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DENNIS LEE AND GEORGE GRANT: TECHNOLOGY AND REVERENCE

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies

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Abstract

This study focuses on poet Dennis Lee's reading of one of his chief influences, George Grant. It notes the affinity in their understanding of the nature and cost of "technology," and highlights their points of disagreement.

For both Lee and Grant, the most deleterious effect of technological domination is the loss of a sense of the holy, a disabling of the human capacity for reverence and justice. Lee parts company from Grant, however, in his account of the holy. Lee tends to characterize the holy in Heideggerian and mystical terms, as an experience of awe unmediated by the things and creatures of the earth, as an encounter with the nothingness that surrounds all beings. For Grant, the holy is present in beings, who participate in a goodness that is primary and more fundamental than mortality. From within his more mystical understanding of the holy, Lee tends to give Grant a partial reading, obscuring Grant's efforts to reanimate a sense of reverence in the midst of technology. His reading also obscures an interesting tension that arises in his accounts of his own poetics and in several of his poems: against his rather mystical, Heideggerian characterization of the holy, his writing enacts a more 'rooted' or 'incarnational' sense of sacredness, in the stance of justice he takes towards other beings.

Chapters One and Two focus on Lee's two prose accounts of Grant, noting the struggle with influence and the partiality of his reading. Chapter Three analyzes the art of Grant's writing, to show his efforts to reanimate a sense of reverence. Chapter Four studies Lee's statements of poetics, noting the competing influences of Grant and Heidegger. Chapter Five argues that Lee's Savage Fields: An Essay in Literature and Cosmology can be read as an effort to understand Grant's notion of "the beneficence of nature." Chapter Six analyzes three of Lee's poems, tracing the tension between his

nature." Chapter Six analyzes three of Lee's poems, tracing the tension between his mystical understanding of the holy and the 'incarnational' understanding found in Grant. The study concludes by suggesting that Lee's hunger for reverence in the midst of technology might serve as a starting point for studying a renewed, reverential consciousness that seems to be emerging among contemporary Canadian authors.

Key Words: Dennis Lee, George Grant, technology, reverence, poetics

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Introduction

The Dennis Lee Papers, housed in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Room at the University of Toronto, is a collection that totals nearly 300 boxes. More than forty years of story are tucked away here: memories of (parts of) a career and a life, and, quite inseparably, the record of a good piece of Canadian literature's recent past. The boxes are full of letters; editing notes for numerous Canadian writers; drafts of poems, essays, and stories; copies of reviews; pathetic little budget sheets for Anansi Press; early catalogues from Anansi; passionate (repeated) declarations of withdrawal from the Anansi enterprise--all mixed in with personal memorabilia like a transcript of Lee's brilliant undergraduate grades and an unemployment insurance identification card.

In Box 22, from 1975, there is a telling letter from a high-school English teacher, Jim Foley. Besides serving as a thank-you to Lee for agreeing to speak at a Canada-Day celebration, the letter lends credence to the principal claims in Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, an early Anansi success. Published in 1972 with teachers like Foley in mind, *Survival* is a zesty taxonomy of the victim motif in Canadian literature. It argues that there is indeed such a thing as Canadian literature, that our literature exhibits a distinct, if dismaying, character and tradition (the victim tradition), that that tradition seems rooted in our colonial mentality and status, and that Canadians in general (in 1972) do not recognize these facts. Foley's letter certainly supports the claim that Canadians in general do not recognize their own literature. It also continues the victim motif, perhaps deliberately, perhaps not.

Foley lists a number of recent outrages against Canadian culture and its lovers--more victims. In 1975, he reports to Lee, only three of 387 books recommended for use

in Ontario schools are written by Canadians; "a teacher could receive certification in British and American literature, but not Canadian"; until 1975, "faculties of education carried no Canlit in their curriculum"; and, the coup de gras, "During 1971, a teacher was refused upgrading in his category because one of the subjects submitted for upgrading was Canadian studies."

