet very little investigation of anything but the primary texts has been attempted; and no detailed study of a spectrum of story cycles by several authors has been made.

Of the four principal authors whom I have selected to deal with at length in this study, Hugh Hood, although an extremely productive writer, had received relatively little

attention, mainly from six critics--Robert Fulford, Dennis Duffy, Victoria G. Hale, Kent Thompson, Pierre Cloutier, and Patricia Morley--until 1979 when Before the Flood, a collection of criticism on Hood's work, appeared.¹⁴ Jack Hodgins has emerged too recently to have received much more than the excited notices of numerous book reviewers.¹⁵ Clark Blaise's fiction, surprisingly, has received extended discussion only by Frank Davey.¹⁶ No detailed attention had been paid to form in Alice Munro's books until Leitch completed her thesis in 1980.

The first, the most frequent, and the best commentator on the use and the importance of the story cycle in Canadian literature is Kent Thompson, himself a writer, editor, and critic. In a review of Margaret Laurence's A Bird in the House, Thompson referred to James Joyce's Dubliners and Dylan Thomas' Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog as early examples of "autobiographical short-story collections . . . which ought to be read in their sequences as whole-books"; but he maintained that A Bird in the House represents a significant development in this "little-used genre" of "inter-locking short stories which make up a whole-book."¹⁷ For Thompson, A Bird in the House is unique in the way that "some stories re-examine the same chronological period as other stories, but examine them with a new focus and a different pattern of events."¹⁸ Laurence's book, Thompson emphasized, "is more than a collection of short stories and



6
yet, although like a novel in some ways, not a novel."¹⁹

The distinction that Thompson made is supported by Margaret Laurence's own comments about how the form of this book of related stories differs from the form of her novels. In "Time and the Narrative Voice," an essay accompanying the stories "The Loons" and "To Set Our House in Order" in John Metcalf's anthology The Narrative Voice, Laurence observed,

These stories are part of a collection called A Bird in the House, eight in all, published separately before they were collected in a single volume, but conceived from the beginning as a related group. Each story is self-contained in the sense that it is definitely a short story and not a chapter from a novel, but the net effect is not unlike that of a novel. Structurally, however, these stories as a group are totally unlike a novel. I think the outlines of a novel (mine, anyway) and those of a group of stories such as these interrelated ones may be approximately represented in visual terms. In a novel, one might perhaps imagine the various themes and experiences and the interaction of characters with one another and with themselves as a series of wavy lines, converging, separating, touching, drawing apart, but moving in a horizontal direction. The short stories have flow-lines which are different. They move very close together but parallel and in a vertical direction. Each story takes the girl Vanessa along some specific course of her life and each follows that particular thread closely, but the threads are presented separately and not simultaneously.²⁰

For Thompson, A Bird in the House possesses the sharpness of focus and the restrictiveness of short stories, as well as the scope of a novel.²¹ Quite clearly, A Bird in the House,

along with Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town, represents a bench mark for writers and critics of Canadian story cycles. For this reason, special attention will be given to these books in my concluding chapter.

In the course of editing The Fiddlehead from 1967 to 1970, Thompson discovered Hugh Hood, whose early publication career Thompson discussed in a review article centering on The Fruit Man, The Meat Man & The Manager. In this article, Thompson noted that the short story form was currently "unfashionable," that "publishers insist (perhaps rightly) that short story collections will not sell," and that short story collections "are somehow therefore considered inferior to novels."²² Nevertheless, Thompson argued, "some of the best fiction in Canada is now being written in the short story form."²³ Hood, said Thompson, is probably the "most ambitious practitioner"²⁴ of this form in Canada. He demands "more of the form than almost any other writer, and he is one of the few who is concerned with the totality of a collection--seeing the collection, I think, as an entity which has its effect in sum and not in bits and pieces."²⁵

Hood's own views concerning the unique arrangement of each of the six books of short stories that he published between 1962 and 1980, along with his general conception of the value and the means of ordering short story collections, are conveyed in the interview with him in

Before the Flood²⁶ and in a letter written to me on April 27, 1981. In this letter, Hood discusses "the way in which a collection of stories might be arranged in book form, so as to exhibit the individual stories to their best advantage, while at the same time maintaining any thread of connection and development they might possess as a group."²⁷ His theory of organization is strong and precise:

The analogy with the arrangement of an exhibition of paintings is probably the most striking and suggestive comparison to be made here. Briefly, the first story in the book might be like the picture that goes in the gallery's show window, not the best picture in the exhibition but one which is immediately attractive and inviting. Once inside the gallery, leisurely perambulation and perusal are desirable, and the two or three best works in the collection should be displayed so that one comes upon them after being in the room for some time. The show should lead the viewer on to further reaches of the room, and unexpected niches. The last two stories in the book, on this view, should be the strongest, unless some other principle of arrangement supervenes. The 'next-to-closing' place on the program was the most desirable on a vaudeville bill. That position is always filled by one of the strongest stories in any collection of mine.²⁸

The awareness of craft revealed in this letter indicates why Hood's writing has so strongly intrigued Kent Thompson and other critics.

In "The Canadian Short Story in English and the Little Magazines: 1971," Thompson mentioned Laurence's A Bird in the House and Hood's Around the Mountain and argued that

only these two Canadian writers "have attempted to use the short-story form as a tool toward the writing of a complete, whole book."²⁹ A few years later, in a letter to me, Thompson noted several other works of this kind, including Charles Bruce's The Township of Time, which appeared in 1959, and cycles by Alice Munro, Ray Smith, and himself, which succeeded Around the Mountain and A Bird in the House:

. . . I think that Ray Smith is the best writer in Canada right now. (Have you read LORD NELSON TAVERN?) He has used the short story as a tool to write a book--which is almost a patented Canadian technique. (See Hood's AROUND THE MOUNTAIN, Laurence's A BIRD IN THE HOUSE, Munro's LIVES OF GIRLS AND WOMEN, Bruce's THE TOWNSHIP OF TIME, and my much inferior Seeg-and-Greta stories³⁰

A few years later still, in a letter to Leitch, Thompson gave a fuller explanation for the emergence of the story cycle as such an important form in Canadian fiction:

. . . because Canadian writers have historically found it very difficult to make a living from their writing, they have had to write when they can, as they can. This means that the short story is an attractive genre. But it's attractive another way, too. The little magazines flourish on the short story, and the Canadian writer, unable to make a living at writing anyhow, thinks that he or she might as well go for the good opinion of his or her friends--the other writers --and so works away at this particular form of fiction. (This is something else I developed in an essay somewhere, that the Canada Council, by supporting the little magazines, has encouraged a very high level of art in the short story in

Canada. And in fact it's true: Canadians are among the best short story writers in English in the world.) But then, when the Canadian writer goes to a publisher with a collection of short stories the publisher throws up his hands in horror. (Almost literally.) SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS DON'T SELL. Seems to be true, although I think it's a self-fulfilling prophecy. They are never advertised nor is anything expected of them, and lo, it turns out that they don't sell. Anyhow, the Canadian writer then tends to compose a book which utilizes the short story form. Quite often it works, but what results is not quite what we usually think of as a novel.³¹

Thompson's increasing understanding of the contemporary Canadian story cycle is symptomatic of the greater attention paid to the form by critics of Canadian fiction in the mid- to late-1970s. It is also reflective of the increasing awareness of the value of the form by Canadian short-story writers at that time, and of their growing tendency to organize their own stories into coherent wholes. Furthermore, the interest that Thompson has shown in the story cycle invites closer reflection on the form, such as the extended analyses of four individual works that I undertake in this study.

Thompson examines Canadian short-story writing essentially from the standpoint of a practising artist, as a writer involved in his own time. His criticism, therefore, presents a view similar to that taken by authors Clark Blaise and John Metcalf in the introduction to Here & Now: Best Canadian Stories, where they argue that not a

single writer represented in their anthology "began writing with Canadian models in mind," that "for fiction-writers, there is no . . . domestic tradition."³² While it is true that the writing of short stories and story cycles became solidly established in Canada only during the two decades following 1960, prior native models for Canadian short-story writers did exist and were occasionally acknowledged. As early as 1928, for example, in the introduction to Canadian Short Stories, Raymond Knister spoke of the "unobtrusive influence" of Duncan Campbell Scott's story cycle In the Village of Viger and praised it as "a perfect flowering of art . . . embodied in one volume" and as still "after thirty years . . . the most satisfying individual contribution to the Canadian short story."³³

Moreover, Hugh Hood, a contemporary of Thompson, Metcalf, and Blaise, observes in the interview in Before the Flood that although ". . . I have had no serious major influence in my work, that anybody could detect stylistically by any test that I know of, from a Canadian writer, that lasted for any length of time," nevertheless "there are two Canadian writers who have had some degree of influence on me. One of them is Stephen Leacock, in relation to Around the Mountain; and the other is Morley Callaghan."³⁴ As a child, Hood "just about memorized"³⁵ Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town, and he regards his own

Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life as an "urban pastoral,"³⁶ as an explicit counterpart to Leacock's book which Hood terms "a pastoral idyll treated satirically."³⁷

The history of story cycles in Canada actually extends over a period of more than one hundred and fifty years, if one begins by looking at nineteenth-century sketch books, which were often fictional or quasi-fictional in nature. Significant works in the early history of Canadian sketch books and story cycles include Thomas McCulloch's The Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure, first published in the Acadian Recorder in 1821-22 then collected in book form in 1860,³⁸ Thomas Chandler Haliburton's The Clockmaker; or, The Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick, of Slickville, first published in the Novascotian in 1835 then collected in three book-length series in 1836, 1838, and 1840,³⁹ Catharine Parr Traill's The Backwoods of Canada (1836), Susanna Moodie's Roughing It in the Bush (1852), Duncan Campbell Scott's In the Village of Viger (1896), Stephen Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town (1912) and Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich (1914), and Frederick Philip Grove's Over Prairie Trails (1922). The importance of these books in the foundation of a Canadian tradition of short fiction is now widely recognized, owing to their republication (sometimes in abbreviated editions) in the New Canadian Library series; and, as I have noted, critics

like Thompson and New have drawn attention to the flowering of the story-cycle form in the 1960s and 1970s when decidedly superior works appeared with great frequency.

A split focus on early and recent works conveys the impression, as Leitch argues in her "chronological survey of the open form in English-Canadian fiction,"⁴⁰ that following the publication of Over Prairie Trails no outstanding story cycles, and no books in allied forms, appeared in Canada for almost forty years, that is, until the publication of Charles Bruce's The Township of Time: A Chronicle in 1959.⁴¹ This view is certainly mistaken, for it ignores such works as The Yellow Briar (1933) by "Patrick Slater" (John Mitchell), the series of sketch books by Emily Carr beginning with Klee Wyck (1941), Paul Hiebert's Sarah Binks (1947), and Robertson Davies' The Diary of Samuel Marchbanks (1947) and The Table Talk of Samuel Marchbanks (1949).⁴² A balanced and complete literary history of Canadian story cycles remains to be written. The critic who attempted this task might well begin with Hugh Hood's Around the Mountain, and specifically with what Hood says about the influence on that volume of the tradition of sketch books:

There are a very large number of these in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, and they're often books of very great importance. The one that I think probably had the most historical importance was Turgenev's A Sportsman's

[Notebook] because of its political influence on the Czar. It depicted the condition of the Russian peasantry so vividly and so humanely that it was directly influential on the Czar's deciding to manumit the serfs. Then there are Dickens' early publications, Sketches by Boz. Then there are George Eliot's Scenes of Clerical Life, and Balzac's Scènes de la vie de province, and hordes of books written in the nineteenth century specifically as sketch books. They were often designed to be accompanied by illustrations. They were often designed to have the literary qualities that water-colour painting often does, an unfinished quality, sketchy--precisely! Just two nights ago, I was asked to speak about Around the Mountain at McGill and I was asked by one of the students why these stories had this tentative and unfinished quality so that your imagination could wander off along the lines into an undefined space. I said, "It's a sketch book," and then talked for a while about this form we're talking about. It has a good deal in common with what used to be called travel sketches. Leacock explicitly calls his book Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town, and he's thinking of that water-colour or pencil portfolio that an amateur artist might have collected--perhaps a woman artist--in the 80s. The characteristics of these are an agreeable tenuousness, an endearing tentative quality. They don't have the whomp, whomp, whomp, full close, of a novel.⁴³

A history of Canadian story cycles that took influence into account would find itself ranging much farther than the Canadian literary tradition (even if that is not so completely uninfluential as Blaise and Metcalf believe) and also far beyond the entire genre of the story cycle. Hugh Hood acknowledges "some degree of influence"⁴⁴ by Leacock and Callaghan, but cites Dante, Spenser, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Turgenev, Joyce, Proust, and Powell as more significant influences on his work.⁴⁵ Similarly, the influence of

Canadian literature on Jack Hodgins, Clark Blaise, and Alice Munro has been relatively slight. Roderick Haig-Brown's novel Timber, although Hodgins was prevented from reading it as a child, nonetheless had a magical influence on him, because he dreamed of writing "the invisible story that hid between those covers."⁴⁶ Hodgins also notes that Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel and Sinclair Ross's novels were important to him because they were written in an obviously Canadian language, expressed decidedly Canadian viewpoints, and therefore taught him that "writers could write meaningfully about specific Canadian themes, characters and places."⁴⁷ However, the greatest influences on Hodgins were Steinbeck, Hemingway, and especially Faulkner.⁴⁸

Blaise observes that "I derive satisfaction only from Mavis Gallant, among Canadians."⁴⁹ The principal influences on him were European writers such as Joyce and Mann, and particularly French writers such as Pascal, Flaubert, and Céline, as well as American writers like Faulkner, Mailer, and Heller, and expatriate writers like Naipaul and, indeed, Gallant herself.⁵⁰ Munro mentions that Lucy Maud Montgomery's Emily of New Moon, Hugh MacLennan's Two Solitudes, and especially Ethel Wilson's fiction were of consequence to her.⁵¹ Yet certainly the most important writers to Munro were Southerners Eudora Welty and James Agee.⁵²

III

Internationally, the standard study of the story cycle is Forrest L. Ingram's Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century: Studies in a Literary Genre. Ingram begins by defining the story cycle as "a set of stories linked to each other in such a way as to maintain a balance between the individuality of each of the stories and the necessities of the larger unit,"⁵³ then redefines it as "a book of short stories so linked to each other by their author that the reader's successive experience on various levels of the pattern of the whole significantly modifies his experience of each of its component parts."⁵⁴ Ingram identifies and describes the features of three principal kinds of story cycle: the "composed" cycle, "which the author had conceived as a whole from the time he wrote its first story"; the "completed" cycle, in which the author "Consciously . . . completed the unifying task which he may have subconsciously begun"; and the "arranged" cycle, consisting of stories which the "author or editor-author has brought together to illuminate or comment upon one another by juxtaposition or association."⁵⁵

Ingram then outlines the critical approaches that have been applied to three twentieth-century story cycles, James Joyce's Dubliners, Albert Camus' L'Exil et le royaume, and John Steinbeck's The Pastures of Heaven, and briefly

delineates a systematic approach to the story cycle. The next chapters of Ingram's book present detailed studies of Franz Kafka's Ein Hungerkünstler, William Faulkner's The Unvanquished, and Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio. These are story cycles, as Ingram remarks in the "Conclusion," that he has "judged to be representative of the range, versatility, and scope of the genre,"⁵⁶ although he admits earlier that all of them are "completed" cycles, that is, "sets of linked stories which are neither strictly composed nor merely arranged."⁵⁷

By contrast, my own study analyzes "composed," "completed," and "arranged" cycles--that is, if any book can be said to belong strictly to any of these categories, for both strictly "composed" cycles (like Hood's Around the Mountain) and simply "arranged" cycles (like Hodgins' Spit Delaney's Island) are in varying degrees "completed." The problem in attempting to define story cycles according to Ingram's three categories becomes apparent in examining Clark Blaise's A North American Education, which might be called an "arranged" cycle, and Alice Munro's Who Do You Think You Are?, which might be termed a "completed" cycle. Blaise's first story cycle was "arranged" from a much longer manuscript that also contained the stories subsequently collected in a second story cycle, Tribal Justice;⁵⁸ however, the continuity within each of the three groups of stories in A North American Education reflects the

character of a "completed" (if not a "composed") work. The first stories in Who Do You Think You Are?--a "completed" work like Munro's episodic novel Lives of Girls and Women--began much as did the stories that were eventually "arranged" in Munro's Dance of the Happy Shades and Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You; but the latest stories were "composed" quickly and assuredly with the final design of the book in mind.⁵⁹ A work like Who Do You Think You Are?, which exhibits features of "arranged," "completed," and "composed" cycles, demonstrates the limitations of any critical approach, like Ingram's, that tends to classify literature rather than to respond openly to it.

With the possible exception of Hugh Hood's work, the patterns of composition behind the story cycles that I am considering are evolutionary in character. Jack Hodgins, for example, states in an interview that

If my concept of a book from the very beginning was totally unified, I would be writing a novel. I can't imagine writing a collection of related stories, although I know people have done it. I can't predict myself clearly enough to be able to do that. I would head off in another direction that would spoil the collection altogether. It's afterwards that the shape is noticed. With The Barclay Family Theatre, I had three-quarters of the stories in front of me before I realized what tied them together, where they overlapped, and why they must belong in the same book.⁶⁰

These evolving patterns have remained true in the case of

Hodgins' second story cycle, The Barclay Family Theatre, although, in Ingram's terms, it is a "completed" cycle rather than an "arranged" cycle like Spit Delaney's Island. Yet, in terms of method of composition and final form, The Barclay Family Theatre also offers some interesting contrasts with Spit Delaney's Island. His first collection possesses the stylistic variety that one might associate with a writer's apprenticeship. The Barclay Family Theatre is a more uniform and more mature work that has strong affinities with the most interrelated book of stories under discussion here, Munro's Who Do You Think You Are?.

The Canadian author most prominently concerned with trying to shape short stories into coherent books is Alice Munro. Michael Taylor describes Who Do You Think You Are? as "a hybrid literary form," which "inverts the pattern of another hybrid, Lives of Girls and Women, a novel with chapters that could just as easily be read as short stories."⁶¹ He concludes that "The form in either manifestation may be unique to Alice Munro."⁶² Although this conclusion ignores the history of Canadian story cycles, and the proliferation of story cycles in Canada during the 1960s and 1970s, Taylor is right in regarding Munro as the Canadian writer who is most preoccupied with this form. For Munro, the idea of a book's form develops only in the process of writing successive stories or after she has finished enough stories to make a full volume. Unlike

Hood's Around the Mountain, none of Munro's first four books is a "composed" cycle. Lives of Girls and Women and Who Do You Think You Are? are examples of what Ingram calls "completed" cycles, whereas Dance of the Happy Shades and Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You are examples of what he terms "arranged" cycles.

The story of the composition of Who Do You Think You Are? is one of the most astounding in Canadian publishing history and it attests to the instinctive, rather than conscious, way that Munro, like Hodgins, proceeds to compose fiction. Yet, intriguingly, the final version of Who Do You Think You Are? is more completely unified than more deliberately "composed" works such as Around the Mountain, which Hood planned and wrote at the rate of two sketches per month from January to June of 1966,⁶³ or Blaise's A North American Education, whose materials were rewritten so often that Blaise considers the book not a first work but, as he tells John Metcalf, "a 'twenty-fifth' work."⁶⁴ This view of Munro's and Hodgins' method of composition is not meant to imply that they are less careful than the other writers about revising their works. As Munro explains in an interview by Mari Stainsby,

I generally have an idea hanging around for years and years, and I'll make several attempts to write it. It's kind of interesting that one of the stories in Dance was going to be a whole novel--this is Postcard, in case you're wondering which one--and one night I was having a bath and

I suddenly realized that it was only a short story and I felt horribly cheated after spending two years on it.

Once I start to write something, and I've got it in the right form, it will probably take--oh, a month--to make it a short story. Most of that time will be spent writing the horrible first draft, which is not only bad but comes slowly. It's really kind of rough. And then I just revise and revise and revise.⁶⁵

In fact, some parts of Lives of Girls and Women, as Munro points out in the interview by John Metcalf, "have certainly been through the typewriter thirty times."⁶⁶

Yet the total form of both Who Do You Think You Are? and Lives of Girls and Women entered Munro's mind late in composition. In the case of Lives of Girls and Women, as Munro explains, her conception of what she wanted to write underwent radical changes:

"Princess Ida" was the first. It was to be a short story. Then I saw it was going to work into a novel, and then I went on and on writing what I thought was a novel. Then I saw that wasn't working; so I went back and I picked out of that novel "Princess Ida," in its original form--I had changed it to make it into the novel --and I picked out "Age of Faith," "Changes and Ceremonies," and "Lives of Girls and Women." Then, having written all those separate sections, I wrote "Baptizing." Then I went back and wrote the two first sections, the one about Uncle Benny, "The Flats Road"--which is called "The Flat Roads" in the paperback!--and "Heirs of the Living Body." And then I wrote the "Epilogue: The Photographer," which gave me all kinds of trouble. I was about half as long again writing that as writing the whole book. And I then plucked it out and decided to publish the book without it. Then--I'm terrible for last-minute emergency calls to the publisher's--then I re-wrote it and put it in.⁶⁷

In another interview, Munro gives an account of the composition of Lives of Girls and Women that stresses the difference between her natural form of the short story (which she finds can be extended or perhaps loosened slightly to create a story cycle or even an episodic novel) and the form of a traditional novel:

When I began to write LIVES, you see, I began to write it as a much more, a much looser novel, with all these things going on at the same time, and it wasn't working. Then I began pulling the material and making it into what are almost self-contained segments. I mean the sections could almost stand as short stories. They're all a little bit too loose, but this seemed to be the only way I could work, and I think maybe this is the way I'll have to write books. I write sort of on--like a single string, a tension string--okay? That's the segment or the story. I don't write as perhaps, as some people say a true novelist does, manipulating a lot of strings.⁶⁸

This explanation is reminiscent of Margaret Laurence's distinction, in the essay about two of her stories from A Bird in the House, between the flow-lines of her short stories and the flow-lines of her novels.⁶⁹ A comparison between Laurence's work and Munro's is very instructive, as is shown by some comments exchanged by John Metcalf and Munro concerning Lives of Girls and Women:

MUNRO: . . . I don't feel at all that the short story is in any way inferior to a novel so it doesn't worry me at all when people say . . . Of course, she's only writing short stories. Would you say they are organically linked stories? Here is the similarity to The Golden Apples,

which I would think of in my mind as a novel but many people wouldn't. I thought the word "novel" had been so loosely applied that one could do almost anything.

METCALF: Fair enough. It isn't the same kind of thing, though, as Margaret Laurence's Bird in the House, where the short stories are self-contained units but inter-linked by having the same character running through. It seemed to me that in Lives of Girls and Women, a section of that book could not really stand completely on its own in the way in which one of the stories in Bird in the House could.

MUNRO: No. I think that's true. I can only think of one or two sections, that could possibly stand on their own and also some of them are quite long. And really too diffuse you know . . .

METCALF: Exactly. They weren't really driving down towards a point.

MUNRO: No. No. They didn't have the tension of a short story, whereas I think Margaret Laurence's stories in Bird in the House did.⁷⁰

This description of A Bird in the House brings to mind Munro's more recent book Who Do You Think You Are? and suggests why these books are story cycles, while Lives of Girls and Women is more novelistic.

In "Who Do You Think You Are?: Review-Interview with Alice Munro," Carole Gerson remarks,

The fact that Rose's experiences are related as a series of stories rather than as a novel means that certain elements, such as her elementary school, her courtship, and her return home to care for her stepmother, are highlighted. But other important aspects of Rose's life--her relationships with her brother, husband, and daughter--remain in the shadows. I asked Munro about the gaps in this book, and whether she saw

it as less of a novel than Lives 71

Munro's answer pinpoints the uniqueness and the strengths of the form that I have chosen as the subject of this study:

I see this definitely as linked stories, and Lives as an episodic novel. If Who Do You Think You Are? is going to be judged as a novel it doesn't work because it doesn't explain enough, whereas Lives explains enough for that period of Del's life. You see, in the parts of a novel, I think all the characters have to matter: in a story you have to concentrate very much on what is happening in that story. I think you're looking at it as a failed novel: why don't you get an explanation of why she doesn't care about Anna (Rose's daughter). When Rose is concentrating on having her affair, Anna doesn't matter. She's taking care of Anna, Anna's part of her life. But Anna doesn't really come into her life. It would have been possible to go through and do a lot of explanatory paragraphs and weave people in, but it would have weakened the stories as stories.⁷²

As in the case of Lives of Girls and Women, the form of Who Do You Think You Are? was discovered late in composition. In fact, one version of the book had already been submitted to Macmillan of Canada, edited, and typeset, and galleys had been sent out to some reviewers, when Munro decided that the book needed to be changed radically.⁷³ The first version of the book was divided into "Part 1" and "Part 2," entitled "ROSE" and "JANET" respectively, containing six stories narrated in the third person ("Royal Beatings," "Privilege," "Half a Grapefruit," "Wild Swans," "The Beggar Maid," and "Spelling") about an actress, Rose,

and six stories narrated in the first person ("Connection," "The Stone in the Field," "Mischief," "Providence," "The Moons of Jupiter," and "Who Do You Think You Are?") about a writer, Janet, who is presumably the "author" or narrator of the first six stories about her doppelgänger, Rose. As Wayne Grady observes in a review of this version,

Who Do You Think You Are? begins with the death of one father and ends with the imminent death of another father. In between are the twin stories of the two daughters: Rose, who grows up in West Hanratty, Ont., the child of a defeated father and a powerless but compassionate stepmother named Flo; and Janet, who is from Dalgleish, Ont., the child of an equally ineffectual father and a somewhat non-existent mother. Both girls think they've escaped from the cloistered virtue of their youth, both marry wealthy, weak men and move to Vancouver, have affairs (or rather non-affairs), leave their husbands, move to Toronto, and become writers. There is a peculiar two-way mirror effect at the end of the book, a faint Nabokovian twist, when a Dalgleish woman asks Janet: "That Rose you write about. Is she supposed to be you?"⁷⁴

However, in the process of creating the final version, as Munro explains in an interview and as Leitch discusses in an appendix to her thesis,⁷⁵ the first five of the original six Rose stories remained the same and were kept in the same order; the last of the original six Rose stories, "Spelling," remained the same but was transferred to second-last place in the volume; three Janet stories ("Connection," "The Stone in the Field," and "The Moons of Jupiter"⁷⁶) were omitted; two Janet stories ("Mischief" and "Providence")

were changed to Rose stories through minor modifications; one Janet story ("Who Do You Think You Are?") was changed to a Rose story through substantial rewriting; and one story ("Simon's Luck")--a story that best articulates the aesthetic informing the entire final volume--was rewritten from a previously published story, "Emily,"⁷⁷ and added for the first time.

Forrest L. Ingram's distinctions among "arranged," "completed," and "composed" cycles seem to imply a myth of progression from a lesser to a greater degree of unity depending on the extent of an author's self-consciousness in writing a book. In fact, as I have already suggested, methods of composition do not necessarily determine the final degree of unity that a book exhibits. The least unified of the four books analyzed here, Spit Delaney's Island, is an "arranged" cycle, as readers like Ingram might expect. In a letter written to me on October 5, 1979, Hodgins gives the following explanation of how the volume evolved:

Yes, the two Spit stories were deliberately used as bookends. The three sections were largely whim (I liked the big roman numerals) but they also helped me give some order to the book--whether anyone else could see that order or not is another matter. I was aware sometime in the arranging, that I had been quite obviously pre-occupied with certain matters while writing these stories. The first two stories, it seemed to me, most obviously raised the big questions I was concerned with. Then there were the people, in

the last three stories, who just might be able to find some answers. The middle people were mainly the defeated. A very loose arrangement, I recognize, but it seemed important to do everything possible to give a collection of stories written over a period of ten years some sense of continuity and connection. None, I might add, in case you misunderstand, was rewritten to tailor it for the collection. I might be tempted to do such a thing now but was hardly equipped to do that then.

"Separating" and "Spit Delaney's Island" were both written after the collection was accepted for publication, by the way. They were never considered part of the same piece. Both were written while I was working on the first draft of INVENTION, but the second one came along six months after the other, when I realized I wasn't satisfied to leave poor old Spit where I'd left him. I don't see them though as two halves of anything.⁷⁸

When asked in an interview if he would expand on these observations, Hodgins replied,

Only to remind you that my shaping of the book was only in the selecting and arranging of stories, not in the writing or revising of them. It simply became a matter of moving the chosen stories around so that their positions benefitted not only themselves but their neighbours--just an editorial job. I had no faith that people would read the stories in order. And reviewers gave me more credit than I think I deserve for the sense of unity the book has. The stories were written--it just seemed to me to make sense that they be shown off in the best way possible. The first Spit story was written after the collection was accepted for publication. I liked it so I added it in place of some other. Six months later, almost against my will, the second Spit story came along and I liked it too and decided to add it to the collection. Then thought--why not use them as bookends. Both the second Spit story and the collection itself had some other title. The present title of the book was something I came up with afterwards--as a title appropriate to both

the story and the group of stories. The choice of title, like the arrangement of stories, being all a part of that business of making a book-- which has little to do with the writing of the stories.⁷⁹

Books resist easy classification. As well as being an "arranged" cycle, Spit Delaney's Island is to some extent a "completed" cycle; in the sense that the two stories about Spit Delaney, which serve as bookends or a frame for the book, were both written after the volume had been accepted for publication.

Blaise's A North American Education is even more difficult to classify. As in the case of Spit Delaney's Island, whose contents were selected from nearly twenty stories that Hodgins had written by that time, the form of A North American Education and the form of Tribal Justice are entirely different from Blaise's original, sizeable manuscript. Between Blaise and his editor--as between Hodgins and his editor a few years later--major decisions were made about how to select and to arrange the stories as they finally appeared.⁸⁰ A North American Education, therefore, is "arranged" in this obvious sense. Subtler aspects of the book's structure, like the movement from third- to second- to first-person narration in "The Montreal Stories," were "arranged" as well. But the continuity within each of the three groups of stories in A North American Education reflects the character of a

"completed" work. The fact that Blaise decided, at some point, to write about not only his experiences as an adult in Montreal but also his generally earlier experiences as a traveller in Europe and his childhood experiences in the American South may even suggest to some readers that in addition to being "completed" and "arranged," these three interconnected groups of stories in A North American Education can be regarded in some sense as a "composed" work.

Possibly as a result of the way that A North American Education came into being, Blaise's book is more unified than Hodgins'. In turn, Hood's Around the Mountain, which is manifestly a "composed" cycle, is even more of a piece than Blaise's A North American Education. It should be noted, however, that even such a deliberately structured book as Around the Mountain resists Ingram's classifications somewhat. Like Hood's carefully planned series The New Age/Le Nouveau siècle, Around the Mountain includes some felicitous discoveries that Hood made while composing it and that make the work in certain respects a "completed" cycle as well.⁸¹ Still, Spit Delaney's Island, A North American Education, and Around the Mountain might be used to demonstrate Ingram's assumption that the degree of unity in the final form of any story cycle is determined by factors of composition.

With Who Do You Think You Are?, however, Ingram's myth of progression ruptures; for although it is the most unified, most interconnected of the four books that I analyze in detail, it was not "composed" deliberately but "completed"--indeed rather frantically so, as I have shown. Nonetheless, in Who Do You Think You Are? Munro has brought something new to the form of the story cycle by creating a truly open form--something like A Bird in the House, but with the parts interconnected differently and even more closely, in the manner of Malcolm Lowry's Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place, Ray Smith's Lord Nelson Tavern, or Hodgins' The Barclay Family Theatre. Although the stories in Who Do You Think You Are? follow a loosely chronological order from Rose's childhood to early middle age, every story opens out to refer ahead or back to times in Rose's life that are dealt with more extensively in other sections of the book.

By choosing a wider spectrum of story cycles to analyze than Ingram discusses in his book, I aim to present somewhat more than he does of the formal range of the story cycle, at least as it appears in Canada. The matters of composition that Ingram raises often influence the final form of a story cycle but such factors are not all-important. The final form of each book, however it is created, deserves the most attention. Now that I have

established some contexts for thinking about Canadian story cycles, my approach in the next four chapters of this study is to consider single examples in detail, by giving special emphasis to the overall design of each work, to what Alice Munro terms "the buried links between the stories,"⁸² and to the relations between parts of each cycle and the whole. The decision to devote much of my effort to detailed analyses of four books, rather than to undertake a broader study of perhaps a dozen books or a general literary history of the story cycle in Canada, reflects my view that such studies cannot adequately demonstrate the literary excellence, the subtlety, the craft, or the individuality of particular books. One can only go so far in discussing books as examples of a special form or theme. Of course, a group of detailed analyses of particular books requires some amount of theory and generalization not only as an introduction but also as a conclusion. Each of the books that I discuss is a story cycle; yet each is also unique, and it is the latter feature that I wish to stress in the next four chapters. Subsequently, however, in my concluding chapter, I turn to further contexts for regarding Canadian story cycles, and to a more general view of a much broader range of Canadian story cycles.

The concluding chapter of this study, then, considers

the story cycle in the context of related forms in Canadian literature such as quasi-fictional collections, autobiographies, and discontinuous long poems. This chapter also refers to a wide variety of Canadian story cycles, from more miscellaneous collections like Ethel Wilson's Mrs. Golightly and Other Stories, Alice Munro's Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You, and Margaret Atwood's Dancing Girls & Other Stories to strongly unified books like Stephen Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town and Margaret Laurence's A Bird in the House. Here, the common features of Canadian story cycles are identified-- characteristics, in most cases, that are studied in detail in my four chapters devoted to particular story cycles by Hood, Hodgins, Blaise, and Munro.

IV

As early as 1972, Kent Thompson called Hugh Hood "probably the master of the short story in Canada";⁸³ and in 1977 novelist and critic John Mills described Hood as "probably one of the five or six best short story writers now alive in the English-speaking world."⁸⁴ Hood's stature as a short-story writer, his understanding, practice, and articulation of a variety of ways that short-story collections can be organized, and the fact that his individual stories or sketches, compared to at least some of

the stories by Hodgins, Blaise, and Munro, are the most traditional and self-contained make a collection by Hood an appropriate place to start my analyses. Among Hood's six collections--Flying a Red Kite (1962), Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life (1967), The Fruit Man, The Meat Man & The Manager (1971), Dark Glasses (1976), Selected Stories (1978), and None Genuine Without This Signature (1980)--the most carefully constructed and unified work, and thus the volume by Hood most clearly central to this study, is Around the Mountain.

With Jack Hodgins' three-part story "Three Women of the Country" and his continuation through "Separating" and "Spit Delaney's Island" of the story of Spit Delaney, the conventionally discrete form of the short story, as practised by Hood, is stretched and the conventional idea of the story cycle itself, as a collection of linked but separate and evenly balanced short stories, is challenged. As Hodgins says of the story "Three Women of the Country" in an essay entitled "An Experiment in Magic," "Certainly the shape and structure of it was unusual--in fact I could expect people to say it didn't follow any of the patterns of the short story at all."⁸⁵ This statement can be applied to Spit Delaney's Island as a whole, as well as to Hodgins' second story cycle, The Barclay Family Theatre, which Hodgins calls "neither a novel nor a book of stories

--because it's both and more!"⁸⁶

To an even greater extent, the stories in each of the three sections of Clark Blaise's A North American Education are continuous and sometimes overlapping chapters, which in their totality re-construct the moral history of a single composite hero by reaching back gradually to its source. The openness of Blaise's stories and the flexibility of the form in which they are arranged are extended further, and used with greater uniformity, in Alice Munro's Who Do You Think You Are?, which examines the stages in the life of the heroine Rose until early middle age through subtle and rhythmic variations in the handling of time and point of view. Munro's creation in Who Do You Think You Are? of a unique "open form,"⁸⁷ her high, international stature as a short-story writer, and the fact that she is the Canadian short-story writer about whose work questions of form are most persistently raised make her as fitting a subject with which to end my individual analyses as Hugh Hood is to begin.

CHAPTER II

A SECULAR LITURGY:

AROUND THE MOUNTAIN: SCENES FROM MONTREAL LIFE

I

By means of a series of critical essays, letters, and interviews, Hugh Hood has sought to make his aesthetic intentions clearly understood by a wide readership. Two of the most instructive essays are "Sober Colouring: The Ontology of Super-Realism" and "Before the Flood," the former written near the beginning of the 1970s and the latter towards the end of the decade. "Sober Colouring: The Ontology of Super-Realism" comments on the development of Hood's ideas about art during the fourteen years since his turn to fiction writing in January 1957, immediately after Robert Weaver rejected an essay by Hood on "Rose Symbolism in the Novels of Morley Callaghan," the first critical article that Hood had written following the completion of his Ph.D. at the University of Toronto.¹ The more recent essay, "Before the Flood," discusses the imaginative influence of Hood's childhood reading and typifies the refined conceptions informing his writing in the 1970s, notably the first trilogy of his epic cycle, The New Age/Le Nouveau siècle, and the impressive short stories written

during the same period and collected in Dark Glasses and None Genuine Without This Signature.² Together, "Sober Colouring: The Ontology of Super-Realism" and "Before the Flood" present a view of art that has shaped all of Hood's writing to varying degrees. Quite early in his career, however, between January and June 1966,³ this theory was given a subtle and coherent and comprehensive form of expression through the composition of Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life.

In the two essays, Hood conveys his admiration for "an art that exhibits the transcendental element dwelling in living things,"⁴ for an art that is "neither penned in itself as an image is . . . nor . . . hissing away into the invisible inane, as symbols do"⁵ but emblematic, that is, "as colourful as an image, and as full of meta-meaning as a symbol, indeed fuller because the implications of the symbol are so chillingly, so frustratingly imprecise."⁶ Hood's great exemplar in this instance and in many others is Wordsworth, whose use of the colour green is precisely emblematic: "the colour is rich, full, wholly given, contextually one of several neighbouring shades and no other, not blurred, intensely evocative of real grass and trees, but at the same time meaningful in a distinct allegorical sense."⁷ Alluding to the example of Wordsworth, Hood states that "If you pay close enough attention to things, stare at them, concentrate on them as hard as you can, not just with

your intelligence, but with your feelings and instincts, you will begin to apprehend the forms in them."⁸

This is the method that Hood pursues in Around the Mountain, a cycle of twelve stories following the Christian calendar and containing specific descriptions of distinct seasons in Montreal, different areas of the city, unique groups of people, and notable individuals. All of these details are informed and illuminated by Hood's artistic revelation of their place in greater patterns and in a Divine Order. It is a method that John Mills says Hood used successfully in the title story of his first book, Flying a Red Kite, and later "brought very close to perfection" in A New Athens, the second volume of The New Age.⁹

Drawing on a commentary by Erwin Panofsky in Meaning in the Visual Arts, Mills identifies Hood's technique as "the anagogical method," a process involving "abandonment of the mind to the harmony and radiance of objects in the physical world in order that the mind be guided towards the transcendent source of this harmony and radiance, namely God."¹⁰

A Christian cosmology--specifically, a Roman Catholic one, with its attendant structure of beliefs and emblems--permeates and unites the whole sequence of ritualistic actions in Around the Mountain. As in William Cowper's hymn "Light Shining Out of Darkness," whose title Hood borrowed for the second story in Around the Mountain,¹¹ and as in other religious poetry that Hood studied in his

M.A. thesis,¹² images of light in Around the Mountain frequently represent Hood's belief in the saving presence of God in this world. Both the searchlight, in the ninth story, that rescues Thierry Desautels from being lost when he descends for the first time into an infernal valley of the shadow of death at rue Valdombre and the amazingly bright and colourful fleet of model ships created by the gypsy Tom, in the second story, that gleams out of the "hellishly dark," "deadly cold" (AM, pp. 29, 33) night are meant to signify the immanence of the Divine Being, by whose Light, Grace, and Love the fallen World of mankind is redeemed.

In "Light Shining Out of Darkness," the Fall from Grace and the ascent of Mount Purgatory are represented as well, through the emblematic description leading up to the vision of Tom's model ships:

The approach to his third-floor quarters is embellished by a really beautiful spiral staircase with a delicate iron rail rising in a graceful curve. I don't deny the staircase is dangerous in winter, when you can't put your bare hand on the railing, and when you have to watch your footing very carefully.

As we ascended Lazarovich said, 'A man fell down here one night straight to the bottom. He was a Hungarian, may have been drunk. Killed instantly.' It was hellishly dark climbing On the third-floor platform, right at the top, you're apt to feel slightly dizzy if you look down at the black rectangle below, whose center, an oblong grass plot, is ringed by upwards-pointing metal spikes. (AM, p. 29)

In sharp contrast to the hope of heavenly immortality suggested by the gracefully curving spiral staircase, the Hungarian's sudden fall to the grave-like plot of ground below is an immediate reminder of mankind's present fallen state and of human mortality.

Mortality and immortality, fallenness and salvation, are religious themes that evoke the Christian system behind Around the Mountain but that also serve as a device of literary structure, connecting the different scenes and the different stories in which they occur. The first story in the volume, "The Sportive Centre of Saint Vincent de Paul," a study of secular analogies for religious community, of man's irresponsibility, and of his deficiency in Christian charity, takes place in part during the "darkest week of the year" (AM, p. 6) and contains a memorable description of death and damnation:

Sometimes working my way along beside the park towards the level-crossing in winter twilight or blackness, I used to have an infernal vision of the place as an immense and horrid ashpit. There are piles of ashes and discarded rubbers, old tires, dead cats, at the back of the park where the snow-removal men heap tumuli of gray slush to await the coming of spring. It seemed ashy, gray to black, infinite, that stretch of obscurity along the railroad right-of-way, where now and then a truck might be seen, its body tilted at a dangerous angle. Spectral muffled figures prodded at lumps of packed snow and ordure as one came by; it was always mysteriously saddening to observe their dauntless activity. (AM, pp. 2-3)

The theme of death is introduced again in the opening story when Seymour's goalie mask is said to resemble closely the death-mask of Keats, and when the emblem of the infernal ashpit is recalled in the reference to the "ashen" (AM, p. 9) appearance of the banished hockey player, Fred Carpenter.

Hood's portrait of man's mortal nature is amplified by many linking references in subsequent stories in the volume. "Light Shining Out of Darkness" contains, in addition to the Hungarian's fatal fall, a remark by Mister Petroff, followed by his "grave salute" (AM, p. 28), that Tom will replace him as patriarch of the Montreal gypsies when he dies. In "Looking Down from Above," the narrator experiences "feelings of mortality and a sense of the passage of time" (AM, p. 82), which are stimulated by the dry heat in early June and embodied in the figure of the defiant old woman and the dwindled form of Monsieur Bourbonnais. The aged Victor Latourelle sits alone "through the oncoming dark" (AM, p. 126) at the close of "The Village Inside." The valley of the shadow of death into which Thierry Desautels descends in "A Green Child" contains a ruined "car's corpse" (AM, p. 136), along with "piles of ashes" (AM, p. 132) that recall emblematic descriptions in the opening story.

These intimations of mortality are drawn together in "The River behind Things," in the final scene where a deathly figure riding in a punt beside a dock, a solitary

Charon-like man with "agitated thin black limbs" (AM, p. 175), jabs a long black pole repeatedly into the ice.¹³

The narrator watches, then raises his eyes up "to the source of the river," gazing far off towards "the high hills" and "the melting ice and snow" (AM, p. 175). Like "The Dead," the final story in Joyce's Dubliners, which closes with a description of the sound of "snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead,"¹⁴ Around the Mountain ends, as it begins, with an evocation of death emphasized by Hood's placement of the word "snow" last, and first, in the volume.

The first description of snow in "The Sportive Centre of Saint Vincent de Paul" is linked with references to snow in the infernal vision pictured later in the same story; but that vision also anticipates "the coming of spring" (AM, p. 3). The hope of rebirth, a return to Eden, immortality, is suggested--again briefly, since the opening story is designed to reflect the ambiguity of winter--by the apple-green and yellow colours of the light emanating, significantly, from the parish church and by the identical colours of one Pee-Wee team's hockey sweaters. The actual sequence of events in the story marks a hopeful advance as well.

"The Sportive Centre of Saint Vincent de Paul" concentrates on the irresponsible actions by Fred Carpenter¹⁵ and, in turn, by his uncharitable team-mates, which are made to

appear more incongruous by their occurrence during the season of Christmas. However, the story moves to a night some weeks later, sometime after the ritualistic beginning of the new year, when, standing near a statue of the Blessed Virgin with the Child in her arms, an emblem of holiness, Grace, and unselfish sacrifice and love, Seymour glimpses the possible self-righteousness of their earlier moral judgement on Fred Carpenter, and the narrator agrees.

This forward-moving or forward-looking tendency, which is based on the archetypal movement from death to rebirth, is more pronounced in the second story in the volume. Here, Hood's calendrical sequence of stories moves one month closer to June and to the "heightened perception" (AM, p. 81)--meaning improved sight and, especially, insight--that fair weather symbolizes for Hood. The vision of Tom's gleaming model ships, the light shining out of darkness of the story's title, momentarily excites "A renovating virtue"¹⁶ in the narrator, who, like Wordsworth contemplating the "spots of time,"¹⁷ concludes,

Sometimes a calm scene like this, a rounded period in the life of the imagination, will rest in one's faculties, stay, rotate, restate itself over and over in changing colours and meanings, exciting feelings, instincts, memory, imagination, seeming to have special powers to enlighten and give form to the rest of our lives. Standing there in the queer narrow living room, almost a scarcely enclosed balcony projecting over nothing, a bit drafty, a bit poor in its other furnishings, I was mysteriously overwhelmed by this various and splendid sight

with feelings of a hidden and immense joy. I was smiling and transfixed, and the remembrance of the sight long after retains the capacity to direct and strengthen all my ways of feeling, so that the life of de Chateaubriand mixes itself irrecoverably with my suspicions of the possibility of goodness, of the memorable life. (AM, pp. 30-31)

The glints of a Divine Order are now stronger and more sustaining than in the preceding story set in December and January; but these intimations of immortality remain only "suspicions" of a remote "possibility" (AM, p. 31). The epiphanic light manifests itself briefly. The story then concludes with a descent into the darkness and cold of the February night, and with a sense of sorrow when the narrator returns much later in the year and discovers that the gypsy family, in whose presence he had been uplifted, has moved on.

The ascent and descent of the spiral staircase in "Light Shining Out of Darkness" is repeated and enlarged in the movement of the volume as a whole. Hood states in an interview that

The stories begin on the flat land up in the northeast of the Montreal region and they gradually make their way up to the top Then [the book] winds around the mountain and back down to the flat land north of Montreal but this time in the west. A complete rotation around the mountain from east to west takes place, and the stories are calculated according to how high up the mountain they are.¹⁸

The summit of human achievement, the climax in man's temporal

search for transcendental perfection, for the Divine Vision, for the goodness of God, occurs at the close of the June story. Mounting to a favourite picnic spot, a kind of Dantean Earthly Paradise at the top of a Mount Purgatory,¹⁹ the narrator partakes eucharistically--like the little girl with the raspberries in the mountain-top scene at the end of Hood's earlier story "Flying a Red Kite"²⁰--of some wine at what appears to be a kind of Last Supper for the now emaciated Monsieur Bourbonnais.

Following this secular analogue of a sacred ritual, the narrator climbs higher still until he is "right at the top," where he thinks that he could step with a single stride "into the next world" (AM, pp. 93, 94). But, "although the vision was good" (AM, pp. 93-94)--another comment with a double meaning--the weather "had a qualified fineness that day, not the perfect blue sky" (AM, p. 92). Even though the narrator thinks that he could step into heaven, his attention is rightfully redirected, in the final paragraph of the story, from a vision of heavenly goodness and salvation to a heightened, but still limited, perspective on the temporal world below--just as the mountain-climbers in Hood's later story "Thanksgiving: Between Junetown and Caintown," from Dark Glasses, are depicted as searching for a way to get back down to man's proper earthly station.²¹

"Looking Down from Above" exemplifies the epistemo-

logical and ontological theories that are central to Hood's writing. In a discussion of the influence of Roman Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain's concept of intuitive reason on Hood's thought, John Orange argues that

Intuitive reason implies a spiritual pre-conscious--a knowing from inclination such as poetic knowledge, any pre-philosophical knowledge of moral values, and mystical experience. It is a kind of knowing from above, as it were, and this way of knowing is, of course, also related to what is known--the Divine Spirit One senses too that many of the short stories and novels are meant to demonstrate that this "knowing from above" (cf. "Looking Down From Above" [AM]), whose source is in a life of the spirit, in fact exists in our daily lives and that it informs many of our choices (aided by Grace) and also our perceptions of beauty and truth.²²

When applied to aesthetic theory, Hood's religious principles give birth to the concept of "super-realism," which is discussed in the essay "Sober Colouring: The Ontology of Super-Realism" and in the interview in Before the Flood. "I love most in painting an art that exhibits the transcendental element dwelling in living things. I think of this as true super-realism,"²³ Hood states in the essay. As he confirms in the interview, his use of the term "super-realism" derives from the Latin word "super," meaning "above":

I'm glad to have the chance to clear that up because I think some people have thought I meant it like Superman, as an intensifier,

more real than the real. That isn't what I meant at all. I was thinking of a long Neoplatonic tradition and particularly of Emerson's essay on "The Over-Soul" as a counterweight to Freudian and psychoanalytic notions of the unconscious If we're going to use metaphors of space, I don't think the bulk of extra-conscious motivation is sub- or pre- or unconscious at all. I think it's superconscious in the Latin sense of coming from above, coming, in Emerson's terms, from the "Over-Soul," but, in my terms, from the Holy Ghost--down from above and enlightening and illuminating, not a dark pall cast up from below.²⁴

Hood's apprehension of the transcendental element incarnate in earthly things distinguishes his writing from that of contemporaries like Alice Munro, for whom "This ordinary place is sufficient, everything here touchable and mysterious."²⁵ Hood's fiction, like Munro's, is thickly textured with minutely realistic observations of daily life; but, as Hood states in a letter to John Mills, his fiction is allegorical as well as realistic:

I want to be more "real" than the realists, yet more transcendent than the most vaporous allegorist. In short, I am following what I conceive [as] the method of Dante Now let me put it to you that since I am both a realist and a transcendentalist allegorist that I cannot be bound by the forms of ordinary realism.²⁶

Although Around the Mountain--like James Reaney's A Suit of Nettles--is indebted to the general form of Edmund Spenser's The Shepheardes Calender,²⁷ Hood feels that he was more deeply influenced by the allegory of Dante.