Two decades later, "Canlit" is no longer a collective victim. It has established its health as a living tradition and a 'legitimate curriculum.' Lee and Atwood, as writers, editors, and advocates, were part of the energy that brought more and more Canadian writers to print and helped establish a broader audience for those writers. Foley's letter would not have to be written today.

Atwood's Survival named a habit of mind that rendered Canadian literature, for a time, both distinctive and ignored. But it also issued a call to the Canadian imagination. The last chapter, which includes a discussion of Lee's long poem, "Civil Elegies," invites writers not only to name their colonial plight, recognize their victim-tradition, and face their distinctive consciousness, as Lee does, but to go beyond these. In the liberationist tones of the day, Atwood asserts that it is time to make (in Margaret Avison's words) "a 'jailbreak and recreation'" (246). Understand the victim-impulse, the victim-patterns in Canadian experience, and, by understanding them, transcend them. Explore this strange consciousness that repeatedly tosses up images of loss and failure, of dreams dashed and hopes defeated, of lives truncated and beings betrayed; explore it and find out "what happens after survival" (246).

What does happen in Canadian literature after Survival? If we start from Atwood's premise, without debating it, we can ask: Do writers find something more to make a literature, a nation, a life out of, beyond that pervasive consciousness of hostility,

malevolent power, hardship, loss, defeat, failure that Survival anatomizes? Do they discover anything beyond the experience of barely, merely, or grimly surviving an encounter with these forces? Does the world of non-human nature get loved as well as feared? Does it speak to us out of its otherness without getting co-opted by romanticism, that early form of technology? Does fragile flesh come to be seen as anything more than a liability? Is consciousness ever anything more than a solitary and alienated ache? Do artists find a way to achieve a culture in a country that knows itself, often, as a hard place, a conquered space, a vestigial might-have-been? How does the artistic community locate indigenous voice when Canadians tend to know their country as something unknowable, undefined, indefinable, ungraspable, and perhaps unspeakable? Does another consciousness, another way of being, of knowing, of speaking, of inhabiting flesh and place arise? Do we achieve that postmodernist "reconstruction beyond despair" that Bowering sees Sheila Watson reaching for as early as 1959 (The Mask in Place 109)?

This study is not an effort to answer those questions with the kind of generalising breadth and exemplifying analysis that would make a sequel to Atwood's Survival; that is a task for another time, or someone else. Instead, I offer a small sketch of a further consciousness that I believe has arisen among contemporary authors. My main purpose is to locate Dennis Lee's work, and the work of one of his chief influences, George Grant, in relation to that consciousness.

At this baffled end of an amazing millenium, a consciousness seems to have emerged that seeks to counter some of the deleterious implications of the modern paradigm of knowledge and the modern project of mastery that, for many, is summed up in the term "technology." Writers as diverse as Don McKay, Tim Lilburn,

Christopher Dewdney, Bronwen Wallace, Lorna Crozier, Michael Ondaatje, Robert Bringhurst, Rudy Wiebe, to name only a few [1], ponder and enact a way of knowing that has less to do with power than with love; against the dominant ethic of the age, which seems to define 'good' as whatever increases mastery and technical efficiency, they seem to be singing a dissident song. Right in the midst of technology's hegemony, standing against the present drive for domination of human and non-human nature, they sing a song of reverence for the earth and the creatures of the earth.

In the works of these authors, victims and hostile forces still abound; life's precariousness is still acutely acknowledged, whether the poem or novel imagines times past or the technological present. The 'postmodern' awareness of pervasive transgression and oppressive systems (epistemological, political, cultural, linguistic), and the feminist, ethnic, ecological inflections of this awareness continue to reveal endemic victimization. But in the face of all that power that too readily makes victims, the imagination that informs the works I have in mind seems angled reverently, towards life.

The consciousness that informs these works is clearly related to the victim consciousness Atwood examines. But there is a difference. In the face of loss or victimization, somehow the emphasis shifts to whatever it is that lets us know loss as loss, and unlived or truncated life as an awful waste. This other consciousness is more passionately attuned to whatever it is that makes us apprehend victimization as the transgression it is. It is attuned to whatever it is, in us, that immediately knows that the misuse of power is unjust. Beyond the awareness that fragile matter is imperilled, we find, in this further consciousness, awe and delight blended with anxious protect[illegible]ess. Out of a sensitivity to whatever is victimized, out of resistance to whatever, as Dennis Lee says, "strikes at life and goodness" ("Cadence, Country, Silence" 168), the authors

I have cited seem to affirm what might be called the given goodness of 'the whole.' They seem to tap the innate passion for justice in the human heart that affirms that such 'goodness' is, however undefinable it has become, however untenable we find our claims about its reality to be. As makers in the age of technology--that seemingly limitless drive to possess and manipulate--the authors I have mentioned appear to respect a limit to making, a givenness or sacredness in things and beings beyond which our power to act or own should not go.

The understanding that informs that respect sidles tentatively into name in Bronwen Wallace's poem "What It Comes to Mean" in her 1985 volume of poetry, Common Magic. In this poem, the narrator speaks of "this gentleness we learn / from what we cannot heal" (77) and goes on to say,

> If I had a god,
>
> I'd say we were holy and didn't know it,
>
> but I see only what we make of ourselves on earth,
>
> how long it takes for us to love what we are,
>
> what we offer to each other in our best moments,
>
> but carelessly, without shyness,
>
> like food grown in plenty,
>
> our mouths blessed with it every day. (78) (emphasis mine)

Wallace only ventures the word "holy," then covers it over; a kind of Canadian diffidence or old Scots shame/modesty inflects the wistful agnosticism. She covers over the "holy" then lets it shine through her words of everyday reverential living/loving, her works she describes as "Nearer to prayers than stories" (83). Wallace makes no metaphysical claims and instead keeps her focus existential and materialist; her concern

and her delight are for "what we make of ourselves on earth." But this 'making of ourselves' does not seem 'modernist'; it does not seem to express the existentialism of sheer human will, of radically free choice, of detached human subjects constructing meaning and civility in an absurd universe. Nor does it seem the product of some 'post-modern' subjectless conduit of language, uttering what the time gives to be said. There is a person here, facing a person. The love we learn, in Wallace, grows out of "what we are," as feeling, thinking, choosing creatures of matter that matters. It is a love that simply extends out to mystery: life is gift--somehow. Somehow, that love she speaks of defines the limit of our power to transgress and manipulate the 'other.' This difference between Wallace's sense of responsibility for "what we make of ourselves" and the existentialism of ungrounded will may seem slight, but I think it is important. Maybe she cannot say we are "holy," but she does enact a way of being and knowing others that suggests we are more than a negligible concatenation of atoms tossed into time with a spin on us--a spin we have learned to call the will to power.

There may be a deep logic in the movement from the victim consciousness Atwood illuminates to this further consciousness that intuits the holy and inhabits the region of reverence. It may be that the colonial, the victim, the sufferer, the "beautiful loser" (Leonard Cohen)--those inept at wielding power--are by nature on the way to compassion and justice. They know the truth of Wallace's beautiful and simple account of "this gentleness we learn/from what we cannot heal." Another's pain, another's simple, needy existence, is our obligation; compassion and the gift of ourselves are the due we render. If 'God,' as eternal, generative goodness, has slipped into oblivion in our age, then maybe the human capacity for gentleness and active justice may somehow recall that generative goodness and reinstate enduring sacredness, against the modern,

desacralised account of matter.

Wallace's phrase calls to mind a perspective on justice/holiness found in the writings of Simone Weil--George Grant's "Diotima" (Sheppard 21) and a thinker Dennis Lee says he is now grappling with ("Poetry and Unknowing" 33). The following passage helps illuminate the relationship between the victim of natural and man-made "necessity" and force, and the just and compassionate lover:

> ...[T]he understanding of human suffering is dependent upon justice, and love is its condition. Whoever does not know just how far necessity and a fickle fortune hold the human soul under their domination cannot treat as his equals, not love as himself, those whom chance has separated from him as an abyss.... Only he who knows the empire of might and knows how not to respect it is capable of love and justice. (Intimations of Christianity among the Greeks 52-53)

Atwood anatomizes the mind and body bowed by the empire of might; in the past quarter century, Canadian literature reaches, perhaps only more consciously than formerly, into the great compassion and the sense of justice that spell resistance to that empire.