"It was with that book," he states, "that I began to feel . . . stronger and stronger affinities with Dante, and it has been increasing ever since."²⁸ In Dante, rather than Spenser, Hood finds a model for his own artistic representation of the incarnation of the Divine Being in the flesh of this world:

I think that Dantean allegory is very much more able to save this world, and to preserve this world, than Spenserian. I don't feel the same commitment to this world in Spenserian allegory that I do in Dantean. I tend to find Spenser dualistic and Platonist and to have not as substantial an awareness of the fleshly solidity of things.²⁹

If Roman Catholicism provides the emblematic super-structure that contains the stories in Around the Mountain, Hood's concentration on particular subjects from everyday life gives individuality to each story. Settings change from one neighbourhood in Montreal to another, seasons pass, different characters appear, separate actions unfold, the tone shifts, themes are introduced for the first time or presented anew, and the narrative mode and the narrative techniques are modified or sometimes altered. The stories as stories convey the variety within the design, the flexibility of ~~the~~ book's form.

II

In the first two stories in Around the Mountain, Hood

concentrates initially on the rituals of hockey, the sport that draws together much of Montreal's populace, and then on gypsy life, a unique culture within that larger social fabric. "The Sportive Centre of Saint Vincent de Paul" begins with a drive heading north off Montreal island then farther east along the north shore of the Saint Lawrence River to the arena at Saint-Vincent de Paul. "Light Shining Out of Darkness" centres on "the country of the ruelles" (AM, p. 21), east of the Main and south of the railway track that the narrator and Seymour cross going north to their weekly game. The pace of the stories is unhurried, as each narrative develops almost imperceptibly from exact descriptions of residential or commercial developments in the east end of the city. "I want to show that the physical and visible are what art lives on,"³⁰ Hood says in the interview in Before the Flood, as he explains the meaning of the term "documentary fantasy,"³¹ which he invented in an earlier interview with Robert Fulford to describe his style of writing in The New Age, a style originating in Around the Mountain and some of the descriptive essays in The Governor's Bridge Is Closed.³² But, Hood adds, "Mental life is not exactly the same as living in the physical world. Documentary fantasy begins to look like, first of all, the world as a given, as the facts, and then the facts transformed by the image-making power."³³

Hood uses checkable facts, like the records for the hockey player Gary Paxton which the narrator finds in the first story; but the facts are exalted to their place in a religious allegory and sometimes they are adjusted to serve this greater fictional truth. "Strictly speaking," the narrator confides in "The Sportive Centre of Saint Vincent de Paul," "this is the Laval Community Arena, but since Laval is so expansive and sprawling a collection of suburbs, I prefer to associate it with the small township where it lies, named for a Saint of very charitable reputation" (AM, p. 6). Knowing the allegorical significance of the fictional name of the arena strengthens one's recognition of the relative absence of sportsmanship or charity in the players' behaviour. In the same way, the use in "Light Shining Out of Darkness" of the name Avenue de Chateaubriand may refer, appropriately enough in the context of Hood's Roman Catholic and Romantic aesthetics, to François René de Chateaubriand, who published Le Génie du christianisme, a work of Christian apologetics, just when Roman Catholicism was about to reassume its place as the official religion of France, and whose exotic and nostalgic works made him one of the great precursors of French Romanticism as well.³⁴ But the name also suggests château brillant, meaning "shining mansion," and therefore helps to concentrate attention on the gleaming manifestation of the model ships and their allegorical meaning. For Hood, documentary gives way to

fantasy and images develop into emblems as he reaches for the source of meaning or the river behind things.

The opening Christmas story culminates in a hopeful scene that is set after New Year's and that is presided over, appropriately, by a highly emblematic statue of the Blessed Virgin with the Child. The figure of Mary, whose supernatural holiness, fullness of grace, and unselfish sacrifices have made her the perfect exemplar of the theological virtues--faith, hope and charity--incorporates the preceding figure of Saint Vincent de Paul and signifies for Seymour and the narrator and, the rest of mankind a model of both the contemplative and the active life.³⁵ In the second story a different model of moral behaviour is provided by the gypsy Tom, who "had done much, worked very hard for a long time, to redress some of his people's legal and political disabilities connected with citizenship, conscription and taxation" (AM, p. 32). Unlike the narrator's somewhat unhappy friend Shvetz, who claims that he has given up joking because he has become a family man and has responsibilities, Tom succeeds in upholding both his freedom and his social and family responsibilities. The fairy-tale-like appearance of Tom's three little girls near the end of the story intensifies the narrator's, and the reader's, earlier wonderment at the "fantastic dream of vanished fleets" (AM, p. 30).

This envisioned quality of "The Sportive Centre of

Saint Vincent de Paul" and "Light Shining Out of Darkness" recedes in the third story, "Bicultural Angela," as emblematic description is temporarily superseded by dialogue and straightforward narration, the more literal techniques of conventional realism. Hood's Christian allegory, however, is still evident in the name of the main character, Angela Mary or Marie-Ange, which suggests that she is an angel or a messenger from God,³⁶ and which links her with the figure of Mary in the opening story and in "Le Grand Déménagement." Angela Mary Robinson comes from Stoverville, Ontario to Montreal with the aspiration of redressing the problems created by the dangerous prejudice of people like her mother, of bridging the gap between anglophone and francophone culture, by becoming bicultural, changing her appearance to resemble that of the French girls, and improving communications through working for CBC-Montréal. But her efforts are confused and troubled--like the extremely ambiguous March light and the vexatious equinoctial gales--and finally disappointing, as represented by the failure of her affair with the would-be chansonnier Stéphane Dérôme.

Marie-Ange fails because she emulates, and eventually becomes, "the mode" (AM, p. 39). Her attempts are inauthentic, cosmetic, and commercial--somewhat in the manner of Jacques Brel, the popular entertainer. Brel impersonates rather than leading like a true chansonnier. This dis-

inction is recalled in the fitting dialogue at the story's end, when Marie-Ange repeats Brel's impersonation of an anguished lover with the line "Ne me quitte pas!" and her indifferent lover Dérôme absently replies "Brel" (AM, p. 48). Dérôme is implicated in the failure as well, for his infidelity to Marie-Ange and for his limitations as an artist, his lack of social commitment. A Québec chansonnier, the narrator states, "must be a leader and encourager of his people"; he has "the responsibility to protect and encourage the national tradition of a resentful minority" (AM, p. 42). But Stéphane Dérôme, despite his pretensions, has only "the talent of a minor film composer or a commercial songwriter" (AM, p. 43).

The narrator's own largely unsympathetic response when Marie-Ange addresses him suddenly as her confidant adds further complexity to Hood's development of the theme of moral responsibility.³⁷ This response connects with the narrator's and Seymour's uncharitable reaction in "The Sportive Centre of Saint Vincent de Paul" and with the narrator's lack of feeling for Julie's anxiety when Gus Delahaye leaves her near the end of "Around Theatres," the next story in the volume.

The title of the fourth story is borrowed from Max Beerbohm's book of theatre criticism, Around Theatres.³⁸ In this story, the difference between anglophone and francophone culture that frustrates the efforts of Angela Mary

Robinson "to get all the way across" (AM, p. 38) reappears on two occasions, in a discussion of different movie audiences, and in the contrast between the unfruitfulness of English theatre in Montreal--represented by Gus Delahaye's failure to make a living as an actor--and the fecundity of French theatre in the city. Such subjects are appropriate to an April story, for, the narrator states, "By Easter, the rinks have melted, the hockey season is almost over, so you naturally switch to going to the movies" (AM, p. 49).

With this reference to Easter in the opening sentence of "Around Theatres," and the subsequent comparison of actors to "early Christian martyrs" (AM, p. 49), Christian allegory again becomes a more explicit factor in the narration, as these allusions anticipate the enactment of a parody of the sacred events of Easter in Gus's death, disappearance, and resurrection. Gus is described by the narrator as being "'nothing but a Jesuitical self-torturing actor'" (AM, p. 56) or martyr and as being "At a sad complete dead end in his own work" (AM, p. 60). Then, following "the final disillusionment" (AM, p. 60) of their hopes of freeing Montreal's English theatre and Gus's sudden disappearance, Gus undergoes a rebirth into a cautious cab-driver that brings him financial security but that debilitates him spiritually. "'At this I can always make a good living,'" he tells the narrator at the end of the story. "'Well, at least a living'" (AM, p. 64). The

ambiguity of this final turn of events offers very limited support for the narrator's belief in the meaning of Easter. Instead, the story's ending seems to confirm, for the moment, Gus's earlier outburst at the narrator:

"So you're one of those saps that lets the weather affect you? Christ, man, the weather isn't good or bad, that's simply the pathetic fallacy, don't you even know that? It's all in your emotions, the universe doesn't give a damn about you . . . Besides, God is dead."
(AM, p. 63)

"Around Theatres" begins by referring to the end of the hockey season that was the subject of the first story and by commenting on the "driving vitality about early spring in Montréal" (AM, p. 49). Then it passes through the "autumnal tone" (AM, p. 61) of Gus's last play to a qualified spring-like revival. Such flexibility in the handling of time and the mixing of different seasons is one of Hood's techniques of casually integrating the whole volume. In the first story, the narrator looks ahead from December and January to the annual dinner at the end of the hockey season and "the coming of spring" (AM, p. 3), and he refers to playing touch football in the summer. In the second story, the narrator describes summertime scenes of "a bare-bottomed infant creeping along the ruelle curb" (AM, p. 21) and "a small, balding, grass plot with ten adults roosting on it and God knows how many kids hollering" (AM, p. 23), and he concludes with his return to Avenue de Chateaubriand "Much

later in the year" (AM, p. 33). Then, in the third story, the narrator begins by recalling a scene from a different time and place--Stoverville, Ontario, before Angela Mary Robinson went to university--and briefly relates her activities in Toronto and in the early period of her life in Montreal before concentrating on the month of March and the main events of the story.

The death and resurrection pattern in the April or Easter story recurs in the following story, "Le Grand Déménagement," which centres on April 30 and May 1. April 30 marks the customary moving day in Montreal, and the narrator's (as well as Hood's) birthdate. May 1 is the occasion for pagan May Day festivities, deriving from ancient fertility rites, but also for religious practices devoted to Mary, the Mother of God. This co-existence or analogy of pagan and religious rituals also appears in the quasi-religious meaning that the narrator finds in secular celebrations like his own birthday party: "Everybody gets the same intense pleasure from repeating the same sequence of actions regularly at the same time each year. Just like a secular liturgy" (AM, p. 70). What man gains from the calendrical arrangement informing his changing existence, from the ritual of celebrating a birthday, or from the ritual of moving into a home, is a feeling of permanence, a sense of the Divine Order, an intimation of his ultimate abode when he returns "home to his father's house."³⁹

Without this feeling of permanence, when man has "the impression of the evanescence of life" (AM, p. 73)--as when one moves out of a home--there is sadness at seeing "so many patterns being broken all at once" (AM, p. 70) and a sense that the former residence is "haunted by actions irrecoverably lost" (AM, p. 73). To be the last man to vacate his home and then to find himself wandering through Montreal after all the empty places have been occupied--a possibility that haunts the narrator's imagination--or to be, as he also imagines, one of many souls "eternally condemned to wander" (AM, p. 68) is to be lost in the Christian sense of being alienated from God.⁴⁰ But what the story emphasizes is man's hope of salvation. It is suggested that the beginning of leases on May 1 may represent "an assimilation of the new, unexplored and therefore slightly alarming domicile to the protection of Mary" (AM, p. 66). The nine months pregnant young woman who falls three storeys when her balcony collapses is "miraculously unhurt" (AM, p. 73) and gives birth to a healthy baby at, appropriately, the Hôtel Dieu.

The theme of Divine Grace or protection is given a humorous and altogether human twist in the reluctant charity of the narrator and the machinations of the rabbi presented in the final scenes of "Le Grand Déménagement." "I'm no good Samaritan" (AM, p. 74), the narrator remarks. This admission recalls his wary neutrality in three of the four

preceding stories. It also points to the difference in moral behaviour between ordinary people and saints like Saint Louise de Marillac, whose feast the narrator's family declines to celebrate in this story, and Saint Vincent de Paul, who figured in the first story, and who may be recalled quite appropriately at this moment because he in fact collaborated with Saint Louise de Marillac in many charitable works.⁴¹

III

A more profound view of the dimensions of human purpose and potential is presented through the narrator's perceptions about an old woman and Monsieur Bourbonnais in the sixth story, "Looking Down from Above." Walking down University on a hot dry day in early June, the narrator finds himself disturbed by ugly and dismal images, "threatening a dubious future" (AM, p. 81), and by "feelings of mortality and a sense of the passage of time" (AM, p. 82). Then he encounters a very old woman, apparently deformed but proceeding steadily up the hill. The scene is reminiscent of Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence," where the narrator, sunk in "Dim sadness--and blind thoughts," discovers--"whether it were by peculiar grace, / A leading from above, a something given"--the old Leech-gatherer. This man of "extreme old age," with "yet-vivid eyes," speaks "above the reach / Of ordinary men"⁴² and renovates "the

faith and hope of Wordsworth's narrator through his own example of perseverance.

The old Leech-gatherer, Hood states in his essay "Sober Colouring: The Ontology of Super-Realism," "is perhaps the most striking example of this capacity of very ordinary persons and scenes to yield, on close inspection, an almost intolerable significance."⁴³ Like Wordsworth's Leech-gatherer, who seems "Like one whom I had met with in a dream,"⁴⁴ the old woman in Hood's story appears like "a snapshot in a dream" and is full of "unstated meaning" (AM, p. 82). Examining her carefully, Hood's narrator has "a drastic perception of the human soul in her, impenetrable and indissoluble" (AM, p. 83). He explains,

Here, I thought, is somebody who has had to renounce all human pretensions to health, beauty, sexuality, earnings and apparently even companionship. I wondered how she lived, and what she ate, whether she took pleasure in her food and her life, what kept her going. We passed and our eyes met; there was fury in her eyes and extraordinary purpose. I could hear her words and felt afraid. She was full of life.

That woman am I. To her state must I come in time. (AM, p. 83)

This double vision of mankind's natural limitations and supernatural potential re-emerges later in "Looking Down from Above" as the narrator describes the life of Monsieur Bourbonnais, another example of perseverance and a model of magnanimity. An industrious, obliging, joyous,

and free man, Monsieur Bourbonnais "knew how to live" (AM, p. 91), the narrator states, and he "taught me much" (AM, p. 84). "'I want it perfect'" (AM, p. 91), Monsieur Bourbonnais insists, while repairing a dent in his car. But his striving for transcendental perfection is stopped short, necessarily, by his own fallen or mortal nature. His health declines.

Suitably, the last time the narrator sees Monsieur Bourbonnais is on a day that is "full of presagings of the end of the perfect part of summer," "a day which is autumnal in tone" (AM, p. 92). It is also Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day-- a holiday celebrated by Québec nationalists, as well as a religious festival devoted to John the Baptist, whom God sent to announce the forthcoming arrival of His Kingdom in Christ.⁴⁵ It is on this day, again appropriately, that the narrator approaches the Divine Vision and momentarily sees the manifestation of God's Kingdom in the soul of earthly endeavour. Looking down from the top of the mountain at "a strangely mixed perspective" of old age and youth below, he realizes,

That old woman on University had climbed and stood waiting for her green light; the tennis players chased their ball; and Monsieur Bourbonnais wanted it perfect. They were all within their rights. Human purpose is inscrutable, but undeniable. (AM, p. 94)

The Edenic peacefulness of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day

celebrations high on the mountain in "Looking Down from Above" gives way in the seventh story, at least temporarily, to the turbulence of anti-English demonstrations by the suppressed society of Québécois living in le centre-sud. At an earlier time, this area was admired for the cohesiveness and "qualified contentment" (AM, p. 103) of its population; but now the district is moribund and explosive. The pattern of streets emphasized in the story's title, "One Way North and South," serves Hood as an emblem for the antithetical characters of francophone and anglophone cultures, which Angela Mary Robinson had failed to bridge in the third story, and which in this story appear to lead inevitably to confrontation.⁴⁶

In "One Way North and South," Gilles O'Neill, an intelligent but uneducated young man from le centre-sud, is drawn into a violent demonstration, which happens on Victoria Day, the holiday on which English Canadians celebrate the Queen's birthday. But as the story proceeds, he is redeemed through the agency of Grace in the form of a young, pretty university student named Denise Gariépy, who once lived in the district. Immediately after the riot, Denise "seems to materialize in front of him like a ghost" (AM, p. 100)--like the Holy Ghost, if the image is understood allegorically in the way that Barry Cameron and Lawrence Mathews have interpreted it in Hood's later story "Going Out as a Ghost," from Dark Glasses.⁴⁷ Consequently,

Gilles refuses to participate in the next destructive demonstration, which occurs, again appropriately, on Canada Day. It is a scene of violence that Hood chooses, significantly, not to present, because he is still intent, in this summertime phase of the book, on revealing more hopeful auguries of social revolution through constitutional means, education, and love. Finally, Gilles decides to "suffer obscurity and indignity just a little bit longer" (AM, p. 110), while he awaits educational reforms that are expected in a year's time, and that should allow him to gain the education needed to better himself for a fulfilling profession and a promised marriage to Denise.

In the interval that passes before Gilles arrives at this decision, he finds himself standing on summer evenings outside a deserted baseball stadium that seems, like his own life, to have reached a dead end. However, as he departs to walk north out of his district up the steep hill to where Denise's father had succeeded, years earlier, in moving with his family, Gilles feels that the change is "like climbing out of a pit" (AM, p. 106), like Thierry Desautels' resurrection at one stage in "A Green Child." Because Gilles carries the strain of "a people's whole history" (AM, p. 111), he also feels as if he is leaving "ghostly thousands cheering behind him" (AM, p. 106). Gilles' liberating decision is applauded by the ghosts of all his ancestors--whose hopes he may be able to fulfill

with the continued inspiration and protection of Denise, who is far less elusive (or illusory) than Thierry's girl in green, and who has already shown herself to be "an example of l'épanouissement des nôtres" (AM, p. 105).

While Hood celebrates current changes that genuinely improve the quality of human life, and while he looks to the future for greater reform, he finds in the past more signs of the values that he permanently prizes--a sense of universal brotherhood, community, home, family, and tradition. This attitude is evident in the description of le centre-sud in "One Way North and South," and in reflections on Ville Saint-Laurent and the life of Victor Latourelle in the succeeding story, "The Village Inside."⁴⁸ Meditating on the vanishing way of life in le centre-sud, the narrator argues,

In those old parishes, there was much stagnation, no doubt, and sometimes acute poverty and hunger, which is painful and undeniable. But there was something valuable too, which made the place awfully good to contemplate, not merely picturesque or quaint, but self-assured, cohesive, admirable, a social unit that really worked, before the march of progress supplanted it with an enormous vacant lot What you saw, behind the trivially picturesque, was a populous society which provided almost all its members with qualified contentment, and a sense of being at home in the world. 'Nobody lives like that now.' Right. Nobody does. (AM, pp. 102-03)

In "The Village Inside," the narrator travels out to

explore the municipalities situated in the countryside at the outer reaches of the island and discovers within the modern suburban development on rue Sainte-Croix in Ville Saint-Laurent much older buildings, "the ghostly presence of the old town" (AM, p. 116), which, like the "ghostly thousands cheering" (AM, p. 106) Gilles O'Neill in the previous story, creates a memorable feeling of the continuity of past and present. A little later, the narrator witnesses a further example of this phenomenon:

It's an eerie sight, standing on rue Sainte-Croix, in front of the evident ghost of a nineteenth-century Québec village, to see overhead jet after jet slanting down and in towards the Dorval runways, almost without intervals between arrivals. You have the impression of one time superimposed on another, with both visibly present, something quite rare. (AM, pp. 117-8)

This intersection of different times and different ways of life--which occurs here, fittingly, on a street named Sainte-Croix--is repeated in the view of the home of Victor Latourelle, the somewhat ambiguous "winner in the little tower,"⁴⁹ whose history concludes "The Village Inside."

For his entire life, which exceeds seventy years, Victor Latourelle has lived in a now hundred-and-forty-year-old wooden farmhouse that once was situated on a seventy-acre farm lying outside the old village. At the insistence primarily of his daughter Victorine, and against his own will, Victor has gradually sold all of his land to

developers except for the tiny fifty-by-fifty-foot lot on which the ancient farmhouse now stands, near a recently constructed shopping centre, at the extreme corner of a gigantic blacktopped parking lot. Attracted by the display of light on the walls of the farmhouse just after sunset during early August, and amazed by the odd juxtaposition of monuments from extraordinarily disparate times, the narrator inquires into, then traces, the history of the farmhouse's tenacious and ultimately victorious owner.

Like the figure of Gilles O'Neill in the previous story, who contains the whole history of his people in himself-- though even more closely resembling the lives of the Goderich family in The New Age, which represent the growth of Canadian society in the twentieth century--Victor Latourelle's life shows the effects of the transformation of Québec society from the traditional, agricultural existence of the nineteenth century to the industrialized, urbanized ways of twentieth-century life. Near the end of "The Village Inside," as Victor sits "through the oncoming dark" awaiting his death, he is said to be watching "the asphalt seas surrounding him" (AM, p. 126)--a very rich image, which suggests the "ash" of Hell and man's "Fall" (associated here with the fortunes of the land developers), and which Hood uses again in the description of the macadamized road at the beginning of A New Athens.⁵⁰

Victor's story culminates, however, in fantasy; for as he

stares out at the infernal-looking asphalt, he sees "cattle grazing, his father working in their thick green truck garden, his uncle Antoine bent in a distant cornfield" (AM, p. 126). It is a vision of a pastoral world now irretrievably past, unless, as the narrator states in the preceding story, you "use your imagination" (AM, p. 102). But, like Jim McGregor's death-bed vision of Jesus walking through fields in Bruce County, Ontario, at the conclusion of Robert Laidlaw's novel, The McGregors, Victor's vision may also represent a personal glimpse of future heavenly bliss, an intimation of immortality.

IV

Victor Latourelle's hallucination or vision, along with the suggestions of ghostliness in both "The Village Inside" and the preceding story, "One Way North and South," exemplifies the fantasy element of Hood's mode of "documentary fantasy" and prefigures the extraordinary atmosphere of the next story, "A Green Child." The dreadful image of urban society that emerges through the contrast between Victor's pastoral vision and the actual environment surrounding his home is also intensified in "A Green Child." Here all hope of life, love, and a Divine Order dissolves in the face of the oppressiveness, impersonality, and monstrosity of the urban present. The story centres on Thierry Desautels, "un vrai jusqu'aboutist" (AM, p. 127),

that is, one who pursues his hopes to the very end. Appropriately, Thierry lives next to the loop at the very end of the bus line, where the suburban landscape gives way to an alarming setting of dark fields with monstrous, lifeless, half-finished buildings and a hellish "deep pit of shadow" (AM, p. 135).

Riding home half-asleep on a misty September night, the hard-working and lonely Thierry is entranced by the sight of a pretty, young girl wearing a vinyl raincoat and a green scarf, who disappears suddenly but whom he sees, and pursues unsuccessfully, on a second and a third occasion. The second instance happens about two weeks after he first glimpses her, on a night in early October while he is experiencing similar feelings of "languor, depression and sleepy fatigue" (AM, p. 134). Thierry follows the possibly imaginary girl, who has already begun to haunt his dreams. He passes the ironic sign "BRIGHT FUTURE CONSTRUCTION" (AM, p. 135), descends into the bottom of the pit, and gets lost--an inauspicious condition in Hood's Christian universe, as the later story "Thanksgiving: Between Junetown and Caintown," from Dark Glasses, confirms. However, Thierry is saved for the moment by a searchlight, which, from the viewpoint of Hood's work as a whole, can be seen as symbolizing the immanence of God. The searchlight reveals what Thierry thinks is the image of the girl, and he then uses the searchlight as a marker in order to ascend out of this infernal

valley of the shadow of death.

On the third and last occasion, once again at night, and, significantly, "well into the fall" (AM, p. 137), Thierry pursues the girl (or at least her image) as she disappears on her motorcycle towards the Montée de Saint-Léonard interchange "at fantastic speed" (AM, p. 138). He has made a fatal choice, "putting his head an inch too close to the noose" (AM, p. 138)--a metaphor that recalls the earlier emblem of the loop at the end of the bus line. This time, Thierry is not saved. Having cast himself into this darkness, he is left crawling up and down different ramps on the monstrous and demonic interchange, afraid that he might fall off where the guardrails are not constructed, and totally exhausted. He is lost without any sense of direction, just as his life--like Gus Delahaye's in "Around Theatres"--has become increasingly directionless.

Thierry's final vision is of "a figure on a massive concrete slab rising before him," which he thinks resembles a test-pattern, but which is really "a peculiarly distorted concrete woman" (AM, p. 139). His Beatrice, the girl of his dreams, the girl in green--a colour that for Hood means "life in this world,"⁵¹--has been hideously transformed, disfigured by "the monstrous power and impersonality of life in this place" (AM, p. 133) into a ghastly emblem of the lifelessness and the lunacy in modern society.⁵² Ironically, Thierry Desautels does not share this perception with the

narrator and the reader. Instead Thierry, whose surname means "of the altars," is presented finally as a sacrifice, lying almost without life on a gigantic, altar-like edifice.⁵³

The living death of Thierry Desautels at the end of the ninth story is followed by the metaphorical death and rebirth of Christopher Holt in "Starting Again on Sherbrooke Street." In comparison with "A Green Child," this story is relatively light in tone, beginning with the cheerful bantering between the narrator and his friend Seymour as they load paintings for Seymour's fall show, and realistic rather than fantastic. The one Seymour Segal painting that is described--"an enormous, blue, three-headed, nightmarish, screaming figure" (AM, p. 145)--may be a reminder of the monstrosity and frenzy of "A Green Child," or it may anticipate Christopher Holt's milder turmoil recollected later on in "Starting Again on Sherbrooke Street"; but Seymour's visions do not prescribe the overall tone of the story. Instead, the narrator concentrates on the momentary triumph of the ascending cycle of human activity over the imminent fall in the cycle of nature:

Sherbrooke Street looked wonderful in the October sunlight. It always does at that time of year, when you can feel the cycle of the year starting up again, the big fall shows in the galleries, girls in highly novel clothes, the hockey season starting in the Forum a few blocks west. Boutiques full of

Scenes from Montreal Life, what really matters is "the appropriateness of the setting to certain forms of human action. Landscape has no special grace in itself."⁵ What matters even more for Hodgins than allegorical action are the characters residing in the place, the people who define the region's state of mind.

As Jeffrey states so effectively in his essay "Jack Hodgins and the Island Mind,"

What Hodgins writes about is the Island Mind itself, its bizarre dreams, its truncated perspectives on the world, its frenetic ambivalence about history, its flight from the world--above all its unending pursuit of the private mythology--but what he mirrors in fact is the frustrated questions of a whole frontier-less continent now increasingly turned in upon itself and unable to discern where mythology stops and reality begins Like other characters in an apocalyptic age, Hodgins' personalities look for a conclusion they can believe in, some dream which could put time and the world back together. Unable to find such a form outside themselves, many of them, each in his or her peculiar way, is driven to invent the private world, an island, an island in an island, an island in the mind The invention of the world is, for Hodgins, a psychological fact of contemporary life to which Vancouver Island offers an unblushing mirror-example. But he shows that invention can contain a cancerous evasion too, can be a terrible lie.⁶

In Spit, Delaney's Island, Hodgins presents both the outer reality of environment and the inner reality of mental experience. Hodgins' imagination and the stories it creates serve to hold, to strengthen, and to show forth the soul of

committed" (AM, p. 83) , an attitude that the magnanimity demonstrated by Monsieur Bourbonnais in the same story completely opposes.

The wonder and optimism at the promises of October in "Starting Again on Sherbrooke Street" carries over into the paeā for the greatness of Montreal, for the godliness of the Saint Lawrence and the Ottawa River, and for the humanity and magnificence of the port installations, in the opening pages of the eleventh story. However, the natural cycle of the year soon re-exerts its power to limit human aspirations. At the close of November, the promise of the future intimated by a sunlit and bustling October afternoon is supplanted by predictions of ice, forebodings of the end of the consequential and controversial shipping season. As the tone changes, the mode of narration shifts from documentary into fantasy, from enraptured description of the topography of Montreal into the darkly mysterious and violent scenario of "a real-life movie" (AM, p. 163), which recalls the Antonioni-like atmosphere of "A Green Child."

In "Predictions of Ice," the narrator encounters the vicious beating of a Russian sailor. The incident represents the kind of violence or sabotage that emerges as political, union, or commercial interests, with grievances to express, apply pressure at crucial moments, such as when the last of the year's shipping has to be completed quickly before ice blocks the route. In the seventh story, "One Way North and

South," description of the destructive Canada Day demonstration was deliberately eschewed so that the narrator could concentrate on the augury of hope represented by the pair of lovers. By contrast, "Predictions of Ice" depicts violence and its awful effects vividly--a much darker vision, which would have been inappropriate in the summery story, but which fits the chilling advent of December in this second-last story of the volume.

"The pleasure of the prospect depends upon the viewer and his sense of the appropriateness of the setting to certain forms of human action" (AM, p. 168), the narrator remarks in the final story as he meditates on the inevitable transformation of the pastoral scenery in the northwest part of the island by suburban, commercial, and industrial development. "Landscape has no special grace in itself" (AM, p. 168). Grace comes from God, and, as an intimation of this view, the narrator turns his attention, from the two rivers of the preceding story to Rivière des Prairies, the river behind things, an emblem of the Divine Order that is revealed within the mutable world of man.

"The River behind Things" describes a joyous summertime excursion by the narrator and his son Dwight, then concludes with a return visit, by the narrator alone, on Christmas Day. The concluding scene expresses the sad sense of loss, which has already emerged at other points in the volume, as the narrator fails to recapture the mood of his earlier

visit with his son. This feeling is followed by a vision of Death, of the Charon-like black figure that sums up all of the earlier hints of man's mortality, including the near-murder of the Russian sailor in "Predictions of Ice." However, Christmas Day is the festival of the incarnation, when, as Hood states in his essay "The Absolute Infant," "God came in upon the world, spread Himself through it, ran His being into the least spaces, showed Himself to be in the smallest corner of existence."⁵⁴ The concluding scene of "The River Behind Things" ends, therefore, in the manner of the psalm that intones "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."⁵⁵ Hood's narrator raises his eyes above and beyond the figure of Death towards "the high hills" and "the source of the river" (AM, p. 175), that is, towards God. But the narrator's vision is limited by the presence of mist, which, like the "qualified fineness" (AM, p. 92) of the weather in "Looking Down from Above," reminds us of Hood's epigraph for Dark Glasses: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face."⁵⁶

At this instant, the scenery is entirely "enveloped and changed" and the city becomes "inexistent" (AM, p. 175). It is a moment of transcendence, like the narrator's vision of Tom's gleaming model ships in "Light Shining Out of Darkness" or the narrator's rapturous upward glance near the end of "Looking Down from Above" or Victor Latourelle's pastoral

vision of heavenly bliss at the conclusion of "The Village Inside." The final scene of the book composes itself instantaneously into meaning, and the narrator experiences a feeling like the philosopher's transcendental sense of his own afterlife at the close of Hood's later story "The Hole":

He began to imagine he'd arrived at an unconditioned state of pre-existence where he was in his cause, that is, in or annexed to or issuing from or conceived by or held in the Divine Mind, in a state of unmixed creaturehood before locality caught him. Not before birth. More like in the idea of himself in the Creator's eternal contemplation of His Essence It was not an annihilation of himself. It was like finally grasping the definition of himself, seeing everything he meant, unconditionally and in an instant.⁵⁷

On an artistic rather than a personal level, the transcendence of space and time at the end of Around the Mountain represents the imaginative process by which Hood, here and elsewhere, has transformed reality into a visionary work of art, "a secular liturgy" (AM, p. 70) praising God by illuminating His creation.

Quite clearly, Around the Mountain represents the sort of story cycle that Ingram calls a "composed" cycle. The volume lends itself to analysis of the interrelationships among stories and, more significantly, of their progression both temporally, through the year, and geographically,

around Montreal. Hood is a very conscious artist, more concerned with preliminary architectonic considerations, and less inclined to improvise a work's shape, than are the three other writers whose books I examine in detail. Around the Mountain was carefully conceived as a whole, and the stories were written largely to fit the overall plan. By contrast, the structure of Spit Delaney's Island was reached after the stories had been written. Yet the arrangement of Hodgins' stories and the resonances between them create as satisfying a volume as Around the Mountain.

CHAPTER III

FRESH SEEING:

SPIT DELANEY'S ISLAND: SELECTED STORIES

I

To live along Canada's western frontier is to find oneself, in the words of Wilfred Watson's poem about Emily Carr, "on coasts of eternity."¹ One of Carr's paintings, "Wood Interior," is reproduced on the cover of Spit Delaney's Island--a fitting tribute to the visionary artist who, as Sheila Watson states in an interview, "created part of British Columbia just the way the [Group] of Seven, for good or ill, created Northern Ontario."² These artists' images, Sheila Watson explains, "created a way of seeing which then becomes part of the history of seeing in Canada. It is something which goes beyond reference--beyond access to archives."³ This "fresh seeing," to use the title of one of Carr's two public addresses about art, is likewise an essential characteristic of Jack Hodgins' achievement.

Spit Delaney's Island conveys a distinct sense of place--what David L. Jeffrey has called "the Island Mind."⁴ With few exceptions, the book concentrates on the lumbering, agricultural, and camping districts along the east coast of Vancouver Island overlooking the Strait of Georgia. Hodgins vividly depicts the awesome physical landscape of this region. Yet, as Hugh Hood writes in Around the Mountain:

Scenes from Montreal Life, what really matters is "the appropriateness of the setting to certain forms of human action. Landscape has no special grace in itself."⁵ What matters even more for Hodgins than allegorical action are the characters residing in the place, the people who define the region's state of mind.

As Jeffrey states so effectively in his essay "Jack Hodgins and the Island Mind,"

What Hodgins writes about is the Island Mind itself, its bizarre dreams, its truncated perspectives on the world, its frenetic ambivalence about history, its flight from the world--above all its unending pursuit of the private mythology--but what he mirrors in fact is the frustrated questions of a whole frontier-less continent now increasingly turned in upon itself and unable to discern where mythology stops and reality begins Like other characters in an apocalyptic age, Hodgins' personalities look for a conclusion they can believe in, some dream which could put time and the world back together. Unable to find such a form outside themselves, many of them, each in his or her peculiar way, is driven to invent the private world, an island, an island in an island, an island in the mind The invention of the world is, for Hodgins, a psychological fact of contemporary life to which Vancouver Island offers an unblushing mirror-example. But he shows that invention can contain a cancerous evasion too, can be a terrible lie.⁶

In Spit Delaney's Island, Hodgins presents both the outer reality of environment and the inner reality of mental experience. Hodgins' imagination and the stories it creates serve to hold, to strengthen, and to show forth the soul of

each place and of the world, the soul of each person, and of mankind.

What Hodgins is finally striving for is the ultimate reality that Hood signifies, in Around the Mountain, by the titles "Light Shining Out of Darkness," "The Village Inside," and "The River behind Things." The Emily Carr painting reproduced on the cover of Spit Delaney's Island powerfully conveys this inward and upward striving, as the viewer of the painting is swept deep into its centre. The wilderness of trees in Carr's painting forms a kind of cathedral--"An Artist's Tabernacle," to use Hodgins' title for the selection from Emily Carr's journals in his anthology The Frontier Experience, or, in Carr's own biblical words, "a tabernacle to the Lord."⁷ This image emphasizes the spiritual direction of Hodgins' work.

As an artist, Hodgins considers that "What you and I call the ocean, is to me only a metaphor. All those trees, for instance, are metaphors; the reality lies beyond them. The act of writing to me is an attempt to shine a light on that ocean and those trees so bright that we can see right through them to the reality that is constant."⁸ Hodgins insists on the necessity of transcending "the frontier experience" signified by the West Coast, of searching for "The Reality that exists beyond this imitation reality that we are too often contented with," of striving to regain our

lost Eden, "The created rather than the invented world."⁹

Questions about the nature of reality, therefore, surround not only Spit Delaney, who asks the unanswerable question "Where is the dividing line . . . Between what is and what isn't" (SDI, pp. 7, 8), but also the other characters in the collection. Questions about the real nature of humanity (good or evil) reappear frequently as well.

The search for transcendental reality--symbolized for Hodgins, as for Hood, by mountain-climbing--culminates in the extraordinary parable related by the poet whom Spit Delaney meets in the final story and in Spit's reflection that sometime he may go up the mountain himself to join her. The parable conveys a major theme of the book, that the mind of an artist can become the soul of a place, carrying, as Jay Macpherson says of the Anagogic Man, "All us and our worlds, . . . / Art and life, and wit and sense, / Innocence and experience."¹⁰ The creative imagination, therefore, is man's instrument for imitating the Divine Creation, and his means of redemption.¹¹

In attempting to convey this internal or transcendental reality, Hodgins often takes us into the non-realistic world of faerie, spirit, dream, legend, or myth. "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School," the most atypical of his stories, possesses something of the logic of a dream or hallucination. The story of Hallie Crane and Morgan in "After the Season"

is a contemporary version of the myth of Proserpina, who is carried off annually into hell by Pluto, king of the underworld. A few stories, like "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School," "Separating," "By the River," and "Spit Delaney's Island," reach back into the history, legends, and myths of Hodgins' own region: he uses, for example, the story of the three McLean brothers and Alex Hare, who were hanged for murder in 1881,¹² as well as Indian myths about the Sea-Wolf, about Coyote and the hungry river monster, and about Kanikiluk emerging from the ocean and transforming a man into a fish.

These local legends and myths serve as a mysterious context that informs, deepens, breathes an extra life or spirit into the surfaces of the stories. In an address entitled "The Something Plus in a Work of Art," Emily Carr commented that the great early West Coast Indian artists appeared to be "striving to capture the spirit of the totem, and hold it there, and keep these supernatural beings within close call."¹³ Hodgins' stories create a similar impression. Significantly, the second meeting between Spit Delaney and the poet Phemie Porter occurs by the water's edge beneath a large totem pole.

Like the frontier and west coast writers described in the introductions to his anthologies The Frontier Experience and The West Coast Experience,¹⁴ Hodgins not only records,

celebrates, mythologizes, and de-mythologizes the beautiful and threatening landscape or seascape of his chosen setting, but also re-creates the human experiences of flight and discovery that take place at Canada's western extremity. Those experiences, along with the metaphor of the island on which Jeffrey places such emphasis, figure prominently in the following passage from Hodgins' introduction to Menno Fieguth's book of photographs Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands:

The landscape still favoured by most photographers of these islands is the landscape of lush rain-forest jungle and violent coastline that seems to exclude--or at best ignore--humans

Menno Fieguth is not one of them. His eye, which seems to seek out life in all its forms for celebration, has found plenty of evidence that these islands are home, to people as well as to trees and wild animals. Even in the thickest corners of wilderness there are signs that people have been coming here for a long time, and for special reasons. Small settlements and peculiar ruins encourage us to see the history of these islands as the history of utopian colonies, most of which have failed to realize their original dream. From all over the world people have come, often in small groups, and once here have proceeded to make even smaller islands for themselves by creating exclusive societies dedicated to the pursuit of idealistic visions. ¹⁵

Although Hodgins succeeds in creating a variety of individuals in his fiction, the characterization appears remarkably consistent in many respects. The characters in Spit Delaney's Island, because they generally live in thinly

populated areas and on an island, are isolated geographically from almost the whole of mankind; but they are also isolated emotionally and spiritually from one another, often by marital and family discord or by death. In most cases, men and women in Hodgins' stories find themselves separated from each other not by accidents of fortune but by failures that belong within the realm of personal choice, action, and responsibility. Having lost touch with their own humanity, or with the reality of the spirit, these characters fail to offer the love and hope and vision necessary to sustain fulfilling relationships with other people. Caught in "mind-forg'd manacles," to use a phrase from William Blake's "London," the characters in Spit Delaney's Island are pressed consciously or unconsciously by fundamental questions about their own identities, about the nature of man and the nature of reality, and about how to discern truth and value.

Such questions reflect the ~~preoccupations~~ that Hodgins came to recognize as he arranged the stories, and that supply the stories with much of their natural force and coherence. The formal unity of the collection is greatly strengthened by Hodgins' somewhat whimsical but deliberate arrangement of the stories into three sequential units, and his use of the two stories about Spit Delaney as a frame for the entire collection. This arrangement of the individual stories forms a loose but meaningful structure, which may

be seen to function in dramatic and thematic terms.

Replying to queries about the structural devices that he employed in Spit Delaney's Island, Hodgins states that "the two Spit stories were deliberately used as bookends. The three sections were largely whim, (I liked the big roman numerals) but they also helped me give some order to the book--whether anyone else could see that order is another matter."¹⁶ In dramatic terms, the structure of Spit Delaney's Island loosely follows the pattern of action associated with drama, with its introduction, complication, rising action, climax, and dénouement. In thematic terms, the tri-partite arrangement of the book suggests the pattern of loss and recovery that Northrop Frye describes in The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance,¹⁷ a narrative pattern that is analogous to the archetypal Christian story of life, death, and resurrection. This Christian pattern has been of great importance to all of Hodgins' work, although it is perhaps most apparent in his second novel, The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne. As William Faulkner, one of the writers whom Hodgins admires most, says about the resurrection theme in his novel A Fable, "I simply used an old story which had been proved in our western culture to be a good one that people could understand and believe, in order to tell something that I was trying to tell."¹⁸

While the overall thematic structure of Spit Delaney's Island ultimately involves an upward progression from the first section to the third, the direction that this development takes involves a darkening of Hodgins' vision before it brightens, a descent into a kind of hell on earth before the possibility of reascending to some sort of earthly paradise can be affirmed. This pattern of loss and recovery, of life, death, and resurrection, is contained in miniature in "Separating," the opening story of the volume, although the recovery or resurrection motif emerges more strongly in "Spit Delaney's Island," the closing story of the collection, which literally completes the action of the first Spit Delaney story. These two stories provide not only a frame for the entire collection, but also a focus: a means of understanding Hodgins' fundamental concerns and his characteristic way of seeing.

II

At one dumbfounding moment in the first story, while Spit Delaney is inattentively soaking up sun with his family at a beach on the west coast of Vancouver Island, the doors of perception abruptly and mysteriously open--calling into question his notion of reality, his attitudes and values, and ultimately his basic identity and purpose. Margaret Laurence comments in a review of the book that Spit's

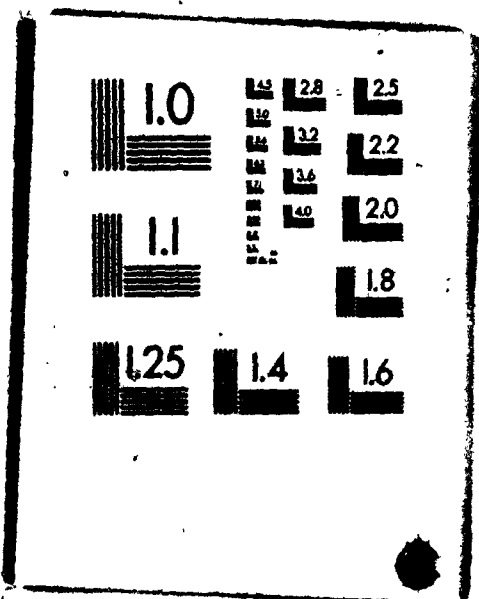
"meaning in life is questioned?"¹⁹ Up to this time, Spit has been living according to the assumptions of a materialist, giving importance to so-called external things. He has failed to perceive, in the words of Blake's Jerusalem, that

. . . in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven
And Earth & all you behold: tho' it appears
Without, it is Within,
In your Imagination, of which this World of
Mortality is but a Shadow.²⁰

Spit's oceanside experience initially causes him, by a Blakean kind of logic, to lose everything that has seemed real and valuable to him: Old Number One, the steam locomotive that he operated in the paper mill for twenty years until the company sold it to the National Museum in Ottawa; the respect of his children; and finally his wife, Stella: "Where is the dividing line," Spit thinks suddenly while lying on the beach, "Between what is and what isn't" (SDI, pp. 7, 8). The question involves, as Marian Strachan says, "The definition of reality and illusion,"²¹ or, as David L. Jeffrey observes, the discernment of the point "where mythology stops and reality begins."²² A little later Spit thinks of a related question, "And what does it take to see it?" (SDI, p. 10)

Jeffrey's and Strachan's interpretations of Hodgins' metaphor of the dividing line contribute valuable insights to an understanding of not only the two Spit Delaney stories

2



but also "By the River," in which Jim Styan searches somewhat irresponsibly for an actual Eden and his wife, Crystal, is lost in her six-month-old self-deception that Jim will soon return to her. Yet the question "Where is the dividing line?" also seems to apply to the different concepts of human nature and the mixed examples of good and evil in "Three Women of the Country," "After the Season," and "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School." In addition, there are the lines of time that mark the beginning and the ending of the tourist season, and, conversely, the ending and the beginning of Hallie Crane's wintertime romance with Morgan, in "After the Season," and the lines of geography in "The Trench Dwellers," including the mountains that separate the Islanders from the open sea, the mountains that separate the nearby mainlanders from the rest of North America, and the "trench" itself, the Strait of Georgia, which divides these two sets of people. There is the line between innocence and experience in such stories as "Other People's Troubles" and "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School," the line between sanity and insanity that Spit Delaney approaches and that Crystal Styan truly appears to have crossed, and the line between life and death, which, Hodgins says by way of introduction to Ethel Wilson's story "A Visit to the Frontier," is "the frontier for which, perhaps, all the others may be only symbols or unacknowledged reminders."²³

Albert Miles and his family approach the ultimate line between life and death in "Other People's Troubles"; and Mrs. Starbuck in "Three Women of the Country," Jerry Mack's son in "The Trench Dwellers," Brian Halligan's mother in "The Religion of the Country," and Mr. Grey in "After the Season" literally cross this line when they die.

Each of the stories in Spit Delaney's Island also explores some form of dividing line between people: between husband and wife in the two Spit Delaney stories, in "The Trench Dwellers," in "By the River," and briefly in "Three Women of the Country," with regard to Charlene Porter's parents; between mother and son in "Three Women of the Country" and between son and mother in "The Religion of the Country"; between distant family members in "The Trench Dwellers"; between households or neighbours in "Three Women of the Country" and "Other People's Troubles"; between lovers in "After the Season" and "Every Day of His Life"; and between the wise Old Man and the false prophets like "Balk-eyed Birdie" (SDI, p. 141) in "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School." Repeatedly, too, Hodgins' stories meditate on the divisions--and often the overlapping--between matter and spirit, body and soul, plant or animal life and human existence, the fallen world and the Divine Vision.

For Jack Hodgins, as for the West Coast Indian storytellers and artists, the "traffic back and forth between sea

and land" (SDI, p. 8), the presence of the supernatural in the natural, is much more significant than the divisions with which Spit Delaney is temporarily obsessed. Even more important to Hodgins are the human connections that individuals sometimes achieve, like the insight into one another that Phemie and Spit share fleetingly in the final story of the volume.

Early in the volume, however, Spit Delaney's compulsion to find answers to the troubling questions about reality and perception leads him on a fruitless tour with his family through parts of Africa and Europe, including such spots as an ancient pyramid in Egypt, Anne Hathaway's Cottage in Stratford, England, and an area of countryside in the extreme south-west of Ireland. While Spit visits each of these places, his anxiety and the memory of Old Number One, which he loved more than any human being, grow so overwhelming that he is driven to the edge of madness and plays full-blast a tape recording of the locomotive's sounds until "Old Number One came alive again, throbbled through him, swelled to become the whole world" (SDI, p. 15). Spit's disturbing and embarrassing actions so deeply alienate his family that his children quit speaking to him for some time and his wife, as soon as they arrive home on the plane, announces her desire for a separation.

The trauma of the Delaneys' separation--reinforced, perhaps, for the reader, by Hodgins' reference to the

cottage that Anne Hathaway occupied separately from Shakespeare--leaves Spit feeling amputated, as if an arm or both of his legs have been cut off, and without the sense of identity that being married conferred on him. "I am a wifeless man" (SDI, p. 5), Spit says to a youth, or rather thinks to himself, at the end of the first section of "Separating," immediately after the youth has hitched a ride with his St. Bernard in a pickup truck. Moments earlier, their eyes met briefly as Spit sat on a big rock close to the highway junction and watched with fascination the hitch-hikers lined "across the front of his place like a lot of shabby refugees" (SDI, p. 4). The image of Spit sitting on his rock and watching the hitch-hikers as Stella prepares to leave him is one that Hodgins returns to in the third section of the story, following an extended flashback portraying the rapid disintegration of Spit's world and his sense of identity. The rock may symbolize Spit's previous confidence in external forms of security. "'Everybody said we had a good marriage,'" Spit complains shortly before Stella leaves him. "'Spit and Stella, solid as rocks'" (SDI, p. 20). Furthermore, like the landform called a "spit," which is almost surrounded by water and is therefore nearly an island, the rock may also represent Spit's self-constructed insularity.