Perhaps no better bridge between the victim consciousness and this new consciousness of reverence can be found than the works of Dennis Lee. Midwife to many authors as an editor, Lee has also given us, in his own writing, a passionate indictment of this desacralized age, a nerve-jangled account of its ravages, and a spirited counter to it. In his poetics of "cadence" and in those poems that make their troubled way to "the deep, unscheduled ground of caring" ("The Death of Harold Ladoo" 56), Lee seeks the

reverence that the technological episteme denies. While that indictment, that account, those poetics, and those poems, apart from his editing, may have had something to do with the birth of his contemporaries' works of reverence, tracing that 'something,' is also not the principal task here. (However, a study of his acts of literary midwifery, as influence and editor, in relation to his contemporaries, would be worth doing. Similarly, a study of the poetics of listening in Lee and his contemporaries might be worth considering). Instead, this present study simply tries to follow Lee the writer, the passionate agnostic, on his deeply personal quest of the holy. In particular, it attempts to track the complicated traces of his reading of George Grant, his friend and most enduring influence, in that quest. To follow Lee in his quest is to query how it is, for him, that reverence is both inescapable and inconceivable. To reflect on this paradox may sharpen the sense of what I am trying to signify in my use of the terms 'holy,' 'justice,' and 'reverence.'

While certain of his contemporaries go on writing works of reverence without precisely theorizing what reverence is or why it is, Lee has problematized, for thirty years, the question of the holy, the sacred. [2] While some of his contemporaries write out of a consciousness that illuminates the limits of transgression, and traces the contours of the inviolable, Lee, in his adult poems and prose, gnaws at the modern illegitimacy of saying what Wallace ventures and withdraws: "If I had a god/I'd say we were holy." He chafes at the modern judgement that any claim about the holiness of beings, or about some given limit in things, is simply, to quote Robert Butts, philosopher of science, "epistemologically empty" [3], a mere unfounded value judgement, product of our subjectivity, with no basis in fact.

Throughout his small, intense body of work, Lee pits his irrepressible spiritual

hunger against the paradigm of knowledge that renders that hunger unintelligible. Putting aside all of his children's verse and his poems for 'adult kids,' The Difficulty of Living on Other Planets, it could be said that his six volumes of poetry, his one book-length essay, Savage Fields. An Essay in Literature and Cosmology, and his key statements on poetics all enact that encounter of spiritual hunger with its own unthinkability. They vibrate with the strife--and the light--that ensue from this tense meeting. In the process, they take their place at the pained, agnostic, longing-filled extreme in the (as yet undefined) sweep of Canadian reverential writing.

Why seek to understand Lee's spiritual/artistic quest through his reading of Canadian philosophical writer and educator, George Grant? It is Lee himself who connects Grant's work with his own life-long meditation on the unthinkability of the holy. In essays, interviews, and epigraphs to poems, Lee generously acknowledges his debt of thought to Grant, whom he read and edited and wrestled with over the course of a long, twenty-year friendship. In two places, Eugene Combs' Modernity and Responsibility: Essays for George Grant, and Lee's own piece, "Grant's Impasse," Lee presents a number of his poems, notably "The Gods," as his own act of "answerable understanding" (Steiner 7) of Grant's work. In turn, in interviews, dedications and prefaces to essays and books, and in a special essay written to mark Lee's accomplishments at mid-career, Grant pays tribute to Lee as a friend who "taught [him] about justice" (English Speaking Justice) and who helped him "to think and to write more clearly" (Technology and Justice). To understand more fully Lee's troubled meditations on the holy, then, it is helpful to try to read as closely and intensely as one can manage, Grant's own small oeuvre: six slim, densely allusive books, and about two dozen as yet uncollected essays.

Thirty years after the Lee-Grant friendship first began, now when present ecological, economic, political, and social crises make Grant's exposure of the costs of technological hubris sound prophetic, now when a number of poets and novelists and thinkers are crystallizing a dissent from the technological paradigm of knowing, it seems timely to take up the invitation to study Lee and Grant together. That invitation has never been given any sustained or adequate critical response. While most of the commentators on Lee's "Civil Elegies" acknowledge Lee's debt to Grant's Lament for a Nation and Technology and Empire, they tend simply to reproduce Lee's own account of that debt, provided in "Cadence, Country, Silence." They also reproduce, uncritically, Lee's assessment of Grant's achievement, also given in that essay. (See, for example, Kane, Bringhurst). In his essay, "George Grant: Language, Nation, the Silence of God," Eli Mandel makes a gesture of going further. He comments that "Civil Elegies is the poetics of Grant's political lament; Savage Fields the critical ground of Technology and Empire" and goes on to say that "We shall have reason to develop this point later." (168) But the promised development, curiously, does not materialize. In "Authenticity and Absence: Reflections on the Prose of Dennis Lee," E.D. Blodgett suggests, more boldly, that "Grant is, in one sense, the author of Lee's text" (109). While four of Grant's commentators argue briefly with Lee's interpretation of Grant (McDonald, Cooper, Emberley, Warren), no one has examined Lee's reading of Grant in any thorough, critical way. In these various commentaries, we find no serious account of the intertwining of Grant's and Lee's thought, no tracing of the deeper dialogue/argument in their works. As recently as 1994, Michael Higgens says breezily, in an interview with Lee (later rewritten and published as "Poetry and Unknowing"): "What about philosophical sources? Look at the thought in Savage Fields. You can pick out

Heidegger, and we know the influence of George Grant." (145) That "we know" seems a bit hasty. My effort to trace Lee's struggle with the holy in the light of the dialogue between his works and Grant's simply pays some overdue, sustained attention to their relationship.

If the invitation to study Lee and Grant together had not been given in their overt acknowledgements, it would beckon simply from the great similarities in their concerns and the echoes that sound between their works. The effort to understand Lee's search for the holy in the light of Grant's thought begins to reveal the depth of their affinity. Both consider what Lee calls "the whole condition of our civilization" ("Enacting a Meditation" 51) in terms of the hegemony of technology. For both, "technology" is a homogenizing, universalizing force posited on the modern, liberal view of the world as neutral matter, raw material, there for the using. Within this view, humans see themselves as radically free wills, responsible for creating and ascribing value as they choose. Both Lee and Grant explore and lament the toll that this way of thinking, being, and acting--technology--is taking on the human personality, on civil being, on the human community, on non-human nature, on language itself, and on our ability to think, love, and enact justice. Both make an effort to articulate what it is we have been deprived of by what Grant calls "the coming to be of 'technology'" ("Justice and Technology" 240): the sense of the holy; spiritual sustenance; a sense of meaning and a call to humanness beyond animal existence or self-absorption; <u>transcendent</u> roots (the oxymoron invites some pondering) that sustain us in love of the earth. Both fear the violence and injustice that may ensue as the drive to dominate non-human nature becomes a drive to dominate, and manipulate, with no sense of intrinsic limit, human nature as well.

Lee gives his art to the contemplation of the world whose lineaments Grant's

critical eye discerns and eloquent voice evokes. What Grant reveals as the plight and predicament of "the modern," Lee dramatizes and wrestles with in his poems and his prose meditations on poetics. The condition of the modern human, the solitary autonomous will marooned in a "value-free" world, inchoately suffering the loss of sacred meaning, comes clear for Lee in Grant. It is a condition he recognizes as his own, a condition he enacts quite thoroughly, with striking alignment with Grant's own concerns and examples. As we know from Lee's essay, "Cadence, Country, Silence: Writing in Colonial Space," Lee also learns from Grant how to name the condition of the colonized Canadian, deprived of indigenous language, and struggling to claim his own reality. The rites of his poetic vocation emerge as efforts to

- name our modern condition
- inflect that condition with the particular note of the colonized Canadian
- diagnose and suffer that condition in poetic enactment
- refuse to fabricate <u>ersatz</u> 'meaning' with the traditional, but deracinated, metaphorical and mythical resources of poetry
- tune the self, instead, to the way things are in this traduced time, listening for the surging, ineradicable "cadence" of their being, and
- track the paths of baffled spiritual hunger as he contemplates the present oblivion of the sacred.