What troubles Spit about the hitch-hikers is their

indifference to their journeying, to the people who might pick them up, and to one another. Spit can remember how differently he used to hitch-hike:

. . . he tried to have a pleading look on his face whenever he was out on the road. A look that said Please pick me up I may die if I don't get where I'm going on time. And made obscene gestures at every driver that passed him by. Sometimes hollered insults. (SDI, p. 22)

At that time, Spit cared enough to show his hopefulness and disappointment. This richly human potential for fellow feeling remains alive in Spit, as Phemie helps him to recognize in "Spit Delaney's Island"; but his wife and other individuals like Marsten and Mrs. Bested in the final story cannot see this potential, or have lost sight of it. Similarly, we are told at the very beginning of "Separating" that "People driving by don't notice Spit Delaney" (SDI, p. 3).

Spit, too, has gradually lost contact with other human beings and his own full humanity, so that his final separation from Stella really only confirms a state of isolation that has been developing for many years. In the third section of the story, however, as Spit's married life with Stella reaches its end and he finds himself stripped of everything that mattered to him, he begins to rediscover his human vitality, first, as he becomes intensely aware of the

essences of things: "The sound of Stella's shoes shifting in gravel. The scent of the pines, leaking pitch. The hot smell of sun on the rusted pole The feel of the small pebbles under his boots" (SDI, p. 22). Yet as Phemie instructs Spit in "Spit Delaney's Island," "'There is no truth in things, . . . except as they bring out the truth in a person'" (SDI, p. 194). Accordingly, at the end of "Separating," Spit's consciousness opens further and begins to partake of the full range of vision, of fellow feeling coupled with imagination, that he will enter into more deeply, though still not entirely, by the end of the title story, when he responds to the poem that Phemie has written for him.

At the end of the first story, Spit sees himself riding west to the ocean in the pickup with the youth and his St. Bernard, laughing, singing perhaps, touching the boy and patting the dog goodbye, and finally,

Sees himself at the water's edge on his long
bony legs like someone who's just grown them,
unsteady,
shouting.
Shouting into the blind heavy roar.
Okay!
Okay you son of a bitch!
I'm stripped now, okay, now where is that
god-damned line? (SDI, p. 23)

Like Job crying out defiantly to God, like the naked King Lear raging against the storm, like Cuchulain fighting the waves at the close of Yeats's tragedy On Baile's Strand,

or like the people eaten on the beach by the monstrous Sea-Wolf in the Indian myth that Stella repeats to Spit earlier in "Separating"--though on a scale more like that of Willy Loman in Miller's Death of a Salesman--Spit Delaney confronts an apparently uncomprehending, unfeeling, and chaotic universe that he still mistakenly believes to be responsible for bringing him low.

Yet Spit, as Kenneth Muir says of Lear, "loses the world and gains his soul."²⁴ Under the guidance of Phemie Porter in "Spit Delaney's Island," Spit looks inward instead of raging outwardly, accepts responsibility for his own well-being, and begins to act on the basis of his rediscovered humanity. Spit saves his soul and, one suspects, may even like Job regain a tentative form of paradise here in this world. In potentia, Spit's spiritual nakedness at the close of "Separating" suggests not the "poor, bare, forked animal" of "unaccommodated man" in Lear's speech to the disguised Edgar, but rather an anti-heroic version of what Milton, in Paradise Lost, describes as the "naked Majesty" of Adam, in whose "looks Divine / The image of [his] glorious Maker shone."²⁵ However shakily he stands on his newly grown limbs, Spit Delaney--unlike the many lost and deluded souls who come to Vancouver Island searching for a possible utopia--seems imaginatively ready to participate in the redemptive activity that could transform the Island, at least for himself, into a new Eden.

The questions presented in "Separating" are repeated more indirectly in the following stories, sometimes in the guise of humour. In "Spit Delaney's Island," for example, on the Delaneys' first anniversary after their separation, their largely humorous sparring leads Spit to comment on the psychic properties of plants and Stella to speculate that perhaps man's thinking originates somewhere outside the human brain. Whether or not Spit and Stella fully comprehend the issues that they raise, these subjects subtly reinforce the key questions about truth, the nature of life, and knowledge initially posed in "Separating."

The questions explored in "Separating" revolve almost entirely around the changing attitudes of one major character, Spit Delaney. There is, however, an important scene in which Spit's damaged belief in seeming tangibles, like his locomotive and his marriage, is contrasted with Stella's cynicism and with her mother's view that nothing is stable. Stella considers man to be destructive and says that reality or truth, "if there is such a thing," consists in "the things that people can't touch, or wreck" (SDI, p. 20). According to her mother, "All [is] a mirage! . . . Blink your eyes and it's gone, or moved!" (SDI, p. 20). In the next story in the volume, entitled "Three Women of the Country," Hodgins extends this strategy of using different viewpoints, by widening the story's range to include three

major interrelating characters, and by employing a more complex and extended narrative structure. Consequently, the story offers quite a different treatment of the book's predominating questions about reality, human nature, and perception.

"Three Women of the Country" explores how three incidents in the tormented life of Mrs. Edna Starbuck affect Mrs. Starbuck and two of her neighbours in the rural community of Cut Off--a name drawn from Ethel Wilson's story "A Visit to the Frontier," which Hodgins included in his anthology The Frontier Experience. The point of view of Hodgins' story moves successively through these three centres of consciousness: from the outermost, Mrs. Wright, who disdains and cannot understand Mrs. Starbuck, then inward a little to Charlene Porter, who is very fond of Mrs. Starbuck, discovers hitherto secret knowledge about her life, but still cannot understand her very well, and finally to Mrs. Starbuck herself. In this way, Hodgins is able to make the reader follow and participate in the exceedingly difficult process of getting to know the reality of another human being.

"Three Women of the Country" echoes Shakespeare's quintessential depictions of the heights and the depths of human nature: the opposition between the innocent and beautiful Miranda and the vile and hideous Caliban in The Tempest, which Hodgins acknowledges as his "favourite

Shakespearean play."²⁶ Hodgins' story may also bring to mind the contrast between Hamlet's ideal of man--"how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties"--and either Hamlet's own subsequent definition of man as "A beast, no more" or Lear's saddening picture of "unaccommodated man" as "no more but . . . a poor, bare, forked animal." The nature and function of Hodgins' animal imagery throughout "Three Women of the Country," however, including the description of Mrs. Wright as "'A little white-haired fox terrier always yapping'" (SDI, p. 35) and the comparison of her arms to "the thin scaly legs of a Rhode island rooster" (SDI, p. 29), differs significantly from the examples that I have cited from the works of Shakespeare. Indeed Hodgins uses animal imagery more in the usual manner of Chaucer than Shakespeare, because it makes a serious point--that man is not as grand as he often affects to be--through the use of comedy.²⁷ Yet by concentrating on the three horrifying incidents concerning Mrs. Starbuck--the discovery of her retarded child, her impulsive killing of the yearling cow, which happens second but is presented first in the story, and her violent death--Hodgins is able to convey the appalling or pathetic or tragic elements of human life, hand in hand with the genuinely comic elements. The three shocking events occur successively during the last two days of Mrs. Starbuck's life; but the narration of events in this story departs somewhat from

straightforward chronology. This fictional strategy allows Hodgins to show how belated and incomplete are everyone's efforts to comprehend even one other person.

Mrs. Wright believes that people are rational beings and that the five senses are the only means of comprehending reality or judging others. Charlene Porter, a fourteen-year-old Christian Scientist, believes that man represents the perfect image of God and that spiritual knowledge transcends the evidence of the senses. Consequently, when Mrs. Wright is faced by the emotion-filled and axe-wielding Mrs. Starbuck who then turns and slays her own yearling cow, and when Charlene is faced by the hissing figure of a boy "Worse off than an animal" (SDI, p. 52) huddling in Mrs. Starbuck's attic, they are stunned by dimensions of human reality that, in different ways, they would rather deny than accept. Like the situations involving the dim-witted and somewhat crazed Larkin triplets, one of whom Charlene calls "'Caliban!'" (SDI, p. 48) after he has abducted and deserted her, these revelations raise questions about the real nature of man, about human motivation and behaviour, and about how to judge or to know one's fellow man.

Yet, unlike Spit Delaney in the preceding story, neither Mrs. Wright nor Charlene Porter feels that her personal sense of identity is called seriously into question. Each of the two neighbouring women remains isolated by her attitudes,

and simply by circumstances, from the tragic action involving Mrs. Starbuck. Charlene finds herself a little more shaken, momentarily, than Mrs. Wright, perhaps because Charlene is younger and her attitudes are not entrenched, but also because Charlene feels closer to Mrs. Starbuck and thinks of her as a kind of surrogate for the mother who ran off with a used-car salesman when Charlene was only five. Neither Charlene Porter nor Mrs. Wright, however, acquires any real sense of Mrs. Starbuck's anguish or her growth in self-awareness. But the reader is allowed to experience Mrs. Starbuck's actual feelings, when the narrative point of view shifts to her in the last section of the story.

Unlike the other two women, Mrs. Starbuck does face and accept the reality of her family situation. In what prove to be the last two days of her abruptly terminated life, Mrs. Starbuck begins to take decisive action to correct her past mistakes, and reclaims her son as truly her own, "trying his name aloud for the first time in fourteen years" (SDI, p. 67). Yet her efforts are futile; her son resists and flees. Mrs. Starbuck drives after him, screams "'You'll hit my son!'" (SDI, p. 67) at an approaching vehicle, and jumps out to protect him. But just as her hand briefly touches him, she falls and is dragged over the bank and down to the creek by her still-moving car. The scene resonates with tragic irony. In the end, Mrs. Starbuck lies dead,

with fluid bubbling out of her mouth, like the yearling cow that she slew a day earlier. Her body rests with one eye under the creek's surface, while the other eye, "a dull, plastic ball, stared swollen and incredulous up at Mrs. Wright as if Mrs. Starbuck in the last failing moment had seen something she badly needed to tell about" (SDI, p. 68). Hodgins' imagery at this point again reinforces the theme of perception-explored in this story and throughout the book.

The driver of the other vehicle, Mrs. Wright, was heading to help Mrs. Starbuck because she had seemed so disturbed. Instead, Mrs. Wright unintentionally, and, to deepen the irony, unknowingly, contributes to Mrs. Starbuck's death. Mrs. Wright neither sees the boy nor hears Mrs. Starbuck's exclamation. Moreover, Mrs. Wright does not even learn of the existence of the boy until she tells Charlene Porter a little later about Mrs. Starbuck's death, and then Mrs. Wright simply reiterates her original philosophical position by saying, "'All I know is what I see. How am I supposed to know anything else?'" (SDI, p. 69) As her attitude to her second husband's infidelity already attested, Mrs. Wright's responses show a capacity to distance herself from the unpleasant reaches of reality and from truth itself.

Before Mrs. Wright withdraws within the limits of experience that she is willing to accept, she stands for one moment looking over "the edge of the bridge, the edge of the world," screams "'What is it? What is it?'" (SDI, p. 68)

and beholds only the unanswering darkness and slow water below. Then she descends to the edge of the creek and finds the body of Mrs. Starbuck, who, like the character with the identical surname in Melville's Moby-Dick and like the heroine, Lucy, in Wilson's story "A Visit to the Frontier," has crossed the ultimate frontier or dividing line into the land of death. The vision of "Three Women of the Country" is darker than the vision of the introductory story, with hardly any hope of the process of redemption that Spit Delaney stands ready to begin at the end of "Separating," unless some measure of hope lies in the reader's awareness of the self-knowledge gained by the tragic Mrs. Starbuck. This darker vision prepares for the situations presented in the stories grouped in the second section of the volume. The more anti-heroic or ironic characters found in these five stories fall considerably short of tragedy, even if they die, and far short of much bliss.

III

The self-knowledge that Spit Delaney and Mrs. Starbuck begin to earn in the first section of Spit Delaney's Island is almost entirely absent from the five succeeding stories. In "The Trench Dwellers," Gerry Mack immediately dismisses his wife's accusation that he is attempting to get away not from his family but from "'humanity itself'" (SDI, p. 82).

"If that was what I wanted," Gerry remarks, "I'd have become a hermit," to which April replies, poignantly, "What else are we?" (SDI, p. 82) Unlike Spit Delaney, who regrets the loss of his wife and family, and unlike the inhabitants of Cut Off who interact at least partially as a community, Gerry Mack has consciously tried to separate himself from the more than four hundred people on Vancouver Island whom his Aunt Nora Macken terms "The Immediate Family" (SDI, p. 73). He has dropped two letters off his name, has intentionally married a woman who has virtually no relatives and who dotingly agrees with everything that he says, and has moved onto the mainland.

Gerry Mack finds the institution of the extended family oppressive and tries to attain his personal identity and freedom independently. Yet, ironically, he remains curiously bound to his family and to the idea of the family despite these actions. While working as an open-line moderator for a new radio station on the mainland just across from his family homestead on Vancouver Island, Gerry Mack deliberately tries to provoke the Islanders by his rudeness and by "outlandish" (SDI, p. 75) comments about life on the Island. Ironically, too, while he thinks that he is "one Macken who has no need for family," his Aunt Nora is thinking how Gerry's spunk shows that "maybe he was the only real Macken in the lot after all" (SDI, p. 76).

Gerry is enveloped in a sequence of ironies and misfortunes that includes April's desertion with their two boys and the death by drowning of one of the children. On his final trip to the Island to attend his son's funeral, Gerry is chastised by Aunt Nora: "'Now do you see where your place is? Now do you see where you belong?'" (SDI, p. 84) However, Gerry returns to the mainland, where he loses his position as an open-line moderator and eventually--as a sort of climax to all of the earlier ironies--moves in with Netty Conroy, a woman who lives "in a junky unpainted house beside a swamp," who has almost a dozen children by fathers of several nationalities and races, and who, Aunt Nora learns, is "related to more than half the people who lived in that mainland town, not to mention most who lived in the countryside around it" (SDI, p. 85).

By becoming involved with Netty Conroy, Gerry Mack appears to subvert even his own principles of independence in order to defy his family's sense of propriety. Along with Gerry's preceding actions, this relationship fulfills Aunt Nora's prediction that "'He'll cut off his nose to spite his face'" (SDI, p. 75). Aunt Nora's comment is then reiterated at the close of the story, where we learn that "she still felt closer to Gerry Mack than to any of the rest of them," possibly, she thinks, "because she, too, had had a tendency to cut off her nose to spite her face" (SDI, p. 85). This recognition by Aunt Nora represents one of the

few moments of understanding, and the only moment of self-knowledge, that anyone experiences during "The Trench Dwellers." Yet up to this point in the story, she has been as blind to the ironies of her situation as Gerry and April remain to theirs. Certainly there is a great deal of irony at Aunt Nora's expense in the fact that it is she, a "tall big-footed old maid living out on that useless farm" without any really immediate family, without a husband or a child of her own, who proclaims that "There wasn't any real substitute for having a lot of relatives" (SDI, p. 73)--although most relatives cannot love or be loved as deeply as one's spouse and offspring. Moreover, it is Aunt Nora who complains that while Gerry's marrying a church-goer would have been worse than his marrying the unattractive and dull April Klamp, to remain a bachelor as "three of her brothers had done and become cranky old grouches as a result" (SDI, pp. 74-75) would be even worse--although she herself has evidently made the same decision as those three brothers.

In the process of the story, April, like Gerry, undergoes a complete and ironic transformation. She acts contrary to her husband's wishes, resettles on Vancouver Island, and gradually inherits Aunt Nora's relatively sterile position as the host of family reunions, a role that does not fulfill either woman's potential or needs. All three principal characters, including Aunt Nora, who has been trapped too long to benefit greatly from a little self-knowledge, are

left dwelling in trenches of their own construction, in the social, psychological, and perceptual equivalents of the restrictive geographical trench in which they reside, on the Island side or the mainland side of the Strait of Georgia. In Hodgins' stories, to attempt to define one's identity by rejecting one's family, one's place, or, most importantly, humanity itself, has disturbing and sometimes calamitous results for characters like Gerry Mack, or Spit Delaney, or Jim Styan in "By the River," or Mr. Grey in "After the Season."

However, there are usually humorous dimensions to the characters and situations in Hodgins' stories, as may be seen readily in the next story, "Every Day of His Life," which shares the ironic mood of the other stories in the second section of Spit Delaney's Island but is lighter in tone. Big Glad Littlestone, a hefty thirty-six-year-old woman with a ten-year-old son, Roger, but with no sign of a husband, is an essentially comic figure, dressed "every day" in "those little red sneakers, that same white bulging T-shirt, those striped knee-length shorts" (SDI, p. 86). She is also overly anxious to snare in marriage any man who steps inside her garden gate and compliments her. Big Glad's visitor, the "'artist'" (SDI, p. 90) Mr. Swingler, also has a comic mien. He appears first as only "a little round head that rode the top of the picket fence to the gate" (SDI, p. 86). His eyes are "like two painted rubber balls

controlled from behind by elastic strings" (SDI, p. 87), and the lower half of his face recedes peculiarly. Mr. Swingler emerges as a caricature of a real artist, for he carries no equipment of his own, borrows Roger's Donald Duck paint set and a pad of paper, sits on the roof of Big Glad's shack looking at the mountain off behind, and paints a picture that even Big Glad considers to be a failure because it does not grant the mountain sufficient power. Furthermore, behind Mr. Swingler's comic features and his ludicrous façade as an artist, lies the amusing but mildly hurtful intelligence of a small-time trickster.

Mr. Swingler, whose name appears to be a conflation of "swinger" and "swindler," is twelve miles off course, if his story about looking for a job at the paper mill can be believed. He rejects the fruit of temptation that Big Glad offers as soon as he arrives, and tries to get Big Glad to give him a ride to the highway in her car. When she refuses, he outwits her at her own game, making her think that he wants to marry her, when, as his final remark in the story implies, he probably only wants to obtain the keys to her garage and car. Much of the humour in this story arises from the ambiguous meaning of such phrases as the title, "Every Day of His Life," which is echoed in Big Glad's enticing comment to Mr. Swingler that "'I guess a man could set up here every day of his life painting that mountain and never paint it the same way twice'" (SDI, p. 95). But the reader

may interpret the title as referring to travelling and masquerading, which, presumably, are much more typical of Mr. Swingler's usual activities than painting is.

Another instance of humour conveyed by the ambiguity of Hodgins' language is the suggestion by Mr. Swingler that Big Glad will get to know him pretty well in the three days after they go to town supposedly to get a marriage licence and before they can legally be married. Indeed she will, although probably not as she expects to know him, for he likely will have vanished. Mr. Swingler's comment, in reply to Big Glad's romantic inquiry about whether he would drink her ashes as he says he consumed those of his first wife, also contains an ironic reference to his presumable habit of treachery: "Miss Littlestone," he says, "'after the first time there's nothing to it'" (SDI, p. 97). By presenting the character of Mr. Swingler quite light-heartedly, Hodgins emphasizes primarily the amusing side of the trickster. "Every Day of His Life," therefore, remains essentially comic in tone, although one can anticipate the disappointment awaiting Big Glad if Mr. Swingler completes his apparent deception and deserts her.

The following story, "The Religion of the Country," is more darkly ironic and more complex than "Every Day of His Life." In this story, Brian Halligan's aged mother and Brian himself, who like Big Glad is thirty-six years old and unmarried when the story begins, undergo different con-

versions. When Brian was only two years old, his family moved to England from its native Ireland, about which his mother commented, "'Tis no country for Protestants any more'" (SDI, p. 98). Soon afterwards, his mother became so homesick that, like a number of characters whom we encounter in Spit Delaney's Island, she abandoned her spouse as well as her child. But once Brian's mother returned to Ireland, she discovered that, like her Cousin Polly, she could not fit in. Despite this similarity between the situations of the two women, when Cousin Polly decided to fulfill her own need for companionship and community by accepting the care of the nuns at a nursing home in Cork, and by turning Roman Catholic, Brian's mother lost all sympathy for her. Yet ironically, after the death of Brian's father and as Brian's mother grows more decrepit and lonely and complains, "'What is a woman without a family?'" (SDI, p. 109), she too is converted to Roman Catholicism. This capitulation then infuriates Brian, although, again ironically, he is undergoing a change in belief that parallels the conversions of the two women.

Like his mother in Ireland, Brian is an outsider. Indeed, Brian "couldn't help knowing that while he was concerned about the old woman's loneliness he was actually worrying about his own" (SDI, p. 105). A poor bookstore operator on Vancouver Island, who has carefully preserved

his acquired English accent and who makes frequent trips to the mainland to attend cultural events, Brian upholds an "affected distant air" (SDI, p. 100) before the native Islanders. He resists their "logger and coalminer mentality" because he is "terrified of being converted to vulgarianism" (SDI, p. 98).

Early in the story, Halligan complains about how the townspeople "'waste their lives accumulating things, grabbing and hoarding, fighting over bits of land and stabbing each other in the back to get ahead'" (SDI, p. 99). Furthermore, he despises the "coarse bush manners" (SDI, p. 105) of a friend's sister, Babe Bickham, who owns a small hotel in a logging settlement on the west coast of the Island and enjoys hiking and hunting. Yet, suddenly, Halligan discovers that he is mysteriously falling in love with her against his own will, probably, the reader infers, because Babe's robust liveliness and the mocking humour that she directs at Halligan are needed to complement his character:

. . . she sneered at his attempt to remain an Englishman though he was obviously planted firmly on this island, and he told her at least he had some clearly defined roots, which was more than could be said for her. Before long she had shown him that what she had instead of roots was a quick mind, a body she knew exactly how to handle, and a determination to make the most of both. And he had shown her that he was perfectly willing to be seduced out of his attitudes for the sake of her continuing company." (SDI, p. 107)

Babe exhorts Brian to "'smarten up that business of yours, make some money. Start buying things, furniture, get yourself a car, start looking at property'" (SDI, pp. 107-08). Babe herself retains empathy for her fellow human beings, as is shown by her protective or pleased attitude towards Brian's mother on different occasions. Yet Brian converts to at least as sinister a form of vulgarism as that which he had attributed earlier to his rough neighbours on the Island, people not too far removed in time from the frontier. Ironically, Brian's own actions eventually match his earlier deprecatory description of the townspeople's self-advancement. He begins to sell real estate in the evenings, and, having already repudiated his mother, does not even bother to fly over for her funeral because he is so preoccupied with the materialistic "religion" of his own country.²⁸

Hodgins' concluding reference to Brian Halligan's refusal to pay his final respects to his mother is heavily ironic: "Land development was a cut-throat business, he said, and there was no room in it for sentiment" (SDI, p. 114). Brian's mother, with considerable self-justification, can reply to Brian's anti-religious stance, "'And what is it I've sold? What have I lost?'" (SDI, p. 113) In view of the comfort and happiness that she gains during her final four years of life, Brian's mother's conversion seems quite

defensible. What Brian himself has sold or lost, in terms of moral behaviour or humanity, is obvious. His attitudes and actions are clearly reprehensible.

The sense of loneliness expressed at different points in "The Religion of the Country" grows more pervasive, eerie, and desperate in "By the River," the story of Crystal Styan, who appears to have shut herself off from reality entirely, in a world of her own fantasy. Six months after her husband's departure, Crystal still expects him to return from town, as he used to, on the train. The suspense of the story and the shock at recognizing the extent of Crystal's self-delusion are heightened by Hodgins' narrative technique, which only gradually reveals her real state of abandonment to the reader. This accumulation of foreboding references, including the silence of the river, operates in ironic counterpoint to Crystal's happy memories of Jim Styan's laughter.

Because "By the River" is restricted almost entirely to Crystal's imaginings, it has the quality of a dream, a quality enhanced by the dream-like cadence and the poetic diction of Hodgins' prose style. References to the local Indians' myth about how the river was a hungry monster that used to gobble up their people until the god-hero Coyote subdued it, and to Crystal's "dream" about how her husband "was trying to go into the river and how she pulled and hauled on his feet but he wouldn't come out" (SDI, p. 118),

add to the eeriness of the story and offer a clue to one possible reason for Jim Styan's disappearance--that he, like Gerry Mack's son in "The Trench Dwellers" or Mr. Grey in "After the Season," may have drowned. Yet Crystal insists on seeing her husband as the triumphant Coyote:

The river runs past silently and she imagines that it is only shoulders she is seeing, that monster heads have ducked down to glide by but are watching her from eyes grey as stone. She wants to scream out "Hide, you crummy cheat, my Coyote's coming home!" but is afraid to tempt even something that she does not believe in. And anyway she senses--far off--the beat of the little train coming down the valley from the town.
(SDI, pp. 120-21)

If, however, as is very possible, Jim Styan has not drowned but has simply deserted his spouse, as many people do in Spit Delaney's Island, to continue "looking for his dream" (SDI, p. 120), then Hodgins' references to Coyote could call to mind not so much the illustrious character of a god-hero as the small and deceitful figure of a trickster,²⁹ like Mr. Swingler in "Every Day of His Life."

Five years earlier, Jim Styan had withdrawn with his wife from Vancouver Island to the mainland, like Gerry Mack in "The Trench Dwellers," but much farther inland, across the province up into the mountains to an area of wilderness. Here, Jim and Crystal might have resembled the earth's first human inhabitants, ready to make their own world, except that they were not in Eden and they were gradually undergoing a

disastrous Fall. Jim Styan's flight, like Gerry Mack's in "The Trench Dwellers" or like Mr. Grey's in "After the Season," seems to have been an inherently self-destructive attempt to isolate himself from humanity, about whom Styan remarked, "'Who needs them?'" (SDI, p. 116) Moreover, Styan's life as a pioneer seems affected and fraudulent: he "started walking around as if there were a movie camera somewhere in the trees and he was being paid to act like a hillbilly instead of the city-bred boy he really was" (SDI, p. 117). Their efforts to build a farm in this isolated piece of bush, ten miles from the nearest town, failed, at least partly because Jim was unable to care properly for the little livestock that they acquired. Yet he retained a capacity for self-delusion--just as Crystal deludes herself still--a capacity to "resume the dream, start building new plans" (SDI, p. 120) even while his farm, animals, and wife suffered.

Following her husband's departure, Crystal's suffering, isolation, and self-delusion are intensified as she is isolated not only from almost all forms of civilization but also from reality itself. Like Mrs. Wright in "Three Women of the Country," who cannot accept Mrs. Starbuck's death, Crystal distances herself from reality, but to a degree that overpowers her mind. The knowledge of Jim Styan's disappearance causes Crystal to cross the edge between sanity and

insanity along which Spit Delaney wandered in "Separating." She survives, pathetically, with the help of the town grocer and the church ladies and the train men, although her reference to "the coming of fall" (SDI, p. 118) sounds ominous to the reader.

In "Other People's Troubles," the final story in the second section of Spit Delaney's Island, Hodgins offers a still darker vision of a reality blasted by the caprice of fortune, in which accidents and suffering befall people apparently without cause or reason, as when Mrs. Baxter's husband is killed fighting fire. One of the characters, Lenore Miles, appears capable of dealing with suffering when it occurs in the lives of neighbours, but, ironically, finds it impossible to accept or to ease in her own family. However, her ten-year-old son Barclay, or "Duke," like Spit Delaney at the end of "Separating," advances to the edge of a greater understanding of life. Duke begins to come to terms with the cruelty of man and the injustice of fortune, and this growth in his perception conveys an element of hope that, otherwise, is almost entirely missing from this section of the volume.

Duke's mother acts as a kind of miracle-worker in times of trouble, a good listener who restores a little strength and hope to other people in the community. "'I do what I can,'" she says. "'Sometimes it seems there is nothing

anyone can do, but they say they prefer to have me there to anyone else, so I go'" (SDI, p. 125). On one occasion she takes her son with her to visit Sandy Melville, whose husband has beaten her badly and left her. Mrs. Miles takes Duke because she wants him to observe something that he would not see in his normal experience at home--how cruel a man can be to a woman and how much the woman suffers --so that if he is ever tempted to hurt a woman he will remember this incident and forbear.

Only two weeks later, however, "fate" in the form of "twenty pounds of falling cedar limb" (SDI, p. 131) strikes hard at the core of the Miles family itself, as the boy's father is grotesquely injured while working at the lumber camp. Ironically, the image of Albert Miles returning home with his head wrapped in bandages like "A faceless mummy" (SDI, p. 132), symbolic of death, or like "something not quite human" (SDI, p. 131), like Mrs. Starbuck's child in "Three Women of the Country," is so disturbing to his wife that her strength vanishes and she runs away from him, sobbing, into the house. Her son, thinking that if the unnatural creature was his father then his mother would have run to succour him, feels perplexed and wishes to deny the awful reality of the situation. He walks away, lies waiting in the mint beside the verandah, but returns when he realizes that he does not know what he is waiting there for,

and helps his father--who says "'Be patient,'" then "'Thank you'" (SDI, p. 133)--to get inside the house. Thinking of his mother's frantic flight, Duke tries to reassure his father and to defend his mother: "'Maybe she'll be down later Sometimes there is nothing anyone can do'" (SDI, p. 133).

Even as Duke reiterates the observation that his mother uttered earlier, he recognizes how quickly such a remark, which one might be content to express about other people's troubles, is shown to be accurate but utterly insufficient by troubles of one's own. He becomes aware of the huge gap between this self-serving platitude and the great empathy or love that all people have a tremendous responsibility to feel when confronted with the horrifying reality of a fellow human being's suffering. Duke's recognition carries him beyond the innocence and the almost blind hopefulness that are symbolized by the use of the colour green in the story--whose original title was "Yesterday's Green Summer"³⁰--and that are connected particularly with the boy's mother. As Lenore Miles's liking for green apparel signifies, she wants to remain innocent and hopeful despite her experience. Duke, however, accepts and learns from the circumstances that he observes and experiences, and demonstrates that while there may be no way to rewrite the past one can still redeem it by facing reality with all of the honesty, awareness, and love that one can command.

Looking back at the five stories in the second section, one notes the recurrence of several important themes: separation, rejection, misfortune, and death, along with deception, misunderstanding, self-delusion, and dejection. These themes weave in and out of the stories from the background to the foreground, are introduced briefly or developed fully, depending on the emphasis of each individual story. While the grouping of these five stories within a single section appears to follow thematic guidelines, the order in which they are arranged seems very loose and can perhaps best be regarded as mainly a dramatic arrangement. Hodgins' basic principle of organization in this section, like Alice Munro's in the whole of Dance of the Happy Shades or Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You, appears to be alternation.

"The Trench Dwellers" is an appropriate beginning because it expresses most effectively the sense of place--including both the notion of community and the concept of regionalism--that is so important a feature of Hodgins' work. This story is followed by a less complex and lighter story, "Every Day of His Life," then by a story in which the plotting is more complicated, "The Religion of the Country," then by another relatively simple although much more mysterious story, "By the River," and lastly by "Other People's Troubles." Something of a thematic arrangement is

seen, however, in the final placement of "By the River," in which the wheel of fortune descends nearly to its lowest point, and "Other People's Troubles," in which fortune is shown at possibly its lowest, most capricious state, but which contains the possibility of an upswing in theme, vision, and tone. While the bleakness conveyed by natural disasters and by Lenore Miles's personal failings makes "Other People's Troubles" a fitting conclusion to the generally downward drift in the second section of the volume, the slight feeling of hope generated by witnessing the maturation of Duke Miles serves as a bridge between this story and the next section of the book.

IV

The first story in the third and final section of Spit Delaney's Island represents a complete change of mode, and announces a switch in focus away from the almost entirely defeated and uncomprehending questers of the second section. "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School" proceeds through a fantastic and parodic treatment of the archetypal Fall into history or rite of initiation, and finishes with an escape from the descent that has just been described. Like the first story in the introductory section, "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School" contains in miniature the pattern of descent and ascent that may be felt, with some fluctuations, in the overall structure of Spit Delaney's

Island. This pattern is made clear by Hodgins' use of the geography of his region for symbolic purposes--very much as Hugh Hood does in Around the Mountain. "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School" begins with a descent from a mountain-top Eden that brings to mind Adam's descent down the hill of history in Book XII of Paradise Lost and his expulsion with Eve from the Garden of Eden. Hodgins' story ends with an imaginary journey back up the mountain that anticipates the upward and inward journey of Spit Delaney and Phemie Porter in the final story of the volume and that resembles the transcendental leap beyond space and time suggested at the close of Around the Mountain.

"At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School" presents the initiation of seventeen-year-old Webster Treherne into the world of experience and sin (perhaps symbolized by the cut on his finger, which, significantly, heals as soon as he dismisses the wound from his mind) through a symbolic journey from a mountain-top commune to the town below. The portrayal of the boy's descent and ascent distinctly echoes not only Milton's story of Adam but also the story of Jesus, His incarnation and His resurrection, which the Archangel Michael relates to Adam in Book XII of Paradise Lost. This overall Christian pattern of life, death, and resurrection carries through Hodgins' story and is reinforced by such details as Birdie's reference to the hanging of three Yanks on Gallows Island, which seems to parody the crucifixion of

Christ between the two thieves on Calvary. Parody plays an important role in "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School," as it does in Milton's depiction of Hell as a parody of Heaven in Paradise Lost.³¹ What Webster encounters on his arrival at Birdie's School is a parody of education in general and a parody of the spiritual education that he has been receiving from the Old Man on the mountain-top in particular.

The Old Man has taught the boy that "time was meaningless and God was All" (SDI, p. 137) and that man was good and hence "destined by definition to be humane, healthy, and immortal" (SDI, p. 142). This view recalls the Christian Science notions held by Mr. Porter and his daughter, Charlene, in "Three Women of the Country." At Birdie's School, however, Webster is told to forget what he has already learned and is taught classes in truth, love, and life. These, the boy notes, are ideals that "'people spend a whole lifetime looking for'" (SDI, p. 141); but Birdie's School teaches its students how to lose these ideals, not to find them. When Webster contracts a disease that Birdie says is "'more than TB'" (SDI, p. 150), Birdie explains that he can graduate from her school without taking all of the courses since he has found out everything for himself because he is about to die. "'That is the reward you get for learning your lessons well, to get sick and die and then

rot in the ground," Birdie states. "'Just when you've found out what you are, you'll cease to be'" (SDI, p. 150).

Webster's own intention when he chose to descend from his state of innocence at the top of the mountain was "to be quickly corrupted" (SDI, p. 137); and, as David L. Jeffrey notes, both Webster's first name and the subject of a diabolic encounter echo Stephen Vincent Benét's story The Devil and Daniel Webster.³² Webster wants to join the McLean gang to experience the melodramatic excitement of their vicious and violent deeds as he had read about them. However, because he has been living in isolation, the boy lacks a sense of historical time, and what he attempts to imitate is an experience that happens to lie almost one hundred years in the past. His actions, therefore, seem ridiculous. During a robbery, he thinks of shooting the store's proprietor but remembers that he has no bullets in his gun; then he almost loses his pants from the weight of the coins that he steals. Evil is parodied, appropriately, because evil is itself a kind of parody of good. The scene might be regarded as a light-hearted equivalent of Milton's parody of evil in Paradise Lost.

As in Milton's and Blake's poetic universes, the movement from innocence to experience in "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School" paradoxically represents a fortunate Fall. In the process of Hodgins' story, the boy comes to a

better understanding of the goodness inherent in his own nature and in mankind through subjection to its very opposite, by trying to live out the fantasy of himself as an outlaw and by being exposed to the demonic education offered at Birdie's School. Birdie's education does not catch on the boy precisely because he is good. Webster repudiates Birdie's view that man's ultimate destiny is "'A black and smelly grave'" (SDI, p. 150) and argues--then demonstrates by his final disappearance, singing "in his freedom" (SDI, p. 151), as he reascends the mountain--that man is more than a decaying sack of bones, that he is immortal. Webster Treherne has discovered an answer to the questions "Who am I?" and "What is man?" that troubled the main characters in the first section of Spit Delaney's Island. Webster declares that he (or man) is "An idea. Somewhere else, everywhere. An idea in the Old Man's mind and therefore perfect. You can't destroy that" (SDI, p. 150). While admitting the existence of evil in the world, the story creates an image of good triumphing over evil because man has a soul capable of redemption, a spirit capable of the love of man and God that leads to man's ultimate freedom and bliss.

Although seventeen-year-old Webster Treherne attains an advanced awareness of the highest spiritual state of which man is capable, the emotional character of Hodgins'

fiction as a whole suggests that understanding alone is insufficient and must be wedded to feeling, that true humanity is realized and fulfilled only through the combination of self-awareness and loving relationships with other people. The geographical isolation pictured in the following story, "After the Season," which is set in a remote fishing camp on Vancouver Island overlooking the Strait and "About fifty miles up the coast past the end of all public roads" (SDI, p. 152), contributes to the personal isolation of Hallie Crane, who runs the cafe and the cabaret, and Morgan, who operates the boat rental. Like so many of the other characters in Spit Delaney's Island who are separated from their families, fifty-one-year-old Hallie has lost her husband, who died eighteen years earlier, and has not seen her daughter for eight years. Hallie has also lost the deep sexy laugh that characterized her youth. She is overly self-conscious, afraid that if she returned to her family she would be useless and unable to communicate. Consequently, she remains at the camp, living a normal life for four months of the year while the camp is filled with tourists, then living in complete isolation from all of humanity except Morgan for the rest of the year. Each year, after practically ignoring one another during the tourist season, Morgan and Hallie repeat a courtship and love affair that Morgan describes as "'A mating dance of two horny people'"

(SDI, p. 161), or as two mountain sheep coming together at high velocity, and that the embittered Hallie compares to Pluto's yearly abduction of Proserpina.

Hallie complains of this situation to Mr. Hamilton Grey, a former teacher, who has fled from human society because he finds the stupidity of mankind appalling, and who is cast ashore at the fishing camp in the midst of a terrifying storm just as Morgan begins his yearly courtship of Hallie. Mr. Grey's view of mankind is so pessimistic that he appears to find nothing good about people at all, except for their potential: "Man has one thing--mind--that makes everything possible" (SDI, p. 158). Yet while Mr. Grey places a value on the human mind, he totally disapproves of human instinct, the sort of instinct represented by Morgan, who is compared repeatedly to an ape.

Hallie, too, exhibits a great deal of instinct and feeling, as in the scene in which she sees a thin red line running from the edge of Mr. Grey's eye down towards the tear duct, knows that he is human after all, and reaches out and brushes a finger momentarily against his cheek. Mr. Grey, however, jumps away from her, as he has fled from mankind in general, defying anyone to touch or to affect him, and repudiating his own humanity. Mr. Grey's effort to isolate himself from mankind, like the attempts of Gerry Mack in "The Trench Dwellers" and Jim Styan in "By the

River," is self-destructive. Appropriately, therefore, though not happily, Mr. Grey is soon killed as the railing along the high boardwalk in front of Hallie's café breaks and he falls down in the dark into the choppy sea.

Mr. Grey, argues Margaret Laurence, has brought "evil into their lives, like the snake into Eden. Shame comes to Hallie, and anger to Morgan, even though both suspect that the stranger-intellectual, ought not to have this power of corrupting their sense of themselves and each other."³³ After Mr. Grey's death, Hallie is left alone in the company of the Pluto-like Morgan. Yet, however dark Hallie may at times consider this situation to be, she does regain--like Maggie Kyle in The Invention of the World and Jenny Chambers in The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne--much of her youthful vitality and joy. Although Hallie can no longer laugh, even when she wants to, she does begin to smile; for, unlike Mr. Grey, she now knows that there is at least one person who can touch her and whom she can touch. Moreover, unlike Proserpina, although Hallie at times denies this, she does not join her lover against her will. When Hallie says that she wants to return home, down-island, to her family, Morgan corrects her, "'Hell you are. You're home now . . . You'll never go back there again and you know it'" (SDI, p. 168). Life with Morgan may sometimes seem like hell, but it is nevertheless a real affirmation of life and love.

As Hodgins suggests in the scene in which Hallie and Mr. Grey reach the top of one hill then see a higher hill to climb, this is not the end but "only the beginning" (SDI, p. 163). Yet it is a hard-earned beginning. Furthermore, although earlier stories in the volume suggest different and darker possibilities, it is precisely man's hardiness or strength in learning how to "survive and go on" (SDI, p. 199) that Spit Delaney and Hodgins emphasize as the collection's structure mounts gradually to its ending in the title story, "Spit Delaney's Island."

The first and the final story of Spit Delaney's Island are pervaded by metaphors of an edge or a dividing line. Thus in the last story we find Spit Delaney living "On the edge of the village, right on the beach" (SDI, p. 171), by the water's edge, while later in the story Spit recalls his recurrent nightmare of being transformed into a fish by the powerful Kanikiluk of Indian myth and being left to flop around on the sand, "beached, neither in ocean or land" (SDI, p. 181), with the sun drying him out, killing him. This undifferentiated state in which Spit finds himself in his nightmare symbolizes his undifferentiated state--neither married, nor single--in his waking life. Spit's frustration with this state explains the urgency with which he seeks to find an answer to the question "Where is the dividing line?" (SDI, p. 7) In Spit's view, as soon as he can find an

answer and differentiate "Between what is and what isn't" (SDI, p. 8), he can begin to place himself and to discover his new identity. However, as Hodgins' stories show, the attempt to establish boundaries is difficult and often deleterious to the individual. The answer to Spit's question, therefore, may be that there is no real answer, or, rather, that there is no fixed answer.

In "Separating," the metaphor of division is embellished at one point just after Stella announces her wish for a separation and Spit flees for the west coast. Here Spit talks at the water's edge with a naked young man who is presumably a false Adam, like Jim Styan, and also a false prophet, like Balk-eyed Birdie. The youth tells Spit about a crack running "all the way around the outside edge of this ocean" that is squirting up lava and "'Pushing the continents farther and farther apart.'" (SDI, p. 18). The youth alludes to the description of God's Creation of a firmament dividing the waters in Genesis i.6-8, and seems to interpret the phenomenon of continental drift as signifying the coming of the Apocalypse. In relation to Spit, this crack or seam separating the continents becomes a metaphor for the separation between himself and Stella. This particular metaphor is then recalled through Spit's nightmare in the final story, when, after being transformed into a fish, he swims out into the Pacific looking for the crack. But

the seam eludes his search, just as the meaning of his separation and the meaning of existence have eluded his comprehension.

Several months after his separation from Stella, Spit invites her out to dinner to celebrate their first anniversary as, to use Hodgins' ironic phrase, "a Separated Couple" (SDI, p. 176). This attempt at some sort of reconciliation fails, because Spit hurts Stella's feelings; afterwards, Spit knows for certain that their relationship is finished. The scene at the restaurant represents an end but also a beginning, for it is there that Spit first encounters Phemie Porter, whose name suggests an ethereal carrier,³⁴ and who serves as Spit's spiritual guide as he begins to be reborn through a casual process of self-inquiry during the remainder of "Spit Delaney's Island." Judging Phemie initially by her hideous appearance, Spit jokes about her and irritates Stella, who suddenly leaves the restaurant. As Spit follows past Phemie, she completely surprises him by grabbing his pants above the knee, exclaiming "'Aren't you a find'" (SDI, p. 183), then advising him "'Some day you'll learn to walk'" (SDI, p. 184), as if, by some psychic power she knew about the nightmare that Spit had been thinking of telling to Stella.

The dead seal that Spit finds the following day is symbolic of the lifeless state that he is passing through,

and is analogous to the image of Spit as a beached and dying fish in his nightmare. A little later, as Spit is walking, appropriately, along the edge of the water, he meets Phemie, also appropriately, at the foot of a big totem pole, a symbol of great spiritual power. Looking at the children playing in the tide pools, Phemie entreats Spit, "'Let these fish splash around in the water. People are meant to climb mountains. Take me inland, Mr. Man, take me up into the hills!'" (SDI, p. 187) Climbing mountains, a key motif in each of the last three stories in the volume, emerges clearly in the final story as a symbol of what Phemie says her father described as "going into yourself" (SDI, p. 189), a symbol of the search for a form of transcendence within the human soul.

As Spit drives Phemie and her "'portable prick'" (SDI, p. 186), Reef, up the mountain, they reach a second-hand store called the Wooden Nickel. The name is attractive, half-joking, half-serious. It suggests false currency, perhaps reminding us thereby that the entire material world is only an imitation. Nonetheless, the store contains a whole inventory of authentic goods--partly junk, partly of great value--all from Vancouver Island; and it is certainly a place of great psychic importance to Spit and Phemie. Ultimately, the Wooden Nickel may stand as a kind of emblem for the inclusiveness of Hodgins' art. Here, at the Wooden

Nickel, when some American tourists insult Phemie, Spit feels enraged and reaches out emotionally to her as she had reached out physically and psychically to him at the restaurant. Phemie senses this compassion. As she explains to Spit while they sit together on the verandah of the Wooden Nickel with her hand holding on to his arm, "'For just a split second we touched, we overlapped'" (SDI, p. 197).

Like Spit and Stella, or Phemie's own parents, Phemie is separated from her husband--spiritually, as well as geographically, because he lacks the vision that she possesses. Phemie, Spit learns, is a poet, who has been travelling coast to coast in preparation for her next book, not for the scenery, she says, but in search of humanity: "'It's evidence I want, of the humanity that's hiding in man'" (SDI, p. 188). When Spit asks why she wants to go up into the mountains if there are few or no human beings residing there, Phemie replies, "'There'll be me . . . I'm in search of my own too, especially. What better place to find it?'" (SDI, p. 188) As Spit and Phemie talk on the verandah of the Wooden Nickel, she encourages him by pointing out that he does not need the tape recording of Old Number One that Stella erased. "'You've already got everything in you that you need'" (SDI, p. 197), Phemie says.

Phemie has begun to tap the source of love deep in

Spit's heart, something that Stella--despite all the accuracy of her long catalogue of Spit's problems--did not accomplish. Phemie has uncovered in Spit what she earlier called "'the humanity that's hiding in man'" (SDI, p. 188), making a sort of rebirth possible for him. For the time being, however, Spit is afraid to follow Phemie farther up into the mountains. He still doubts his capability, still lacks some confidence, but not entirely and not as much as earlier. He does know, although his friends Marsten and Mrs. Bested are unable to see it, that he has started to change. He is getting ready to proceed farther along that journey of self-inquiry symbolized by mountain-climbing: "I just may go up yet," Spit says, "to see for myself" (SDI, p. 199).

Like Spit Delaney, the reader of Spit Delaney's Island is introduced to a new way of seeing. Hodgins' writing crosses the dividing line between surfaces and an ulterior or interior world, a world of myth, dream, or fantasy. In this way, Hodgins resembles Emily Carr, who, part way through her career as a painter, became dissatisfied with the art of surface representation and, under the influence of West Coast Indian art, started to reach into an internal landscape. In "Fresh Seeing," a public address delivered on March 4, 1930, Carr commented on how "All nature," for the Indian, "seethed with the supernatural. Everything, even the commonest inanimate objects--mats, dishes, etcetera--possessed a

spirit."³⁵ Carr placed the utmost value on "trying to grasp the spirit of the thing itself rather than its surface appearance, the reality, the 'I am' of the thing, the thing that means 'you.'"³⁶ Like Emily Carr, in her painting and prose writing, Hodgins has created a fresh way of seeing, which evokes the spirit of Spit Delaney's Island, defining the West Coast and making the region articulate.

The mode of writing that Hodgins employs can perhaps best be identified by the term used by W. B. Yeats to describe the poetry of William Blake: "visionary realism."³⁷ By applying this term to Hodgins' fiction, I mean to suggest the manner in which the geographical and psychological realism of these stories, the richly particularized sense of place and character, expands to include the more poetic elements of metaphor, classical and Indian myth, dream, and fantasy, then advances even further to attain something of the quality of sacred parable.

This sense of parable is present most fully in the final story of the volume when Phemie Porter discovers an old oak chest of drawers, which the proprietor of the Wooden Nickel has begun to strip down in order to find its "'real value'" (SDI, p. 193), and which reminds Phemie of the chest of drawers that a cabinet maker made for her when she was just a child. The carpenter (whose occupation is probably meant to recall that of Jesus) explained to Phemie that the

chest contained

"a secret compartment It was the invisible soul of the chest, he said, where I could keep things that belonged just to me. But I never found it myself, and I was afraid to admit it to him, so I learned to store everything important in my own mind, and later in poems, and gradually began to suspect this was what he intended." (SDI, p. 193)

By means of this parable, Hodgins develops the theme of vision that he has been exploring in the many references to sight and blindness throughout the collection. "'Vision is a thing of the heart,'" Mrs. Bested says near the beginning of "Spit Delaney's Island." "'A person could be blind as a bat and have vision clear as glass'" (SDI, p. 172). Thus Phemie, whose "eyeballs were great scarred knobs, diseased probably and discoloured too, nearly yellow," although "they were not hard, or cruel" (SDI, p. 184), has a second sight that allows her to see more deeply into Spit than anyone else can. Later, Spit wonders "if you could get your eyeballs scarred from what you've seen" (SDI, p. 187).