Growing clarity about his vocation and its operative <u>poetics</u>, Lee says, coincided with his reading of Grant's critique of technological modernity.

Beyond the affinity in the thought and sensibility of Grant and Lee, however, there <u>is</u> argument, and complication. It is the argument of this study that, in his prose commentaries on Grant, Lee gives his friend a curiously partial reading. As a result, he

offers a decidedly partial account of the deepest affinity between them. The partiality of his reading, in my view, is a function of the difference between Lee's attraction to a mystical and 'discarnate' understanding of the holy and Grant's commitment to an 'incarnational' understanding. What that partiality obscures (and perhaps the obscuring is a matter of diffidence) is the eros for justice that Lee shares with Grant and that Grant honoured in him. A reading of Lee in the light of Grant helps clarify that eros and reveals an interesting tension that arises between Lee's mystical account of the holy and the more 'rooted' sense of sacredness that is implied in his poetics and in the action of many of his poems. Lee tends to understand and seek the holy as an experience of unmediated awe, of ecstatic dissolution of self in the power of "tremendum" (Otto 12). He tends to understand awe as a kind of Heideggerian illumination of Being (which illumination, really, says nothing about the holiness, inviolability, or ethical demand of beings). While he tends to theorize the holy in this mystical fashion, in his poetics, and on the 'surface level of content' in his poems, there can be found in the passionately just stance he takes towards other beings and things, in his account of cadence, and in his poems, an affirmation of the ineradicable (incarnated) presence of the "good," here in time, and in the flesh. This is not to say that the mystical, flesh-relinquishing approach to the holy does not issue in compassion. The mysticism of Buddhism and of St. Theresa of Avila, for example, conceives the encounter with the 'great emptiness' or the ecstatic experience of oneness with God as an education of the soul in charity for those suffering the travails of time. What I sense in Lee's poems, though, is a little different: there can be discerned a response to the demand of the creatures that is an encounter with the good before him, rather than beyond them. Situated always in the midst of what Grant calls the daily "nerve-wracking situations of justice" ("Justice and Technology" 242), Lee's

thinking comes upon the obligation that the sacredness of other beings puts upon one. In this veiled and "enacted" affirmation, Lee touches what is central to Grant's thought more fully than he does in his strangely truncating prose commentaries.

To make this claim come clear here, it is necessary to clarify some of the terms I have introduced, terms that will be used throughout this study. Grant's 'incarnational' sense of the holy is most explicitly laid out in "Faith and the Multiversity," a piece that is anomalous in an oeuvre characterized, on the whole, by indirection, artful irony, and a 'negative' approach to tentative affirmations. This essay is Grant's most direct expression of his own faith and of what his biographer, William Christian, calls his "implicit positive teaching" (350) about love. In this essay, Grant counters the modern, diminished account of reason as simply instrumental, as a power of analysis and calculation. For Grant, reason also includes "understanding," intuition, the wonderful capacity for receptivity to what is outside the mind and the self. Drawing on the thinking of Simone Weil, Grant ponders the understanding of faith as a kind of knowing, a different epistemology: faith is "'the experience that the intelligence is illumined by love'" (38).

Grant also worries, in this essay, about the challenge to such faith posed by the current account of knowledge as an operation of objectification and representation that gives the knower power over what is known. Such knowing turns everything known into "resource" and strips it of its sacred otherness: "Anything apprehended as resource cannot be apprehended as beautiful" (51). The beauty of a thing or being, for Grant, in his Christian Platonism, is that quality by which it transcends mere instrumentality and merely instrumental thinking. In pondering the ancient understanding of knowledge as dependent upon love in relation to our modern episteme, Grant illuminates the core of

the disjunction he finds between technology and justice, technology and reverence.