Through Phemie, Hodgins stresses the perceptive and redemptive powers of the creative imagination, of artistic vision, which for Hodgins is fuelled by human love and feeling. The mind of an artist and the art it creates can manifest "'the invisible soul'" (SDI, p. 193)--the individual and universal truth--of a place or a person, as the poem

"The Man Without Legs," which Phemie writes about Spit, testifies. Moreover, Phemie remains in the poem and in Spit's mind as a guide, "a leader" of a secret army planning to "liberate us all from something" (SDI, p. 199). Spit remarks that if he had known initially that Phemie was a poet he would have had nothing to do with her. By the end, however, Spit acknowledges that sometimes when he reads her poem,

it starts to make a kind of sense to me, if I don't try too hard She's in there somewhere looking at me clearer than anyone's ever seen me before. If I could understand, if I could get inside those words with her, I think I'd be able to know what it was she saw when she looked at me, what it was that made her believe I could manage, that I could survive and go on. (SDI, p. 199)

Like the poetry of William Blake, or of Dylan Thomas, whose poem "Fern Hill" is alluded to in "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School,"³⁸ and like Alice Munro's first book of stories, Dance of the Happy Shades, Hodgins' Spit Delaney's Island moves to a concluding celebration of the power of the artistic imagination to reshape and to redeem the world. This celebration is strengthened by the demonstration of Hodgins' own shaping power, both in individual stories and over the length of an entire story cycle which convincingly unites somewhat heterogeneous material.

CHAPTER IV

SHORED FRAGMENTS:

A NORTH AMERICAN EDUCATION: A BOOK OF SHORT FICTION

I

The stories in Clark Blaise's A North American Education are separated from each other in two ways. Like the contents of all short story collections, including Hugh Hood's Around the Mountain and Jack Hodgins' Spit Delaney's Island, these stories are individual units with unique fictional structures. But the stories in A North American Education--like Alice Munro's in Who Do You Think You Are?--also stand as fragments, as distinct episodes, of one huge, imaginary opus¹ or personal mythology that Blaise sought to construct through the process of writing his first four books. A North American Education and Tribal Justice, two interrelated books of autobiographical stories,² and Days and Nights in Calcutta, a somewhat fictionalized memoir³ co-written with Bharati Mukherjee, were followed by a fairly conventional novel or bildungsroman, Lunar Attractions, which Blaise has called "the final work of my personal quest for identity."⁴

Unfortunately, the autobiographical backbone that A North American Education shares with the single, continuous

narrative Blaise eventually created in Lunar Attractions has stimulated a sense that A North American Education is, as Laurie Ricou and John Moss have termed it, "a near-novel,"⁵ and, at least by implication, a near-success, or worse still, an artistic failure. Novel-centred criteria of this kind easily lead to the misguided conclusion that Russell M. Brown, for example, has drawn about the book: "Together the stories achieve an impact that they would lack separately, but at the same time the inconsistencies between them, their shifting protagonists, are distracting. It makes the reader wish that the work had been revised so that it would come together as a whole."⁶ A more accurate and more illuminating view, like that of Frank Davey in his essay "Impressionable Realism: The Stories of Clark Blaise," concentrates instead on the exact purposes and achievements of Blaise's language and form, on the characteristics that succeed in making A North American Education a touchstone for critics like William H. New, who numbers it among the major Canadian collections of short stories that "strive for the expression of a total linguistic gesture: the restructuring of the world in the mind of the writer/reader."⁷

The restructured world or imaginary universe posited by Clark Blaise's first four books is intensely autobiographical and incorporates in a single mythical structure Blaise's varied but related cultural experiences in

rural parts of the American South, urban centres in the eastern United States, the Canadian Prairies and Quebec, western and northern Europe, and India. Of Blaise's four books, A North American Education is the most comprehensive, the most representative of the entire scope of this mythical structure. It stands in relation to Blaise's imaginary magnum opus much in the same way that Malcolm Lowry's Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place, another fragmentary collection of autobiographical fiction, represents a "microcosm,"⁸ as William H. New has argued, of Lowry's enormous, unfinished novel cycle or fictional autobiography entitled The Voyage that Never Ends. Yet, like Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place, whose "artistic independence"⁹ New asks readers to remember, Blaise's first book has an autonomous shape of its own, a coherent literary structure that makes itself felt in several ways.

The individual stories in A North American Education, like the stories in Hodgins' Spit Delaney's Island, vary significantly in technique and form, from stories that possess the unities of time, place, and action to stories that challenge such conventions by experimenting with point of view, narrative time, and structure. Yet, like the components of other story cycles, the stories in A North American Education have considerable coherence, which is apparent in how readily the stories lend themselves to

organization into three interrelated units. The unity of each of these groups, however, is tighter than the unity found within the three sections of Spit Delaney's Island, for as the titles "The Montreal Stories," "The Keeler Stories," and "The Thibidault Stories" suggest, each section of Blaise's book coheres around a primary place or character. The unified effect of each group is heightened by the device of supplying not only a title but also an epigraph for each unit. Literary structures of different sorts, such as the movement from third-person to second-person to first-person point of view through the first section of A North American Education, add to the coherence within each section of the book; but still larger structures unite the three sections into a single fictional whole.

The principle of "weighting," for example, which Kent Thompson has identified as his own means of structuring stories,¹⁰ is an important factor in the total structure of A North American Education. Blaise's most common pattern--as seen in miniature in the story "The Bridge," though not in all of the stories--involves presenting brief episodes in the early part of a story and leaving the most substantial material for much fuller development later. The same pattern of weights is evident, if we begin by judging weight simply by the length of each story, in Blaise's arrangement of each section of the book--less so in the

first section, where the first and third stories are of equal length while the second story is shorter, but definitely in the second and third sections, where the stories get longer and longer as the reader proceeds through either section. The overall structure of the three sections in A North American Education contains an identical sort of weighting, for the first section is very short, the second is much longer, and the third is a little longer still. Furthermore, the structure of the whole work reveals another kind of weighting, towards the final section again, which is not a simple matter of length and which is much more difficult to demonstrate: a more subtle weighting in terms of intensity and authenticity so that the reader feels that the closing section is the strongest part of the book.¹¹

An additional important factor in the entire structure of A North American Education, one that reinforces the reader's sense of how the volume is weighted towards the last section, is Blaise's unconventional handling of time. There are great variations, from story to story, in the time when each story is set and in the time when each story is told, as well as exceedingly subtle variations, sometimes within a single story, in the times upon which the narrative consciousness meditates. Yet a pattern predominates, a pattern of return in which an "exiled and exploring consciousness,"¹² to use a phrase from Balachandra Rajan's

study of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land, searches for the "single mythic moment" (NAE, p. 131) mentioned in the epigraph from Sartre that introduces the final section of A North American Education. It is the point signified at the end of the title story by Franklin Thibidault's memory of "a once-in-a-lifetime day" (NAE, p. 184) during his childhood when he went fishing with his father. It is also the point that Blaise refers to in Lunar Attractions when the novel's hero, David Greenwood, defines art as "the ability to pluck significance from chaos and relate it back to a single source."¹³ This pattern of return in quest of a lost source of meaning and personal identity is represented in A North American Education by Blaise's basic reversal of the chronological tracing of a character's development, forward from childhood, in a more conventional künstlerroman like Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

Yet another way in which the structure of A North American Education acts upon the reader is suggested by John Metcalf's comment while interviewing Blaise that "The 'plots' of all your stories are carried also by an unobtrusive chain of images much in the manner of poems--I read your work as poems" ¹⁴ By extension, the structure of the volume as a whole can in some respects be said to lie in still larger chains of repeated and related emblems. A story cycle like A North American Education

therefore, can be said to bear something of the relationship to a novel like A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man that a sequence of lyric poems like Margaret Atwood's The Journals of Susanna Moodie¹⁵ has to a long narrative poem like E. J. Pratt's Toward the Last Spike.

This approach to understanding the kind of extended lyrical form frequently represented by story cycles also brings to mind Northrop Frye's comment in his "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology" that

Every good lyrical poet has a certain structure of imagery as typical of him as his handwriting, held together by certain recurring metaphors, and sooner or later he will produce one or more poems that seem to be at the centre of that structure. These poems are in the formal sense his mythical poems, and they are for the critic the imaginative keys to his work. The poet himself often recognizes such a poem by making it the title poem of a collection.¹⁶

Indeed, it is in the title story of A North American Education that the reader witnesses the repetition and elaboration of the single image of "Thibidault et fils, fishing again" (NAE, p. 183), which stands at the centre of Blaise's mythology¹⁷ both as a metaphor for the continuing quest of the narrative consciousness throughout the volume and as a metaphor for the "single source"¹⁸ that the narrative consciousness and art itself seek.

The third section of A North American Education recalls the use of the myth of the Fisher King in The

Waste Land, for Jean-Louis Thibidault resembles the failing Fisher King. Moreover, Jean-Louis' son, Frank, the protagonist in this section of the book, resembles the younger Questing Knight, who seeks to revive the Fisher King and to restore fertility to his land, and who, at the close of Eliot's poem, is also pictured as fishing:

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?¹⁹

A few lines later in The Waste Land, the Quester Hero makes a statement that is commonly applied to Eliot's poem itself: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins." Blaise's A North American Education represents a similar literary achievement.

In the course of the book, a kind of composite hero appears in the guises of various personae, the protagonists of the stories, whose interchangeableness, Blaise observes ironically, "is not meant as a particularly well-disguised secret."²¹ Yet the volume as a whole also possesses a single narrative consciousness, an elder, maturer version of the composite hero. By retracing various episodes in the composite hero's life, the narrative consciousness undertakes a symbolic quest of his own, towards self-understanding, and discovers that a meaningful reordering or rebuilding or rebeginning of one's life can be made

possible through the acts of memory, reflection, imagination, and language. In the mind of the writer/reader, then, the narrative consciousness of A North American Education ultimately melds with the composite hero, much in the way that the narrator of Wordsworth's great autobiographical poem The Prelude proceeds back in time and joins with his younger self growing up.

Despite occasional differences, the "Norman Dyer," the unnamed "you," and the unnamed "I" of the first three stories and the "Paul Keeler" of the next set of stories unite with and perhaps within Franklin Thibidault to form the composite hero of A North American Education. At one point in "The Salesman's Son Grows Older," the hero's elder self asks, "What calamity made me a reader of back issues, defunct Atlases, and foreign grammars?" (NAE, p. 155): Like the narrative consciousness himself, Blaise's hero is, as this question suggests, a figure in search of a lost time, a lost place, and a lost language of identity. On the one hand, he appears dreamy, impressionable, self-concerned (that is, alternately self-admiring, self-pitying, and self-abasing), disillusioned, insecure, idle, and ineffectual;²² yet, on the other hand, he appears perceptive, intelligent, and reflective. By the end of the book, the reader remembers the protagonists in the first two sections almost as more highly fictionalized or disguised versions of Franklin Thibidault.²³ Frank's two-

fold bicultural roots, namely French and English as well as Canadian and American, and his childhood transience in some sense account for most of the adult feelings and adventures of the composite hero. This connection, however, can only be understood, on the part of the narrative consciousness or the reader, by fishing in the deeper waters of the hero's childhood which remain virtually unstirred until the third section of the book.²⁴

A North American Education crosses time and space back to the American South then briefly looks ahead, northward, towards where the book began. As Fraser Sutherland remarks, "'Snow People' has Thibidault pointed north, away from the southern nightmare and in the direction of what--a home? It's as if Thibidault will grow up and change his name to Norman Dyer, the chief character in 'A Class of New Canadians', the book's first story."²⁵ This aspect of the volume's structure invites comparison with the more pronounced circular--that is, calendrical--arrangement of Hugh Hood's Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life, particularly because this structural feature is conveyed at least partly in both works by adapting James Joyce's description of snow at the close of Dubliners.

The final story in A North American Education is entitled "Snow People: A Novella," which suggests the importance to Frank and his mother of their Canadian heritage

by drawing attention to how, living in Florida and other places in the United States, "he and his mother dreamed of the North and of snow" (NAE, p. 199). Near the close of "Snow People," as the Thibidaults journey gradually northward after their fraudulent and violent eviction from a Florida town, the image of snow is stressed increasingly: "They moved every week or two. The winter deepened. It snowed and melted; grew black, lingered on the north side of things" (NAE, p. 225). The image is repeated in the hideous parody of a snowman that Frank makes indoors, by stuffing his old clothes with papers, and then hangs by a belt from a chandelier, like a suicide victim, to delight his parents, not suspecting that it would terrify his mother and enrage his father. In the final paragraph of the story, the image of snow is echoed once again in the reference to "a blizzard" (NAE, p. 230) that trapped Frank's father.

Then, turning once more to the opening story in the volume, one glimpses the hero, in the persona of Norman Dyer, as he "hurried down Sherbrooke Street, collar turned against the snow" (NAE, p. 3). This image conveys a much stronger impression of affliction and flight (feelings that surface momentarily near the end of the story) than is suggested by Dyer's own illusory view of "the peaceful snow" (NAE, p. 3) as a protective drape that keeps the harsher, more distasteful realities "remote" (NAE, p. 3).

For the reader of "The Montreal Stories," then, the image of snow or winter, like "the snow falling faintly through the universe . . ." ²⁶ at the end of Dubliners, acquires an additional, bleaker significance, as an emblem of a kind of spiritual paralysis that troubles Joyce's and Blaise's characters alike.

More particularly in A North American Education, snow or winter serve as an emblem of the "death-driven" (NAE, p. 60) character of Blaise's composite hero and of the dreadful forces that "could suddenly cut him down without warning. Or not quite without warning: without defense" (NAE, p. 194). This disconcerting vision of the nature of reality consistently punctures the dreams of the hero throughout Blaise's stories and thereby creates coherence of another kind in the volume as a whole. But this vision is moderated by the hope implicit in the act of writing, itself, ²⁷ and by Blaise's considerable achievement in providing, as the title of the last of "The Montreal Stories" suggests, "Words for the Winter," the fragments of understanding that the writer, the hero, and the reader gain and learn to shore against their ruins.

II

"Words for the Winter" opens with the comment, "September, month of the winding down" (NAE, p. 25). The remark instantly conveys a sense of the decline, the dis-

illusionment, and the suffering that mark the societies around the hero of A North American Education and captivate his soul. In addition, it is this "texture"²⁸ of moral decay, foremost, that Blaise's work shares with several of the novels that have strongly influenced him: Gustave Flaubert's Sentimental Education, Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks, William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!--all of which are cited in A North American Education²⁹--as well as Louis-Ferdinand Céline's novels and Norman Mailer's An American Dream. "Let us say that I still have a residue of respect for a sprawling naturalism," Blaise says in an introduction to a selection of four of his stories in New Canadian Writing 1968, "but that I wish I could do something with it in the manner of Norman Mailer."³⁰

The choice of the title of A North American Education appears to be almost a conflation of the titles of Mailer's An American Dream and Flaubert's Sentimental Education. Also, the characterization of Blaise's composite hero seems to draw extensively on the nightmare experience of "a teeming misery"³¹ projected by Norman Mailer's fictional persona. Accordingly, just as Paul Keeler thinks, in "Extractions and Contractions," that he is "No John Wayne, certainly," but instead is "beginning to feel like Norman Mailer" (NAE, p. 45), so the name Norman Dyer, which Blaise gives to his hero in the first story of the volume, sounds suspiciously close to Norman Mailer.

For Blaise, writing fiction "in the manner of Norman Mailer"³² involves the two factors that he prizes most in fiction, "texture" and "voice." "Texture," Blaise explains in the interview by John Metcalf, "is detail arranged and selected and enhanced. It is the inclusion of detail from several planes of reference: dialogue, fantasy, direct passive observation ('I am a camera'), allusion, psychic wound, symbol, straight fact, etc. etc. --the sum of all that is voice."³³ "By voice," Blaise adds,

I am referring to the control, what is commonly referred to when we mention the 'world' of a certain author; the limits of probability and chance in his construction, the sanctions he leaves us for our own variations, what we sense of his own final concerns and bafflements Voice allows the reader a confidence that he is in a shaping vision with a tone coloration that is different from the actual 'character's'. That's one reason why 'autobiographical' is accurate but insufficient; there is no such thing as an 'autobiographical voice'.³⁴

The voice, the shaping vision, that consistently informs the stories in A North American Education catches the reader's feelings with special directness and compulsion at the end of "The Montreal Stories," in the final two sentences of "Words for the Winter": "Something infinitely small but infinitely complicated has happened to our lives," the narrative consciousness concludes, "and I don't know how to present it--in its smallness, in its compli-

cation--without breaking down. I who live in dreams have suffered something real, and reality hurts like nothing in this world" (NAE, p. 37).

Disillusionment operates as a structural principle in many of the stories, including "Words for the Winter." These disillusionments, however, represent not only a source of suffering but also a means of enlightenment, both as the hero experiences events and as he, or the narrative consciousness, subsequently recalls them. Moreover, the theme of disillusionment--which, interestingly, has been identified as the major theme in Flaubert's Sentimental Education³⁵--is connected in "The Montreal Stories" to the immigrant theme, which in turn is related to the theme of language. For Blaise, language or writing permits the articulation of one's identity and paradoxically offsets the disillusionments being described. "Words for the Winter" begins like "A Class of New Canadians," the first of "The Montreal Stories," with a sense of contentment and self-satisfaction, with a vision of an idyllic but precarious dream-life beside "the last pure-water lake in the Laurentians" (NAE, p. 25). "This," the hero states, "is how I dreamed it would be: water, trout, and mountains. And in this small way, I have succeeded." Yet, as is the case throughout A North American Education, contentment or success is momentary and illusory, and is quickly followed by frustration and apparent defeat.

Back in Montreal, life verges on the unbearable, especially in wintertime when the hero is forced to stand waiting in a blizzard at a bus stop, along with his Greek and West Indian neighbours, who, he observes, "must want to die" (NAE, p. 27). Winter is an agonizing physical reality as well as a literary symbol of the spiritual malaise that enervates Blaise's Montrealers much as it paralyzes Joyce's Dubliners. In the last of "The Montreal Stories," Blaise's hero is stunned by torment after torment, as he struggles to survive "the dentist's chair" (NAE, p. 28) of winter, tries to exterminate the mice that invade his family's living quarters, is antagonized by Irene, the neighbour girl "with the Anne Frank face" (NAE, p. 29) but the voice and motives of a hurtful woman, witnesses the death of six-year-old Nikos then is accused and attacked by grief-stricken Greek women, and finally sees his privacy and by extension his personal identity collapse when Irene, presumably, steals his keys.

This descent, which is symbolized by the physical drop from the fisherman's Laurentian paradise into the city of Montreal, involves unexpectedly severe hardships. But it is undertaken deliberately, in an effort by the hero to join the Canadian society to which he has immigrated: "I wanted to sink into the city; to challenge it like any other immigrant and go straight to its core" (NAE, p: 30). The

immigrant theme is central to all three stories in the opening section of A North American Education, as the title of the first story, "A Class of New Canadians," and the paradoxical announcement that begins the second story, "You jump into this business of a new country cautiously" (NAE, p. 16), signify. The importance of language to the overriding quest for personal and cultural identity throughout the book is also stressed from the outset by the fact that the first story focusses on an English-as-a-Foreign-Language class. Phrases from foreign languages as well as speeches in different dialects appear strategically in "A Class of New Canadians" and subsequent stories in the volume, for language itself is perhaps the primary emblem³⁶ of the various cultures that Blaise's hero observes.

The hero of the first story, Norman Dyer, lectures on literature in English during the daytime--Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! is said to be "his favorite" (NAE, p. 6)--and teaches an evening course in English as a Foreign Language. Teaching the language course is important to Dyer for financial reasons and because it fulfills his desire to be socially useful. But the course also answers his need for a flattering self-image: "There was to Dyer something fiercely elemental, almost existential, about teaching both his language and his literature in a foreign country--like Joyce in Trieste, Isherwood and Nabokov in

Berlin, Beckett in Paris" (NAE, p. 5). He is "proud of himself for having steered his life north" (NAE, p. 3) to Montreal, where he has lived now for eighteen months.

Dyer regards the city of Montreal as an embodiment of a rich, multi-lingual and multi-cultural heritage, good taste, and fine living, even though "he'd witnessed a hold-up, watched a murder, and seen several riots" (NAE, p. 4), that is, precisely the forms of violence thought to be characteristic of the United States. Apart from this particular delusion, there is something vain, affected, and even dissembling about Dyer, as his surname suggests and as his dilettantish sampling of ethnic restaurants, his custom of trying on assorted cultural identities, shows. Dyer considers himself to be far superior to his New Canadian students, whom he thinks are not yet worthy of the new personal and cultural identity whose habiliments they wear. Yet, ironically, Dyer too is really a foreigner, an immigrant, a New Canadian, and is not much more acculturated to Montreal and to Canadian life than his students are.

The reader is told very little about Dyer's past, except that he is "a recent Ph.D." (NAE, p. 5) who received his formal education in the United States and has "no intention of returning" (NAE, p. 4). For vivid pictures of Blaise's composite hero's past, and of what American life has meant to him, including descriptions of disease,

the debasement of sex, police harassment, and other forms of physical squalor and moral decay, the reader must wait until the final section of the book, "The Thibidault Stories." "A Class of New Canadians" rests solidly in its own place and time--in Montreal, where the first four stories (and some of the fifth story) are centred, and close to the near-present time of the fourth story, "Extractions and Contractions," when the hero has turned thirty and feels that "the next long decline" (NAE, p. 45) is about to begin.

Following "A Class of New Canadians," the stories reach out and backwards, increasingly, to other places and times. This fluctuation in setting and narrative time is enhanced in later stories, particularly "The Salesman's Son Grows Older." There, after being drawn back to the hero's distant past, the reader's attention is also directed forward, at various points in the story including the closing paragraph, to Montreal, to the narrative present of the volume, as Franklin Thibidault or the narrative consciousness compares his son's upbringing with his own youth in the American South, Saskatchewan, and eastern American cities.

In the opening story of the volume, "America" is simply labelled by the word "odiousness" (NAE, p. 13). For the time being, the reader concentrates on how Blaise's hero, in the persona of Norman Dyer, has "begun to think of

himself as a semi-permanent, semi-political exile" or as "a walking violation of American law" (NAE, p. 4): The reader also discovers that the hero's real education, although he is unaware of this fact, is only beginning. Norman Dyer represents the adult consciousness of A North American Education at its least self-aware phase.

At the end of "A Class of New Canadians," Dyer looks for a second time at the well-dressed mannequin in the window of an exclusive men's shop; recognizes that the superior set of clothing worn by his student Miguel Mayor in class that evening was purchased in toto from such a store, then imagines himself being chased down the street by the naked mannequin. Dyer thinks, now, that Mayor's affectations are "comic, even touching. Miguel Mayor had simply tried too hard, too fast, and it would be good for him to stay in Montreal until he deserved those clothes, that touching vanity and confidence" (NAE, p. 15). Yet this condescending attitude carries less truth than the "moment of fear" (NAE, p. 15) that the hero experiences then dismisses, an epiphany unacknowledged by him but intimating to the reader that this evaluation of Miguel Mayor can be applied with considerable validity to Dyer himself. Dyer never makes this connection consciously. But the reader gradually comes to understand, with Blaise, that Dyer's desire for "mastery" (NAE, p. 6) is potentially sinister, that his self-esteem is excessive and

possibly undeserved, and that his tastes--as Miguel Mayor's retort, "'There are not any good Spanish restaurants in Montreal'" (NAE, p. 11), implies--are probably pretentious.

A moment later in the same conversation with Miguel Mayor, Dyer glances at Mayor's badly written but "somehow competent" (NAE, p. 13) letter of application for a job in Cleveland and thinks about the Spaniard's image of confidence, prosperity, and impeccability: "For an instant Dyer felt that his student was mocking him, somehow pitting his astounding confidence and wardrobe, sharp chin and matador's bearing against Dyer's command of English and mastery of the side streets, bistros, and ethnic restaurants" (NAE, p. 13). It is at this point that Dyer thinks of "the odiousness" of "America" that Mayor would "soon be supporting," and reflects that "It was as though a superstructure of exploitation had been revealed, and Dyer felt himself abused by the very people he wanted so much to help. It had to end someplace" (NAE, pp. 13-14). Consequently, Dyer refuses to correct more than a single word in Mayor's letter, an act that may appear righteous but that is in fact egotistical. In preying upon a student's ignorance, Dyer's deed is actually as exploitative as Miguel Mayor's own actions or the American society that many immigrants, perhaps of a certain "psychological type" (NAE, p. 11), are so anxious to join. Furthermore, by having Dyer delete the second instance of the word "'humbly'" (NAE, p. 14) from

the letter, Blaise sardonically underlines the lack of humility that Mayor and his teacher share.

Dyer's attitudes include an ardently expressed belief in the freedom of the individual from political control, an ideal that he says "'makes Canada so appealing'" (NAE, p. 8) in comparison with the fascism of South Africa, the racism of Australia, or the anti-communism of the United States. Attitudes like this one, along with Dyer's profession, appear to set him apart, especially in his own mind, from students such as Miguel Mayor and Mr. Weinrot. Dyer, however, not only shares Miguel Mayor's pride but also closely resembles his New Canadian students in other fundamental respects. As a recent immigrant himself, Dyer is still a student of Montreal and Canadian life, and is similarly anxious to assimilate himself into his new surroundings:

He had worked on conversational French and mastered much of the local dialect, done reviews for local papers, translated French-Canadian poets for Toronto quarterlies, and tweaked his colleagues for not sympathizing enough with Quebec separatism When stopped on the street for directions, he would answer in French or accented English. (NAE, p.

Yet such activities are really a "charade" (NAE, p. 25), as the hero says of his Laurentian retreat in "Words for the Winter." Ultimately, he cannot suppress either his deep, sometimes unconscious feeling of being

culturally and spiritually lost or the feeling of fear that jumps out and threatens him as a result of feeling lost. To free himself from this desolate and anxious condition, the narrative or questing consciousness of A North American Education must undertake a journey towards self-awareness along which he must rid himself of his illusions.

The third-person hero, Norman Dyer, of "A Class of New Canadians" is just beginning his initiation into Canadian life and his education towards some kind of self-understanding. However, the second-person protagonist, "You," of "Eyes" makes some progress along these twin routes, even though the statement "Months later you know the place" (NAE, p. 21) is seen, ironically by the reader as being too congratulatory and ultimately illusory. Deep inside himself, the "You" of "Eyes" senses that he is still a watcher rather than a participant, that he is a kind of voyeur, like the "rheumy, pasty-faced Irishman" or "panhandler" who observes the hero's naked wife from an "ill-lit fire alley" (NAE, p. 17) behind their apartment flat. Reflecting upon how the voyeur, with some regularity, must have "watched the two of you when you prided yourself on being young and alone and masters of the city" and upon how "If you hurt him, he can hurt you worse, later, viciously" (NAE, p. 18), the hero suffers a further loss of confidence than was prompted by the frightening epiphany

at the close of "A Class of New Canadians." But concomitantly, he gains a greater knowledge of his adopted city and, more importantly, a greater understanding of the illusoriness of his own pride and perhaps of the mistakenness of his desire for mastery.

In "Eyes," the hero moves gradually closer to what the "I" of the third story calls the "core" (NAE, p. 30) of the city, settling first in an English-speaking suburb, then moving downtown into an unhealthy and overly expensive French-speaking district populated by young television personalities and stewardesses, decrepit pensioners, and figures like the voyeur, then moving into a neighbourhood containing Greeks and some Jamaicans. As in the opening story, the illusions of the hero build, in "Eyes," as he happily imagines that he has "rediscovered the innocence of starting over" (NAE, p. 21), feels pleased with himself at managing well in such exotic surroundings, and is satisfied that his son, although he "knows no French" (NAE, p. 21), "is becoming Greek, becoming Jamaican, becoming a part of this strange new land" (NAE, p. 22). In reality, the hero remains fundamentally foreign to the culture of his immediate neighbours and to the larger society, composed primarily of French-Canadians, that envelopes all of them.

Once again, therefore, the hero's illusions are punctured. He learns that "we immigrants" (NAE, p. 21), being immigrants, are isolated from Canadian life by an

inability to perceive certain refinements of native gesture. He also discovers that immigrant peoples remain separate from--and a source of fear for--one another. Blaise's hero finds the pig's eyes that some people in the neighbourhood Greek butcher shop are chewing attractive, and is able to touch the skin and ear of the dead animal. But he cannot finally cross the cultural barrier that the Greeks' custom represents for him: "You would take that last half inch but for the certainty, in this world you have made for yourself, that the eye would blink and your neighbors would turn upon you" (NAE, p. 24).

While the "You" of "Eyes" differs in some respects from Norman Dyer, the hero of the preceding story, and resembles him in other ways, the "You" of "Eyes" and the "I" of the following story, although they remain unnamed, are really the same character. This connection between the "You" and the "I" is disclosed by references in both stories to the hero's son, Kit, or Christopher--a highly appropriate name in the context of A North American Education because it recalls the famous explorer and discoverer of America, Christopher Columbus. However, the name of the man's wife, Erika, is not identified until "Words for the Winter"; and she is described--somewhat contradictorily, it seems--first as "a north-Europe princess from a constitutional monarchy" (NAE, p. 18), then as having come "from Germany" (NAE, p. 30).

The third story represents a continuation of the second story in terms of character (the hero and his family) and setting (the Greek neighbourhood), and in terms of psychological action. Hence, the feeling that the privacy of the hero's family has been invaded, which is provoked by the discovery of the voyeur in "Eyes," becomes more immediate in the next story when the hero assumes that Irene has stolen his keys and envisages that she is beginning to burgle his family's flat. Furthermore, the threat that the hero imagines as his finger approaches the pig's eye at the end of "Eyes" becomes a reality in "Words for the Winter," when he is accused and threatened by the Greek women at the scene of Nikos' death.

Perhaps the striking continuity between the second and the third story exaggerates the minor differences between them and the opening story and gives rise to the wish on the part of readers like Brown that Blaise had revised the stories to make them more coherent. Admittedly, there are several significant differences between Norman Dyer, who is single, lives in "a small but elegant apartment near a colony of émigré Russians just off Park Avenue" (NAE, p. 4), is almost unbearably pretentious and self-righteous, and shows hardly any capacity for redemption, and his counterparts in the next two stories. It should be noted, however, that Blaise gains different effects from portraying somewhat different heroes, and

that the wider range that this accomplishment allows is presumably more important to him than the additional unity and impact that he has chosen to sacrifice by not employing an absolutely identical character as the hero of all three of "The Montreal Stories."

In fact, as Blaise says in the interview by John Metcalf, the creation of character is much less important to him than "rendering the texture of a situation in a voice appropriate to it."³⁷ Blaise simply does not want to define the protagonists of these stories sharply from one another. Nor does he want to define the heroes sharply as a single composite character. The heroes in A North American Education are loosely interchangeable³⁸ yet slightly varied; while the variety is obviously a result of the requirements of the stories as stories, it also contributes to the scope and, as Fraser Sutherland has commented,³⁹ to the vigour of the book as a fictional whole.

The desire for revision that some readers of A North American Education have felt would appear to be largely unfounded and inappropriate. Norman Dyer, with all his distinctness, is essential to the story "A Class of New Canadians"; the story could not have been presented as successfully if the more sympathetic hero of the next two stories had been used in Dyer's place. Indeed, there is a strong possibility, because the hero of the second and third stories would have been unsuitable for "A Class of

New Canadians," that Blaise might have had to sacrifice this commanding story if, for the sake of more coherence, he had chosen, or had been told, to employ the same hero throughout the first section of the volume. As it is, Blaise's device of not naming the hero in "Eyes" and "Words for the Winter" is consistent with his desire to create voice rather than character.

Blaise's strategy actually minimizes the differences between the hero of these stories and Norman Dyer to such an extent that Frank Davey, for example, has concluded mistakenly that Dyer is the hero of all three stories.⁴⁰ This conclusion ignores the hint afforded by Blaise's decision to entitle this group of stories according to the name of a place, Montreal, rather than the name of a character, as was possible with "The Keeler Stories" and "The Thibidault Stories." Yet the notion that Dyer is the hero of "The Montreal Stories," if not literally accurate, is not far from the truth that in these stories and in the entire collection Blaise is attempting to present--and, in my view, succeeds in presenting--a complex portrait of the education of a single composite hero.

This view of the work's coherence is supported, in the opening section, by the actual similarities that exist between Dyer and his counterparts in the two following stories, despite certain differences among them. The three

heroes have in common a fundamental situation as recent immigrants to Montreal, along with a strong sense of pride, a desire for mastery, and a feeling of fear. As well, they share the fact that each of them is undeserving, so far at least, of the lost paradisaal home that they seek--although, significantly, Norman Dyer does not recognize this fact, whereas the "I" of the third story does. "He makes me feel," the narrator of "Words for the Winter" comments about the character Serge, "that I'm only a teacher too young to have suffered and deserved the lake, but too old to ever learn the proper physical skills" (NAE, p. 26). "The Montreal Stories," then, exhibit not only coherence but also development, for the first-person narrator of "Words for the Winter" has grown, in self-knowledge, beyond the heroes in the two preceding stories. Moreover, this progress in the education of Blaise's hero is underlined by the manner in which Blaise has structured the first three stories so that they proceed inward, from third- to second- to first-person narration.

III

The sense of "winding down" (NAE, p. 25), that the first-person narrator of "Words for the Winter" not only observes in the world around him but also experiences on an intense personal level is played out more fully and more palpably in the following story. "Extractions and

Contractions" is the first of "The Keeler Stories" in terms of its place in the volume, and also the last of "The Keeler Stories" because it contains the most up-to-date portrayal of the now thirty-year-old composite hero of A North American Education. In this story, Blaise's hero has reached a condition of extreme self-analysis and self-recrimination. He reflects on the physical and moral decline in which he is caught up--what D. H. Lawrence (in a passage that Hugh Hood cited as an epigraph for his novel The Camera Always Lies) called "'the drift towards death'"⁴¹--and grieves for all that appears lost or unfulfilled.

"The Montreal Stories" look to the future with the hope of what may be achieved in a new country--a hope that is inevitably disappointed, as the initial epigraph from Blaise Pascal's Pensées anticipates, because "'we are always preparing to be happy'" (NAE, p. 1) and therefore fail to live, whole-heartedly, in the present. "The Keeler Stories," however, as the second epigraph from Pascal suggests, look to the future and to the past, as "'we dream of those times which are no more, and thoughtlessly overlook that which alone exists'" (NAE, p. 39).

The decay of Keeler's teeth--leading to the horrible and graphically described extraction of a nerve in the hope of saving a tooth, when the dentist "rams a platinum wire up the holes he has drilled, plunges it up and down then pulls it out, yellow with nerve scum" (NAE, p. 44)--becomes

emblematic in Keeler's mind of a spiritual or moral deterioration. Reflection on tooth decay is followed by thoughts of "Bad styles and bad convictions" (NAE, p. 45). Decline "begins in choices" (NAE, p. 45), Keeler believes, and he punishes himself with self-recriminations. "There are days in November," he says, "even without aching teeth that I realize how little I've done to improve our lives, how thwarted my sense of style has become" (NAE, p. 47); and later he thinks, "In Buddenbrooks the hero dies prematurely after a dental visit, without a nerve even being discussed. I could die tonight of a dozen things, all deserved" (NAE, p. 53).

This twin sense of decline and guilt carries over into the scene in which Keeler discovers that his family's apartment is infested with roaches, when Keeler regards his son and fears that "a plague of long brown roaches is living inside him, thriving on our neglect" (NAE, p. 56). Keeler's feeling recalls that of the hero in the previous story who bemoans how he has "stained" his wife "with the froth of mice, their birth and death, in all my dreams and failures" (NAE, p. 30). In fact, Keeler's growing sense of mortality, decay, guilt, and grief almost overwhelms the sense of new life, growth, hope, and joy that would be expected to surround the imminent birth of his second child.

"Extractions and Contractions" concludes with the symbolic dawn of a new day following Keeler's frenzied

nocturnal cleansing of their whole apartment, and with the sound of the engines of neighbours' cars "trying to start" as he turns from the window and goes "to put on water" (NAE, p. 58) to boil for breakfast. Keeler's utterly ordinary action represents the fundamental kind of human act on which survival of the simplest sort, a life lived in the present and not in dreams of the past or the future, can at least be based. However meagre, such an act represents a necessary start, a new beginning made possible (paradoxically, one might think at first) by the process of disillusionment that the hero of A North American Education has been undergoing, by the saddening recognitions to which he has come. Having cleaned the apartment, Blaise's hero lets himself dream that it is "Ready for youth," then sharply reminds himself, "But I'm not young, anymore" (NAE, p. 57). Moreover, with the loss of youth, the freedom to choose and to change one's identity radically seems to have vanished as well. For their first five years in Montreal, Keeler and his wife have thought that "there is nowhere else we'd rather be"; but, Keeler adds regretfully, there is "Nowhere else we can be, now" (NAE, p. 58).

For him now, Keeler reflects, there are only "Old passports, pulled nerves, resting in offices" (NAE, p. 58) -- emblems of lost freedom, lost youth, lost selves. "I think of my friends, the records they cry over, silly poems set to music, and I could cry as well. For them, for

us" (NAE, p. 58). But with the end of grief may come the beginning of an acceptance of one's fate, an acceptance of the knowledge that while the present is here to be lived in, while the future is yet to come, and while the past has truly passed, nevertheless time present and time future are somehow contained in time past and the past must therefore be reclaimed with searching honesty, not sentiment.

From this attempted truth-telling emerges a distinct vision of reality whose tone and technique of presentation have been described astutely by Margaret Atwood:

A North American Education is, as a book with such a title would have to be, a collection of horror stories; and very fine ones. But the horror is in the ordinary, in the things that happen to people leading usual, and therefore bizarre, lives. The disturbing quality in Blaise's work comes not from the distortion of reality but from the sharp focusing of the actual: like an insect or a thumb seen in closeup.⁴²

A striking example of Blaise's vision of reality is the emblematic description of a boy's drowning at Niagara Falls--"a horror story" (NAE, p. 59) in itself--that opens "Going to India," the second of "The Keeler Stories." "It isn't death," Blaise's hero thinks; "it's watching it arrive, this terrible omniscience that makes it not just death, but an execution" (NAE, p. 59).

"Going to India" is set a year and a half earlier than "Extractions and Contractions," while the third Keeler

story, "Continent of Strangers: A Love Story of the Recent Past," is set five years earlier still. This arrangement affords the reader a degree of hindsight, which illuminates the earlier attitudes and experiences with a harsh light suggestive of the "terrible omniscience" (NAE, p. 59) with which the movement of the boy on the raft down the Niagara River is viewed. By looking at, and having the reader look at, the past of Paul Keeler through lenses darkened by an ironic sense of the fate that has since befallen him, Blaise in one respect distorts the past by adding a new dimension to it but in a more important respect rids the past of its illusions and understands the past as it truly was for the first time.

In the introductory section of "Going to India," the reaction of Keeler's nearly four-year-old son to the photographs of the other boy's drowning disturbs Keeler, who grieves for his son and is appalled by the clarity with which his son at such a supposedly innocent age already apprehends death:

"And now he knows one thing, doesn't he, Daddy?"

"What does he know?"

"Now he knows what being dead is like."

(NAE, p. 60)

The boy's drowning and his son's comment confirm Keeler's own anguished sense of the insurmountable primacy of death as a defining force in human existence. "I am death-

driven," Keeler confesses; "I feel compassion, grief, regret, only in the face of death" (NAE, p. 60). Moreover, the boy's drowning serves as an emblem for the extended horror story that follows, for the hero's desperate preparation for, and journey to, India.

On one level, India for Keeler represents infinity, perfection, a higher order of being, or holiness, as is shown by his observations about his Indian wife and their Indian friend Deepak. Keeler describes his wife, Anjali Chatterjee, as "the most lushly sexual woman I had ever seen. Reserved and intelligent, she confirmed in all ways my belief that perfection could not be found in anything American" (NAE, p. 62). Of their friend Deepak, who had been matched to marry Keeler's wife but did not because their horoscopes clashed, and who eventually married an American girl, Keeler adds, "Deepak's life is ruled by his profound good taste, his perfect, daring taste. Like a prodigy in chess or music he is disciplined by a Platonic conception of a yet-higher order, one that he alone can bring into existence" (NAE, p. 67). Yet, on another level, when Keeler actually travels to India, to what he calls "a corridor of history for which I have no feeling" (NAE, p. 65) as well as "something bigger and darker than I'd ever imagined" (NAE, p. 73), he finds it utterly terrifying; and, when he finally enters the airport terminal at Bombay, he reflects, "I've never been so lost" (NAE, p. 83).

As Marianne Micros says of the deep fear of sacred places like Delos, Greece that the character "Gwendoly" experiences on a different eastern journey in Gwendoly MacEwen's Mermaids and Ikons: A Greek Summer, "The ancient places of timelessness, pieces of eternity, like the ones in Forster's A Passage to India, can represent absolute truth and the Infinite, or nothingness. A Westerner, with a fear of the Infinite, which he sees as nothingness, always flees from those places, as does Gwendoly." ⁴³ Micros' reference to Forster is especially pertinent to Blaise's story "Going to India," where at one point Keeler remembers "E. M. Forster, you ruined everything. Why must every visitor to India, every well-read tourist, expect a transformation? I, too, feel that if nothing amazing happens, the trip will be a waste" (NAE, p. 64).

The world of Blaise's story, as Keeler reminds us, is not the still somewhat romanticized world of "the novels" (NAE, p. 80) like E. M. Forster's A Passage to India, but is rather the barren and nearly hopeless world of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land and The Hollow Men. Blaise's world is also much faster. The speed of the day charter flight, which Keeler and his family take from New York to London to Paris to Frankfurt to Kuwait to Bombay, eliminates the gradual process that human beings need to acclimatize themselves as they move into increasingly foreign cultures. It therefore makes the outer

destination, India, even more strange, formidable, and shocking. Furthermore, this speed reduces the appreciation that Keeler and his family might have felt for the uniqueness of every point on the journey, including its terminus, if they had travelled more leisurely, as Keeler had done five years earlier, for two summers, in Europe. "The price we pay for the convenience of a single day's flight is the simple diminishment of all that's human," Keeler thinks; "Just as Europe is changed because of India, so India is lessened because of the charter flight" (NAE, p. 80).

Keeler's arrival in India with his wife and son does not occur until the midway point of the thirteenth and last section of "Going to India." The notion of a rite of passage contained in the title of Forster's novel is de-emphasized by the title of Blaise's story. Like the cultural barrier between the protagonist and his Greek neighbours in "Eyes," India represents a boundary that Blaise's hero finds difficult, if not impossible, to cross. "Going to India," one realizes, is not about India or what the family experiences there. The story is about Keeler's ideas of India and, more importantly, the process of preparing for, then travelling to, India and how this process alters his "old perspectives" (NAE, p. 73). When Keeler flies over Europe on his way to India, the present superimposes itself on the past, as it does with increasing frequency and force throughout A North American Education: "I

recognize the Rhine, see the towns I once hitchhiked through, and bask in the strangeness of it all, the orbits of India and my early manhood intersecting" (NAE, pp. 77-78). But the effect of going to India on Keeler's earlier perspectives is finally devastating. "How will I ever return to Europe and feel that I've even left home?" Keeler remarks; "India has already ruined Europe for me" (NAE, p. 73). It is from this ironic perspective that the reader looks when he turns to the presentation of Keeler's earlier, European adventures in the following story, "Continent of Strangers: A Love Story of the Recent Past."

As for the sequel to "Going to India," where one might expect to find an answer to the present question of whether India will transform Keeler--and if so, how--the reader already has before him the largely dispiriting evidence of Keeler's deepening sense of strangeness, fatalism, and grief, as shown in the preceding but later story, "Extractions and Contractions." In "Going to India," as Keeler leaves New York, he reflects,

Flights are a time of summary, an occasion for sweating palms. If I should die, what would I make of my life? Was it whole, or just beginning? I used to write miniature novels, vividly imagined, set anywhere my imagination moved me. Then something slipped. I started writing only of myself and these vivid moments in a confusing flux. That visionary gleam; India may restore it, or destroy it completely. (NAE, p. 73)

One concludes that "the visionary gleam" or "the glory and the dream"⁴⁵ of Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality" have fled entirely, or have been expunged, from Blaise's world. A "Romantic" artist would lament this condition; but a different kind of artist, such as Blaise, accepts it in the hope that, consequently, the exceedingly harsh, inglorious reality of the twentieth century could be ameliorated. Perhaps a comment by another rootless and exiled writer, V. S. Naipaul, can stand for Blaise's own aesthetic intention: "I really do hope that by the most brutal sort of analysis . . . one is possibly opening up the situation to some sort of action; an action that is not based on self-deception."⁴⁶

In contrast to the mature consciousness that encompasses A North American Education and that some times, as in the three epigraphs, addresses the reader fairly directly, the mind of twenty-two-year old Paul Keeler in "Continent of Strangers" appears a restless sea of grand illusions and changing emotions. This ironic distance between Keeler and the implied mature version of Blaise's composite hero is reinforced by the use of third-person, past-tense narration for telling the story. Because "Continent of Strangers" is the last of "The Keeler Stories" to be presented, the reader approaches it not with a sharp sense of irony directed at Keeler, but with a more indefinite feeling of desolation from knowing that the

apparently exciting adventure that one is about to see has been deflated by the later experience of travelling to India.

In the preceding story, "Going to India," Keeler recalled--a little idealistically, the reader soon discovers--how

Five years ago I threw myself at Europe. For two summers I did things I'll never do again, . . . finally not caring . . . , coming close to saying that life was passionate and palpable and worth the pain and effort and whoever I was and whatever I was destined to be didn't matter. Only living for the moment mattered It all reminded me that I was young and alive, a hitchhiker over borders, heedless of languages (NAE, pp. 61, 62)

In "Continent of Strangers," however, the irony emerges more strongly as the reader--and with him, one suspects, the narrative consciousness of A North American Education--observes Keeler's European interlude realistically rather than idealistically. The rite of passage undergone by Keeler in Europe, including both the desolation that he felt and the self-satisfaction that he momentarily acquired, is gradually stripped of illusion and is shown, in retrospect, to have been rather hollow and unfruitful. The reader is left with a sense of desolation far deeper than the desolation that Keeler, as in his quotation of Eliot's Wagnerian line "Ed und leer das Meer,"⁴⁷ presumably affected, just as in Boston Keeler had once affected the role of the brilliant,

Proustian writer by "spending long hours in a tearoom describing his delicate moods" (NAE, p. 87) in letters to his distant girl friend, Janet.

The twenty-two-year-old Keeler is a love-sick dreamer, a young man searching for the perfect, eternal woman. From the beginning to the end of the story, he remains full of fantasies, self-deluded, and, despite all disappointments, ready to take on a new disguise or role. Keeler adopts the self-effacing disguise of a Canadian dressed "in somber corduroys" (NAE, p. 85). Later in the story, he plays the outgoing, romantic "role of sophisticated lover, the type who journeys over borders courting women in their languages" (NAE, p. 102). He is also excessively proud of his abilities as a writer; and when the young Finnish woman Aino remarks that his writing resembles Chekhov's, Keeler replies, "'He'll do, Aino. But how, exactly, am I like him?'" (NAE, p. 123) The second part of this response reveals a lack of self-confidence in Keeler, in spite of his pride, that also typifies his failed sexual adventures: his purely imaginary encounter with the Icelandic stewardess, which opens and sets the tone for the story; the scene in Place Pigalle, Paris, during which the youthful prostitute accepts the proposition by the two American fraternity boys rather than Keeler; or his experiences with Janet, first in Germany, then during their holiday in

Sweden. At the dismaying climax to this series of events, Keeler accuses Janet of forcing him to live with the illusion that they are lovers then shattering the illusion; and Janet pleads with him not to leave, says that she is ready to have sex with him, but cries "'Are you going to rape me?'" (NAE, p. 128) when Keeler takes her hand in an attempt simply to comfort her.

"Europe at last, Janet his domain, the priceless experience--Paris, Rome, Cologne, the Alps--love!" (NAE, p. 89), Keeler thinks as his flight arrives in Europe. Towards the end of the story, however, he ponders instead how "He'd come to Europe for the oldest reasons--love and culture--and still he felt lost" (NAE, p. 125). As in the case of Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, in which Stephen's ecstatic and holy vision of the dove-girl is followed by the dispiriting view of him at home--in a parody of the Eucharist--consuming watery tea and crusts of fried bread, the romantic dreams of Blaise's hero are sadly undercut by reality. Shortly after Keeler reaches Janet's residence in Germany, he is shown day-dreaming about the Swedish holiday that Janet promised to him at the suggestion of her roommate Ingrid: "A cottage by the sea, love-making before a fire, Ingrid of the ash-tresses, he smiled--my Europe?" (NAE, p. 98) Then, suddenly, Blaise switches to a description of Keeler "rinsing diapers for three hours" (NAE, p. 98) in the laundry at

which Janet has been working.

Like Stephen Dedalus, too, Paul Keeler is essentially not a participant but an observer--a role that corresponds with the image of Blaise's hero as a kind of artistic voyeur in a number of the other stories in the volume, particularly "Eyes" and "A North American Education." As Keeler reflects shortly after his failed adventure in the Place Pigalle while he watches, but again feels unable to join, a dance at the UNESCO Auberge, "he was freer than most, just to observe His was a Europe of shrunken dimensions, and he was no bold discoverer. He was a writer, a creator; he would learn to satisfy himself with that" (NAE, p. 105). However, even at the story's end, Keeler cannot resist the temptation of acting out the unsuitable, fleeting, and essentially meaningless role of the sexually bold fraternity boy. He strips and turns towards the sea and the archetypal female Aino, with the expectation of undergoing the ritualistic initiations of nude bathing and sex that he balked at, or failed at, earlier. But, for the moment at least, he still hesitates, "hoping to see Janet running his way" (NAE, p. 129). One senses that even if Keeler does perform these actions, they will be ritualistic in form only and not in function. As he had in Boston, and as he would on the way to India or later still in Montreal, Blaise's hero continues to drift, idling precariously without a stable keel.