For Grant, in his faith, and in his intimacy with pre-modern thought, justice is an order humans did not make, an order within which one discovers categorical limits to what should be done to another creature--even if it were possible--an order within which one might discover what is "due" to other beings. When humans come upon "that which [they] cannot manipulate" (Philosophy in the Mass Age 81), they encounter the holy--eternal, indestructible "good" (or "God"), discoverable in the things and creatures of the earth.

While this given and primary goodness, this "beneficence of nature" ("Tyranny and Wisdom" 102), is discovered, negatively, in the arrival at these limits, in the revolts of nature that announce these limits, it is also discovered, positively, in the human capacity for love. For Grant, the beings and things of the earth have a given nature; they are good in themselves and they participate in--they incarnate--a goodness that is, finally, "beyond being" ("Faith and the Multiversity" 75). The human capacity for love both acknowledges and demonstrates this incarnate and transcendent goodness: "What is given us and draws from us our loving is goodness itself; the perfection of all purposes which has been called God" (74). In this loving knowledge, in what Emmanuel Levinas calls a "vigilant passivity to the call of the other" (R.E. Cohen 29)--so like Don McKay's "poetic attention" ("Baler Twine: Thoughts on Ravens, Home, and Nature Poetry" 23) and Dennis Lee's cadential listening--humans can come upon the demand of justice that the reality of "the other" puts upon them. With Weil, Grant puts that demand in terms of "consent to the fact that there is authentic otherness" ("Faith and the Multiversity" 38) and considers the nature and cost of that consent.

Consent to the other, or reverence for the good that is met first in fellow

creatures, stills the lust for power and the acquisitive probing of calculative reason. It curbs self-assertion and counters the modern notion that the highest good for the human psyche is recognition. Such reverence arises in one when the full nature and purpose of another being, its "beauty" or "eternality" ("The Computer Does Not Impose on Us the Way It Should Be Used" 128), its utter, unrepresentable "purposiveness" ("Faith and the Multiversity" 46) eludes the objectifying grasp. Such reverential knowing brings one into the inviolable presence of the unrepresentable other--its holiness. Within this understanding, the preciousness of the other is not just posited on its mortality (which is the rubric Lee consistently evokes) but on its goodness, which transcends time. For Grant, the most terrifying and beautiful recognition that there is such a goodness and eternality is found in the Christian's hunger and thirst for justice and in Socrates's claim that "it is better to suffer injustice than to inflict it" ("Justice and Technology" 237). To refuse to transgress the sacredness of another, even at the price of one's own life, is to witness to a goodness that is both beyond being and present in beings. [4] It is to reach the point where the 'self' of radical freedom meets the soul that cannot be itself if the will to power is all.

That extreme demand of justice is not, mercifully, put upon many; for Grant, though, answering to it is the height of human excellence--as demonstrated for him in Socrates and Christ. While few have to face that demand, and while only some may love as wholly as St. Francis, who was so full of the loving need of otherness that he "was able to beget upon the lepers as beautiful" (74), the simple act of loving, banal or great, is a grace: "The shoe fetishist, the farmer and St. John of the Cross were on the same journey, but at different stages" (39). This love imitates the goodness from which all being proceeds: "To love something with intelligence is to want it to be" (64).

The obverse of this loving knowledge is, for Grant, the utter, solipsistic self-assertion of the tyrant, the one for whom "otherness has disappeared as much as can be imagined" (74). In the liberal paradigm of knowledge, and in the drive for technological mastery that has arisen out of that paradigm, Grant, with Leo Strauss, sees a frightening potential for tyranny. Self-assertion and oblivion of the sacredness of otherness, is implicit in the drive to draw everything that is--things, beings, ideas even--into projects designed to increase humans' power--and often the power of just a few humans. While Grant recognizes (as any sane person must) that humans, as relatively frail physical beings, must intervene in the natural order, he suggests that they (we) must find a way to intervene that is less destructive of otherness; what we face in this age is essentially a challenge of 'making': we have been making technologically; can we make poetically? The notion of matter as raw material obscures the need to intervene in a way that respects the nature of the other and harmonizes human need with the rest of the earth. The 'home' example of the technological denigration of matter and the assertion of self-will that Grant returns to time and time again--but not without compassion for the private extremis the situation poses--is abortion. Within the ontology implicit in the liberal view of humans as radically free wills and of matter as neutral stuff, there can be found no reason to limit that act, which makes the 'other' an object. Otherness as that which puts limits on our doing is denied. This example focusses Grant's thinking on justice.