IV

In the subsequent and final section of the volume, the narrative consciousness of A North American Education reaches farther back into the formative years of his childhood and adolescence, and approaches the source of meaning and personal identity that has eluded his past and present searches. With the aid of memory, reflection, imagination, and language, he selects from and distils the flux of past events into vivid scenes and begins to see these epiphanies in a more meaningful relation. In "The Salesman's Son Grows Older," after wondering "What calamity made me a reader of back issues, defunct Atlases, and foreign grammars?" Franklin Thibidault exclaims,

The loss, the loss! To leave Montreal for places like Georgia and Florida; to leave Florida for Saskatchewan; to leave the prairies for places like Cincinnati and Pittsburgh and, finally, to stumble back to Montreal a middle-class American from a broken home, after years of pointless suffering had promised so much.
(NAE, p. 155)

The poignant power of this passage makes the reader feel that he--along with the questing consciousness--has suddenly discovered the genuine outlines of the history of the composite hero of A North American Education.

Like the pair of stories that complete the first section of A North American Education, but unlike "The

Keeler Stories," the first three stories in the third section move forward in time, concentrating mainly on Frank's, or Frankie's, experiences at the ages of seven, eight, and thirteen. In each story, he gains some exposure to the curiously interrelated forces of Eros and Thanatos. More particularly, he witnesses his father's infidelity to his mother, but does not understand what he sees or hears. Yet while each of these three stories relates some sort of initiation that the young Frankie undergoes, the texture and the meaning of each story are complicated by the appearance, at certain points in the narrative, of the adult consciousness of Frank Thibidault, a professor in his late twenties. Each story, then has a double effect⁴⁸ through focussing on how the experiences of Frank's youth felt then and on what they mean to him now-- in the larger context of what, as he begins to realize, he was destined to become.

The theme of "Thibidault et fils" (NAE, p. 165), the relationship of father and son, becomes even more complicated in this context. As the point of view of each story contracts and expands, we see Franklin Thibidault not only as a boy, in relation to his father, but also as a man, in relation to his own son:

My son sleeps so soundly. Over his bed, five license plates are hung, the last four from Quebec, the first from Wisconsin. Five years ago,

when he was six months old, we left to take a bad job in Montreal, where I was born but had never visited. My parents had brought me to the U.S. when I was six months old. Canada was at war, America was neutral. America meant opportunity, freedom; Montreal meant ghettos, and insults. And so, loving our children, we murder them. Following the sun, the dollars, the peace-of-mind, we blind ourselves. Better to be a professor's son than a salesman's son-- better a thousand times, I think--better to ski than to feed the mordant hounds, better to swim at a summer cottage than debase yourself in the septic mud. But what do these license plates mean? Endurance? Exile, cunning? Where will we all wind up, and how? (NAE, pp. 155-56)

This passage also emphasizes the affinity between A North American Education and Joyce's künstlerroman, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. The question about exile and cunning is a specific allusion to Stephen Dedalus' declaration that

I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use--silence, exile, and cunning. 49

Blaise's technique of presenting both a youthful and an adult view of Frank Thibidault's childhood gives the title "The Salesman's Son Grows Older" a special resonance. But it is the next story, "A North American Education," that uses this contrast most thoroughly, and amplifies the texture of Blaise's work by broadening the span of time treated. "To understand such a boy is to begin with the

father" (NAE, p. 197), the narrator states in the final story of the volume. However, in the title story, the questing consciousness reaches even farther back to the figure of Frankie's grandfather, whose French heritage the boy receives in addition to his father's Quebec heritage. This European heritage stands in marked contrast to the North American education that the boy obtains through his father.

"A North American Education" dwells in part on the boy's own sexual initiation. It is therefore a continuation of Frankie's experiences and glimpses of adult life in the two preceding stories, such as undressing the furniture store mannequins in "The Bridge," seeing and touching a woman's breast for the first time in "The Salesman's Son Grows Older," and the nascent awareness of his father's adultery in both stories. Yet the descriptions of the lives and deaths of the boy's grandfather and father add a sense of dynastic tragedy to the title story. Blaise may have found this characteristic in Absalom, Absalom! and other novels by Faulkner. The connection may explain why Blaise mentions Faulkner's work at four points in A North American Education.⁵⁰

Beginning with the opening sentence of "A North American Education," Blaise introduces a stronger historical perspective than he exhibits anywhere else in the volume: "Eleven years after the death of Napoleon, in the

presidency of Andrew Jackson, my grandfather, Boniface Thibidault, was born" (NAE, p. 162). Characteristically, this comment emphasizes that Blaise's hero has more than one heritage--like the boy's name, Franklin Thibidault, which combines an American name, Franklin (presumably after the famous statesman, inventor, and author, Benjamin Franklin) and a French name, Thibidault. Frank has seen only one photograph of his grandfather Boniface, and imagines him "as a face in a Gold Rush shot, the one face that seems both incidental and immortal guarding a claim or watering a horse, the face that seems lifted from the crowd, from history, the face that could be dynastic" (NAE, p. 164). As an adult, Frank still possesses many photographs of his father, Jean-Louis, two of which are described.

The background of the title story is extended to include the departure of Frankie and his parents from Montreal and their arrival in Florida. There, they were "to start again, in the sun," and there, Frank comments, "I was to begin my life as a salesman's son. As reader of back issues, as a collector of cancelled stamps (the inkier the better), as student and teacher of languages" (NAE, p. 165). The historical span also incorporates later events in the life of Frank's father, such as the upsetting circumstances of his burial. By means of these historical portraits, "A North American Education" creates

an unmistakable sense of a French-speaking male line of descent. This lineage is more important to Frank than his British heritage, from his mother's side of the family, which is mainly scoffed at when it is referred to in this and the preceding story. What matters, principally, is the relationship between father and son, symbolized by the photograph of Frankie and his father taken by his mother on their first day in Florida and inscribed by Jean-Louis, in French,

Thibidault et fils,
Daytona, avr/46. (NAE, p. 165)

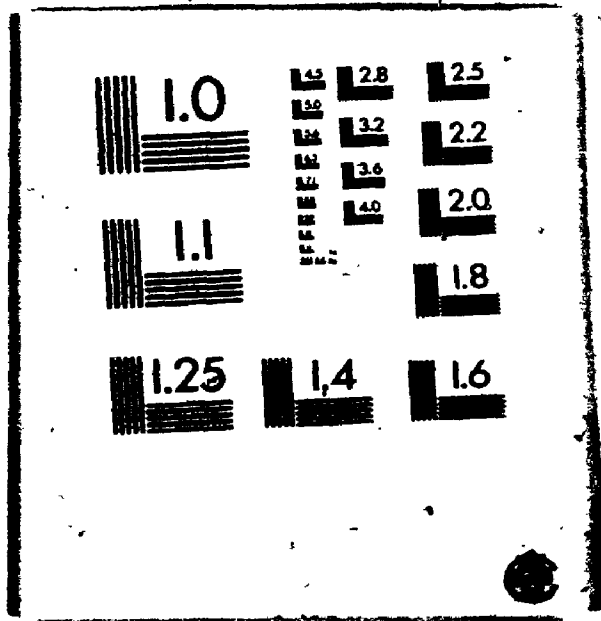
The special relationship between the boy and his father, a bond of blood, masculinity, and language, is reinforced in "A North American Education" by the boy's discovery that the object of his own sexual fantasies and voyeurism, Annette, has a hidden connection with his father. On one occasion, while babysitting Annette's children, the boy explores her medicine chest "to learn some more about her" (NAE, p. 182), and in the process overhears unexpected noises in the adjoining bathroom of his own family's duplex. He immediately looks through the razor slot and then through a hole that he has found by sliding down the collars on the pipes under the sink, and, to his delight and puzzlement, sees the "Bare golden legs" (NAE, p. 183) of Annette. Moments later, he witnesses her depart

secretively in the station wagon owned by his father's furniture company. Recalling the episode about fifty years later, Frank remarks,

And that was all. For some reason, per the shame of my complicity, I never asked father why he had come home or why Annette been in our bathroom. I didn't have to-- gotten a glimpse of Annette, which was all I could handle anyway. I didn't understand rest. Thibidault et fils, fishing again. (p. 183)

The afterthought, "Thibidault et fils, fishing" re-emphasizes the importance of the relationship between father and son. It also illustrates the way that fishing has been transformed into a metaphor for other experiences. As Frank said earlier in "A North American Education" describing how he would observe Annette through a hole he had cut in the curtains, "At thirteen I could spend hours, unconscious of peeping, unaware, really, of what I wanted or expected to see. It was almost like fishing with patience and anticipation keeping me rooted" (175). Likewise, when Frankie contemplates the possibility of seeing Annette bathe as he watches through the hole beside the pipes and then tells her to take a bath, he remarks, "It reminded me of fishing as a child, trying to influence the fish to bite" (NAE, p. 179). Also, when Jean-Louis takes his son to a sex show, fishing is metaphorically tied to this adventure by the father's comment

3



"Tell your mother we were fishing today, O.K.?" (NAE, p. 172)

Blaise's stories, as he says in the introduction to the selection of his early work included in New Canadian Writing, 1968, "though not conceived as allegories, seem prone to that interpretation."⁵¹ Annette, for example, is perceived by the narrative consciousness as a kind of eternal woman: "She was the woman, I now realize, that Dostoyevski and Kazantzakis and even Faulkner knew; a Grushenka or the young village widow, a dormant body that kindled violence" (NAE, p. 176). Similarly, by seeing Jean-Louis Thibidault and his son allegorically, as modern North American versions of the Fisher King and the Questing Knight, one attains a greater comprehension of the father-son relationship that the narrative consciousness has been pondering:

Thibidault and son: he was a fisherman and I always fished at his side. Fished for what? I wonder now--he was too short and vain a man to really be a fisherman. He dressed too well, couldn't swim, despised the taste of fish, shunned the cold, the heat, the bugs, the rain. And yet we fished every Sunday, wherever we lived. Canada, Florida, the Middle West, heedless as deer of crossing borders. (NAE, p. 167)

Moreover, fishing signifies the hope that was continually renewed as the Thibidault family moved from one place to another. Fishing also represents the hope that is now supplied by the questing consciousness through

the acts of memory, reflection, imagination, and language, however dismal the pictures that he presents may appear. As Frank says about his fishing expeditions with his father, "Every cast became a fresh hope" (NAE, p. 167). Ultimately, it is a hope for the kind of happiness or communion that Frank felt one Sunday in Florida when he and his father sat together on a bench at the beach while hurricane winds stirred breakers offshore and whipped salt water and sand in their faces:

My father and I sat on the bench for another hour and I could see behind his crusty sunglasses. His eyes were moist and dancing, his hair stiff and matted. We sat on the bench until we were soaked and the municipal guards rounded us up. They then barricaded the boulevards and we went back to the car, the best day of fishing we'd ever had, and we walked hand in hand for the last time, talking excitedly, dodging coconuts, power lines, and shattered glass, feeling brave and united in the face of the storm. My father and me. What a day it was, what a once-in-a-lifetime day it was. (NAE, p. 184)

On this elated note, the story "A North American Education" ends, as if the whole story has been related in order to reach this moment upon which the narrative consciousness can confidently construct his identity because the situation is defined by the harmonious bond between Jean-Louis and Frank, rather than by the sense of separation, arising from their feelings of embarrassment and shame, that so often hurt their relationship.

The disturbing rift between father and son throughout most of Jean-Louis' life is shown in the title story by the detailed presentation of a scene from the time when they were living in Cincinnati. One Sunday, although Frank is ready to go fishing, his father takes him instead to a side-show, "across the river [in] Boone County, Kentucky, where things were once again southern and shoddy" (NAE, p. 168). Jean-Louis expects that his son will get a better idea about sex by watching the nude Princess Hi-Yalla perform than he could obtain from books. Instead of the positive experience Frank's father intends this show to be, its effect is entirely negative. Frank ejaculates spontaneously as they leave the tent, thereby embarrassing his father, who exclaims, "I think there's something wrong with you" (NAE, p. 172). This remark, Frank observes many years later, "was the worst thing my father could say about me" (NAE, p. 172). Eventually, the negative effect of this episode is deepened, because it proves to be the end of any kind of mature communication between father and son, and because it permanently disfigures Frank's own later efforts at love-making. As Frank reflects from the vantage point of his own adulthood,

And no other talk, man-to-man, or father-to-son, had ever taken place.

I think back to Boniface Thibidault--how would he, how did he, show his sons what to do and where to do it? He was a Frenchman, not a

North American; he learned it in Paris, not in a monastery as my father had. And I am, partially at least, a Frenchman too. My father should have taken me to a cocotte, to his own mistress perhaps, for the initiation, la déniement. And I, in my own love-making, would have forever honored him. But this is North America and my father, despite everything, was in his silence a Quebec Catholic of the nineteenth century. Sex, despite my dreams of something better, something nobler, still smells of the circus tent, of something raw and murderous. Other kinds of sex, the adjusted, contented, fulfilling sex of school and manual, seems insubstantial, willfully ignorant of the depths. (NAE, p. 173)

Contentment, however, in Blaise's world, is often a simple illusion that is subverted by a more profound vision of "the depths," the disillusioned, and at times horrifying, reality that Blaise is attracted to, and that he compels his readers to enter as well. To conclude the volume on the note of elation expressed at the close of the title story would be, for Blaise, to end on a false note, to end with illusion rather than with reality. In keeping with Blaise's vision of reality, fishing acquires a much darker aura in the final story than it possesses in "A North American Education," as if Blaise wishes to remind us, in Sheila Watson's phrase, "That when you fish for the glory you catch the darkness too."⁵² Hence, when Frankie returns with his father in "Snow People" to show the fish that he caught, he discovers

the strangest, most frightening thing he'd ever seen. On his line was the same scummy black

head, the mouth open enough to expose a set of nearly human teeth; the gills still heaving, but nearly all the body was gone He was seven years old; he didn't know yet who he was, nor had he yet suffered for what he would become.

But the fish at his feet or whatever it had been, had seen the worst thing in the world, whatever that was. The boy knew now that both things existed, the unnameable fish and the thing that had eaten it, and knowing that, he felt he had seen the worst thing too. (NAE, p. 210)

Later in "Snow People," Frankie's father, having refused to sign his business over to the bank, tries, unsuccessfully, to withstand his pursuers by barricading himself and his son at home. As the boy is captured by one policeman and Jean-Louis turns to see the other policeman pointing a rifle, the Thibidaults' situation is identified, metaphorically, with Frankie's heaving fish. The living room shudders with red light, from a police cruiser, "coming in through all the windows, dull crimson, the heaving gills of a dying fish" (NAE, p. 214). The destruction of "the unnameable fish" by "the worst thing in the world" (NAE, p. 210), by something abstract and unidentifiable, has now entered the boy's world in the concrete, recognizable forms of corrupt bank officials and vicious policemen.

A year or two afterwards, the illusion of contentment--with "girls jumping rope in the dust" (NAE, p. 185) and the nine-year-old Frankie playing baseball--is shattered once again as a hardball breaks Frankie's jaw,

hurting him badly for "the first time" (NAE, p. 186). About a month later, after his mouth has been wired shut to heal the jaw, Frankie is ambushed by his classmates and suffers even more excruciating pain when, in Blaise's precise and therefore horrifying words, "for the second time in a month the boy tasted blood and smelled the bone and gristle, but now it was worse, for the wires were sprung and came bristling through his lips and tongue and this time the blood was bright as it dripped off the ends of the wire onto the pavement" (NAE, p. 192).

Like the boy on the Niagara River in the opening of "Going to India," whose knowledge of his impending death makes it "not just death, but an execution" (NAE, p. 59), Frankie "knew something was headed his way" (NAE, p. 190) while bicycling home: "He knew they were after him and that the plan was complicated and somehow exciting, and he was excited too, being the victim. He simply didn't know how to avoid it" (NAE, p. 190). The reader is told that what makes Frankie's bicycle buck is a taut cat-gut line stretched across the road. The line tangles in the basket of Frankie's bike then catches him across the chest. Frankie, however, cannot comprehend what causes the incident. As a result, he is left with a disturbing vision of reality--disturbing because it is dreadful, because it is unstoppable even though it is anticipated, and because it

is unknowable even after it happens:

Whatever it was, it took on the aspect of a general principle with the boy, that whatever the comforting vision before him . . . something dreadful could suddenly cut him down without warning. Or not quite without warning: without defense. (NAE, p. 194)

Such a vision of life imparts a terrible burden, which is made more onerous by the clarity and particularity of Blaise's descriptions. Yet somehow, in the face of this horrifying universe, the adult Frank maintains "a kind of arrogant self-assertion". (NAE, p. 223). This positive attitude, which he exhibited as a child, is now firmly based on confidence in his intelligence, a deepening understanding of reality, unvanquished faith in the value of human relationships--represented by the "once-in-a-lifetime day" (NAE, p. 184) with his father and his affection for his mother--and, lastly, his continuing "wonder for the new things there were to learn" (NAE, p. 224). The re-discovery or affirmation of these principles occurs near the end of the last story in A North American Education, as the questing consciousness and the reader reclaim the composite hero's past, and, in the words of T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets, "arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time."⁵³

"The Thibidault Stories" start simply and straightforwardly with "The Bridge," whose opening section is

devoted to the nascent sexual appetite of seven-year-old Frankie Thibidault, although we do not learn his first name until the next story. On summer evenings at the store where his father works as a furniture buyer, Frankie watches Betty Furness, the hostess on a television program called Studio One, then goes to get sandwiches and coffee with his father's "unbearably voluptuous" or "ripe" secretary, Joan, who was "Born a Larivière up in New Hampshire" (NAE, p. 134) and has "a northern voice" (NAE, p. 133). Later, Frankie secretly caresses and disrobes the store mannequins, whom he imagines as "immobile, unprotesting, Betty Furnesses" (NAE, p. 134).

In the second section of "The Bridge," a typical Blaise pattern appears, as a family holiday at the beach, "a day of perfect calm," gives way suddenly for the boy to "the dark funneling shapes of my worst nightmares" (NAE, p. 135). Although Frankie knows that there could be dangerous fish in the ocean and that he could easily drown because he is a non-swimmer, he remains unworried, persisting in his "illusion . . . that I could walk that day to Dakar or Lisbon" (NAE, p. 135). Then he stumbles, swallows water, feels his throat close with fear, and sinks momentarily in deep water until his father raises him up, strikes him to break the airlock in his chest, and commands, "Dites rien à Maman!" (NAE, p. 136). Meanwhile,

the boy's mother remains isolated from father and son, sleeping obliviously on the shore.

The third section of "The Bridge" begins with an echo of the boy's near death by drowning, as Frank recalls his failure at learning to swim during the lessons offered at Fort Lauderdale's Municipal Pool. In this instance, the description of how the boy feels out of place in both the hot sun and the cold water is symbolic of his alienation from both Floridian culture, represented by the "murderous summer sun," and his native Canadian culture, represented by the "fresh, icy water": "I tried to float and felt torn by the scalding sun on my back and the numbing cold that gripped my legs and belly. I wanted to sink into the dancing blueness, the cold Canadianness of the water" (NAE, p. 136). The boy longs for Canada, as he and his mother will long for the snow that symbolizes the north and Canada in "Snow People." Yet, as "The Salesman's Son Grows Older" suggests, Frankie will not return to stay in Canada (except for a short time in Saskatchewan) until "years of pointless suffering" (NAE, p. 155) have passed.

In the climactic scene of "The Bridge," Frankie has bicycled out to the pool barefoot, with a towel around his shoulders, and "feeling very Floridian and almost at home" (NAE, p. 136). On his return journey, while waiting for an old wooden swing bridge over the Inland Waterway to come back into place, he burns his feet and falls off his

bicycle. As Frankie struggles onto the bridge, where he can be a little cooler, he remembers "the day I almost drowned" and has "the impression that I was going to die and that dying on the bridge with hundreds of cars passing would be more pathetic than anything" (NAE, p. 139). He feels his eyesight go gradually awry, imagines himself "somehow balancing on the sharpened pupil of my eye," loses his normal sense of space and time, and, "as in a dream" (NAE, p. 140), finally becomes unconscious. Soon he is rescued, as in the preceding section of the story, by his father, accompanied by a young woman. She is both frightened at how close Frankie came to dying and afraid that he will see her with his father. Although the boy notices that she speaks "in that harsh Yankee voice" then "in that soft Canadian French of her childhood, and mine" (NAE, p. 141), he seems not quite able to recognize her. However, the reader does identify Joan, the subject of some of Frankie's sexual fantasies in the opening section of the story, and, presumably, his father's mistress. Thus, in the final section of "The Bridge," Eros, the principle behind the opening section, and Thanatos, the principle behind the second section, intertwine.

"The Bridge" briefly introduces a number of the major concerns of "The Thibidault Stories" as a group, including the special relationship between father and son, a bond of masculinity and language that excludes Frankie's mother

here as she is omitted from the "once-in-a-lifetime" (NAE, p. 184) scene recalled at the end of "A North American Education." Also in "The Bridge," there is the tie felt among French-speaking people of both sexes, which in this story involves the boy, his father, and Joan. The father's relationship with Joan prefigures his affair with Annette, the French-speaking woman in "A North American Education." In addition, the boy's early feelings of sexuality and his glimpse into the world of illicit adult sexuality foreshadow developments in his own sexual initiation or in his awareness of other persons' experiences (notably his father's infidelity) in "The Salesman's Son Grows Older" and "A North American Education."

Frankie's two brushes with death in "The Bridge" remind the reader of a theme that has preoccupied Blaise's hero in several preceding stories. In terms of this section of the book, these two incidents also express symbolically, for the first time, the dark vision of life--the "general principle" (NAE, p. 194) according to which a scene of apparent calm can give way to an unpreventable calamity--that is elaborated on most fully in the concluding story of the volume. Furthermore, the boy's traumatic collapse on the bridge may be interpreted as a symbol of the hero's basic predicament throughout the volume. Continually, Blaise's hero finds himself in exile from one culture--whether the cultures are American and Canadian,

American and Greek, Canadian and Indian, Canadian and Swedish, Canadian and Floridian, or Montréalais and prairie. The composite hero of A North American Education seems suspended on an imaginary bridge between different cultures and beyond space and time. Other themes or motifs presented in "The Bridge" reappear later in the section too, such as the rescue from possible death, which is repeated, with variations, at the opening of "Snow People," where Frankie fears that George Stewart, who saved him during the previous summer from another near drowning, has now hurt him fatally with a hardball.

Of the concerns introduced in "The Bridge," it is Jean-Louis' adultery that, in the next story, "The Salesman's Son Grows Older," acts most dramatically (though imperceptible to Frankie until some months later) on the boy's life. Frankie's mother discovers that another woman has been with her husband following his near-fatal car accident, and she elects to sell most of their belongings in Florida and to move with her son back to her family, in Saskatchewan. Some months later, her husband, whom Frankie has presumed to be dead, bids them to join him and they prepare to travel again. An even more pervasive influence than his father's adultery is the boy's inheritance as a salesman's son: the family's frequent moves, and a preoccupation with his father's nearly constant travelling and often uncertain whereabouts. Appropriately,

Frankie's childhood ambition is "to be a Greyhound driver" (NAE, p. 143), a goal suggesting that he can come close to feeling at home only when he is on the road. It is this transient state of mind that Frank~~e~~, as an adult reflecting on his past and on the different future he expects for his own son, strongly laments during the same story.

Frankie's sense of transience and especially his feeling of alienation are apparent on different levels of existence in "The Salesman's Son Grows Older." As his sexual initiation continues--Frankie is eight--he undergoes experiences, like caressing a woman's breast, that, because of their newness to him, make him feel estranged. He also feels alienated because he is too chubby and slow to play games well, and because he is an "only child" (NAE, p. 154). For these and other similar reasons, he wishes for "a deference, a near sympathy" from other people that, as he observes later, "I'd been seeking all along and probably ever since" (NAE, p. 149). Although shooting gophers in Saskatchewan makes him feel for a time "As happy as I've ever been" (NAE, p. 154), his sojourn there also increases his sense of estrangement and humiliation.

In Saskatchewan, Frankie reflects on the peculiarity of his accent and his slow speech patterns and discovers that he is totally ignorant of certain Canadian customs. Uncle John Blankenship tells Frankie that "'You're in your own country now'" (NAE, p. 152); but the boy cannot accept

this statement. He does not even understand what is being discussed when his uncle refers to a bonspiel. Frankie feels alienated from Canada and from his mother's family, including Morley Blankenship, his rather ridiculous, late grandfather, "a wheat pool president who had petitioned thirty thankless years for left-hand driving in Canada" (NAE, p. 154). On one occasion, his Aunt Valerie upbraids his mother for deciding to run back to her husband. His mother replies that she is fully aware that the woman who was with her husband at the hospital in Valdosta, Georgia "wasn't the first and she might not be the last--" and that "'it's my life and I'm responsible and you can all . . . go to hell'" because "'I didn't marry a Blankenship'" (NAE, p. 159). This time, however, Frankie understands his aunt better than his mother, and is sorry for his aunt. As a result, he is left feeling even more thoroughly perplexed and alienated.

At one point, Frankie's teacher crams her fingers down his throat to save him from choking, even though the boy is only blue in the face from the ink leaking out of his Hopalong Cassidy pen. Frankie regards the incident as an "impulsive assault" (NAE, p. 157). He thinks of himself as "an innocent American," who has been victimized by some vicious, retributive attitude that is best summarized by the title of Blaise's companion book of stories, Tribal

Justice:

Canadians! I'd wanted to scream, what do you want? You throw me on the floor because of my accent and you pump your fingers in my throat fit to choke me then worst of all you start laughing when you find I'm not dying. But I am. Stop it. (NAE, p. 157)

Frankie feels close to death often. When he stays with the Davis family while his mother visits his father in the hospital, Miz Audrey Davis, hearing him cough, pours a spoonful of sugar and kerosene down his throat and holds it there until he thinks that he is "drowning" (NAE, p. 148). The episode parallels the later scene when his teacher in Saskatchewan forces her fingers down his throat. The second incident, however, is connected to a sort of dying that is not imagined but real, at least in a metaphorical sense, suggesting the spiritual death or loss undergone by the boy.

From the vantage point of adulthood, Frank reflects on this loss during the powerful lament that interrupts the narration of the boy's experiences in Saskatchewan and again during the coda-like ending to "The Salesman's Son Grows Older." The latter starts with the recollection of "sounds of my childhood" (NAE, p. 160) in the American South and concludes with the statement "I'm still a young man, but many things have gone for good" (NAE, p. 161). As Frank's mind shifts from childhood sounds and scenes to

his present environment, when, "tonight, over the shallow breathing of my son, an aluminum shovel strikes the concrete, under new snow" (NAE, p. 160), he is reminded as well of his more recent past. He recalls his first teaching job in Wisconsin, at the age of twenty-four, when he was "feeling important" and "was political," and when, "on a snowy evening like this," he found himself the victim of police "Harassment" that he identified, then, with "America" (NAE, p. 161). Finally, sounds from the three times--Frank's childhood, his mid-twenties, and his late twenties--flow together in the imagination of the narrative consciousness: "slap-slap, the dusty rope. Patrolmen on our steps, the shovel scraping a snowy walk" (NAE, p. 161). For the appreciative reader, the three sections of A North American Education coalesce in much the same way.

In effect, A North American Education operates somewhat like Four Quartets--albeit less stringently or decisively--by "recapitulating and reopening its history," as Balachandra Rajan says of Eliot's poem, "in a further circle of recurrence and reversal."⁵⁴ The narrative consciousness of A North American Education and Blaise's composite hero follow the same cycle, but proceed essentially in opposite directions. By the time of the first four or five stories in the volume, the hero has come forward full circle to Montreal, the place of Frank

Thibidault's birth. Sometime later than the events pictured in these stories--it would appear to occur outside the obvious perimeter of Blaise's fiction, perhaps in the imaginary realm of the "implied author" and the "implied reader"⁵⁵--the composite hero, by implication, matures into the narrative consciousness of A North American Education. In the course of the ten stories, the narrative consciousness traces (through first- and second- and third-person points of view) the hero's history back full circle to the formative experiences of his childhood. Then, towards the end of the final story, the narrative consciousness briefly begins to follow the hero forward in the direction of the wisdom that he, as the mature consciousness of the book, will finally attain. In short, the complex story-cycle form of A North American Education is perfectly suited to --indeed, it magnifies and reinforces--the inherent shape of the mythic narrative that Blaise wishes to present.

This circulatory quality may be observed, in miniature, in the structuring of episodes in the final story, which begins with the accident during a hardball game when Frank was nine years old, then moves back to an event when he was seven, then proceeds forward to the major catastrophe of his childhood years (and of the story) and his family's ensuing flight northward. The structuring of events in "Snow People," as in the entire volume, is a radically different arrangement from a linear temporal order. It

emphasizes the fictive qualities of Blaise's work, how far his art departs from mimesis of so-called "reality," how different art is from life. The placement of "Snow People: A Novella" as the last story in the volume firmly establishes the cyclical design of A North American Education. Blaise also knows that the more ample scope (and somewhat more novelistic texture) of "Snow People" and its clearer articulation of themes from other stories demand, dramatically and thematically, that it be placed at the conclusion of the book.

A last variation, the switch from the first-person narration of the first three stories in this section to the third-person narration of the last story, serves to distance the narrative consciousness and the reader from Blaise's hero, as they were distanced from him in the first story of the volume. Finally, the questing consciousness and the reader are released, as if magically,⁵⁶ into their own imaginations, where "the restructuring of the world,"⁵⁷ to use William H. New's phrase for the aim of the story cycle, must take place if it is to be achieved at all.

This dimension of A North American Education has intriguing affinities with the emphasis on a transcendental, visionary, or imaginative process at the conclusions of Hood's Around the Mountain, Hodgins' Spit Delaney's Island, and Munro's Who Do You Think You Are?

CHAPTER V

WIDE OPEN WINDOWS:

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

I

Alice Munro's first book, Dance of the Happy Shades, and her third book, Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You, are characterized by variety in technique and, especially in the latter work, by variety in subject matter, although both books convey some degree of unity through the general consistency--the vision, the tone, the recurring concerns--of the fictional universe that they present. The variety in the two books, as Munro acknowledges, resulted from the fact that both were transitional or "discovery" works.¹ Dance of the Happy Shades signified the completion of Munro's eighteen-year apprenticeship, which began with the publication of three stories in Folio during the two years that she was a student at the University of Western Ontario.² Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You represented a somewhat different process, as Munro entered the middle of her career and tried to learn how to tell more complex kinds of stories.

By comparison, the stories in Munro's second book, Lives of Girls and Women, and the stories in her fourth book, Who Do You Think You Are?, are remarkably, but not

entirely, uniform, in terms of narrative method and material. In addition, each of these works is governed by a much stronger structure than either Dance of the Happy Shades or Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You, although a loose thematic or tonal structure can be discerned in those two books, particularly if one concentrates on the first and the last story in each volume. Lives of Girls and Women, which Munro terms "an episodic novel,"³ follows the development of Del Jordan from childhood to early adulthood. Who Do You Think You Are?, which Munro calls "linked stories,"⁴ rather than a novel, also traces the life of a single character.

With the exception of "Epilogue: The Photographer," Lives of Girls and Women presents Del's life through discrete, rather than overlapping, episodes. An adult Del re-creates the stages of her earlier experiences in a style that reflects her level of maturity and way of feeling at each individual stage. This narrative method gives way to a very different and more exciting handling of point of view and time in Who Do You Think You Are?.

In writing this book, Munro has secured a position as one of the rare writers who, in Kent Thompson's words, "are always discovering whole new dimensions of writing" because they "are constantly challenging technique, form, genre-- and themselves."⁵ The "disarrangements" (W, p. 17), to

use Munro's own term, the shifts, and the intersections within and between stories in Who Do You Think You Are? make it a much more experimental, open, and life-like form of fiction than the mainly linear Lives of Girls and Women.

Of the ten stories in Who Do You Think You Are? the most conventional, and therefore most exceptional, story is "Wild Swans." By focussing on Rose's unusual sexual initiation as she travels by train from her home town to Toronto, this story adheres quite closely to unities of time, place, and action. In "Wild Swans" alone, Munro restricts the narrative almost entirely to a single time, a day in Rose's adolescence; however, in other stories the narrative moves freely, backwards and forwards and sideways, giving additional texture, perspective, and ambiguity to each story. "Wild Swans" is complete in itself and moves along smoothly to a satisfying close. Other stories, however, are open-ended, apparently unfinished, and characterized by unpredictable "disarrangements" in the narrative line that are deliberately meant to call something already described into question, to challenge the reader's understanding, to supply an ever-widening compass to a story. In this respect, "Royal Beatings" provides a fitting opening to the volume. Although the story concentrates on the earliest world in Rose's life, that of her childhood home, it looks ahead to the time when Rose,

pushing forty and living alone in Toronto, momentarily contemplates how her stepmother, Flo, sits speechless, but not expressionless, in a crib at the Wawanash County Home for the Aged--an image that anticipates Rose's concerns in the second-last story of the book, "Spelling."

Many of the stories end with a similar, unofficial epilogue, in which the narrative skips ahead to a later time, and to a point of deeper understanding, in Rose's life. In one such instance, at the close of "Simon's Luck," Munro discusses how a television audience

trusted that they would be protected from predictable disasters, also from those shifts of emphasis that throw the story line open to question, the disarrangements which demand new judgments and solutions, and throw the windows open on inappropriate and unforgettable scenery. (W, pp. 172-73)

Then, at the end of the story, comes a new revelation for Rose:

Simon's dying struck Rose as that kind of disarrangement. It was preposterous, it was unfair, that such a chunk of information should have been left out, and that Rose even at this late date could have thought herself the only person who could seriously lack power. (W, p. 173).

"Simon's Luck" was one of the last two stories written for the book,⁶ and it would appear to offer Munro's most direct statement about the narrative method that she adopted in the volume as a whole. Throughout Who Do You Think You Are?

Rose continually searches for a full comprehension of herself and her world, but sees her queries and concerns resolve, then shatter, then rearrange into another pattern. Here, as in "Tell Me Yes or No," "The Ottawa Valley," "Winter Wind," and "Material," in Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You, or "Home," in 74: New Canadian Stories, Munro emphasizes the frailty of human efforts by composing stories that call the artifice of all fiction, even apparently "artless" fiction, into question.

Like the narrative method that is used so consistently in Who Do You Think You Are?, the vision of reality that emerges from the ten stories is a crucial feature of the overall unity that the book achieves. In the process of recording Rose's physical and mental travels, Munro once again goes beyond "realism"⁷ to explore both surface reality--which in Munro's work is always luxuriantly textured and meaningful, not superficial⁸--and the reality behind, underneath, or above life's surfaces. Thus in the opening story, "Royal Beatings," the image of Rose's father as an expert furniture repairman and stern disciplinarian is offset by the secret, perplexing image of him as a comic and romantic wordsmith, making up a playful sequence like "'Macaroni, pepperoni, Botticelli, beans--'" or reciting a beautiful passage of poetry from The Tempest, "'The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces'" (W, p.

4).⁹ Alternately, daily life opens up to reveal a gothic world of squalor, violence, and rumoured incest. Or, again in the same story, the prospect extends from dim aspects of the ordinary world to "the evening star" (W, p. 20), which the old men sitting on the bench in front of Flo's store suppose to be a marvellous airship with ten thousand electric lights, and which is actually the planet Venus.

At the same time as Munro avidly pursues oddities, horrors, or mysteries in life and in one's perception of life, she is quick to ridicule examples of artistic distortion, including the gothicism and the romanticism that she parodied in Lives of Girls and Women by means of the young Del Jordan's scraps of writing and her imaginary novel based on the Sherriff family. In "Privilege," the second story in Who Do You Think You Are?, Rose recalls her childhood acquaintance Franny McGill in connection with "the figure of an idiotic, saintly whore" pictured in books or movies. The narrator adds, sardonically, that "Men who made books and movies seemed to have a fondness for this figure, though Rose noticed they would clean her up" (W, p. 26). In the next story, "Half a Grapefruit," Munro has Rose react against the element of unreality or untruthfulness that Rose (and perhaps Munro) senses in Katherine Mansfield's story "The Garden Party":

There were poor people in that story. They lived along the lane at the bottom of the garden. They were viewed with compassion. All very well. But Rose was angry in a way that the story did not mean her to be. She could not really understand what she was angry about, but it had something to do with the fact that she was sure Katherine Mansfield was never obliged to look at stained underwear; her relatives might be cruel and frivolous but their accents would be agreeable; her compassion was floating on clouds of good fortune, deplored by herself, no doubt, but despised by Rose. (W, p. 48)

Truth-telling is an important compulsion in Munro's art and often involves the revelation and the examination of what Munro terms "true lies" (W, p. 133). This phrase aptly conveys the juxtapositions, paradoxes, or ambiguities that are so typical of Munro's "double vision" as discussed in various ways by Rae McCarthy Macdonald, Hallvard Dahlie, and Helen Hoy.¹⁰

As I understand Munro's depiction of the extraordinary facets of daily life, she is seeking to present the truth, even if the truth consists of the "true lies" of Flo's melodramatic tales or the fabulous legends that are repeated about town. If truth-telling is an important ingredient of Munro's fiction, so is story-telling and imaginative re-creation. Sometimes the subject of a story appears to be the very way stories are told, how events are remembered, how life is re-created or completely fabricated through art. Thus the description of how the royal

beatings got started is a self-consciously fictional rendering of what might have happened: "Suppose a Saturday, in spring" (W, p. 10), it begins.

Stories get incorporated as set pieces within Munro's stories. In "Half a Grapefruit," to cite another example, one passage is introduced by "This is the sort of story Rose brought home" (W, p. 41), while the following section begins with "Here is the sort of story Flo told Rose" (W, p. 42). Munro's mature stories from the middle to late 1970s are more "postmodern" than they are normally credited with being,¹¹ owing to their metafictional or self-referring concern with legend-building and story-telling. This concern gives the stories a highly fictive quality, based partly on the traditions of oral story-telling common in rural areas like Munro's birthplace, and partly on the play of imagination, which moves freely, to use the simile with which Munro describes the wrangle between Flo and Rose, "like a dream that goes back and back into other dreams, over hills and through doorways, maddeningly dim and populous and familiar and elusive" (W, p. 11).

Indeed dreams and especially memories are two of the strongest elements in Who Do You Think You Are?, and their recurrence adds both fluidity and coherence to the book's movement and form. Like Proust's masterwork, A la recherche du temps perdu, Munro's Who Do You Think You Are?

is less a volume about the maturation of a single character than a volume about the workings of time and perception and memory and understanding, the essence of human life as a whole.¹² Yet, despite the freedom of movement or surface randomness of individual stories and throughout the entire book, patterns or rhythms emerge that give a definite shape to each story and to the volume, somewhat like the poetically conceived form and structure that John Metcalf has discerned in the stories of Clark Blaise.¹³

For Munro, human life arranges itself in patterns, rituals, ceremonies, and performances that connect us with all forms of life--primitive, ancestral, contemporary, and supernatural--the ambiguous cosmic dance signified by the title Dance of the Happy Shades. Munro's fascination with patterns appears throughout her fiction and emerges strongly in Who Do You Think You Are?, in descriptions of the pattern on egg cups, the pattern on linoleum, the pattern of streets, class structure, and the order of words. These patterns represent two forces: the designs imposed on nature and experience by human actions, and the designs that artists create. Often life's profoundest meanings are conveyed through rituals or ceremonies, which occupy a significant position in Munro's fiction. Yet, as the title of one of the chapters in Lives of Girls and Women suggests, Munro is concerned with both "Changes and Ceremonies."

At times she explores the possibility that existence may extend naturally into the supernatural, that life may be subject to a larger design than human beings can grasp. But Munro's basic view, to which she gives special emphasis in Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You and Who Do You Think You Are?, is that the world is perpetually shifting and ultimately unknowable--and hence tremendously interesting.

As in Lives of Girls and Women, but with greater range and flexibility, the stories in Who Do You Think You Are? depict the changes in the principal character as she passes through each important stage of her life. Theatrical metaphors--stages, characters, roles, performances--are important in Munro's work, and Rose's profession as an actress emphasizes this feature. Flo, Simon, Ralph Gillespie, and Rose herself are frequently seen doing comic imitations of their favourite characters. At more serious moments, too, in relationships with other people, Rose slips into roles instead of being herself. Scenes, such as the royal beating in the opening story, are acted out like dramatic rituals. The recurrence of these emblems and metaphors--the patterns, the rituals, the ceremonies, and the performances--at intervals throughout Who Do You Think You Are? contributes to the unity of the book, by linking the individual stories even more closely together.

Munro's imagery, particularly her use of similes, also enhances the unity of Who Do You Think You Are?. Her similes are unpredictable, humorous, and vitalizing--like discovering pineapples or octopuses in a rural Ontario town--and seem to be drawn consistently from nature, a fact that reminds us of the pastoral aspect of her art.¹⁴

Favourite images also recur. In Munro's first book, Dance of the Happy Shades, images of light and shade appear in virtually every story, thereby giving a unique colouration to the entire book. This pattern of contrasting imagery suggests the love of distinctions that is seen in Munro's continual exploration of the differences between surface reality and the reality behind or underneath or above the surface, as well as in her exploration of the difference between one time and another. A similar pattern of imagery is evident in Who Do You Think You Are?, for example in the description in the opening story of "a cloudy, interesting, problematical light on the world" (W, p. 5). This image may stand as a metaphor for the mature vision of the world--like the vision in one of Shakespeare's problem comedies, perhaps--that Munro herself offers in this volume. The image of shade is also used in relation to Flo, in the reference to "the shady melodramatic past of Flo's stories" (W, p. 8) and the notion that Rose had to "remove herself from Flo's shade" (W, p. 186). In the last instance, as in

the title of Dance of the Happy Shades, "shade" suggests "ghost," the ghosts of our ancestral past that haunt us until we reach some kind of settlement with them.

To say that Who Do You Think You Are? is "a group of inter-related short stories arranged in chronological sequence,"¹⁵ which pictures the growth of Rose from childhood to about the age of forty, is to offer a simplistic view of the structure of a many-layered and technically versatile book. One important structural feature that such a view ignores is the changing tension between Rose and her stepmother, Flo, as Rose grows older and more distant from Flo, comes back to help Flo when she becomes incapacitated with old age, and is finally released from her. This cyclical or spiral progress is also represented geographically as the work moves from rural southwestern Ontario away to British Columbia then back again to Rose's home town of Hanratty, Ontario, which is now much changed itself.

The tension between Flo and Rose is emphasized by the title of the book, Who Do You Think You Are?. The title raises the question of Rose's identity, which absorbs her throughout the book; but it is also important to recognize that the title is first spoken aggressively in the sardonic tone of another, older character, namely Flo, from whose perspective Rose regularly examines her-

self. At the end of the first story, for example, the adult Rose thinks that she would like to tell Flo something that she has just heard. Rose still needs Flo, even at the later date to which "Royal Beatings" has finally skipped, when Rose herself is pictured as approaching middle age. But Rose cannot reach her stepmother, just as the narrator at the end of "The Ottawa Valley," in Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You, feels her mother's image melt and flow away from her.

The narrative as a whole may, therefore, be seen as Rose's effort to reach out to Flo, as well as to reach some basic kind of reconciliation with her own life and being. Rose's own development from the beginning to the end of the work may be gauged in terms of the degrees of her dependence on Flo. From the outset, when Flo initiates the royal beating, she is the agent of Rose's humiliation, a theme that is repeated forcefully in Rose's relationships with men, including her father, until she finally discards this subservient role and begins to comprehend her true, if still shifting, identity as an actress or artist. Rose reaches the threshold of this new beginning, appropriately, in the volume's last and title story; and she achieves it, interestingly, through remembering and reflecting upon her relationship, as a schoolchild and much later as an adult, with the mimic or comedian Ralph Gillespie.

II

The new liberties with traditional narrative forms that Munro takes in Who Do You Think You Are? are summarized in a comment on how her attitudes changed in the two decades since she wrote her early short story "The Office":

["The Office"] is a little bit rearranged and pointed up to make a story. I think if I were doing it now I'd write it differently. That doesn't mean it might be better, just different. If I were doing it now I'd make the fictionalizing less evident. It is only when you look back over the years you've been writing that you see you have--at least I have--been following certain literary fashions. When I wrote this story, something a bit more definite had to happen in stories than is the case now. Or that's how it seemed to me. And that accounts for the way the story is wrapped up, with the landlord's accusation, the confrontation, the narrator leaving. That isn't quite what I'd do now. I don't know what I would do. I'd like it more open, less pointed, even less contrived; I would like it to seem all artless and accidental, which means that I have adopted another fashion. By fashion I don't mean some currently popular tricks--though there's always a bit of that--but a way of making the story that seems now to get closer to what I want to say.¹⁶

The openness that Munro mentions here is apparent from the beginning of Who Do You Think You Are? in the way that "Royal Beatings" freely plays between two worlds that her vision encompasses: the lowly, worn, surprising, everyday world of "real life" (W, p. 1); and the spectacular, romantic, dark, legendary world of people's imaginings and their theatrics.

"Royal Beatings" commences with Rose's childhood wonderment at the significance of words, an artistic fascination that Rose shares with Del Jordan in Lives of Girls and Women. Contemplating Flo's phrase "Royal Beating," Rose imagines a scene from the pre-Civil War American South (or from romantic fiction or movies about the South, such as Gone With The Wind), involving white horses, black slaves, and blood. These images connect later in the story with Flo's legendary tale of how Hat Nettleton and two other young men with blackened faces had seized old man Tyde, whom they had suspected of beating and impregnating his daughter Becky, a big-headed dwarf with a twisted neck, and had beaten him incessantly, "while his nightgown and the snow he was lying in turned red" (W, p. 8). The imagined beating of the slaves, the presumed beatings of the Tyde children and their mother, and the legendary horsewhipping of old man Tyde himself are linked by analogy with the actual, ritualistic beating of Rose by her father, at Flo's instigation, which stands at the centre of the story. These connections are also echoed momentarily in the story's epilogue, when Rose, at about forty years of age, hears a flattering and comic radio interview with Hat Nettleton, recorded shortly before his death at 102 years of age, and thinks, "Horse-whipper into centenarian" (W, p. 22).

The picture of the slaves is unquestionably romanticized. The legend that Becky's deformity was caused by her father's beatings is undercut by information that she was a polio victim. The outline of Flo's tale about the beating and the death of old man Tyde and about how his supposed assailants were released from long prison terms in less than a year and given jobs sounds suspiciously like pulp fiction. Hence, for Rose, "Present time and past, the shady melodramatic past of Flo's stories, were quite separate" (W, p. 8). Even the dramatic ritual in which Rose is beaten by her father dwindles, as Flo and Rose's father are finally "drawn back into themselves" (W, p. 18) by ordinary bickering, just as Rose is "drawn back from thoughts of suicide or flight," after the battle, "by the smell of salmon, the anticipation of crisp chocolate" (W, p. 19).

At the height of the Royal Beating, the face and the voice of Rose's father appear "quite out of character" (W, p. 16). He resembles "a bad actor, who turns a part grotesque" (W, p. 16), like the humiliated Rose herself, who "must play her part in this with the same grossness, the same exaggeration, that her father displays, playing his" (W, p. 17). Throughout Munro's fiction, characters and actions become exaggerated--momentarily assume romantic, melodramatic, gothic, or absurd proportions--then diminish

to their normal, ordinary forms. To see human beings only in their exaggerated forms, such as the "idiotic, saintly whore" (W, p. 26) ridiculed in the following story, is to neglect their essential humanness and ultimately to distort reality. Conversely, to present reality as something plain and even tedious is also to misrepresent it, by ignoring the splendour and the savagery that are shown when ordinary existence suddenly and surprisingly opens inward, capsizes, or is lifted up to reveal unimaginable mysteries, sources of celebration. Indeed, for Munro, "everything here [is] touchable and mysterious."¹⁷ The exaggerations, the so-called gothic elements that Munro's fiction shares with the literature of the American South,¹⁸ are also part of reality. Artistic lies are purposely subverted in Munro's fiction through parody or ironic juxtaposition. However, "true lies" (W, p. 133) are essential. They accurately represent the proportions that we sometimes assume, and, more importantly, the often distorted ways that we imaginatively perceive or reconstruct life. For Munro, such re-creation is prevalent throughout our existence, whether we are seeing life through the fantastic eyes of childhood, or, years later, are watching life take on mysterious colouration, as it recedes darkly into our past, in the manner of the life of the girl's father at the close of "Walker Brothers Cowboy" in Dance of the Happy Shades.

In presenting such a complex vision of life, "Royal Beatings" and other of Munro's mature stories follow unpredictable paths. Like Who Do You Think You Are? as a whole, they possess a special, intricate structure that involves oblique beginnings, developments in focus, tone, character delineation, and understanding, and open endings. "Royal Beatings" is divided into four sections, the first of which serves a double purpose as an introduction to the story and an introduction to the entire book. The story begins by articulating the abrasive relationship between Flo and Rose, which, whether it is in the foreground or the background, energizes much of the volume: "Royal Beating. That was Flo's promise. You are going to get one Royal Beating" (W, p. 1). The opening section also introduces the four members of Rose's family and their life in Hanratty, Ontario. It looks back to what Rose perceived "as an orderly, far gentler and more ceremonious time, with little touches of affluence" (W, p. 2) when Rose's mother was alive, presents Flo's story of Rose's mother's death, and describes Rose's father and his repairing and restoring of furniture in the shed behind Flo's store from the Depression until his death, following the war, during Rose's teenage years. The focus of the section expands in time, then in space, concluding with a wider examination of the social structure of Hanratty and

the place of Rose's family in poorer West Hanratty.

The second section of "Royal Beatings," by contrasting Flo's stories about Becky Tyde with Rose's own childhood impression of Becky as "town oddity and public pet, harmless and malicious" (W, p. 8), shows how Flo's perspective differs from that of Rose. This section of the story moves next to a more direct description of Flo as seen not through her stories but through her apparel and her physical features: "Rose's earliest memories of Flo were of extraordinary softness and hardness" (W, p. 9). Earlier, the attitudes of Rose's father were suggested by "things he had been moved to write down" (W, p. 2), documentary notes that Flo found in his shed after he had died, including the penultimate message "All things are alive. Spinoza" (W, p. 3). Now, aspects of Flo's youth, as Rose imagines it, are similarly revealed by fragments of songs that Flo sings. Rose hears in these songs "the reckless dangerous life of cities" (W, p. 10), from the time before Flo married Rose's father, when she worked as a waitress in the coffee shop at Union Station in Toronto. Rose also imagines the "life Flo seemed to have had beyond that, earlier than that, crowded and legendary," with romantic figures and monstrous figures "and all kinds of old outrages and sorrows jumbled up together in it" (W, p. 10).

The third section of "Royal Beatings" presents a

painstaking reconstruction of the sort of Royal Beating that Rose got from her father. It concludes with one of the rare happy moments that the characters in the book always seem to be searching for, when Flo performs her comic trick of suspending and turning herself upon two chairs. At this moment, it seems to Rose that Flo resembles the airship that the old men imagined; while Rose's father, who ruthlessly told the old men that what they actually saw was Venus, now exclaims, amusingly, that Flo looks like that planet. The tone of the story has shifted from the feeling of "a cloudy, interesting, problematical light on the world" (W, p. 5) mentioned at the end of the first section, through assorted complications or jumbles, then through the sinister theatrics of punishment, to a momentary brightening.

In the fourth and final section, or epilogue, the tone darkens once again. Rose is left not only with a somewhat more developed understanding of the people and the events of her past but also in a state of unresolved frustration, without any final satisfied feeling of reconciliation or even resignation, a condition that compels her, the narrative, and the reader onward. The epilogue focusses on the process of establishing "A living link with our past" (W, p. 22), as the radio interview with Hat Nettleton at the Wawanash County Home for the Aged stirs Rose's old

memories and recent feelings about Flo. Consequently, Rose--whom we are told, somewhat ominously, "was living by herself in Toronto" (W, p. 20) at the time of the epilogue, as if she had suffered some catastrophe to be explained later in the volume--experiences a compulsion to reach out to Flo and to tell her the latest story about Hat Nettleton. Yet Rose cannot, because Flo "had removed herself," after Rose had put her in that same Home for the Aged, and no longer spoke to or answered anybody, "though she occasionally showed her feelings by biting a nurse" (W, p. 22). Reconstruction, telling, and reaching, then, emerge as the central, in many ways still frustrated, preoccupations of Rose and of the story itself.

In "Who Do You Think You Are?: Alice Munro's Art of Disarrangement," Lawrence Mathews stresses that "The effect of the epilogue is to cause us to question the validity of Rose's perception of the past, as it has been delivered by the narrative."¹⁹ He argues that

The prominence given to Hat Nettleton's account of the past certainly stimulates the reader to speculate along these lines. The irony of the epilogue seems to lack the sort of "point" we might expect it to have. Neither differences nor similarities between Rose and Nettleton are emphasized. Perhaps Rose, unlike Nettleton (insofar as she understands Nettleton), has a view of her past experience which is unromanticized, "balanced," "objective." Perhaps, on the other hand, she has, unwittingly, undergone a transformation as dramatic as Nettleton's ("horsewhipper to centenarian"), and perhaps this

has affected her view of the past. Certainly the question has been raised.²⁰

As in Clark Blaise's A North American Education, the emphasis throughout Who Do You Think You Are? is placed not so much on Rose's youthful experiences in themselves as on the process through which the elder questing consciousness in the book remembers, and probably distorts, but in my view eventually understands, those past situations. The process involves trying to make connections that will eliminate the separation that Rose feels between the present and the past. As Rose has known since childhood, the past has been embellished, in one way, by Flo. Moreover, as Rose only begins to understand many years later, the past has been falsely embroidered, in related ways, by herself, first, as an often fanciful child, and then, as a frequently dejected and theatrical adult.

The second story, "Privilege," begins with a description of how, in adulthood, Rose used to show off to her privileged acquaintances, who, unlike Rose, "wished they had been poor, and hadn't been" (W, p. 23). Somewhat in the way that her father had acted as "king of the royal beatings" (W, p. 1), Rose "would queen it over them" by recalling "scandals^a and bits of squalor from her childhood" (W, p. 23), especially toilet stories. The repeated images of toilets and excretion are again meant to challenge any

polite or romantic notions held by Munro's readers. They also function like the recurring references to beatings in the preceding story, as a poetic rhythm that connects numerous aspects of the story.

Thus Rose, whose principal problem in public school was that she refused to use the outdoor toilet and therefore risked pain and possible embarrassment, is connected to old Mr. Burns, whom the girls watched in his privy, to Franny McGill, whom the schoolchildren observed being raped by her own brother in the entrance to the Boys' Toilet, to Rose's teacher, who would not use the toilet either. The image of a toilet or of excretion also links Rose to her beloved, Cora, whose grandfather cleaned out toilets and was called the honey-dumper, and to Flo, who mocked Rose for wetting her pants, bought a chemical toilet to put in the woodshed, and finally installed a bathroom in their house during the prosperous war years. Furthermore, in the last three paragraphs of the story, Munro dwells almost completely on toilet images as she traces the changes that occurred in West Hanratty over the years.

Rose re-created these parts of her past in order to elevate herself--a bad motive, as the narrator recognizes, and, we infer, as Rose too eventually recognizes in the "time present" of the book. This "time present" represents the point at which the unidentified narrator²¹ describes,

in the past tense, Rose's early experiences and the apparently quite recent epilogues to those experiences when Rose was nearing forty. As in Blaise's A North American Education, the narrator and the maturing protagonist in Who Do You Think You Are? become almost indistinguishable, merging in a single questing consciousness, as the narrator to almost all intents and purposes becomes Rose, and as Rose therefore becomes in a way the narrator. The little stories that Rose told to astound her acquaintances, as the narrator and now Rose are aware, may have been true, but were "off-balance" (W, p. 27) or false in the effect that they created. As the narrator observes,

Her schooling seemed deplorable. It seemed she must have been miserable, and that was not so . . . she was not miserable, except in the matter of not being able to go to the toilet. Learning to survive, no matter with what cravenness and caution, what shocks and forebodings, is not the same as being miserable. It is too interesting. (W, p. 27)

Superficially, "Privilege" resembles Munro's earlier stories about childhood and adolescence. In fact, the section of "Privilege" in which Rose becomes obsessed with the older girl Cora--imitating Cora and imagining herself being sick and being cuddled by Cora, inventing "stories of danger and rescue, accidents and gratitude" (W, p. 32) --closely recalls the brief passage from "Princess Ida"

in Lives of Girls and Women describing Del Jordan's infatuation with the "beautiful, shining girls" in High School, several years older than herself, such as Pat Mundy, about whom Del likewise "made up daydreams"²² of being rescued, nursed, or held. Yet the much more complex handling of point of view in "Privilege" and the emphasis here on story-telling itself set such stories apart from Munro's earlier stories like "Boys and Girls," in Dance of the Happy Shades, and "Princess Ida."

In the end, too, "Privilege" moves out beyond the personal situation of Rose's growing detachment from Cora, beyond "this loss, this transformation" (W, p. 36) to still larger concerns. The story concludes with a contrast between life as a whole in West Hanratty during the prosperous war years and life there in the Depression:

. . . the two times were so separate it was as if an entirely different lighting had been used, or as if it was all on film and the film had been printed in a different way, so that on the one hand things looked clean-edged and decent and limited and ordinary, and on the other, dark, grainy, jumbled, and disturbing. (W, p. 37)

But whether this distinction is objectively true, or true only subjectively as a distorted projection from Rose's imagination, remains, as Lawrence Mathews would argue, open to question.

Contrasts are prevalent in Munro's work. One remem-

bers, for example, in Lives of Girls and Women, the contrasting images of Miss Farris--her enthusiastic direction of the high school operetta and her mysterious drowning--pictures that do not hang together plausibly, although "they are going to have to stay together now."²³ "Privilege" depicts a number of contrasts, including the difference in the town between one time and another, the difference in economic background between Rose and her adult friends, and the difference between Rose's chaotic classroom and the glorious pictures of birds arranged above the blackboard:

In an ordinary classroom they would not have seemed so extraordinary. Here they were bright and eloquent, so much at variance with everything else that what they seemed to represent was not the birds themselves, not those skies and snows, but some other world of hardy innocence, bounteous information, privileged light-heartedness. No stealing from lunchpails there; no slashing coats; no pulling down pants and probing with painful sticks; no fucking; no Franny. (W, pp. 29-30)

Contrasts are important in Who Do You Think You Are? from the beginning, as may be seen in several descriptions in "Royal Beatings." There is the contrast between the time, for sixteen months in Rose's life, when her parents were alive and the less gentle, orderly, ceremonious, or affluent time after her mother's death. There are also the contrasts between "the person who spoke to her as her

father" and "the person who was not supposed to be there," who quoted The Tempest, between "The person creating the noises in the bathroom" and "the person who walked out," the two of whom, Rose thought, were "not connected" (W, p. 4), and between the unbelievably normal figure of Becky Tyde and the Becky disfigured by polio. The story also contrasts Hanratty and West Hanratty, "the days before the war, days of what would later be legendary poverty" (W, p. 5) and the prosperous war years, as well as the past and the present, between which, again according to Rose, "only a formal connection could be made" (W, p. 8).

Rose, especially as a youngster, is fond of antitheses, contrasts, separations. Munro enjoys making distinctions, too. But she is equally avid about connections, bridges, transitions. Important contrasts do exist between the world of home presented in the first story and the world of school depicted in the second story. The difference is reinforced by Munro's use of separate, unnumbered stories rather than the convention of numbered, as well as individually titled, stories that is found in such works as Hood's Around the Mountain, Hodgins' The Barclay Family Theatre, Welty's The Golden Apples, or McCarthy's The Company She Keeps, or the designation of numbered and titled chapters in Hemingway's In Our Time. Between the first two stories of Who Do You Think You Are?

however, Munro has constructed (as does the reader, in the co-creative act of discovering connections between one story and another) bridges of the imagination, like the actual bridge that Rose crosses between the second and the third story when she passes the Entrance examination and proceeds from public school, in West Hanratty, to high school, in Hanratty. Here, once again, "Differences soon became evident" to Rose, in this case "between town and country" (W, p. 38).

In an interview by Carole Gerson about Who Do You Think You Are?, Munro has said that the requirements of the stories as stories led to a lack of development in certain aspects of Rose's relationships with other people,²⁴ an omission of the rounded portraits that one could justifiably expect to fill out a more novelistic work such as Lives of Girls and Women. Nonetheless, Who Do You Think You Are? does show a progression in the way that the characters are revealed to the reader from story to story, a progression that is not usually found in story cycles, which normally do not draw on the device of main characters for the unity that they achieve.

In the case of Flo, for example, the first story refers only obliquely to her "crowded and legendary" (W, p. 10) life before she worked as a waitress in the coffee shop in Union Station. The second story tells us briefly that

Flo had come from the country, from the hill farms. It is not until the third story, "Half a Grapefruit," that details of Flo's early life are revealed. Following her mother's premature death, an experience paralleled by the early death of Rose's mother, Flo had been given away to a well-to-do farming family that treated her unfairly. We are told about the time when Flo's mother was dying of cancer and Flo thought that she herself had been poisoned by a fortune teller. On this occasion, we are intrigued to learn, Flo retreated to a secret place of her own in a corner of the granary, where she kept "the bits of china and the wilted velvet flowers and whatever else was precious to her" (W, p. 53). Here she waited, anxiously "to see how death would slice the day" (W, p. 53).

What is especially interesting about Flo's self-revelations is that they are made through her own stories. In this way, Munro emphasizes how central story-telling is to life itself. As the narrator of the story "Winter Wind" in Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You states,

I am only doing in a large and public way what has always been done, what my mother did, and other people did, who mentioned to me my grandmother's story. Even in that close-mouthed place, stories were being made. People carried their stories around with them.²⁵

In Munro's view, life is a collection of stories, told from different points of view, in which we are truly--to use the

title of an uncollected story about Flo and Rose-- "Characters."²⁶ Hence, the story "Half a Grapefruit" does not follow a conventional story line with rising and falling action but instead follows a looser, more associative, apparently digressive structure, built to a considerable extent around stories told by different people with a limited amount of action in between. There is "the sort of story Rose brought home" (W, p. 41); and there is "the sort of story Flo told Rose" (W, p. 42).

"Half a Grapefruit" is also organized, like the preceding stories, around a single image: in this case, cancer. Apparently offhand references to the deaths--all from cancer--of Flo's mother, her foster mother, and, years later, Ruby Carruthers, the slutty girl who was the subject of the story that Rose told Flo, reinforce the gloomy aura of the impending fate of Rose's father. To begin, "Half a Grapefruit" focusses, as the title suggests, on Rose's pretentious desire to be considered part of the town group rather than the country group in her high school. The hazards of high school life, like losing a Kotex pad (a subject akin to the preoccupation with toilets in "Privilege") and having it displayed scandalously in the school's trophy case, are also presented. The concern with poverty and privilege that links this story to the preceding story comes to the foreground in Rose's angry

reaction to Katherine Mansfield's story "The Garden Party." Rose's anger is also directed towards her father, for his sickness, towards their family's impoverishment, and towards Flo, for making certain that "there was not a thing in their lives they were protected from" (W, p. 47). Flo pricks Rose's illusions, as Munro indirectly does too.

Although "Half a Grapefruit" takes Rose into another new world, namely high school, the real development in the story, as well as its greatest emotional force, has to do with Rose's understanding of her father. Rose recognizes that she disgraces her father not simply by violating his idea of what a woman should be, by being practically the opposite of Flo, who is his ideal, but in a more profound way:

The real problem was that she combined and carried on what he must have thought of as the worst qualities in himself. All the things he had beaten [my italics] down, successfully submerged, in himself, had surfaced again in her, and she was showing no will to combat them. (W, p. 45)

Here, two stories later, is a plausible motive for the savagery of Rose's father, towards her, in "Royal Beatings." However, Rose's understanding of her father's relationship with her develops further still:

She knew he felt pride in her as well as this nearly uncontrollable irritation and apprehension; the truth was, the final truth was, that he would not have her otherwise and willed her as she was.

Or one part of him did. Naturally he had to keep denying this. (W, p. 46)

Subsequently, the story reaches its climax when Rose imagines her father's feelings as he waits to go to Westminster Hospital, where he will surely die soon. Typically, Munro describes the father's predicament through simple but very poignant images: "Her father was waiting. His shed was locked, his books would not be opened again, by him, and tomorrow was the last day he would wear shoes" (W, p. 53). These images depend partly for their effect on the reader's remembering the descriptions in the opening story of how Rose's father worked in his shed, lovingly repairing and restoring furniture and occasionally quoting something poetic. The climactic passage in "Half a Grapefruit" concludes with Rose's initial understanding "that he would never be with her more than at the present moment," then looks ahead to observe that "The surprise to come was that he wouldn't be with her less" (W, p. 53). The flexibility in point of view, Munro's decision not to restrict the presentation of any given moment in Rose's life to how Rose thought of it simply at the time when she was experiencing it, deepens our understanding of the experience. In this instance, the burden of loss is also lightened, for the reader, because he is supplied with the foreknowledge, as it were, of the continually full

presence of Rose's father in her life as she too grows older.

This flexibility continues in the sudden disruption in the epilogue of "Half a Grapefruit." The narrative jumps ahead to a time many years later when Rose comes home--from where we do not yet know--"to see what was to be done about Flo" (W, p. 53). Rose's return coincides with the Centennial Year Reunion at the newly built high school, a ritualistic celebration that is tinged with all kinds of ironies. There is now a Ladies' Room containing a new, properly functioning, Kotex dispenser and recalling the renovations in the primary school toilets in the preceding story. The three boys of the scandalous tale that Rose told Flo earlier in the story have been transformed into respectable citizens, in the manner of the metamorphosis of Hat Nettleton at the end of the first story. The ringleader of the early sexual escapade, Horse Nicholson, in particular, has moved successfully into politics following a lucrative career as a contractor, and is now pronouncing "that what they needed was a lot more God in the classroom and a lot less French" (W. p. 54). This final joke is typical of Munro's work in the way that it suggests the constraining and possibly hypocritical protestantism of the area of rural Ontario with which she often deals.²⁷ Also typical is the way that the

joke renders the whole story more ambiguous, and its vision more complex, by doubling humour and irony.

III

"Wild Swans" marks a transition in space and time, from the rural Ontario matrix to urban life and from childhood to adulthood. Here Rose undergoes, in an unusual way, the initiation rite of a girl's first sexual experience. Her encounter is bizarre, and also ironic because it fulfills the warning contained in another of the gothic stories that Flo told Rose: "Watch out, Flo said as well, for people dressed up as ministers. They were the worst. That disguise was commonly adopted by White Slavers, as well as those after your money" (W, p. 55). The action of the story focusses on the molesting of Rose by a rather elderly man during Rose's first train trip by herself to Toronto, an act that Rose initially resists, then acquiesces to, and partly enjoys. However, the main level at which Munro deals with this encounter, her real pre-occupation in the story, has to do with the peculiar relations between imagination and reality, between mind and action--with how Flo's story and Rose's adolescent fantasies are fulfilled in the actual experience that Rose has, and with Rose's subsequent bewilderment about the truth of the man's identity and her own motivations.

As something--probably the stranger's newspaper, or is it his hand--touches her leg, Rose reflects that "She had a considerable longing to be somebody's object. Pounded, pleased, reduced, exhausted" (W, p. 61). Then, alarmed, Rose thinks of how "Her imagination seemed to have created this reality, a reality she was not prepared for at all" (W, p. 61). But Rose feels herself compelled to be the man's victim, to be his accomplice, by her own curiosity, a feeling "More constant, more imperious, than any lust" (W, p. 62). Not believing what is happening, and astounded by her own "greedy assent" (W, p. 63) to the act, Rose discovers pleasure and celebration through disgrace and beggary.

The parody, or deliberate stylistic excesses, in Munro's long and pointedly symbolic description captures the extremity of Rose's adolescent feelings and recalls her satire in Lives of Girls and Women of the euphemistic treatment of sex in some early twentieth-century fiction, particularly the symbolic use of a moving train.²⁸ Rose's sexual awakening is identified with the rites of spring, the rustling of ferns and the flowing of streams in the landscape through which the train passes. The ultimate release of Rose's sexual energies is symbolized wittily through the conventional Freudian symbols of the gates and the towers, the domes and the pillars, of the Exhibition

Grounds that come into view as they arrive in Toronto, and, more characteristically of Munro, through the repetition of an image presented earlier in the story, the wild swans of the title, and of the stranger's story (again, a story) to Rose:

The gates and towers of the Exhibition Grounds came to view, the painted domes and pillars floated marvelously [sic] against her eyelids' rosy sky. Then flew apart in celebration. You could have had such a flock of birds, wild swans, even, wakened under one big dome together, exploding from it, taking to the sky. (W, p. 63)

"The Beggar Maid" completes the transition from childhood to adulthood and from rural to urban life begun in "Wild Swans." Here Rose's search for self-definition reaches a crisis while she is attending university in London, Ontario and is faced with the crucial problem of whether to accept either of the contradictory roles forced upon her by Dr. Henshawe and Patrick Blatchford. Both of these people are implicitly asking Rose, "'Who do you think you are?'" (W, pp. 13, 196)--a question that is posed by Flo in the opening story and repeated by Miss Hattie Milton in the closing story, and that can be seen to bracket the entire volume.

Rose, who comes to university on a scholarship, is admonished frequently by Dr. Henshawe, the retired English professor with whom Rose boards, that she is a scholar and

should not waste her time attending social events like pep rallies, football games, and dances. This role seems to suit Rose, or at least part of her. "The buildings and the books in the Library were what pleased Rose most about the place," whereas noisy, student-promoted activities involving idiotic school cheers and songs "seemed to her inappropriate and distracting" (W, p. 72). However, Rose is distressed by the difference that she feels between ordinary students, whom she envies, and scholarship students like herself, who suffer under other people's expectations of them. As a result, when Patrick Blatchford takes a romantic interest in her, Rose is delighted, partly because Dr. Henshawe is always congratulating Rose on not being boy crazy. In becoming involved with Patrick, Rose is fulfilling a wish to be normal, although, as the narrator reveals, and as the elder Rose begins to understand many years later, this form of normalcy follows highly unrealistic, indeed chivalric, conceptions of behaviour and modes of conduct.

The storytelling or role-playing element that Munro sees as being so much a part of real life is prominent in the relationship between Patrick and Rose. Rose first presents herself to Patrick, albeit unconsciously, as the heroine of one sort of romantic story,²⁹ as "a damsel in distress" (W, p. 74), who was grabbed by the leg on the bottom floor of the library stacks (a molestation that

links up with the incident in the preceding story, "Wild Swans"). Because Rose "had to tell somebody" (W, p. 73) this story, and because the first person that she finds is Patrick in his carrel, she chooses to throw herself upon him. The relationship into which Patrick and Rose subsequently enter again involves the conventions of romance. Thus Rose "dimpled and sparkled and turned herself into a fiancée with no trouble at all" (W, p. 89), when women from the relatively poor (in terms of Patrick's family's fortune) upper level of society in Hanratty began to acknowledge her. For these ladies and for the as yet uncomprehending Rose, whose dream of wedded bliss is to turn quickly into a nightmare, the thought that she will be moving to British Columbia to live is described as adding "more magic to the tale" (W, p. 89).

Rose and Patrick dwell in a wholly romanticized world in which she accepts his false images of themselves as the "sharp and swarthy," "clever and barbaric," fiercely desirous and forceful King Cophetua and the "meek and voluptuous" (W, p. 77), helpless and grateful Beggar Maid in a painting by Edward Burne-Jones that Patrick mentions and Rose puzzles over.³⁰ In reality, as Rose recognizes at certain percipient moments, and as she will better understand later, Patrick is too insecure and needful of Rose's love, too apologetic and weak and boring, to come anywhere

close to resembling King Cophetua; and she is too high-spirited, playful, and ambitious to resemble the Beggar Maid.

Patrick is caught up with the idea of loving and marrying Rose; and unfortunately, because part of Rose likes the feeling of subjugation, she succumbs to the story. Her response is linked to the feeling of "humiliation and defeat" that she, at some level, apparently wished to partake of through inciting her father's beatings and "his final, sickened contempt" (W, p. 17). Her response is also linked to the feeling of "disgrace" or "beggary" (W, p. 63) that she greedily assented to in her sexual encounter with the mysterious stranger on the train to Toronto. A different part of Rose momentarily recognizes the double truth about Patrick's love for her: "It was a miracle; it was a mistake. It was what she had dreamed of; it was not what she wanted" (W, p. 77). "'I don't have to know what I want to know what I don't want!'" Rose exclaims to Patrick before breaking off their relationship--temporarily, as it turns out. "'I never loved you'" (W, p. 92). But a little later she succumbs to another romantic image of herself as the forgiving lover, a role that is a grave mistake, as she decides upon reflection many years later in the first of the two epilogues of the story. "She should have left him there" (W, p. 96), the narrator

and the elder Rose conclude brusquely, instead of forgiving him and consequently sacrificing her own freedom.

As opposed to Ralph Gillespie and to Simon, the men whom Rose will identify with most closely and love best, Patrick Blatchford definitely "was not a comedian; nothing could be further from his intentions" (W, p. 66). Ralph has a "good-natured face" (W, p. 200), which he distorts comically to mimic Milton Homer; and Flo has a potentially pretty face, which she cannot resist altering monkeyishly to make fun of "herself and others" (W, p. 9). By contrast, the face that Patrick makes at Rose, as described in the second of the two epilogues of the story, when they meet for a moment during the middle of the night at Toronto airport about nine years after they were divorced, is horribly and menacingly and, to Rose, unbelievably grotesque: "It was a truly hateful, savagely warning, face; infantile, self-indulgent, yet calculated; it was a timed explosion of disgust and loathing" (W, p. 96).

"The Beggar Maid" and "Mischief" stand at the centre of the volume as a complementary pair of stories depicting the growth and the demise of Rose's mismatched relationship with Patrick. "Mischief" focusses on Rose's extramarital relationship with Clifford, which begins at a party that Rose arrives at having "no idea that her life was going to be altered" (W, p. 98). The new relationship immediately gives Rose the feeling of being "transformed, invulnerable" (W, p.

109); and, subsequently, Rose's awareness of "the splendor of herself" (W, p. 113) is aroused, making her temporarily joyous. But when she meets Clifford at Powell River to consummate their affair and he rejects her, Rose is left with the feeling of "a whole wall crumbling in on her, rubble choking her" (W, p. 123) and with a sense that even her grief is a waste. At other times, Rose thinks that the affair, however wasteful and dishonourable, "was necessary, . . . was the start of wrecks and changes, the start of being where she is now instead of in Patrick's house" (W, p. 130). The story involves a reversal, or what Frank O'Connor in his description of the traditional short story calls the bending of an iron bar.³¹ Yet, like most of the other stories in Who Do You Think You Are?, "Mischief" is far from traditional in the way that it experiments with various perspectives and moves around in time.

By breaking from the conventional unity of time that a short story was traditionally thought to need to preserve,³² Munro is able to create both a sense of how an experience felt as it happened to Rose and a sense of the deeper meaning that an experience acquires when it is seen in connection with later developments in Rose's life. In this way, Munro presents a cluster of feelings, or, to use William H. New's description of the stories in Hood's Around

the Mountain, a prose tone-poem,³³ rather than a conventionally plotted story. The reader is left feeling "appalled and sad" (W, p. 132)--like Rose, when, years later in Toronto, Clifford finally makes love to her in the company of his wife, Jocelyn. The reader's feeling of pathos is intensified by the irony, also noted by Lawrence Mathews,³⁴ with which Munro handles Rose's deluded and sorry reflections at the end of "Mischief." Rose decides not to be angry at Clifford and Jocelyn for reawakening the "cold and hurtful need" for men "which for a while she had been free of," and not to be angry at them for having "made a fool of her, cheated her, shown her a glaring lack" (W, p. 132). Instead, Rose plans "to go on being friends with Clifford and Jocelyn," however debilitated and pathetic the relationship with them left her feeling, "because she needed such friends occasionally, at that stage of her life" (W, p. 132).

Once again in "Mischief," Munro constructs a story at least partly around shifting connections and contrasts. The personal background of Jocelyn's husband, Clifford--"the arthritic father, the small grocery store in a town in upstate New York, the poor tough neighborhood" (W, p. 110)--so nearly resembles Rose's impoverished upbringing in Hanratty that she and Clifford appear to be natural soul-mates. During their affair, Rose and Clifford are

also connected by the deceitfulness that they practise, most obviously towards their respective spouses. This approach contrasts sharply both with the openness that Jocelyn probably would have exhibited in a similar situation, had she fallen in love with a married man, and with the unselfconscious brazenness shown by Patrick as he expresses his prejudices at Jocelyn and Clifford's party. At one point, Jocelyn remarks to Rose about Patrick that "'He's quite a stunning type, really, isn't he?'" (W, p. 111) Like Patrick, who is heir to a department store chain, Jocelyn comes from a privileged background. Just as Patrick was disgusted when he visited Rose's home in Hanratty in "The Beggar Maid," here Jocelyn, although she expresses her feelings much more considerately than Patrick, takes an ironic view of Rose's pride in the education that she received at a college in Western Ontario.

When the two women first meet, however, Jocelyn is much poorer than Rose, who is made to "feel apologetic and embarrassed" about her recently acquired wealth simply by the way that Jocelyn "could say middle-class prosperity so viciously and despisingly" (W, p. 115). Yet, by the end of the story, Jocelyn has become wealthy herself, and revels in "flagrant consumerism. Jocelyn exhibits her new possessions in much the same way that Patrick, to Rose's disgust, would proudly show guests the illuminated fountain

of Neptune with a fig-leaf that he had placed in their garden and that he referred to, without irony, as "'our answer to the suburban swimming-pool mania!'" (W, p. 116) Rose and Jocelyn are drawn together initially, in a maternity ward, by their disdain for the housewifely preoccupations of the other women on the ward which they parody in a witty interchange culminating in, or descending to, the image of polishing their stoves with old snot. But gradually Rose and Jocelyn grow apart, partly because of the increasingly different perspectives that they have of Clifford once he and Rose begin their affair.

By going to Powell River in the hope of consummating her affair with Clifford, Rose undertakes the daring "transformation . . . , to enter on preposterous adventures in your own, but newly named, skin" (W, p. 64), that she dreamed of (and in a degrading way enacted) in "Wild Swans." The feeling of being "transformed, invulnerable" (W, p. 109) that Clifford's first advance gave her was completely an illusion. Thus at Powell River the image of acquiring a new skin is suddenly reversed, as Clifford sheds his skin for an older one:

Indeed, indeed, he looked as if he had shed a skin, and it was the skin that had hankered after hers. He was again the pale, and rather irritable, but dutiful, young husband she had observed paying visits to Jocelyn in the maternity ward. (W, p. 122)

The pain that this shedding causes Rose is anticipated by the use of the identical image, earlier in "Mischief," when Rose readies herself at home before departing for the expected assignation and accidentally burns her own skin by mistakenly pouring nail polish remover instead of baby oil over her body.

During an earlier conversation with Jocelyn, Rose thought of the old Clifford as merely "the Clifford Jocelyn knew, the same one she had always presented to Rose," about whom "Jocelyn could be mistaken" (W, p. 111). Later, in Powell River, as Rose looks at Clifford and sees not her lover but Jocelyn's husband, Rose recognizes to her sorrow that she too could be mistaken. The key question that emerges in the story here is one of perspective, an issue that also appears earlier in the conflicting ways that Rose and the party-goers view Patrick. Their scorn for him results in Rose's wish that she could get at and reveal to others the "simple, pure and trustworthy" person that she believed to be at "The core of Patrick" (W, p. 108) and that contrasted so strongly with the overbearing man with vile tastes and opinions. The reader learns that there are many sides to truth, as is also pointed out through Clifford's comment, some years later, about his relationship with Jocelyn:

"It's absolutely true I've wanted out ever since

I got in. And it's also true that I wanted in, and I wanted to stay in. I wanted to be married to you and I want to be married to you and I couldn't stand being married to you and I can't stand being married to you. It's a static contradiction." (W, pp. 127-28)

Rose's continued liking for Patrick, although she had to escape from him, and although he now detests her, re-affirms the paradoxical vision that we recognize as a special hallmark of this volume and of Munro's other fiction.

IV

Munro's work gives the impression that she would agree with the sentiments in the epigraph that Kent Thompson used in his novel Across from the Floral Park: "There is no bottom to Truth. No bottom at all. To any of them."³⁵ This impression continues in "Providence," where, as Rose prepares to leave Patrick, Munro emphasizes the paradoxical, perplexing nature of truth by confronting Rose with past images of the part of herself that was caught up, for a time, in the illusion of being in love with Patrick. His action of "putting fresh Scotch tape on the snapshots in the [family] album" (W, p. 133) suggests that he is still, at this moment, anxious to sustain the illusion. Rose observes Patrick, is angry with him, then notices a couple of the snapshots of herself: "pushing Anna on a swing in the park; herself smirking in a bikini; true lies"

(W, p. 133). Rose rejects these images of herself and reaches for a different identity. In the process, as retold in "Providence," she abandons Patrick, loses another lover, Tom (as she lost Clifford in "Mischief" and will lose Simon in the succeeding story), and finally lets go of her daughter Anna.

"Providence" ends as it begins, with Rose's images of her daughter. The story opens with Rose's dream of meeting Anna, who did not speak to her, and who "was covered with clay that seemed to have leaves or branches in it, so that the effect was of dead garlands. Decoration; ruination" (W, p. 133). In the dream, Anna resembles "a botched heavy-headed idol" (W, p. 133). These images of disfigurement and death, signifying the imminent rupture of their relationship, give way at the end of the story to another saddening picture, an image of incompleteness and removal. Rose is seen sifting through Anna's unfinished letters, as she cleans out their apartment in the mountain town in the Kootenays where Rose found work at a radio station, and prepares to depart for Toronto. But Rose's condition is really much better than it at first appears to be. She has made a passage. She has earned this departure.

Rose's position at this moment brings to mind the situation, in Lives of Girls and Women, of her much younger

counterpart Del Jordan, when she leaves Jubilee:

Now at last without fantasies or self-deception, cut off from the mistakes and confusion of the past, grave and simple, carrying a small suitcase, getting on a bus, like girls in movies leaving home, convents, lovers, I supposed I would get started on my real life.³⁶

Like Del, who rejects the roles represented by Jerry Storey, Naomi, and Garnet French, Rose must discard the images of herself offered by Flo, Dr. Henshawe, Patrick, Anna, and others. In "Providence," the breaks from Patrick, Tom, and Anna are painful to Rose. Yet, like the termination of her affair with Clifford in "Mischief," which came to be regarded, paradoxically, as the necessary beginning of Rose's escape from Patrick, these separations come to be seen not only as unfortunate acts of "fate" (W, p. 150), as Tom refers to the snowstorm that prevents Rose from meeting him in Calgary, but also as mysteriously "providential" acts, or blessings in disguise:

The windfall of coins that Anna receives from a pay telephone, at the exact moment when Rose's hopes of meeting Tom are finally crushed, seems at first to be only a devastatingly ironic comment on the capriciousness of fate, which brings "streaks of loss and luck" haphazardly, without any sense of justice:

"It's crazy," Rose said. She meant the idea of the money belonging to the phone company. She

was tired and mixed-up but beginning to feel temporarily and absurdly light-hearted. She could see showers of coins coming down on them, or snowstorms; what carelessness there was everywhere, what elegant caprice. (W, p. 150)

Yet, gradually, this unexpected bounty also comes to symbolize the blessing that a bewildering "Providence" has bequeathed to Rose, her release from dependence, in this case, on Tom. Rose and Anna play with the money at their kitchen table happily, and Rose is blessed with the feeling that this is "One of the few times, one of the few hours, when Rose could truly say she was not at the mercy of past or future, or love, or anybody" (W, p. 150).

In "Providence" and "Simon's Luck," Munro raises profound questions about the way that the universe is ordered and about the effects on people of forces beyond human power. Such concerns are appropriate to Rose's maturer years, at the age of thirty or thereabouts, when she leaves her husband, and when she thinks for the first time about how death could come to her. While she was still a teenager, Rose experienced the waning and eventual death of her own father; but only later, in "Providence," does she imagine herself dying, in an airplane accident:

She did think it would not be right to die that way, to crash in the mountains going to see Tom. She thought this, in spite of the fever she was in to go. It seemed too frivolous an errand to die on. (W, p. 143)

Like "Providence," "Simon's Luck" begins and ends rather sadly. The story opens with a picture of Rose feeling "lonely in new places," strolling outdoors and observing parties and family suppers, knowing "she wouldn't be long inside there . . . before she'd wish she was walking the streets" (W, p. 152), yet wanting to join nonetheless. These paradoxical attitudes are typical of Rose's predicament. As in the case of her broken relationship with her daughter, Rose experiences a sense of missing something important to her but also a growing sense that she might be more likely to fulfill herself while she is on her own. Rose continues to search for the hiding places of her power, although she often thinks that she is nearly powerless. She looks for the answer to the question posed by the book's title, for what she describes, in "Simon's Luck," as "a private balance spring, a little dry kernel of probity" (W, p. 170), on which her sanity, self-worth, and identity can securely rest. At the same time, Rose instinctively places protective layers around herself, but continually finds them ripped off, and her identity assaulted, by such people as the abusive young man and the faculty wife at the university party in Kingston where Rose meets Simon.

In "Simon's Luck," the site of Rose's rented quarters at a "crossroads village" (W, p. 160) is symbolic. At this point in her life, Rose believes that it is still

necessary to choose between slipping once again into a form of dependence, however much part of her would delight in an all-consuming love affair with Simon, and establishing an independent existence. Her father's beatings, Patrick's control, Clifford's rejection of her, and Tom's ready acceptance that their relationship was fated not to continue have combined to make Rose feel that with any man she would soon find herself in a position of being dominated and possibly humiliated. Even loving a kind, comical man like Simon--or so Rose thinks at the time--could prevent her from achieving and maintaining her personal identity:

. . . he would be the one who condemned and forgave and how could she ever know if he would forgive her again? Come here, he could tell her, or go away. Never since Patrick had she been the free person, the one with that power; maybe she had used it all up, all that was coming to her. (W, p. 169)

Rose flees west, it appears at first, because she is afraid that she has been jilted when Simon does not return following their initial glorious weekend. For half an hour, she again enjoys the total freedom that she had experienced many years earlier in the Kootenays, while playing with the coins found by Anna. Everything seems "bountifully clear" (W, p. 170) to Rose at this point in "Simon's Luck." But, in the epilogue of the story, her sense of the protection that she thinks she has built around herself, her sense of

her own power, and her feeling of security within a larger order ordained by providence, fate, or luck are subverted. Earlier in the story, Simon, who was born a Polish Jew, told Rose how "blessed and lucky" he, his older sister, and another boy had been in escaping from a train inspection in German-occupied France during World War II, but how Simon had not seen the others again. Upon hearing this story, Rose objected that what happened "'was only lucky for you'" (W, p. 160). The epilogue informs us about the final, cruelly ironic reversal in Simon's fate which Rose has only learned about accidentally. As a result, her view of life, as well as the vision of the book, darkens by several shades.

For the moment, however, when Rose enters the café in a prairie town within sight of the Cypress Hills, she recognizes a great, gladdening change in herself. At this point, Munro's story is unfolding principally through Rose's imaginings--rather than through narrated actions--as she fantasizes about possible developments in the story of herself and Simon. As Rose drives west, she has the impression that "a magnetic force" holding the tail end of her car alternately "ebbed and strengthened" (W, p. 169) but finally weakened and disappeared. Then Rose discovers that she is able to perceive objects as objects, as they truly are, without colouring them with her own subjective

feelings and reflections. She examines "the usual things there are behind café counters" and recognizes in the ordinary, unchanged "solidity" of the dishes a sign or an emblem of her own "changed state" (W, p. 170). As they are perfectly themselves, perceived by her "in a way that wouldn't be possible to a person in any stage of love" (W, p. 170), so Rose for the time being is totally herself, independent.

Rose concludes that "love removes the world for you, and just as surely when it's going well as when it's going badly" (W, p. 170). From this viewpoint,

it seemed to her it might not be the disappointment, the losses, the dissolution, she had been running from, any more than the opposite of those things; the celebration and shock of love, the dazzling alteration. Even if that was safe, she couldn't accept it. Either way you were robbed of something--a private balance spring, a little dry kernel of probity. So she thought. (W, p. 170)

The use of the word "seemed" and the addition by the narrator of the comment "So she thought" suggest the possibility that Rose's observations about love, and her assuredness, are open to ironic judgement or suspicion by the reader, or to later revision by Rose in the light of her further experience. Rose's assuredness grows as she becomes confident that "Luck was with her" (W, p. 171); and indeed she appears to be very fortunate, because right

after abandoning her job at an Ontario college to head west she wins an important role in a major new television series in Vancouver. But much is called into question or shaken by an unexpected turn of events a year or so later, when Rose accidentally meets the woman who pressed her during the party in Kingston about the high suicide rate for female artists. This woman mentions offhandedly that Simon died, from cancer of the pancreas. "'So sad,'" she says to Rose. "'Sad. He had it for a long time'" (W, p. 172).

In the remaining moments of "Simon's Luck," Munro causes the reader to reflect on the relations between different forms of art (some that distort, recalling Rose's opinion of the Katherine Mansfield story, and some that do not distort) and life. Rose ponders how in her current television series only certain events are deemed acceptable by the television audience. In the series, terrible events "always threatened to happen but they didn't happen, except now and, then to peripheral and unappealing characters" (W, p. 172). By contrast, Munro's story exposes the reader deliberately to disaster and to "those shifts of emphasis that throw the story line open to question, the disarrangements which demand new judgments and solutions, and throw the windows open on inappropriate unforgettable scenery" (W, pp. 172-73). "Simon's Luck" ends with a painful twist

in the story, a disarrangement--the belated news of the death of the hero--and with the heroine's ensuing frustration:

It was preposterous, it was unfair, that such a chunk of information should have been left out, and that Rose even at this late date could have thought herself the only person who could seriously lack power. (W, p. 173)

The end of the story of Rose's relationship with Simon alters her understanding of earlier parts of the story and leaves crucial questions open to the reader's speculation. Had Simon known about his illness when he met Rose? Did he abandon her selflessly so that she would not have to suffer through to its end with him? Is Rose drawn closer to Simon by her reaction to this news, by appreciating his selflessness and pitying his powerlessness? The ending also changes or deepens the view of providence, fate, or luck that Mauro has been developing throughout the story. Simon counted on his luck, and interpreted his mysterious escape, at the age of fourteen, from occupied France as a sign of perpetual good luck. But his good luck did not hold.

The view of life that emerged in "Providence" darkens considerably with the picture in "Simon's Luck" of a good, selfless, loving, comical man's unjust affliction. The vision of "Simon's Luck" is terribly disturbing, a harsh

portrait of the human condition, in which man stands precariously, nearly powerless, facing apparently indifferent or even absurd forces. It is a vision that challenges all of the happy-ending stories, like TV serials, whose myths we might prefer to live by but cannot, and, Munro is also suggesting, must not. In this way, Munro continues to cut away at the illusions on which we often base our positive expectations of reality--a destructive process on her part, one might say, but for the essential fact that ultimately, like a Beckett character perhaps, we are left with some sort of truth on which to stand, that "private balance spring," or "little dry kernel of probity" (W, p. 170). Like Spit Delaney sitting on his rock in Jack Hodgins' story "Separating" (to consider the positive dimension of that image), Rose has been reduced to the bare substance upon which a character may be able to build a worthwhile future.

In the following story, "Spelling," we enter an even more Beckett-like territory, a world on the other side of normalcy, as Rose encounters the deteriorating, possibly crazy, near-caricatures of humanity on the third floor of the Wawanash County Home for the Aged. To this place Rose must now take Flo, who, in the two years since Rose was last home to Hanratty, has slipped into senility. In Flo, and particularly in the old woman called Aunty whom Rose

meets at the Home, Rose is presented with images of "unaccommodated man," debilitated adults crouching in cribs and wearing diapers, truly "poor, bare, forked animal[s]" with a pathetically tenuous grip on reality: "Bodies were fed and wiped, taken up and tied in chairs, untied and put to bed. Taking in oxygen, giving out carbon dioxide, they continued to participate in the life of the world" (W, p. 183). Yet, surprisingly, it is here at the edge of unreality, at the extremity of human deterioration, that Rose discovers and delights in the most profound and instinctive of human feelings, the love or celebration of life that is signified here not by the larger desire to make up stories, but by the more elementary desire to master words, to articulate letters, that is a foundation of creative power.

Rose watches a nurse playing a game of spelling with Aunty. Excitedly, Rose says a word which Aunty spells too: "'C-E-L-E-B-R-A-T-E'" (W, p. 183). The blind old woman is "'a wonder'" (W, p. 183), as the nurse says; and the power that she holds onto and exhibits by spelling is a miracle worth celebrating. When Aunty spells a word, there is

Sometimes a long wait, a long wait between letters. It seemed she had only the thinnest thread to follow, meandering through that emptiness or confusion that nobody on this side can do more than guess at. But she didn't lose it, she followed it through to the end, however tricky the word might be, or cumbersome.

Finished. Then she was sitting waiting; waiting, in the middle of her sightless eventless day, till up from somewhere popped another word. She would encompass it, bend all her energy to master it. (W, pp. 183-84)

Here Rose makes a further discovery, in perceiving the incredible ability of human beings to maintain a sense of dignity even in the face of physical and mental decrepitude. Held preciously in Aunty's mind, each word, Rose speculates, must seem "marvellous and distinct and alive as a new animal" (W, p. 184). For Aunty, these words form "A parade of private visitors, not over yet" (W, p. 184), giving her, still, a grip on life. Characteristically, however, Munro has Rose consider another possibility about the words in Aunty's mind: "Did they carry their usual meaning, or any meaning at all?" (W, p. 184) Rose cannot know what is happening in the old woman's mind, just as she finds it difficult to communicate with Flo, or, later, has trouble talking with her childhood soul-mate Ralph Gillespie.

The new appreciation of human potential for dignity that Rose gains from meeting Aunty helps her to accept the necessity of putting Flo in the Home. In a dream, the night after touring the Home and seeing Aunty, Rose happily imagines Flo installed in a large, fancy, wicker bird-cage, "handsomely seated on a throne-like chair, spelling out words in a clear authoritative voice . . . and

looking pleased with herself, for showing powers she had kept secret till now" (W, p. 184). Rose has reconciled herself to Flo and to Flo's worsening condition, and in the process Rose has accepted a good deal of her own inheritance: her background, her family, and her mortality. Consequently, Rose can perform calmly, as she did at the end of "Providence," another ritual of re-ordering, "the horrifying clean-up that followed Flo's removal" (W, p. 187).

A little later, out at the Home, Flo and Rose joke together about a wig that Rose found while cleaning up and that Flo, in a moment of clarity, laughingly compares to a dead squirrel. Sticking the wig on herself, Rose is able "to continue the comedy" (W, p. 187)--even though she believes that Flo can feel "her death moving in her like a child" (W, p. 185), and even though, as the narrator comments ironically, Rose was mistaken in thinking that death would come as a quick relief for Flo. "Spelling" conveys darker overtones to the reader than are immediately comprehensible to Rose. But Rose has certainly managed, at last, to "remove herself from Flo's shade" (W, p. 186). Finally, like Marlow speaking to Kurtz's Intended in Heart of Darkness, but with considerably less irony on Munro's part than on Conrad's, Rose can comfort Flo with a lie, by saying that she had shown Flo's gallstones to Rose's father,

who was in fact long since dead.

Earlier, Rose succeeded in discarding Patrick and the identity that he had placed upon her. Now, she has reached farther back, and deeper, to escape the perceptions that Flo judged her by during childhood, and as recently as the time when the arthritic Flo wrote to tell Rose "Shame" (W, p. 186) after seeing her appear with one breast bare in a television production of The Trojan Women. By the time of the concluding story, therefore, Rose is finally free to respond directly to her own needs, to start to answer the question posed in the story's and the book's title, to try to establish a genuine identity of her own.

In "Who Do You Think You Are?" Munro introduces two significant characters. One is Milton Homer, the town fool, who is simple, comic, and free to take whatever risks he wishes. The other is Ralph Gillespie, Rose's childhood classmate, whose comic imitations or celebrations of the character of Milton Homer helped to stimulate Rose's own desire to act, and whose imitations Rose remembers, profitably, many years later. It is Ralph, when Rose meets him at the Legion immediately after putting Flo in the County Home, who indirectly eases Rose's sense of shame about how she may have fallen short in her perceptions and portraits of people, and who teaches Rose that her sympathy for these people makes her shortcomings less important.

Moreover, it is in remembering Ralph's imitations that Rose perceives a mirror image of her own identity, along with the meaning and the value of her own choice of vocation as an actress.

If Milton Homer and Ralph Gillespie had appeared in a Shakespearean comedy, they would have been "low characters" and would have been laughed at by their nobler contemporaries. Likewise, at earlier stages of her life, Rose would have dismissed Milton and Ralph or would have made fun of them to friends as being mentally, socially, or professionally inferior. However, as Rose now lovingly brings to mind stories and memories about these two figures, she seems at last to have absorbed the wisdom of Miss Hattie, one of Milton's aunts, who reprimanded Rose as a child for thinking that she was better than other people, and demanded, just as Flo had said to Rose sometime earlier, "'Who do you think you are?'" (W, pp. 13, 196) Now, Rose admits the validity of the question.

When Rose spoke to Ralph at the Legion,

She did not get much response . . . , though he seemed attentive, even welcoming. All the time she talked, she was wondering what he wanted her to say. He did want something. But he would not make any move to get it. Her first impression of him, as boyishly shy and ingratiating, had to change. That was his surface. Underneath he was self-sufficient, resigned to living in bafflement, perhaps proud. She wished that he would speak to her from that level, and she thought he wished it, too, but

they were prevented. (W, p. 205)

Now, in memory, Rose becomes aware of "a wave of kindness, of sympathy and forgiveness" that passed from Ralph to herself, "though certainly no words of that kind had been spoken" (W, p. 205). This fellow feeling helps to release Rose from thinking that "Everything she had done could sometimes be seen as a mistake" (W, p. 205).

The situation is reminiscent of the epilogue to Lives of Girls and Women. There Del Jordan is brought up short by "The ordinariness of everything"³⁷ at the Sherriffs' house, which previously was an object of her melodramatic imaginings; and she subsequently finds herself revelling in the desire to record the simple but amazing details of the town and the people of Jubilee. Bobby Sherriff, a sometime mental patient, is a social outcast, like the zany Milton Homer, and, in his later years, Ralph Gillespie, who is physically disabled by the war and is regarded as odd by newer residents of the town who mistake his comic imitations for craziness. But Del receives a unique offering from Bobby, when, after wishing Del good luck in her life, he removes the fork, napkin, and plate that she had been using:

With those things in his hands, he rose on his toes like a dancer, like a plump ballerina. This action, accompanied by his delicate smile, appeared to be a joke not shared with me so much

as displayed for me, and it seemed also to have a concise meaning, a stylized meaning-- to be a letter, or a whole word, in an alphabet I did not know.³⁸

Like this mysterious offering by Bobby Sherriff, or like the unexpectedly beautiful music that a retarded girl plays in "Dance of the Happy Shades," a piece "that carries with it the freedom of a great unemotional happiness"³⁹ and that strikes the narrator as a communiqué, a revelation, a miracle, a gift, a celebration, Ralph Gillespie's unspoken offering "of kindness, of sympathy and forgiveness" (W, p. 205) has an epiphanic effect. This blessing is so sacred to Rose that she refuses to spoil it by using it as material for another gossipy story. Instead, she will treasure it privately, although she now understands herself well enough to admit that "it was lack of material as much as honorable restraint that kept her quiet" (W, p. 206). The final effect of the story and of the book--to extend the reach of the religious metaphors that Munro is fond of using--is one of momentary communion, which Rose now enjoys for the first time, an attachment between herself and Ralph Gillespie that helps to repair the male/female rifts Rose has suffered through with Patrick, Tom (who reappears fleetingly in this story), and Simon.

At the very end of the book, while ruminating about Ralph's death and life, Rose pays tribute to their attach-

ment when she wonders, "What could she say about herself and Ralph Gillespie, except that she felt his life, close, closer than the lives of the men she'd loved, one slot over from her own?" (W, p. 206) This question emphasizes not only the communion between Rose and Ralph but also their separateness; and, quite typically of Munro's work, the passage also stresses the inadequacy of Rose's imagination, and of words particularly, to comprehend or to convey her feelings completely. Even now, Rose could not readily answer the question raised in the title of the final story and of the book. Yet she does appear to have established "a private balance spring, a little dry kernel of probity" (W, p. 170). Like Ralph Gillespie, Rose now seems "self-sufficient; resigned to living in bafflement, perhaps proud" (W, p. 205). Upon this centre, Rose's still-shifting identity may rest fairly securely, even when her present feeling of reconciliation is threatened or subverted again in the future. Like Spit Delaney and Phemie Porter in Spit Delaney's Island, Rose and Ralph have touched one another momentarily; and, like the questing consciousness of A North American Education, Rose has shored fragments of understanding against the ruins of her past and present. If the stories in Who Do You Think You Are? have seemed to be a series of endless departures for Rose, the book appears to end with an arrival.

Perhaps, in Rose's turning world, her greater openness to love and her stronger feeling of self-worth will be comfort and stability enough.

unit. The story cycle stimulates the same response, making readers perceive--indeed, half create--the intersections among the stories' orbits.

These intersections occur on several planes, which, as my analyses of Around the Mountain, Spit Delaney's Island, A North American Education, and Who Do You Think You Are? have shown, often vary considerably in both character and relative importance from one book to another. In her survey of about twenty-five Canadian story cycles, Linda M. Leitch, not surprisingly, finds "the organic unity usually arising from the manipulation of setting, characterization, narration and structure . . ."¹³ A fuller description of the complex and variable features that serve to unify story cycles might begin with what Laurie Ricou identifies, in Clark Blaise's two story cycles, as "a sustained sense of a world with a growing consciousness at its centre."¹⁴ This Jamesian idea of the "centre of consciousness"¹⁵ or Gérard Genette's more refined concept of the "focal character"¹⁶ is often a more useful key than the notion of characterization for understanding the organization of story cycles. In Laurence's A Bird in the House, characterization is important; but it is not central to A North American Education and it is almost irrelevant to Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town. However, these books, and others, are usefully approached

is also governed by a unifying myth. The calendar and Christian myth are essential to Hood's work. Hodgins' informing myth involves loss and recovery, the search for the true nature of reality. In Blaise's book, as in Stegner's, there is the myth of the return in search of personal identity. A related myth, a cycle of departure and return and subsequent departure in search of a new beginning, provides an underlying shape for Munro's book. For Blaise and Munro especially, writing is, in Ann Mandel's phrase, "a search for form."⁴ Or, to cite Ihab Hassan's description of "postmodern" writing in his seminal essay "POSTmodernISM: A Paracritical Bibliography," the forms of these books represent "the literary act in quest and question of itself."⁵

Among Canadian writers, the strongest spokesman for Postmodernism is Robert Kroetsch, who in 1972 co-founded Boundary 2: A Journal of Postmodern Literature. Kroetsch's Field Notes is one volume in a history of Canadian long or serial poems which parallels in many ways the history of Canadian story cycles. Like the story cycle, the discontinuous long poem has flourished in recent decades in Canada, although beginning about a decade earlier than its fictional counterpart with Jay Macpherson's The Boatman (1957) and James Reaney's A Suit of Nettles (1958). These poem cycles were succeeded in the 1960s by such works as

Reaney's Twelve Letters to a Small Town (1962) and The Dance of Death at London, Ontario (1963), Earle Birney's "November walk near False Creek mouth" (1964), Phyllis Webb's Naked Poems (1965), Dennis Lee's Civil Elegies (1968), and Don Gutteridge's Riel. A Poem for Voices (1968). As Michael Ondaatje states of a number of these poets in his introduction to The Long Poem Anthology, "These writers mapped out possible directions that became important to a new generation of poets."⁶ In the 1970s and early 1980s, then--as with the story cycle--an abundance of long poems followed, including Margaret Atwood's The Journals of Susanna Moodie (1970), Ondaatje's The Collected Works of Billy the Kid (1970), Gwendolyn MacEwen's Armies of the Moon (1972), bp Nichol's The Martyrology (1972-), Daphne Marlatt's Steveston (1974), Al Purdy's In Search of Owen Roblin (1974), Lee's The Death of Harold Ladoo (1976), Gutteridge's A True History of Lambton County (1977), D. G. Jones's "Kate, these flowers . . . (The Lampman Poems)" (1977), Stephen Scobie's McAlmon's Chinese Opera (1980), and Kroetsch's Field Notes (1981).

The most specific connection between any of these long poems and the story cycles that I have been discussing is between the calendrical structure of Reaney's A Suit of Nettles and that of Hood's Around the Mountain, both of which were modelled, though more extensively and more

explicitly in Reaney's case, on Spenser's The Shepherdes Calender.⁸ According to Hood, this structural principle is very Canadian, because of the marked shifts in climate that are experienced in Canada from one season to the next. Among story cycles other than Around the Mountain, Hood cites as an example the differences in Mariposa with the changing seasons as described by Stephen Leacock in the early pages of Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town.⁹ In addition, Robertson Davies has used the Gregorian calendar and the zodiacal calendar, respectively, as the structural bases for two of his sketch books, The Diary of Samuel Marchbanks and Samuel Marchbanks' Almanack.

The most significant comparison between the long poem and the story cycle is the way that both forms demand a strong imaginative response from their readers. Reaney emphasizes the importance of "The third eye" of the imagination--particularly the reader's--to an understanding of Macpherson's work.¹⁰ Germaine Warkentin, in an introduction to A Suit of Nettles, stresses that "Reaney wants us to engage in an act of creation by bringing . . . extremes together in a single unity."¹¹ More pointedly, in Robert Kroetsch's words, "The continuing poem makes / us / readers"¹²--enforcing our participation by inviting us to see connections between the lyric pieces or otherwise discontinuous components that make up the extended

unit. The story cycle stimulates the same response, making readers perceive--indeed, half create--the intersections among the stories' orbits.

These intersections occur on several planes, which, as my analyses of Around the Mountain, Spit Delaney's Island, A North American Education, and Who Do You Think You Are? have shown, often vary considerably in both character and relative importance from one book to another. In her survey of about twenty-five Canadian story cycles, Linda M. Leitch, not surprisingly, finds "the organic unity usually arising from the manipulation of setting, characterization, narration and structure . . ."¹³ A fuller description of the complex and variable features that serve to unify story cycles might begin with what Laurie Ricou identifies, in Clark Blaise's two story cycles, as "a sustained sense of a world with a growing consciousness at its centre."¹⁴ This Jamesian idea of the "centre of consciousness"¹⁵ or Gérard Genette's more refined concept of the "focal character"¹⁶ is often a more useful key than the notion of characterization for understanding the organization of story cycles. In Laurence's A Bird in the House, characterization is important; but it is not central to A North American Education and it is almost irrelevant to Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town. However, these books, and others, are usefully approached

through application of critical theories about the relations among the "implied author," the narrator, the "centre of consciousness" or the "focal character," the remaining characters, and the "implied reader."¹⁷

The "sustained sense of a world" that Ricou speaks of may refer to the reader's heightened sense of what is probable in a writer's unique fictional universe as the reader becomes more familiar with the author's work--for example, the "general principle" felt by Clark Blaise's hero that "whatever the comforting vision before him . . . something dreadful could suddenly cut him down without warning. Or not quite without warning: without defense."¹⁸ Ricou's phrase may also refer to the reader's awareness of a writer's genuine signature, the features of subject and technique, including cadence, tone, narrative strategy, imagery, and themes, that characterize an author's work. But often the "world" that the reader enters in individual story cycles refers more literally to a certain fictional community. In many books of stories, this sense of community is so strong that the reader ceases to view the book as a simple collection or miscellany. Such a response prompts Robertson Davies to say of Stephen Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town that

Although the term "sketches" suggests looseness of form, we find that the book must be read straight through; if we are to comprehend it

fully; chapters may be extracted, as they have been by more than one anthologist, but no chapter is wholly self-contained. Read it as a novel, and all the characters fall into a coherent pattern, and the strongest sense of the Little Town itself becomes so palpable that we know the Little Town to be the hero, the theme to which all else is contributory.¹⁹

The particular community in question may be a single street or quartier, as it is in Norman Duncan's The Soul of the Street, Gabrielle Roy's Street of Riches, Lawrence Garber's Tales from the Quarter, and Mordecai Richler's autobiographical book The Street. It may instead be a village, as in Duncan Campbell Scott's In the Village of Viger and Ernest Buckler's Ox Bells and Fireflies, or a town, as in Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town, W. O. Mitchell's Jake and the Kid, Laurence's A Bird in the House, and Munro's Lives of Girls and Women, or a city, as in Leacock's Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich and Hood's Around the Mountain. In some works-- whether non-fiction, fiction, or a mixture of the two-- the community presented may stretch to an entire district or a substantial region, as in Susanna Moodie's Roughing It in the Bush, Grove's Over Prairie Trails, Stegner's Wolf Willow, Charles Bruce's The Township of Time, George Elliott's The Kissing Man, and Hodgins' Spit Delaney's Island.

But in some story cycles the community may not be

geographical at all. It may be psychological, a community of experience rather than a community of place. "My interest is in 'tribalism' on the American continent, and in all groups who refuse amalgamation and prefer codes and taboos of their own,"²⁰ notes Clark Blaise, whose A North American Education and Tribal Justice Laurie Ricou calls the "epitome in Canadian literature" of the form of the "sequence-of-stories-as-novel."²¹ Blaise's two story cycles present a psychological community of outsiders. Similarly, in Joyce Carol Oates' Crossing the Border, there is a community of transients; and, in Margaret Gibson's The Butterfly Ward, there is the community of the so-called insane.

In addition to the authorial "world" and the narrative "consciousness" that Ricou pinpoints, various other structural techniques may be used to create a strong impression of unity in story cycles. One of the most crucial features is a book's title. Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life suggests a focus on place; whereas Who Do You Think You Are? suggests an interest in the question of personal identity. The titles Spit Delaney's Island and A North American Education point to concerns with the relation between place and human identity.

Hood's choice of title reflects his view that Montreal is "a natural allegory" or "icon."²² As Patricia Morley

has observed, the Montreal setting is appropriate because Hood sees human life as revolving around the religious experience and the moment of epiphany that mountains and mountain tops traditionally symbolize.²³ Mont Royal becomes in Hood's mythology a purgatorial mount like Dante's.²⁴ The title Spit Delaney's Island encapsulates the cohesive sense of community that readers find in Hodgins' stories, what David L. Jeffrey has called "The Island Mind."²⁵ The title A North American Education contributes to the reader's feeling that the experiences presented are chapters in the personal history of a single hero. Blaise's title also suggests that the Asian and European settings in "Going to India" and "Continent of Strangers" are, to use Marshall McLuhan's term, "anti-environments,"²⁶ which may help to define one's identity but which are not the native environment where one's identity is shaped.²⁷ The sardonic and argumentative tone of the title Who Do You Think You Are? conveys the pressures imposed by Flo and others as Rose struggles for self-expression and self-fulfilment. Munro's title, therefore, is a key to the dramatic structure of the book.

Among the most important organizing features of most story cycles are beginnings and endings. A number of collections begin by looking back to an older time: Hood's Flying a Red Kite ("Fallings from Us, Vanishings"),

Elliott's The Kissing Man ("An act of piety"), and Munro's Dance of the Happy Shades ("Walker Brothers Cowboy").

Usually the older time referred to is identified with the protagonist's childhood. Many story cycles begin with childhood or some version of innocence and end with wider experience, maturity, and frequently death. Examples include: Munro's Who Do You Think You Are?, Blaise's Tribal Justice, Alistair MacLeod's The Lost Salt Gift of Blood, Laurence's A Bird in the House, Scott's In the Village of Viger, and, among those books that move towards maturity but do not end with death, Hodgins' The Barclay Family Theatre, Buckler's Ox Bells and Fireflies, Lowry's Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place, and Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town. The books that proceed from childhood to death often create the impression of moving from light to darkness, a pattern that is perhaps best seen in the range of Ethel Wilson's Mrs. Golightly and Other Stories from the witty opening story, "Mrs. Golightly and the First Convention," through to the sad, spectral existence, and horrifying near-murder, of Mr. Willy in the closing story, "The Window."

A few volumes reverse these common patterns.

Elliott's The Kissing Man begins with a death (as does Hood's The Fruit Man, The Meat Man & The Manager) and ends with a birth (as does Margaret Atwood's Dancing Girls

& Other Stories). The Kissing Man moves from "sorrow" and "a terrible fear" to "hope" and a happy feeling of "connection."²⁸ This reverse movement from darkness to light is presented even more intensely through Hood's Dark Glasses in the progression from the infernal images of the gorilla mask and the detention centre in "Going Out as a Ghost" (which are developed from details in Canto xxix of Dante's Inferno) to the paradisaical image of sailing blissfully on a blue lake at the conclusion of "An Allegory of Man's Fate."²⁹

Sometimes story cycles end with a feeling of uneasiness and disillusionment, as in Blaise's Tribal Justice ("Among the Dead") and A North American Education ("Snow People"), Hood's The Fruit Man, The Meat Man & The Manager ("Who's Paying for This Call?") and Flying a Red Kite ("The End of It"), Munro's Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You ("The Ottawa Valley"), and Wilson's Mrs. Golightly and Other Stories ("The Window"). A little more frequently, story cycles end with transcendence or freedom (sometimes through coming to terms with death), celebration, or at least the comfort of survival, as in Hood's Around the Mountain ("The River behind Things"), Dark Glasses ("An Allegory of Man's Fate"), and None Genuine Without This Signature ("Doubles"), Hodgins' The Barclay Family Theatre ("Ladies and Gentlemen, The Fabulous Barclay

Sisters!") and Spit Delaney's Island (the title story), Buckler's Ox Bells and Fireflies ("Fireflies and Freedom"), Elliott's The Kissing Man ("The way back"), Lowry's Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place ("The Forest Path to the Spring"), Atwood's Dancing Girls & Other Stories ("Giving Birth"), MacLeod's The Lost Salt Gift of Blood ("The Road to Rankin's Point"), and Ray Smith's Lord Nelson Tavern ("Walk").

Other story cycles seem to conclude on the border between release and disillusionment: Munro's Who Do You Think You Are? and Dance of the Happy Shades, and Gibson's The Butterfly Ward, which end with their title stories, Laurence's A Bird in the House ("Jericho's Brick Battlements"), and Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town ("L'Envoi. The Train to Mariposa"). Leacock's book also stands as an example of another common characteristic in the conclusions to story cycles, the pattern of a return, in fact and also in memory, often to where the story cycle began, as a reader might expect from the use of the term "story cycle." This pattern of return is prominent in Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town and also figures in Munro's Who Do You Think You Are? ("Spelling" and "Who Do You Think You Are?") and Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You ("The Ottawa Valley"), Blaise's A North American Education ("Snow People"), Hood's Around the

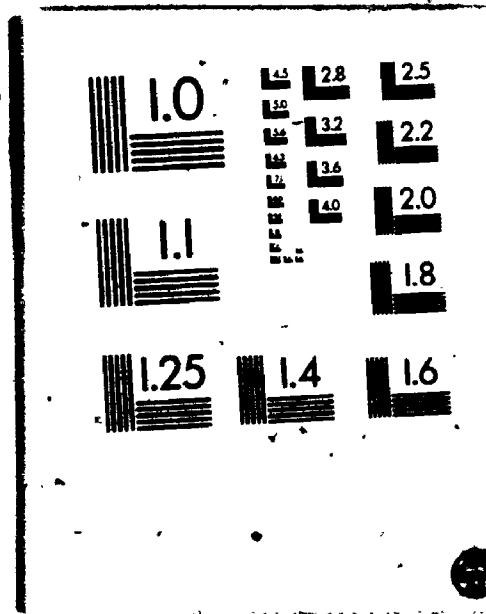
Mountain ("The River behind Things"), Hodgins' Spit Delaney's Island (the title story) and The Barclay Family Theatre ("Ladies and Gentlemen, The Fabulous Barclay Sisters!"), Laurence's A Bird in the House ("Jericho's Brick Battlements"), Buckler's Ox Bells and Fireflies ("Fireflies and Freedom"), MacLeod's The Lost Salt Gift of Blood ("The Road to Rankin's Point"), and Elliott's The Kissing Man ("The way back").

A more obvious formal device for beginning and ending a story cycle is the use of a frame or frames, as in Hodgins' Spit Delaney's Island, with the two stories about Spit Delaney, and in Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town, where the intermediate episodes dealing with different subjects (financial affairs, social affairs, religion, love, and politics) are bracketed first by the stories of Mr. Smith's hostelry and candidacy and secondly by the prologue and the epilogue. Leacock's book begins with the simple title "The Hostelry of Mr. Smith" and ends with the more formal title "L'Envoi. The Train to Mariposa." Whether identified officially or not, prologues and, more frequently, epilogues are useful integrating devices in such works as Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town, Stegner's Wolf Willow ("Epilogue: False-Front Athens") and Munro's Lives of Girls and Women ("Epilogue: The Photographer").

Another important feature in the structure of some story cycles is the use of numerical arrangements in planning a volume or dividing it into parts. The number of stories placed in each section of Blaise's two story cycles (three, three, and four in A North American Education and five, four, and three in Tribal Justice) contributes to the pattern of rhetorical or dramatic weights in each book: the force of "The Thibidault Stories," ending with a novella, in A North American Education; and the brief acceleration of the last stories, culminating with the final emblem of cars, "in cautious pursuit, rushing to embrace the city,"³⁰ in Tribal Justice. In Leon Rooke's Death Suite, the three "Murder Mystery" sections are placed at equal intervals, with two stories on either side of them.

On a somewhat larger scale, Blaise's two story cycles and Hodgins' Spit Delaney's Island are divided into three sections whose arrangement defines the overall development of each work: a pattern of return, in A North American Education; a journey from childhood to maturity or from dreams to disillusionment in Tribal Justice; and a movement from struggle through defeat to the hope of redemption in Spit Delaney's Island. Very occasionally, as in the twelve calendrically oriented segments in Hood's Around the Mountain, every unit in a story cycle participates in a

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precise numerical arrangement. Hood considers the "metaphorical structure" of chapters in fiction to be the same as the movement in short stories;³¹ and, in a comment about chapters, he observes that

Chapters for me are, first, numerical devices, and they're all built around the meditations on 1, 3, and 12, and 4, and 7 I will instinctively tend to cast a work into patterns based on those numbers. You'll say, "That's crazy!" It may be crazy; but it's very deep in Western thought.³²

Thus in the case of Spit Delaney's Island, Hodgins' three-part structure rests on the archetypal pattern of life, death, and resurrection.

Along with the authorial "world" and the narrative "consciousness" that Ricou centres on, and the structural elements (titles, beginnings and endings, frames, prologues and epilogues, and numerical arrangements) that I have just discussed, some other factors are of importance to the unity of story cycles: characterization, themes, imagery, and narrative techniques. In A Bird in the House, for example, Laurence uses the device of a principal character, Vanessa MacLeod, whose development through the book can be measured to a large degree by her changing view of death. This pattern begins in the first story with the romanticized version of the death of Old Jebb that Vanessa plans to use in her story The Pillars of the Nation, then moves to the

near death of Vanessa's mother in childbirth and the memory of the death of Vanessa's father's younger brother, Roderick, in the second story. These references are followed by the death of Grandmother Connor in "Mask of the Bear," the death of Vanessa's father, Ewen, in the fourth and title story, the death of Piquette Tonnerre in the next story, and the death of Grandfather Connor in the final story. The use of A Bird in the House as the title of the whole collection, recalling the unsettling adage "'A bird in the house means a death in the house'"³³ that Noreen quotes to Vanessa in the title story, stresses the importance of death as a thematic centre of the volume.

This superstitious maxim contains the central image of the book, houses--suggesting especially the Brick House, the awesome "monument,"³⁴ as Vanessa reflects at both the beginning and the ending of the work, of Grandfather Connor, of his fortitude, his repressiveness, and his legacy. There is also the MacLeod house, of which Vanessa's father, Ewen, remarks, "'It's the damned house all the time. I haven't only taken on my father's house, I've taken on everything that goes with it, apparently.'"³⁵ "'A bird in the house means a death in the house'" also contains a favourite image of Laurence's, birds, which recur in different stories, usually in connection with themes of captivity and freedom, and thereby add another

unifying rhythm to the book. Another primary image and theme in the volume is unmasking, the largely unwanted glimpses that the young Vanessa has of secret emotional depths in the lives of her father, her mother, Grandmother MacLeod, Aunt Edna, Piquette, Grandmother Connor, and, as shown by "Mask of the Bear," Grandfather Connor. Laurence's double perspective of child and adult is a consistent technique that also enhances the unity of A Bird in the House.

The use of recurring characters other than a main character, which is an important unifying feature of A Bird in the House, also occurs in story cycles that do not possess a principal character, such as Munro's Dance of the Happy Shades, where the characters of a young girl and her younger brother recur in different stories. Dance of the Happy Shades and, even more so, the apparently miscellaneous collection Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You, occupy places near the opposite end of the story cycle spectrum from the novelistic Lives of Girls and Women. Yet all of the stories in Dance of the Happy Shades are strongly connected by images of light and shadow, and, usually, by the feeling of "distances you cannot imagine,"³⁶ of people and ways of life receding, becoming shades, dying, and always coming to seem more complex.

Several of the stories in Something I've Been Meaning

To Tell You, including the opening title story and the finale, "The Ottawa Valley," involve mystery or secrecy in their subjects and in the telling, the psychological and the literary "tricks" and "trap doors"³⁷ that Munro comments on at the end of "Tell Me Yes or No." In a review of Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You, John Orange identifies several other linking themes, which "recur often enough to nudge the reader into thinking about the unity in the diversity."³⁸ These themes include: pre-adolescent and adult sexual relationships that leave the females feeling "betrayed, hurt, disappointed, jilted, wounded" by the males; "the problems many elderly people must confront when they come into contact with various fashionable sub-cultures and cults and changing values"; the view expressed in the title story "'that the qualities of legend were real, that they surfaced where and when you least expected'"; and the complaint by different narrators "about the inadequacy of words to capture reality and about the way life itself doesn't really have a plot."³⁹ Even such an apparently diverse collection of stories as Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You, therefore, has, as Orange concludes, "a kind of coherence beneath the surface."⁴⁰ Neither Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You nor Dance of the Happy Shades exhibits the uniformity in technique and point of view found in Lives of Girls and

Women and Who Do You Think You Are?. Still, Munro's two relatively miscellaneous collections do possess a kind of structural consistency, based not on a principle of continuity but on a principle of variation--an alternation, as Munro has explained, between more personal and less personal stories.⁴¹

The final characteristic that I wish to discuss is narrative voice--an essential quality in short story writing, as John Metcalf's fine anthology The Narrative Voice attests, and a central factor in assessing the degrees of unity in different collections of stories, including the four principal story cycles analyzed in this study. Hood says of Around the Mountain that

I wanted to write a pastoral about Montreal which would be half-way between the Mariposa treatment and the Brechtian treatment of London as an infernal and inverted pastoral. My Montreal is never hellish or infernal, and at the same time it's never purely an innocent village where Belinda and Chloe and Daphnis sport themselves on the green. It looks in various ways. I would say that the story "A Green Child"--where the narrator talks about the vision of the city of Antonioni . . . and the narrator also has an actual descent into the underworld there on the street which is called rue Valombre, the Valley of the Shadow--that's as close as I come to an infernal view of the city. I think probably part of the last story--where they're driving, out on the west-island, the narrator with his son--is about as innocent a piece of pastoral as there is in the book. There are disasters, and then there are felicities.⁴²

At this point in his remarks, Hood centres on the question of tone that has involved critics of Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town:

It's odd how consistently the discussion of Sunshine Sketches turns on whether it was meant maliciously or not. There are two ways of looking at it: you can see it as a killing satire on the Orillians; or you can see it as gentle and kindly. In fact, what you have to do is see it as either or both because the work just has those possibilities in it.⁴³

Likewise, Kent Thompson opens his review of Laurence's A Bird in the House by remarking "that the use of a narrator and the function of the narrative voice are becoming increasingly common and increasingly important in contemporary writing."⁴⁴ Thompson adds the following comments about the advantages of the way that Laurence has used her narrator:

For one thing, she has employed the device of the double-perspective. The author is telling these admittedly autobiographical short stories from the point of view of an adult who was once a child named Vanessa. By her complete control of the method, Margaret Laurence has avoided the usual dangers of this method--the danger of betraying the child's perspective by imposing judgements and thereby rewriting history and the danger of betraying the present by nostalgia --and has accomplished the virtues inherent in the method. That is, the adult narrator learns from what the child experienced and failed to understand. Vanessa sees things but Mrs. Laurence sees the significance of things. And she has wisely chosen to call the child "Vanessa" rather than "Margaret" because Margaret Laurence is here not writing autobiography, but fiction, and using fictional methods to evoke significance.

And by being the teller telling the tale, Margaret Laurence has invoked both the verbal range and the judgement which a camera, recorder of pictures, cannot. The significance of the story is as much in the telling as in the story.⁴⁵

Laurence's use of narrative voice in A Bird in the House takes the reader close to the "responsive vocal style" that George Bowering praises in A Jest of God, where Laurence creates "the voice in the ear pursuing Rachel's mind even into the deep places where the most superior fiction (Joyce, Beckett, etc.) comes from."⁴⁶

The narrative voice that the reader hears in Around the Mountain, Spit Delaney's Island, A North American Education, and Who Do You Think You Are? helps to unify the impression created by each volume, regardless of variations in tone or point of view. In the work of Hugh Hood, as he acknowledges, the narrative voice is reminiscent of Romantic conversation poems,⁴⁷ or, in John Metcalf's phrase, "something like heightened conversation."⁴⁸ John Orange speaks of the "Infectious exuberance" that characterizes Jack Hodgins' voice, of how "The pacing of the prose, the surprising turns of events, the colloquialisms in both dialogue and narration, the burlesque humour (including parody), combined with a sometimes wry, sometimes sardonic irony keep the reader always entertained, and above all alert and curious."⁴⁹ The narrative voice in Clark Blaise's writing, as Metcalf observes of

Blaise's reading style, conveys a "feeling of contained power," of urgency, that tightens its grip relentlessly on the reader.⁵⁰ In the case of Alice Munro, the voice that we consistently hear, as Robert Weaver says of Dance of the Happy Shades, is "lyrical, often melancholy, and always marvellously distinctive and alive."⁵¹

As the range in unity of Alice Munro's books suggests, a broad gradation of story cycles stands between the boundaries delimited by the form of the short story miscellany on one side and the form of the novel (or the discontinuous, but single, fictional narrative such as Rudy Wiebe's The Blue Mountains of China and Michael Ondaatje's Coming Through Slaughter) on the other side. Typically, the components of each cycle are autonomous, self-contained units, whether the book is somewhat unified, like Spit Delaney's Island, or highly unified, like Around the Mountain. The most obvious sign of this autonomy--a matter of slight artistic carelessness in the newly created book--appears when a story includes information that is necessary for understanding the story when it is read separately, but that is unnecessary in the larger context because the details are given in an earlier story in the volume. A Bird in the House, Lives of Girls and Women, Who Do You Think You Are?, possibly A North American Education, and perhaps the final story in Spit Delaney's

Island contain minor defects of this kind. This question would probably never arise in deliberately "composed" cycles. Nor would it usually pertain to the distinguishable materials in the stories in most "arranged" cycles. But the overlapping of subjects between stories in most "completed" cycles creates a situation in which this problem occurs, when these works have not been revised or edited sufficiently.

The stories in Around the Mountain, Spit Delaney's Island, A North American Education, Who Do You Think You Are?, and in most other story cycles are completely or nearly autonomous. In a few examples verging on the novelistic edge of the story-cycle spectrum, however, the sections are not very autonomous. Lives of Girls and Women, as Munro has observed, consists of stories that are largely dependent and fuller than usual. Although composed essentially as stories, because that is the only way that Munro can write successfully, these function more as chapters of an episodic novel."⁵² Similarly, the final form of Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town (most notably, the frequent use of the rather artificial convention of a curtain at the end of individual sketches for the purpose of creating suspense, along with the use of two triptychs focussing successively on Dean Drone and Peter Pupkin) owes a great deal to the book's composition,

and initial publication, as a serial in the manner of Leacock's master, Charles Dickens.⁵³

Munro herself, in the interview by Carole Gerson, addresses the fallacious notion of a short story writer as a failed novelist.⁵⁴ As Donald Cameron has shown in his book Faces of Leacock, this misconceived criticism has marred Leacock's reputation considerably.⁵⁵ Nor does the adjuration about Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town by Robertson Davies, to "Read it as a novel,"⁵⁶ help. A strong defense for the writer of short fiction is contained in the essay "The Amazing Genius of O. Henry," which appeared in Leacock's Essays and Literary Studies (1916) not long after Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town (1912) and Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich (1914), his most powerfully unified books. Davies has commented that Leacock's "temperament disposed him to comment on the world as a humorist."⁵⁷ Leacock's creative temperament likewise disposed him to write short sketches, which he collected in miscellanies, or organized into small groups within individual volumes, or designed in book-length units. Leacock's defense of O. Henry's method, therefore, may be read as a self-apology, for Leacock's insights into the nature of O. Henry's achievement were clearly the product of an intense sympathy:

O. Henry wrote in all two hundred short stories

of an average of about fifteen pages each. This was the form in which his literary activity shaped itself by instinct. A novel he never wrote. A play he often meditated but never achieved. One of his books--Cabbages and Kings--can make a certain claim to be continuous. But even this is rather a collection of little stories than a single piece of fiction. But it is an error of the grossest kind to say that O. Henry's work is not sustained. In reality his canvas is vast. His New York stories, like those of Central America or of the west, form one great picture as gloriously comprehensive in its scope as the lengthiest novels of a Dickens or the canvas of a Da Vinci. It is only the method that is different, not the result.⁵⁸

The essential goal for criticism of the short story and the story cycle must be to consider these forms on their own terms, not according to the criteria of forms like the novel or the prose epic. With caution, one may be able to accept the view of short and long narrative forms expressed by Hugh Hood:

I see myself as a Canadian artist in the sense that I am helping to provide the country with its most meaningful self-expression, and I think that this is done more in fiction, not necessarily in prose fiction, but Homeric narrative, epic cycle. I think traditionally the long narrative form of art has been the great means for a culture or society to express itself. The short story is really only a part --just like the parts of an epic cycle, the short stories about Diomedes or Ulysses that group themselves around the main narration. The central narration must be of considerable magnitude; it must involve a long journey or a long passage of time or something like that. This, of course, brings us very close to myth. I think of myself as an artist who is helping to make, helping to develop the Canadian

literary myth.⁵⁹

Still, one must never lose sight of the unique virtues and achievements of the short story and the story cycle. Furthermore, one must resist the possible implication of this view, that a fiction writer who composes only in the minor keys of the short story or the story cycle and never in the major keys of the novel or the prose epic is remaining an apprentice rather than becoming a master. Certainly, Hood's own decision to develop his art of the short story while writing his prose epic, The New Age, has provided several impressive reminders--such as "Going Out as a Ghost" and "The Woodcutter's Third Son"⁶⁰--that the value of a short story may be as great as that of a longer narrative. Indeed, it is now more widely recognized that an author may compose only short fiction and be a major writer, as André Maurois has observed of Jorge Luis Borges.⁶¹

Canadian short stories and story cycles, as well as the sketches and the sketch books that feed into a Canadian tradition of short fiction, include remarkable achievements of their own. Some of the most deservedly famous works in Canadian literature--such as Thomas Chandler Haliburton's The Clockmaker, Susanna Moodie's Roughing It in the Bush, and Stephen Leacock's Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town--belong to this broad category, and provide a rich background

for contemporary story cycles. In addition, this flexible form has often been a suitable vehicle for expressing two of the strongest tendencies in Canadian literature: the impulse towards autobiography and the impulse towards documentary,⁶² as exemplified by Hugh Hood's Around the Mountain. On the level of technical accomplishment or artistic excellence alone, rather than mere cultural significance, the story cycle offers a unique artistic blend, as Kent Thompson found in Margaret Laurence's A Bird in the House, a combination of considerable breadth of material and sharpness of focus.⁶³ Together, works like these signify the emergence of a recognizable Canadian tradition, a valuable genre requiring a unique way of reading and an appropriate mode of criticism.

There are, then, important organic forms of fiction that one would not call novels, including experimental works like Michael Ondaatje's Coming Through Slaughter. In the case of the story cycle, its usually autonomous units acquire considerably more resonance and significance when they are collected, so that the overall effect is larger than one might expect a simple combination of parts to have. However, as Charles Dickens wisely observed about the sketches comprising The Pickwick Papers, the reader must first recognize that ". . . what they are they were designed to be."⁶⁴ Story cycles must be read whole

and they must be read creatively. As Michael Ondaatje comments in his introduction to The Long Poem Anthology, "We can come back to these fragile drawings again and again, taking another look, discovering something new, not hearing what we heard the first time we read [them]." ⁶⁵ Readers, too, in Jay Macpherson's phrase, make "a Cosmos of miscellany"; ⁶⁶ and story cycles, like long poems, require active readers.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹ These authors are listed chronologically by year of birth, or alphabetically by surname if two or more authors were born in the same year. For an alternate listing of fifty Canadian short story writers, see Geoff Hancock, "Pure Fiction: A Six Month Course in Fiction Writing," Canadian Author & Bookman, 55, No. 4 and 56, No. 1 (Summer/Fall 1980), 28.

² Hugo McPherson, "Fiction 1940-1960," in Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, gen. ed. and introd. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 720-21.

³ Wayne Grady, Preface, in The Penguin Book of Canadian Short Stories, ed. and pref. Wayne Grady (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1980), p. vi.

⁴ Hugh Hood, The Fruit Man, The Meat Man & The Manager (Ottawa: Oberon, 1971), [p. 6].

⁵ Letter received from John Metcalf, 13 Aug. 1979.

⁶ The three stories in Thompson's trilogy are "What Costume Shall the New Man Wear?", "I Live in Canada," and "The Death Party." See The Fiddlehead, No. 93 (Spring 1972), pp. 69-100.

⁷ The six stories in Gallant's "Linnet Muir" sequence are "In Youth Is Pleasure," "Between Zero and One," "Varieties of Exile," "Voices Lost in Snow," "The Doctor," and "With a Capital T." For bibliographical information about the initial publication of these stories, see Douglas Malcolm, "An Annotated Bibliography of Works by and about Mavis Gallant," Canadian Fiction Magazine, No. 28 (1978), p. 123. This sequence has been collected in Mavis Gallant, Home Truths: Selected Canadian Stories (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1981).

⁸ The eight stories in Metcalf's sequence "The Geography of Time" are "Early Morning Rabbits," "The Beef Curry," "Just Two Old Men," "A Process of Time," "The Happiest Days," "Geography of the House," "A Toy Called Peter Dog," and "Consequences." See Prism international, 4, No. 1 (Summer 1964), 6-30; and Prism international, 4, No. 2 (Fall 1964), 28-43.

⁹ William H. New, "Fiction," in Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, gen. ed. and introd. Carl F. Klinck, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), III, 258.

¹⁰ See Kristen Egener Chaddah, "Narrator and Protagonist: An Appraisal of the Two Voices in Susanna Moodie's Roughing It in the Bush," M.A. Thesis Western Ontario 1978; Donald Cameron, Faces of Leacock: An Appreciation (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967); Douglas O. Spettigue, Frederick Philip Grove (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969); Desmond Pacey, Ethel Wilson (New York: Twayne, 1967); Gregory M. Cook, ed. and introd., Ernest Buckler (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972); Alan R. Young, Ernest Buckler (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); Lorraine McMullen, Sinclair Ross (Boston: Twayne, 1979); William H. New, Malcolm Lowry (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971); Elspeth Buitenhuis, Robertson Davies (Toronto: Forum House, 1972); Judith Skelton Grant, Robertson Davies (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978); Geoff Hancock, ed., Canadian Fiction Magazine, No. 28 (1978); Grazia Merler, Mavis Gallant: Narrative Patterns and Devices (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1978); Clara Thomas, The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975); William H. New, ed. and introd., Margaret Laurence (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977); Victoria G. Hale, "Elements of Literary Tradition and Myth in the Novels and Sketches of Hugh Hood: An Examination," M.A. Thesis Sir George Williams 1971; J. R. (Tim) Struthers, ed., Before the Flood: Our Exagmination round His Factification for Incamination of Hugh Hood's Work in Progress (Downsview, Ont.: ECW, 1979); and Linda [M.] Leitch, "Alice Munro's Fiction: Explorations in Open Forms," M.A. Thesis Guelph 1980.

¹¹ See S. L. Dragland, Introduction, in In the Village of Viger and Other Stories, by Duncan Campbell Scott (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), pp. 10-13; Dennis Duffy, "George Elliott: The Kissing Man," Canadian Literature, No. 63 (Winter 1975), pp. 52-63; William H. New, "Godfrey's Book of Changes," Modern Fiction Studies, 22 (Fall 1976), 375-85; Lawrence Garber, "Exploring Ray Smith's Labyrinth," rev. of Lord Nelson Tavern, by Ray Smith, Books in Canada, June-July 1974, pp. 12, 15-17; and Douglas Barbour, "Ray Smith: Some Approaches to the Entrances of Lord Nelson Tavern," Open Letter, 3rd ser., No. 5 (Summer 1976), pp. 50-64.

¹² William H. New, Among Worlds: An Introduction to Modern Commonwealth and South African Fiction (Erin, Ont.: Porcépic, 1975), pp. 116-17 and "Fiction," in Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, 2nd ed., III, 258.

13 Linda [M.] Leitch, "Alice Munro's Fiction: Explorations in Open Forms," pp. 8-47, 173-77.

14 For a complete listing of criticism and interviews by Fulford, Duffy, Hale, Thompson, Cloutier, and Morley to the end of 1978, see J. R. (Tim) Struthers, "A Bibliography of Works by and on Hugh Hood," in Before the Flood, pp. 262-94.

15 David L. Jeffrey's essay "Jack Hodgins and the Island Mind" was published in Book Forum, 4 (1978), 70-78. Subsequently, Robert Lecker's essay "Haunted by a Glut of Ghosts: Jack Hodgins' The Invention of the World" and Susan Beckmann's essay "Canadian Burlesque: Jack Hodgins' The Invention of the World" appeared in Essays on Canadian Writing, No. 20 (Winter 1980/81), pp. 86-105 and pp. 106-25.

16 See Frank Davey, "Clark Blaise," in his From There to Here: A Guide to English-Canadian Literature Since 1960, Our Nature--Our Voices, Vol. II (Erin, Ont.: Porcépic, 1974), pp. 55-57; and Frank Davey, "Impressionable Realism: The Stories of Clark Blaise," Open Letter, 3rd ser., No. 5 (Summer 1976), pp. 65-74. "Crossing Borders," an essay by Russell M. Brown on Blaise, Kroetsch, and Oates, "The Short Fiction of Clark Blaise," an essay by Robert Lecker, and "A Conversation with Clark Blaise," by Barry Cameron have been accepted for publication, however, in Essays on Canadian Writing.

17 Kent Thompson, rev. of A Bird in the House, by Margaret Laurence, The Fiddlehead, No. 84 (March-April 1970), p. 108; rpt. in Margaret Laurence, ed. and introd. William H. New (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), pp. 152-53.

18 Kent Thompson, rev. of A Bird in the House, in Margaret Laurence, p. 153.

19 Kent Thompson, rev. of A Bird in the House, in Margaret Laurence, p. 152.

20 Margaret Laurence, "Time and the Narrative Voice," in The Narrative Voice: Short Stories and Reflections by Canadian Authors, ed. and introd. John Metcalf (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), pp. 127-28; rpt. in Margaret Laurence, ed. and introd. William H. New (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), p. 158.

21 Kent Thompson, rev. of A Bird in the House, in Margaret Laurence, p. 153.

- 22 Kent Thompson, rev. of The Fruit Man, The Meat Man & The Manager, by Hugh Hood, The Fiddlehead, No. 92 (Winter 1972), p. 116.
- 23 Kent Thompson, rev. of The Fruit Man, The Meat Man & The Manager, p. 116.
- 24 Kent Thompson, rev. of The Fruit Man, The Meat Man & The Manager, p. 116.
- 25 Kent Thompson, rev. of The Fruit Man, The Meat Man & The Manager, p. 116.
- 26 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, in Before the Flood, pp. 42-46.
- 27 Letter received from Hugh Hood, 27 April 1981.
- 28 Letter received from Hugh Hood, 27 April 1981.
- 29 Kent Thompson, "The Canadian Short Story in English and the Little Magazines: 1971," World Literature Written in English, 11, No. 1 (April 1972), 21.
- 30 Letter received from Kent Thompson, 27 Aug. 1975.
- 31 Kent Thompson, Letter to Linda M. Leitch, 10 March 1978, as quoted in Linda [M.] Leitch, "Alice Munro's Fiction: Explorations in Open Forms," p. 41.
- 32 Clark Blaise and John Metcalf, Introduction, in Here & Now: Best Canadian Stories, ed. and introd. Clark Blaise and John Metcalf (Ottawa: Oberon, 1977), [p. 5].
- 33 Raymond Knister, "Introduction: The Canadian Short Story," in Canadian Short Stories, ed. and introd. Raymond Knister (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1928), p. xix.
- 34 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, pp. 25-26.
- 35 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 50.
- 36 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, pp. 52-53.
- 37 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 26.

38 Fred Cogswell, "Literary Activity in the Maritime Provinces 1815-1880," in Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, 2nd ed., I, 120.

39 Fred Cogswell, "Haliburton," in Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, 2nd ed., I, 109-10.

40 Linda [M.] Leitch, "Alice Munro's Fiction: Explorations in Open Forms," p. 8.

41 Linda [M.] Leitch, "Alice Munro's Fiction Explorations in Open Forms," p. 29.

42 The Diary of Samuel Marchbanks and The Table Talk of Samuel Marchbanks were followed twenty years later by a third volume, Samuel Marchbanks' Almanack (1967).

43 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, pp. 51-52.

44 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 25.

45 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, pp. 28-31, 35, 40, 42, 44, 47-49, 51, 52, 61-66, 69-73, 74-79, 83, 84, 85-86.

46 Jack Hodgins, "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," by Geoff Hancock, Canadian Fiction Magazine, Nos. 32/33 (1979-80), pp. 37-38.

47 Jack Hodgins, "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," by Geoff Hancock, p. 38; and Jack Hodgins, in "B.C. Novel Praised: Jack Hodgins a Rare Writer Going Places," by Ken Adachi, The Toronto Star, 14 July 1978, Sec. Entertainment, p. D1.

48 Jack Hodgins, "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," by Geoff Hancock, p. 37; and Jack Hodgins, "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, Nov. 1980 and Jan. 1981.

49 Clark Blaise, "An Interview with Clark Blaise," by Geoff Hancock, Canadian Fiction Magazine, Nos. 34/35 (1980), p. 49.

50 Clark Blaise, "Author's Introduction," in New Canadian Writing, 1968 (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1968), pp. 67-68; "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, Journal of Canadian Fiction, 2, No. 4 (Fall 1973), 78; and "An Interview with Clark Blaise," by Geoff Hancock, pp. 49-50.

51 Alice Munro, "An Interview with Alice Munro," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, 27 April 1981.

52 Alice Munro, "Alice Munro Talks with Mari Stainsby," by Mari Stainsby, British Columbia Library Quarterly, 35, No. 1 (July 1971), 29; Alice Munro, "A Conversation with Alice Munro," by John Metcalf, Journal of Canadian Fiction, 1, No. 4 (Fall 1972), 56, 57, 60; and Alice Munro, "An Interview with Alice Munro," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers.

53 Forrest L. Ingram, Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century: Studies in a Literary Genre (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), p. 15.

54 Forrest L. Ingram, Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century: Studies in a Literary Genre, p. 19.

55 Forrest L. Ingram, Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century: Studies in a Literary Genre, pp. 17-18. Ingram discusses only sets of stories that have been formally "collected," and excludes "uncollected" works such as J. D. Salinger's Glass family stories. Ingram notes that "Sets of stories may be 'collected' by an editor or by an editor-author or by a single author." However, he refers only to "sets of stories which the respective authors have indicated belong in one volume."

56 Forrest L. Ingram, Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century: Studies in a Literary Genre, p. 201.

57 Forrest L. Ingram, Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century: Studies in a Literary Genre, p. 18.

58 Clark Blaise, "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, 79.

59 Alice Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?: Review-Interview with Alice Munro," by Carole Gerson, Room of One's Own, 4, No. 4 (1979), 3; and Alice Munro, "An Interview with Alice Munro," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers.

60 Jack Hodgins, "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers.

61 Michael Taylor, rev. of Who Do You Think You Are?, by Alice Munro, The Fiddlehead, No. 121 (Spring 1979), p. 126.

- 62 Michael Taylor, rev. of Who Do You Think You Are?, p. 126.
- 63 Hugh Hood, Notes for an Autobiography, 7 July 1966.
- 64 Clark Blaise, "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, 79.
- 65 Alice Munro, "Alice Munro Talks with Mari Stainsby," by Mari Stainsby, 27.
- 66 Alice Munro, "A Conversation with Alice Munro," by John Metcalf, 54.
- 67 Alice Munro, "An Interview with Alice Munro," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers.
- 68 Alice Munro, "Alice Munro," in Eleven Canadian Novelists, interviewed by Graeme Gibson (Toronto: Anansi, 1973), p. 258.
- 69 Margaret Laurence, "Time and the Narrative Voice," in Margaret Laurence, p. 158.
- 70 Alice Munro and John Metcalf, "A Conversation with Alice Munro," by John Metcalf, 60.
- 71 Carole Gerson, "Who Do You Think You Are?: Review-Interview with Alice Munro," by Carole Gerson, 3-4.
- 72 Alice Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?: Review-Interview with Alice Munro," by Carole Gerson, 4.
- 73 Alice Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?: Review-Interview with Alice Munro," by Carole Gerson, 2-3; and Alice Munro, "An Interview with Alice Munro," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers. Actually, the history of the composition of Who Do You Think You Are? is even more complicated than a comparison of the first complete version and the final version suggests. Even earlier, Munro had on hand an incomplete sequence of eight Rose stories, including the six Rose stories contained in the first complete version, along with "Mischievous" and "Providence," which were not Janet stories originally at all. Because Munro did not have enough Rose stories to make an entire book, she decided to do a book containing the Rose stories and some Janet stories that she had written. But this idea created an imbalance in the proposed book. Therefore, Munro changed "Mischievous" and "Providence" to Janet stories so that she would have a fairly proportioned collection. Then, when

Munro discovered in September 1978 what the true shape of the book should be, she added "Simon's Luck," made major revisions in "Who Do You Think You Are?" in order to change it from a Janet story to a Rose story, readily changed "Mischief" and "Providence" back to Rose stories by minor revisions, and dropped the three remaining Janet stories.

Two reviews of the first complete version of the book appeared: Sheila Robinson Fallis, rev. of Who Do You Think You Are?, by Alice Munro, Quill & Quire, Oct. 1978, p. 43; and Wayne Grady, "Alice through a Glass Darkly," rev. of Who Do You Think You Are?, by Alice Munro, Books in Canada, Oct. 1978, pp. 15-16.

74 Wayne Grady, "Alice through a Glass Darkly," p. 15.

75 Alice Munro, "An Interview with Alice Munro," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers; and Linda [M.] Leitch, "Alice Munro's Fiction: Explorations in Open Forms," pp. 150-71, 197-99.

76 "Connection," "The Stone in the Field," and "The Moons of Jupiter" were first published, respectively, in Chatelaine, Nov. 1978, pp. 66-67, 97, 98, 101, 104, 106, Saturday Night, April 1979, pp. 40-45, and The New Yorker, 22 May 1978, pp. 32-39.

77 "Emily" appeared in Viva, Aug. 1978, pp. 99-105.

78 Letter received from Jack Hodgins, 5 Oct. 1979.

79 Jack Hodgins, "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers.

80 As Trade Editor of Doubleday Canada then as Publisher of Macmillan of Canada, Douglas Gibson was involved in editing three of the four principal story cycles discussed in this study: A North American Education, Spit Delaney's Island, and Who Do You Think You Are?. [Personal conversation with Douglas Gibson, 24 March 1981.]

81 As examples of discoveries made while writing Around the Mountain, Hood mentions the names Valdombre and Bright Future Construction. [Personal conversation with Hugh Hood, 13 Aug. 1981.]

82 Letter received from Alice Munro, 26 May 1981.

83 Kent Thompson, "The Canadian Short Story in English and the Little Magazines: 1971," 21.

48 For an extended analysis of "The Village Inside," see Kent Thompson, "Formal Coherence in the Art of Hugh Hood," in Minus Canadian: Penultimate Essays on Literature, ed. and introd. Barry Cameron and Michael Dixon, Studies in Canadian Literature, 2 (Summer 1977), 205-12.

49 Telephone conversation with Hugh Hood, 21 Aug. 1979.

50 Telephone conversation with Hugh Hood, 21 Aug. 1979.

51 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 35.

52 For a similar interpretation, which argues that "The green girl could be lost Nature, instrumentalized by technological man into a reinforced-concrete fossil," and that "Thierry . . . is trapped, exhausted, in the mazy ruins of modernism where he wanders as in a nightmare," see Dennis Duffy, "Space/Time and the Matter of Form," in Before the Flood, pp. 133-35.

53 Victoria G. Hale, "Elements of Literary Tradition and Myth in the Novels and Sketches of Hugh Hood: An Examination," M.A. Thesis Sir George Williams 1971, p. 118, cites Hood's authority for this interpretation.

54 Hugh Hood, "The Absolute Infant," in his The Governor's Bridge Is Closed, p. 142.

55 Psalms cxxi.1.

56 I Corinthians xiii.12.

57 Hugh Hood, "The Hole," in his Dark Glasses (Ottawa: Oberon, 1976), p. 118.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹ In September 1955, Hood began teaching full-time at Saint Joseph College in Hartford, Connecticut; and on October 31, 1955, he completed the oral examination on his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Toronto. The dissertation, which is 421 pages long, is entitled "Theories of Imagination in English Thinkers 1650-1790." From December 1955 to spring 1956, Hood wrote the opening chapter of "God Rest You Merry," the first of two early, complete, unpublished novels. Then in the summer of 1956, Hood "spent a lot of time talking to Morley Callaghan with the idea in mind of doing a critical article," which he wrote that fall and submitted to The Tamarack Review. . . . Robert Weaver's dislike for the article convinced Hood "definitely to throw over academic criticism and go for fiction writing." Hood dates his beginnings as a fiction writer, therefore, from January 1957. In that first year of "writing seriously and all the time," Hood composed ten short stories and finished the first draft of "God Rest You Merry." [Hugh Hood, Notes for an Autobiography, 1 June 1963.]

² Hood began the first part of The New Age/Le Nouveau siècle in October 1972 and completed the third part in May 1978. In the same period, he wrote the following short stories: "An Allegory of Man's Fate" (Dec. 1973-Jan. 1974), "Going Out as a Ghost" (Jan. 1974), "Thanksgiving: Between Junetown and Caintown" (Nov. 1974), "God Has Manifested Himself Unto Us as Canadian Tire" (Nov. 1975), "Ghosts at Jarry" (Sept. 1977), "None Genuine Without This Signature, or, Peaches in the Bathtub" (Oct. 1977), "Crosby" (Nov. 1977), and "Doubles" (Dec. 1977). The first three of these stories are among those collected in Dark Glasses. The last five stories appear in None Genuine Without This Signature. [Hugh Hood, Notes for an Autobiography, 4 Oct. 1973, 7 Sept. 1974, 30 Aug. 1975, 11 Sept. 1976, 4 Sept. 1977; Letter received from Hugh Hood, 22 Feb. 1979; Letter received from Hugh Hood, 8 March 1979; and J. R. (Tim) Struthers, "A Bibliography of Works by and on Hugh Hood," in Before the Flood: Our Exagmination round His Factification for Incamination of Hugh Hood's Work in Progress, ed. J. R. (Tim) Struthers (Downsview, Ont.: ECW, 1979), pp. 232, 233, 244.]

³ Hugh Hood, Notes for an Autobiography, 7 July 1966.

⁴ Hugh Hood, "Sober Colouring: The Ontology of Super-Realism," Canadian Literature, No. 49 (Summer 1971), p. 30; rpt., with pref., as "The Ontology of Super-Realism," in his The Governor's Bridge Is Closed (Ottawa: Oberon, 1973), p. 130. All references to this essay use Hood's preferred title, "Sober Colouring: The Ontology of Super-Realism," but cite page numbers from The Governor's Bridge Is Closed.

⁵ Hugh Hood, "Before the Flood," in Before the Flood, p. 14.

⁶ Hugh Hood, "Before the Flood," p. 14.

⁷ Hugh Hood, "Before the Flood," p. 16.

⁸ Hugh Hood, "Sober Colouring: The Ontology of Super-Realism," p. 132.

⁹ John Mills, "Hugh Hood and the Anagogical Method," in Before the Flood, pp. 95, 110.

¹⁰ John Mills, "Hugh Hood and the Anagogical Method," p. 100.

¹¹ Telephone conversation with Hugh Hood, 21 Aug. 1979.

¹² See Hugh Hood, "The Architecture of Experience (Studies in the Relation of Cosmology to Poetry in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries)," M.A. Thesis Toronto 1952. 111 pp.

¹³ In "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, in Before the Flood, p. 47, Hood says of this dark figure, "Well he was there. I looked at the man. I was maybe a hundred years away from this guy who was doing exactly what's described in the story, and I thought to myself that this looks like a little black figure in the painting of Bruegel or Hieronymus Bosch, it looks like a Dance of Death figure, and I thought it tied in very nicely with the poetic complex of, putatively, high hills, mystical experience, primordial breast, nurture, fog, snow, dark figure, death--and that's how it ends."

¹⁴ James Joyce, Dubliners: Text, Criticism, and Notes, ed. Robert Scholes and A. Walton Litz, The Viking Critical Library (New York: Viking, 1969), p. 224.

¹⁵ Hood's ironic choice of a surname for Fred Carpenter alludes to the occupation of Jesus. In "Hugh Hood and His Expanding Universe," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 3, No. 1

(Winter 1974), 58, Kent Thompson suggests that "If Carpenter represents the failure of Christ for the 20th century, then Hood seems to be saying that in the 20th century's rejection of Christ there has been also the rejection of the doctrine of Mercy, with the resulting sin of self-righteousness. Pride."

¹⁶ William Wordsworth, The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Helen Darbishire, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959), Text of 1850, XII.210 (p.445).

¹⁷ William Wordsworth, The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind, Text of 1850, XII.208 (p. 445).

¹⁸ Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 45.

¹⁹ Dorothy L. Sayers' description of Dante's Earthly Paradise, in the introduction to her translation of Purgatory [Il Purgatorio], Vol. II of The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1955), p. 68, illuminates Hood's choice of setting and themes in "Looking Down from Above": "At the summit of Mount Purgatory is the Earthly Paradise, the place of Man's Innocence, 'empty now, because of her fault who gave ear to the Serpent.' It is from here that, if Man had not fallen, he would have entered upon the life of Perfection, in this world and the next."

²⁰ For an analysis of this scene from "Flying a Red Kite," see John Mills, "Hugh Hood and the Anagogical Method," pp. 96-98.

²¹ For an analysis of "Thanksgiving: Between Junetown and Caintown," see Lawrence Mathews, "The Secular and the Sacral: Notes on A New Athens and Three Stories by Hugh Hood," in Before the Flood, pp. 220-22.

²² John Orange, "Lines of Ascent: Hugh Hood's Place in Canadian Fiction," in Before the Flood, pp. 117-18.

²³ Hugh Hood, "Sober Colouring: The Ontology of Super-Realism," p. 130.

²⁴ Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 76.

²⁵ Alice Munro, "Everything Here Is Touchable and Mysterious," Weekend Magazine, 11 May 1974, [p. 37].

26 Hugh Hood, "Hugh Hood and John Mills in Epistolary Conversation," The Fiddlehead, No. 116 (Winter 1978), p. 145.

27 For a discussion of correspondences between The Shepherdes Calender and Around the Mountain, see Victoria G. Hale, "Elements of Literary Tradition and Myth in the Novels and Sketches of Hugh Hood: An Examination," M.A. Thesis Sir George Williams 1971, pp. 102-04.

28 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 47.

29 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 49.

30 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 80.

31 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by Robert Fulford, The Tamarack Review, No. 66 (June 1975), p. 77.

32 A more detailed view of this development in Hood's style is given by Patrick Blandford in "Hood à la mode: Bicultural Tension in the Works of Hugh Hood," in Before the Flood, pp. 150-51: "The Governor's Bridge Is Closed (1973) is a collection of intimate first-person-singular recollections in which Hood, free of the restraints of plot and characterization, uses his considerable descriptive powers to great advantage. Stylistically, one is reminded of Around the Mountain (1967) which also exhibits a rather 'free-form' approach to the narrative account. His next book, The Swing in the Garden (1975), demonstrates a further refinement of this technique wherein the opportunities for description and recollection are maintained, while Hood distances himself from the action through the character of Matt Goderich."

33 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 82.

34 "Chateaubriand, Vicomte François-René de (1768-1848)," The Oxford Companion to French Literature (1959).

35 J. F. Murphy, "Holiness of Mary," in "Mary, Blessed Virgin, II (in Theology)," New Catholic Encyclopedia.

36 Telephone conversation with Hugh Hood, 21 Aug. 1979. Hood noted that the name "Angel" derives from the Greek word "aggelos," meaning "messenger," which is what angels

and Marie-Ange are.

37 For a related discussion of the subtlety of Hood's rendering of fallenness in his portrayal of the protagonist in "Going Out as a Ghost" and the narrator in "Dark Glasses," see Lawrence Mathews, "The Secular and the Sacral: Notes on A New Athens and Three Stories by Hugh Hood," pp. 216-17, 219-20.

38 Personal conversation with Hugh Hood, 14 Aug. 1981.

39 I Samuel xviii.2. Hood's first published novel, White Figure, White Ground, was originally entitled "To His Father's House." [Hugh Hood, Notes for an Autobiography, 1 June 1963.]

40 Lawrence Mathews, "The Secular and the Sacral: Notes on A New Athens and Three Stories by Hugh Hood," p. 221, demonstrates the Christian significance of being lost in his analysis of Hood's "Thanksgiving: Between Junetown and Caintown."

41 M. A. Roche, "Vincent De Paul, St.," New Catholic Encyclopedia.

42 William Wordsworth, "Resolution and Independence," ll. 28, 50-51, 65, 91, 95-96, in The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, II, ed. E. de Selincourt, rev. Helen Darbishire, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 236-38.

43 Hugh Hood, "Sober Colouring: The Ontology of Super-Realism," p. 134.

44 William Wordsworth, "Resolution and Independence," l. 110, in The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, II, 239.

45 M. E. McIver, "John The Baptist, St.," New Catholic Encyclopedia.

46 For an extended discussion of bicultural tension in Around the Mountain, see Patrick Blandford, "Treatment of English-French Cultural Tension in the Works of Hugh Hood," M.A. Thesis Concordia 1979, pp. 70-86.

47 See Barry Cameron, rev. of Dark Glasses, by Hugh Hood, The Fiddlehead, No. 115 (Fall 1977), p. 146; and Lawrence Mathews, "The Secular and the Sacral: Notes on A New Athens and Three Stories by Hugh Hood," pp. 214-15.

48 For an extended analysis of "The Village Inside," see Kent Thompson, "Formal Coherence in the Art of Hugh Hood," in Minus Canadian: Penultimate Essays on Literature, ed. and introd. Barry Cameron and Michael Dixon, Studies in Canadian Literature, 2 (Summer 1977), 205-12.

49 Telephone conversation with Hugh Hood, 21 Aug. 1979.

50 Telephone conversation with Hugh Hood, 21 Aug. 1979.

51 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 35.

52 For a similar interpretation, which argues that "The green girl could be lost Nature, instrumentalized by technological man into a reinforced-concrete fossil," and that "Thierry . . . is trapped, exhausted, in the mazy ruins of modernism where he wanders as in a nightmare," see Dennis Duffy, "Space/Time and the Matter of Form," in Before the Flood, pp. 133-35.

53 Victoria G. Hale, "Elements of Literary Tradition and Myth in the Novels and Sketches of Hugh Hood: An Examination," M.A. Thesis Sir George Williams 1971, p. 118, cites Hood's authority for this interpretation.

54 Hugh Hood, "The Absolute Infant," in his The Governor's Bridge Is Closed, p. 142.

55 Psalms cxxi.1.

56 I Corinthians xiii.12.

57 Hugh Hood, "The Hole," in his Dark Glasses (Ottawa: Oberon, 1976), p. 118.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

¹ Wilfred Watson, "Emily Carr;" in Canadian Anthology, ed. Carl F. Klinck and Reginald E. Watters, rev. ed. (Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1966), p. 385.

² Sheila Watson, "An Interview with Sheila Watson," by Pierre Coupey, Roy Kiyooka, and Daphne Marlatt, The Capilano Review, Nos. 8/9 (Fall 1975/Spring 1976), p. 353.

³ Sheila Watson, "An Interview with Sheila Watson," p. 353.

⁴ David L. Jeffrey, "Jack Hodgins and the Island Mind," Book Forum, 4 (1978), 72.

⁵ Hugh Hood, Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1967), p. 168.

⁶ David L. Jeffrey, "Jack Hodgins and the Island Mind," 72, 73.

⁷ Emily Carr, "An Artist's Tabernacle," in The Frontier Experience, ed. Jack Hodgins (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975), p. 83.

⁸ Jack Hodgins, "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," by Geoff Hancock, Canadian Fiction Magazine, Nos. 32/33 (1979/1980), p. 47.

⁹ Jack Hodgins, "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," by Geoff Hancock, p. 47.

¹⁰ Jay Macpherson, "The Anagogic Man," in her The Boatman and Other Poems (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 56.

¹¹ On the redemptive imagination in Romantic and twentieth-century literature, see Ross Woodman, "Satan in the 'Vale of Soul-Making': A Survey from Blake to Guinsberg," The Humanities Association Review, 25 (1974), 108-21, "Imagination as the Theme of The Prelude," English Studies in Canada, 1 (Winter 1975), 406-18, and "The Death and Resurrection of Milton according to the Gospel of Blake," English Studies in Canada, 3 (Winter 1977), 416-32, along with M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), pp. 117-22 et passim.

12 For an account of the McLean gang, see F. W. Lindsay, The B.C. Outlaws, illus. Florence Lindsay ([Quesnel, B.C.]: n.p., 1963), pp. 24-34; subsequently printed under the title Outlaws in British Columbia.

13 Emily Carr, "The Something Plus in a Work of Art," in Fresh Seeing (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1972), p. 37.

14 Jack Hodgins, "Introduction: Deeper into the Forest," in The Frontier Experience, ed. Jack Hodgins (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975), pp. 1-2; and Jack Hodgins, Introduction, in The West Coast Experience, ed. Jack Hodgins (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976), pp. 1-2.

15 Jack Hodgins, Introduction, in Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, by Menno Fieguth (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), n. pag.

16 Letter received from Jack Hodgins, 5 Oct. 1979.

17 Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 95-157.

18 William Faulkner, "Interviews in Japan," in Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner 1926-1962, ed. James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 99-100.

19 Margaret Laurence, "Hodgins at Last Collected," rev. of Spit Delaney's Island: Selected Stories, by Jack Hodgins, The Globe and Mail, 8 May 1976, Sec. Entertainment-Travel, p. 38.

20 William Blake, Jerusalem, Plate 71, ll. 17-19, in The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman, commentary by Harold Bloom, rev. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), p. 223.

21 Marian Strachan, "Magic Island Captured in Its Captives' Tales," rev. of Spit Delaney's Island: Selected Stories, by Jack Hodgins, The Gazette [Montreal], 5 June 1976, Sec. 4, p. 46.

22 David L. Jeffrey, "Jack Hodgins and the Island Mind," 72.

23 Jack Hodgins, "Introduction: Deeper into the Forest," p. 2.

24 Kenneth Muir, Introduction, in King Lear, by William Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1966), p. iv.

- 25 John Milton, Paradise Lost, IV.291-92.
- 26 Jack Hodgins, "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," by Jack David, Essays on Canadian Writing, No. 11 (Summer 1978), p. 143.
- 27 In "Jack Hodgins and the Island Mind," 73, 76, and in "A Crust for the Critics," rev. of The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne, by Jack Hodgins, Canadian Literature, No. 84 (Spring 1980), pp. 75, 77, 78, David L. Jeffrey repeatedly compares Hodgins' methods and concerns with Chaucer's.
- 28 For Hodgins' own comments on this story, see Jack Hodgins, "Author's Commentary," in Stories Plus: Canadian Stories with Authors' Commentaries, ed. and introd. John Metcalf (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1979), pp. 121-23.
- 29 On the trickster figure see Paul Radin, The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology, with commentaries by Karl Kerényi and C. G. Jung (New York: Bell, [1956]).
- 30 Jack Hodgins, "Yesterday's Green Summer," Descant [Fort Worth, Texas], 13, No. 4 (Summer 1969), 39-47.
- 31 Balachandra Rajan, Paradise Lost & The Seventeenth Century Reader (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), p. 50.
- 32 David L. Jeffrey, "Jack Hodgins and the Island Mind," 74.
- 33 Margaret Laurence, "Hodgins at Last Collected," p. 38.
- 34 Jack Hodgins, "An Interview with Jack Hodgins," by Jack David, p. 144.
- 35 Emily Carr, "Fresh Seeing," in Fresh Seeing, p. 20.
- 36 Emily Carr, "Fresh Seeing," p. 11.
- 37 W. B. Yeats, as quoted in Damian Grant, Realism (London: Methuen, 1974), p. 54.
- 38 In "At the Foot of the Hill, Birdie's School," Hodgins writes, "Yet time, a poet told him from the dusty back pages of a fat collection, would take him by his shadow-hand and lead him up out of childhood to the dark swallow-thronged loft of mysteries and manhood" (SDI, p. 138). The final stanza of Thomas' poem "Fern Hill" begins, "Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me /

Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my
hand" In "Dylan Thomas' Cosmology," M.A. Thesis
Western Ontario 1966, p. v, Don McKay remarks that for
Thomas, "When man's vision is broad enough to perceive in
his own birth and death the pervasive rhythm of life, he
is able to redeem his world without transcending time and
space."

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

¹ Blaise himself draws attention to this imaginary opus in The Narrative Voice: Short Stories and Reflections by Canadian Authors, ed. and introd. John Metcalf (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 1. He states that "For a number of years I have been writing a novel under several titles that would express the totality of my experience as North American outsider, set in Canada, in the suburbs of the east coast American cities, and in the rural south. Evidences have been published in various academic journals, and in a full collection to appear in 1972." (In fact, A North American Education, the collection referred to, was not published until 1973.)

² In "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, Journal of Canadian Fiction, 2, No. 4 (Fall 1973), 79, Blaise mentions that A North American Education and Tribal Justice were at one time gathered together as a single manuscript.

³ Stan Dragland, "First Person?", Brick: A Journal of Reviews, No. 9 (Spring 1980), p. 51. Dragland notes that "at a reading in London this spring Blaise said he made the Blaise in Calcutta more innocent about India, at the outset of the trip, than Blaise the writer was, to make what the Blaise persona learns about the country more telling."

⁴ Clark Blaise, "Interview: Clark Blaise on Artful Autobiography: 'I who live in dreams am touched by reality,'" by Geoff Hancock, Books in Canada, March 1979, p. 30.

⁵ Laurie Ricou, Editorial, Canadian Short Story Magazine, 3, No. 1 (Winter 1977), 1; and John Moss, Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel: The Ancestral Present (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 26.

⁶ Russell M. Brown, "The Insolent Infinity," rev. of A North American Education: A Book of Short Fiction, by Clark Blaise, Canadian Literature, No. 58 (Fall 1973), p. 115.

⁷ William H. New, "Fiction," in Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, gen. ed. and introd. Carl F. Klinck, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press,

1976), III, 258. New groups the following works from the years 1960-73 along with A North American Education: Malcolm Lowry's Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place, George Elliott's The Kissing Man, Ray Smith's Cape Breton Is the Thought Control Center of Canada, and Dave Godfrey's Death Goes Better with Coca-Cola.

⁸ William H. New, Malcolm Lowry (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 20.

⁹ William H. New, Malcolm Lowry, p. 11.

¹⁰ Kent Thompson, "Academy Stuff," in The Narrative Voice: Short Stories and Reflections by Canadian Authors, p. 237.

¹¹ See Philip Marchand, "In Search of a Place, in Search of a Self," rev. of A North American Education: A Book of Short Fiction, by Clark Blaise, Saturday Night, May 1973, p. 37; and John Moss, Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel: The Ancestral Present, p. 49. Both Marchand and Moss comment on the special impact of "The Thibidault Stories." Marchand argues that "The time for feeling at home in a given corridor of history is, of course, childhood. People learn then to claim their own, or not at all That is why, perhaps, this closing section . . . is the most poignant and horrifying of all the narratives, and the most unforgettable."

¹² Balachandra Rajan, The Overwhelming Question: A Study of the Poetry of T. S. Eliot (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 129.

¹³ Clark Blaise, Lunar Attractions (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1979), p. 232.

¹⁴ John Metcalf, "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, 79.

¹⁵ Margaret Atwood, "An Interview with Margaret Atwood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, Essays on Canadian Writing, No. 6 (Spring 1977), p. 19. Atwood says that The Journals of Susanna Moodie is not epical but lyrical: "It's not subjective lyrical. I would drag in Yeats at this point and say anti-mask, etc. etc. But it's still lyrical. It's a lyric form. It's short, discrete units which are put together to form a whole, like Shakespeare's sonnets, or whatever, but the things themselves are still lyrics."

16 Northrop Frye, "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology," in his The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 179.

17 The importance of fishing as a metaphor to Blaise is underlined by the prominent place that fishing occupies in "Broward Dowdy," the first story in Tribal Justice, as well as in the opening scene of Lunar Attractions which involves David Greenwood and his father.

18 Clark Blaise, Lunar Attractions, p. 232.

19 T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land, ll. 423-25, in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 74.

20 T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land, l. 430, in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, p. 75. For an example of this interpretation of The Waste Land, see Anne C. Bolgan, What the Thunder Really Said: A Retrospective Essay on the Making of The Waste Land (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1973), p. 37. Bolgan says of Eliot's achievement in this poem that "If he would in fact put his 'lands in order,' he must needs accept for himself the wisdom retained in those 'fragments' which he has now, as the fruit of his journey through The Waste Land, 'shored against . . . [his] ruins.'"

21 Clark Blaise, "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, 79.

22 Many of these traits of Blaise's hero are identified by Frank Davey in "Impressionable Realism: The Stories of Clark Blaise," Open Letter, 3rd ser., No. 5 (Summer 1976), pp. 65-74.

23 The heroes of the stories in the first two sections closely resemble Franklin Thibidault but, unlike him, are not a Montreal-born son of a French-Canadian father and an English-Canadian mother. In "A Class of New Canadians," when questioned by Mr. Weinrot, Norman Dyer admits, reluctantly, that he is an American. "It was a question Dyer had often avoided in Europe, but had rarely been asked in Montreal" (NAE, p. 9). Paul Keeler is not Canadian-born either, since he is described as disguising himself like a Canadian in "Continent of Strangers" and he speaks of having recently obtained his Canadian citizenship papers in "Extractions and Contractions." No precise references to the nationality of the parents of Blaise's heroes are made in the first two sections of A North American Education,

although in "Going to India" Keeler remarks, "To say the least, I come from uncertain stock. My parents had been twice-divorced before divorcing each other. Four of the five languages I speak are rooted in my family, each grandparent speaking something different, and the fifth, Russian, reflects a secret sympathy that would destroy [my wife's] parents if they knew My family is broad and fluid and, though corrupt, fabulously unsuccessful. Like gypsies they cover the continent" (NAE, p. 63).

24 During the first two sections of A North American Education, there are a few brief recollections of the hero's childhood. In "Eyes," a reference is made to when the hero was "an adolescent in another country slithering through the mosquito-ridden grassy fields behind a housing development, peering into those houses where newlyweds had not yet put up drapes . . ." (NAE, p. 18); in "Words for the Winter," the hero mentions Florida and his "own days before coming here, when winter was short and bracing, a good time for steady work" (NAE, p. 28); and at different points in "Going to India," Paul Keeler provides images of his Florida childhood (NAE, pp. 59-60, 64, 81).

25 Fraser Sutherland, "A Search through Time and Place," rev. of A North American Education: A Book of Short Fiction, by Clark Blaise, Journal of Canadian Fiction, 2, No. 4 (Fall 1973), 105.

26 James Joyce, Dubliners: Text, Criticism, and Notes, ed. Robert Scholes and A. Walton Litz (New York: Viking, 1969), p. 224.

27 As John Mills says of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, one of Blaise's favourite writers, in "Le Merdeur Strikes Back," rev. of Céline: A Biography, by Patrick McCarthy, in his Lizard in the Grass (Downsview, Ont.: ECW, 1980), p. 256, ". . . Céline's pessimism is to a large extent invalidated by his role as a creative artist. The zest, passion, and wit which accompanies the joyous flow of language no matter what that language explores constitutes 'the rose' I spoke of earlier in this review." I am also reminded of Albert Camus' statement, as quoted in Anne Hébert, "Poetry: Broken Solitude," in her Poems by Anne Hébert, trans. Alan Brown (Don Mills, Ont.: Musson, 1975), p. 48, that "'True despair is agony, the tomb or the abyss: If he speaks, or reasons, above all if he writes, at once this is our brother holding out his hand, the tree is justified, and love is born. A literature of despair is a contradiction in terms.'"

28 Clark Blaise, "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, 78; and Clark Blaise, in Clark Blaise and Bharati Mukherjee, Days and Nights in Calcutta (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), pp. 18, 19.

29 NAE, pp. 163, 53, 6, respectively.

30 Clark Blaise, "Author's Introduction," in New Canadian Writing, 1968 (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1968), p. 67.

31 Norman Mailer, An American Dream (New York: Dell, 1978), p. 116.

32 Clark Blaise, "Author's Introduction," in New Canadian Writing, 1968, p. 67.

33 Clark Blaise, "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, 78.

34 Clark Blaise, "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, 78.

35 Robert Baldick, Introduction, in Sentimental Education, by Gustave Flaubert, trans. and introd. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1964), p. 12.

36 Some of the other national emblems appearing in A North American Education are citizenship papers, currency, flags, license plates, bumper stickers, signs in public buildings, and postage stamps. Emblems of travel or transience also abound in the book. These include keys, streets, cars, maps, Greyhound buses, borders, passports, aircraft, orbits, long distance calls, post cards, and National Geographic.

37 Clark Blaise, "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, 79.

38 Clark Blaise, "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, 79.

39 Fraser Sutherland, "A Search through Time and Place," 105.

40 Frank Davey, "Clark Blaise," in his From There to Here: A Guide to English-Canadian Literature Since 1960, Our Nature--Our Voices, Vol. II (Erin, Ont.: Porcépic, 1974), pp. 55-56.

41 D. H. Lawrence, "To Edward Garnett," 14 Nov. 1912,

as quoted in Hugh Hood, The Camera Always Lies (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), n. pag.

42 Margaret Atwood, Afterword, in A North American Education: A Book of Short Fiction, by Clark Blaise (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1973), n. pag.

43 Marianne Micros, "The Complex Simplicity of Greece," rev. of Mermaids and Ikons: A Greek Summer, by Gwendolyn MacEwen, Essays on Canadian Writing, No. 12 (Fall 1978), p. 76.

44 In "Going to India," Blaise has Keeler quote two short passages from The Waste Land (NAE, p. 79). Another line, "This is how the world will end" (NAE, p. 82), echoes a line repeated in the final stanza of The Hollow Men.

45 William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," ll. 56, 57, in The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, IV, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 280.

46 V. S. Naipaul, The Return of Eva Perón; with The Killings in Trinidad, as quoted in Rupert Schieder, rev. of The Return of Eva Perón; with The Killings in Trinidad, by V. S. Naipaul, The Globe and Mail, 28 June 1980, Sec. Entertainment, p. 13.

47 Richard Wagner, Tristan und Isolde, III, xxiv, as quoted in T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land, l. 42, in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, p. 62. The reference to Wagner is supplied in Eliot's "Notes on the Waste Land," in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, p. 76. In A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 74, B. C. Southam translates the line as "'Desolate and empty the sea.'"

48 In "Impressionable Realism: The Stories of Clark Blaise," p. 68, Frank Davey comments, "Essentially, a Blaise narrator is not interested in telling the story; he is interested in analyzing it, savouring it, reflecting on it. This aspect gives the story two concurrent levels of plot--one that involves the events being recounted and another in which the recounting itself is the central event."

49 James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Text, Criticism, and Notes, ed. Chester G. Anderson (New York: Viking, 1968), pp. 246-47.

50 NAE, pp. 6, 42, 65, 176.

51 Clark Blaise, "Author's Introduction," in New Canadian Writing, 1968, p. 67.

52 Sheila Watson, The Double Hook (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1959), [p. 7].

53 T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets, in The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot, p. 197.

54 Balachandra Rajan, The Overwhelming Question: A Study of the Poetry of T. S. Eliot, p. 136.

55 Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 71, 138; and Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1974), pp. xii-xiii.

56 I have in mind the way that Puck releases the audience at the end of A Midsummer Night's Dream and the way that Prospero releases his subjects at the close of The Tempest.

57 William H. New, "Fiction," in Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, 2nd ed., III, 258.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

¹ In "An Interview with Alice Munro," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, 27 April 1981, Munro refers to the title story of Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You as "a discovery story." Nearly all of the stories in this book, she says, "were experiments," in which she was "trying very hard to learn things about writing . . . I was trying out a lot of technical things in here, I suppose, without actually admitting that that's what I was doing. Now, when I look at the titles, I realize that." Similarly, a number of the earliest composed stories in Dance of the Happy Shades were what Munro calls "exercise stories." In arranging each of these collections, Munro and her editor, Audrey Coffin, strove to accentuate the differences between stories, and therefore to avoid "leading the reader to expect that [either book] was a kind of segmented novel," by separating the first-person stories.

² Munro's first three published stories were "The Dimensions of a Shadow," Folio, 4, No. 2 (April 1950), [4-10], "Story for Sunday," Folio, 5, No. 1 (Dec. 1950), [4-8], and "The Widower," 5, No. 2 (April 1951), [7-11]. The stories collected in Dance of the Happy Shades range, in terms of year of composition, from "Day of the Butterfly," which was written in 1953, to "Postcard," "Walker Brothers Cowboy," and "Images," which were written in 1967. For discussions of this earlier period of Munro's career, see Douglas O. Spettigue, "Alice Laidlaw Munro: A Portrait of the Artist," Alumni Gazette [Univ. of Western Ontario, London], 45, No. 3 (July 1969), 4-5; and "An Interview with Alice Munro," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers.

³ Alice Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?: Review-Interview with Alice Munro," by Carole Gerson, Room of One's Own, 4, No. 4 (1979), 4.

⁴ Alice Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?: Review-Interview with Alice Munro," by Carole Gerson, 4.

⁵ Kent Thompson, "A Conversation with Kent Thompson," by Barry Cameron, Essays on Canadian Writing, No. 17 (Spring 1980), p. 74.

⁶ In September 1978, Munro rewrote "Who Do You Think You Are?" from the story of the same title in the first version of the book. She also rewrote "Simon's Luck" from

a previously published story, "Emily," and inserted it in the book's final version. See Alice Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?: Review-Interview with Alice Munro," by Carole Gerson, 3; and Alice Munro, "An Interview with Alice Munro," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers.

⁷ For a discussion of the limitations of the term "realism" as it is commonly used, see Damian Grant, Realism (London: Methuen, 1970).

⁸ In "A Conversation with Alice Munro," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 1, No. 4 (Fall 1972), 56, John Metcalf asks Munro, "do you feel 'surfaces' not to be surfaces?" and she answers strongly in the affirmative.

⁹ William Shakespeare, The Tempest, IV.i.152.

¹⁰ See Rae McCarthy Macdonald, "A Madman Loose in the World: The Vision of Alice Munro," Modern Fiction Studies, 22 (Fall 1976), 365-74; Hallvard Dahlé, "The Fiction of Alice Munro," Ploughshares, 4, No. 2 ([Summer] 1978), 56-71; and Helen Hoy, "'Dull, Simple, Amazing and Unfathomable': Paradoxes and Double Vision in Alice Munro's Fiction," Studies in Canadian Literature, 5 (Spring 1980), 100-15.

¹¹ See, for example, George Bowering's poor estimation of Munro in "Modernism Could Not Last Forever," Canadian Fiction Magazine, Nos. 32/33 (1979/80), p. 4; and "Interview: Why Problem-Solver George Bowering Vows Never to Write Another Historical Novel," by Linda M. Leitch, Books in Canada, Nov. 1980, p. 30.

¹² In "An Interview with Alice Munro," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, Munro mentions that she read Proust avidly while writing Lives of Girls and Women.

¹³ John Metcalf, "Interview: Clark Blaise," by John Metcalf, Journal of Canadian Fiction, 2, No. 4 (Fall 1973), 79.

¹⁴ It should be remembered that pastoral surpasses the simple and sentimental idealization of rustic or rural life and achieves a more complex expression of the values and limitations of both rural and urban life. For discussions of the characteristics of pastoral literature, see Peter V. Marinelli, Pastoral (London: Methuen, 1971); and Patrick Cullen, Spenser, Marvell, and Renaissance Pastoral (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970). Marinelli's description of how Wordsworth, in The Prelude, united "the pastoral of rural life with the pastoral of childhood" brings to mind many of Munro's earlier and much-anthologized short stories.

Patrick Cullen's statement that "Pastoral provided a mode for the juxtaposition of contending values and perspectives" seems to have some bearing on Who Do You Think You Are? For three discussions of the importance of the pastoral in Canadian literature, see Joseph M. Zezulka, "The Pastoral Vision in Nineteenth-Century Canada," Dalhousie Review, 57 (Summer 1977), 224-41; E. D. Blodgett, "Cold Pastorals: A Prolegomenon," Canadian Review of Comparative Literature, 6 (Spring 1979), 166-94; and Walter Pache, "English-Canadian Fiction & the Pastoral Tradition," Canadian Literature, No. 86 (Fall 1980), pp. 15-28.

15 Sam Solecki, "Letters in Canada 1978: Fiction: 2," rev. of Who Do You Think You Are? and other books, University of Toronto Quarterly, 48 (Summer 1979), 319.

16 Alice Munro, "On Writing 'The Office,'" in Transitions II: Short Fiction; A Source Book of Canadian Literature, ed. Edward Peck (Vancouver: CommCept, 1978), p. 261.

17 Alice Munro, "Everything Here Is Touchable and Mysterious," Weekend Magazine, 11 May 1974, p. 33.

18 For an extended discussion, see Nora Phyllis Robson, "Wawanash County: Parallels between the World of Alice Munro and the White American South," M.A. Thesis McGill 1978.

19 Lawrence Mathews, "Who Do You Think You Are?: Alice Munro's Art of Disarrangement," p. 7.

20 Lawrence Mathews, p. 10.

21 The character Janet is identified as the narrator of the twelve stories in the first version of Who Do You Think You Are?--including six third-person stories about Rose, and six first-person stories about Janet herself. For information about the differences between the contents of the two versions of Who Do You Think You Are?, see my Introduction and the relevant secondary sources noted therein.

22 Alice Munro, Lives of Girls and Women (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1971), p. 70.

23 Alice Munro, Lives of Girls and Women, p. 141.

24 Alice Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?: Review-Interview with Alice Munro," by Carole Gerson, 4.

25 Alice Munro, Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974), p. 201.

26 Alice Munro, "Characters," Ploughshares, 4, No. 3 ([Summer] 1978), 72-82.

27 For an extended discussion, see Nora Phyllis Robson, "Wawanash County: Parallels between the World of Alice Munro and the White American South," M.A. Thesis McGill 1978.

28 See Alice Munro, Lives of Girls and Women, p. 175.

29 See Catherine Sheldrick Ross, "Calling Back the Ghost of the Old-Time Heroine: Duncan, Montgomery, Atwood, Laurence, and Munro," Studies in Canadian Literature, 4, No. 1 (Winter 1979), 56-58.

30 The painting is called King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid. Its creator, Edward Burne-Jones, is identified by Maria Cecilia Velden in "Surfaces and Depths: The Fiction of Alice Munro," M.A. Thesis Western Ontario 1979, pp. 102, 121.

31 Frank O'Connor, The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story, Special Anthology ed. (New York: Bantam, 1968), p. 415.

32 This assumption grew from a comment made by Poe very early in the history of the short story about how a skilfully constructed tale reaches for "a certain unique or single effect." See Edgar Allan Poe, "Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales," in Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. Robert L. Hough (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 136.

33 William H. New, "Fiction," in Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, gen. ed. and introd. Carl F. Klinck, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), III, 264.

34 Lawrence Mathews, pp. 12-14.

35 Kent Thompson, Across from the Floral Park (New York: St. Martin's, 1974), n. pag.

36 Alice Munro, Lives of Girls and Women, p. 242.

37 Alice Munro, Lives of Girls and Women, p. 250.

38 Alice Munro, Lives of Girls and Women, pp. 253-54.

39 Alice Munro, Dance of the Happy Shades (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968), p. 222.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

- ¹ S. L. Dragland, "Questions of Form in Contemporary Canadian Writing," Tics [Univ. of Western Ontario, London], 1, No. 1 (March 1979), 5.
- ² Ann Mandel, "The Frontiers of Memory: Wallace Stegner's Wolf Willow, a Neglected History," Laurentian University Review, 8, No. 1 (Nov. 1975), 94.
- ³ Ann Mandel, "The Frontiers of Memory: Wallace Stegner's Wolf Willow, a Neglected History," 100.
- ⁴ Ann Mandel, "The Frontiers of Memory: Wallace Stegner's Wolf Willow, a Neglected History," 94.
- ⁵ Ihab Hassan, "POSTmodernISM: A Paracritical Bibliography," New Literary History, 3 (Fall 1971), 15.
- ⁶ Michael Ondaatje, "Introduction: What Is in the Pot," in The Long Poem Anthology, ed. and introd. Michael Ondaatje (Toronto: Coach House, 1979), p. 11.
- ⁷ For a discussion of several of these long poems and many others, see Robert Kroetsch, "For Play and Entrance: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem," Dandelion, 8, No. 1 (1981), 61-85.
- ⁸ For a short comparison of The Shepherdes Calender and Around the Mountain, see Victoria G. Hale, "Elements of Literary Tradition and Myth in the Novels and Sketches of Hugh Hood: An Examination," M.A. Thesis Sir George Williams 1971, pp. 102-04; and for some observations about relations between Spenser's poem and A Suit of Nettles, see Alvin A. Lee, James Reaney (New York: Twayne, 1968), pp. 53, 58, 60, 63, 73-76, 109-10, 112.
- ⁹ Personal conversation with Hugh Hood, 13 Aug. 1981. See Stephen Leacock, Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town, pref. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), pp. 4-5.
- ¹⁰ James Reaney, "The Third Eye: Jay Macpherson's The Boatman," Canadian Literature, No. 3 (Winter 1960), p. 30; rpt. in Canadian Anthology, ed. Carl F. Klinck and Reginald E. Watters, rev. ed. (Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1966), p. 538.

- 11 Germaine Warkentin, Introduction, in A Suit of Nettles, by James Reaney, 2nd ed. (Erin, Ont.: Porcépic, 1975), p. v.
- 12 Robert Kroetsch, in "Statements by the Poets," in The Long Poem Anthology, p. 312.
- 13 Linda [M.] Leitch, "Alice Munro's Fiction: Explorations in Open Forms," M.A. Thesis Guelph 1980, p. 1.
- 14 Laurie Ricou, Editorial, Canadian Short Story Magazine, 3, No. 1 (Winter 1977), 1.
- 15 See Henry James, The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces, introd. Richard P. Blackmur (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), passim.
- 16 See Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, trans. Jane E. Lewin, foreword by Jonathan Culler (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1980), pp. 185-210, 243-54. In Munro's Lives of Girls and Women and Who Do You Think You Are?, for example, Del Jordan and Rose are both focal characters, whose experiences and perspectives orient the narrative in either book. But while Del, at an older age, is also the narrator of Lives of Girls and Women, Rose is not, strictly speaking, the narrator of Who Do You Think You Are?. Often, however, the narrator of Who Do You Think You Are? shifts from narration or commentary about Rose to speaking as Rose, thereby giving the impression that Rose and the narrator, like the younger and the older Del Jordan, at some level form a single questing consciousness. Here the focus of the narration continues to be Rose, regardless of alterations in the voice of the narration.
- 17 On the "implied author" and the "implied reader," see Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 71, 138; and Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1974), pp. xii-xiii.
- 18 Clark Blaise, A North American Education: A Book of Short Fiction (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1973), p. 194.
- 19 Robertson Davies, Stephen Leacock (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. 21.
- 20 Clark Blaise, in "BLAISE, Clark 1940-," Contemporary Authors: A Bio-Bibliographical Guide to Current

Authors and Their Works, Vols. LIII-LVI (1975).

- 21 Laurie Ricou, Editorial, 1.
- 22 Hugh Hood, in "A Novelist on Novels--and His Criteria," by Beverley Rix and Ron Grantham, The Saturday Citizen [Ottawa], 19 June 1971, Sec. 3, p. 35.
- 23 Patricia A. Morley, The Comedians: Hugh Hood & Rudy Wiebe (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1977), p. 114.
- 24 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, in Before the Flood: Our Exagmination round His Factification for Incamination of Hugh Hood's Work in Progress, ed. J. R. (Tim) Struthers (Downsview, Ont.: ECW, 1979), p. 47.
- 25 David L. Jeffrey, "Jack Hodgins and the Island Mind," Book Forum, 4 (1978), 72.
- 26 Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, War and Peace in the Global Village (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1968), p. 175.
- 27 Matt Cohen makes the same point about the country and the city in his novel The Disinherited, introd. John Moss (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 23: "Unmarked by his years on the farm, [Erik] had entirely taken on the appearance and smoothness of a city person--one for whom the outdoors was a park where one might seek diversion or renewal but not the place where survival was decided."
- 28 George Elliott, The Kissing Man (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1962), pp. 6, 134.
- 29 In his rev. of Dark Glasses, by Hugh Hood, The Fiddlehead, No. 115 (Fall 1977), pp. 147, 146, Barry Cameron describes the Centre de Prevention in "Going Out as a Ghost" as "a Dantean image of purgatory, if not hell," and says that "An Allegory of Man's Fate" "ends with a pastoral vision of apocalyptic bliss in which all Bronson's suffering remains unremembered." Dark Glasses, Cameron points out, has a "redemptive structure," within which the stories move "from now to then, from an earthly, Dantean inferno or purgatorio to a heavenly paradiso, from suffering to bliss, and from a tragic vision to a comic vision of life."
- 30 Clark Blaise, "Among the Dead," in his Tribal Justice (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1974), p. 224.

- 31 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood" by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 41.
- 32 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 40.
- 33 Margaret Laurence, A Bird in the House, introd. Robert Gibbs (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 102.
- 34 Margaret Laurence, A Bird in the House, pp. 3, 207.
- 35 Margaret Laurence, A Bird in the House, p. 96.
- 36 Alice Munro, "Walker Brothers Cowboy," in her Dance of the Happy Shades (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968), p. 18.
- 37 Alice Munro, "Tell Me Yes or No," in her Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974), p. 124.
- 38 John Orange, "Munro's Magic Weave," rev. of Something I've Been Meaning To Tell You, by Alice Munro, Journal of Canadian Fiction, No. 13 (1975), p. 194.
- 39 John Orange, "Munro's Magic Weave," p. 195.
- 40 John Orange, "Munro's Magic Weave," p. 195.
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- 42 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 53.
- 43 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, p. 53.
- 44 Kent Thompson, rev. of A Bird in the House, by Margaret Laurence, The Fiddlehead, No. 84 (March-April 1970), p. 108; rpt. in Margaret Laurence, ed. and introd. William H. New (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), p. 152.
- 45 Kent Thompson, rev. of A Bird in the House, in Margaret Laurence, p. 152.
- 46 George Bowering, "That Fool of a Fear: Notes on A Jest of God," Canadian Literature, No. 50 (Fall 1971), p. 42; rpt. in Margaret Laurence, p. 161.

- 47 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by J. R. (Tim) Struthers, pp. 62-63, 72-73.
- 48 John Metcalf, "Telling Tales," p. 9.
- 49 John Orange, "Seeking the Astounding: Jack Hodgins' Fiction," pp. 1-2.
- 50 John Metcalf, "Telling Tales," p. 8.
- 51 Robert Weaver, Afterword, in Dance of the Happy Shades, by Alice Munro (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968), n. pag.
- 52 Alice Munro, "A Conversation with Alice Munro," by John Metcalf, Journal of Canadian Fiction, 1, No. 4 (Fall 1972), 60, 61; and "Who Do You Think You Are?: Review-Interview with Alice Munro," by Carole Gerson, Room of One's Own, 4, No. 4 (1979), 4.
- 53 Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town was first published as a newspaper serial in The Montréal Daily Star between February 17, 1912 and June 22, 1912. It appeared every Saturday with the exception of the following dates: March 9, April 6, April 27, May 11, May 18, June 1, and June 15. For a summary of the peculiarities and the problems of serial composition, see Archibald C. Coolidge, Jr., Charles Dickens as Serial Novelist (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State Univ. Press, 1967), p. 8.
- 54 Alice Munro, "Who Do You Think You Are?: Review-Interview with Alice Munro," by Carole Gerson, 4.
- 55 Donald Cameron, Faces of Leacock: An Appreciation (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967), pp. 138-53.
- 56 Robertson Davies, Stephen Leacock, p. 21.
- 57 Robertson Davies, "Stephen Leacock," in Our Living Tradition: Seven Canadians, ed. Claude T. Bissell (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 136; rpt. in Masks of Fiction: Canadian Critics on Canadian Prose, ed. A. J. M. Smith (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), p. 101.
- 58 Stephen Leacock, "The Amazing Genius of O. Henry," in his Essays and Literary Studies (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1916), p. 203.
- 59 Hugh Hood, "An Interview with Hugh Hood," by Victoria G. Hale, World Literature Written in English, 11, No. 1 (April 1972), 35. It is interesting to note that in Around

the Mountain and other story cycles by Hood, a single story occupies a position something like that of a single novel in Hood's epic cycle The New Age, although the novels are more open-ended than the stories. In this and other respects, Around the Mountain was the precursor of The New Age.

⁶⁰ Hugh Hood, "Going Out as a Ghost," in his Dark Glasses (Ottawa: Oberon, 1976), pp. 7-21; and "The Woodcutter's Third Son," in his None Genuine Without This Signature (Downsview, Ont.: ECW, 1980), pp. 77-97.

⁶¹ André Maurois, Preface, in Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings, by Jorge Luis Borges, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby, pref. André Maurois, introd. James E. Irby, augmented ed. (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. ix.

⁶² In her Introduction, in 78: Best Canadian Stories, ed. John Metcalf and Clark Blaise (Ottawa: Oberon 1978), p. 5, Joan Harcourt remarks that ". . . there is little real fiction in Canada. What we have instead are personal histories with the names changed and the facts slightly bent." Also see Dorothy Livesay, "The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre," in Contexts of Canadian Criticism, ed. and introd. Eli Mandel (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1971), pp. 267-81.

⁶³ Kent Thompson, rev. of A Bird in the House, in Margaret Laurence, p. 153.

⁶⁴ Charles Dickens, "Preface to the First Cheap Edition 1847," in his The Pickwick Papers, afterword by Steven Marcus (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. ix.

⁶⁵ Michael Ondaatje, "Introduction: What Is in the Pot," p. 12.

⁶⁶ Jay Macpherson, "The Third Eye," in her The Boatman and Other Poems (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 7.

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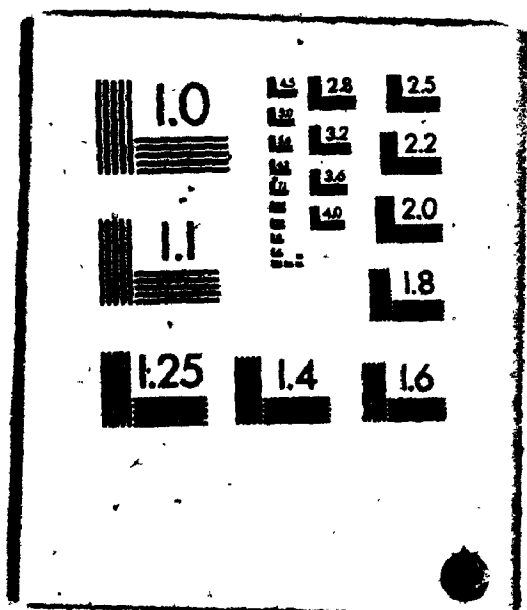
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