In the wholly rational and wholly reverential consent to otherness that is at the heart of justice, there is, for Grant, a real eros. One's creatureliness, neediness, dependency, and bodily being are bound up in this loving consent. That eros, mediated by the body, participates in the holy. It grounds awe; it grounds the ecstasy that beauty and excellence inspire; it grounds the active justice that is carried out in costly

acknowledgement that the reality of the other puts upon one an obligation that is "beyond all bargains and without an alternative" (English Speaking Justice 93). In his 'incarnational' understanding, then, Grant finds holiness present in the beings and bodies of the earth; an experience of the holy is not just an experience of awe, but also an ethical demand. While that demand is the most immediate substance of the holy, it is not, in Grant's view, at odds with joy, or ecstasy, or timeless radiance.

But if this is Grant's stance, how can it be that Lee connects Grant, as I said above, with his own 'lifelong meditation on the unthinkability of the holy'? How is it that Lee connects his own mystical, 'discarnate' account of the holy with what he hears in Grant?

In truth, Grant devotes the greater part of his writing to the exposure and indictment of the power of the modern scientific-technological paradigm of knowledge to obscure our obligation to others and to the earth; this alarmed focus is what is most evident to most readers. The theoretic incongruence between modern physics/modern social science and the idea of eternal justice is the central problematic that animates Grant's meditations. The utterance that sounds loudest for Lee, in these meditations, is Grant's pain-filled cry: "how dark is the question of good in our era" ("Revolution and Tradition" 85).

As a reader of Grant, Lee is fascinated by one key image tossed up by his pain and alarm: the image of the "tight circle" within which modern thinking revolves, a tight circle that betrays technology's ability to function as a frame within which all that is must now appear (a notion central to Heidegger's thinking on technology). One of the earliest expressions of this problem for thought is found in Grant's "The University Curriculum" (which Lee edited for all three of its publications):

> The tight circle then in which we live is this: our present forms of existence have sapped the ability to think about standards of excellence and yet at the same time have imposed on us a standard in terms of which the human good is monolithically asserted. (131)

In his prose accounts of Grant, in "Cadence, Country, Silence" (1972) and "Grant's Impasse" (1990), Lee tends to take this part of Grant's critique of modernity as the whole. Finding that the image of the circle--the modern's impasse of thought, the "impotence of the mind towards meaning" ("The University Curriculum" 126)--accords so truly with his own experience as a modern, Lee makes that circle the circumference of Grant's thought. He tends to treat all of Grant's references to an older understanding of justice and incarnated holiness as elegiac only; they fade and have no purchase on the mind because, as Grant says, "the enormous corpus of logistic and science of the last centuries is uncoordinate as to any possible relation it may have to those images of perfection which are given us in the Bible and philosophy" (Time as History 52).

Lee acknowledges repeatedly, then, that his own thinking cannot exit the circle Grant names; Grant's faith-filled claim about the "beneficence of nature" is simply inconceivable to a mind shaped by modern science, modern historicism, and the subject/object-value/fact division of the world. Lee's inability to get his mind around the notion of nature's beneficence, or given goodness, is evident in one of his editorial comments on Grant's Technology and Empire. In a 1968 letter to Grant, Lee writes:

> You mention several times here (as at the end of the "Curriculum" piece) the notion that there is a dichotomy whose second part is true: either the liberal account of nature is correct and it is neutral and a-valuative; or nature is beneficent. Is this not skipping a step? Isn't the real counter to

> the liberal view of nature one that says: value is encountered in nature (and human nature), and does not reside in men's will or in their cultural inheritance alone? From that one can move to the statement that nature is beneficent--or to the statement that nature is malevolent, or any other thing. But surely the point at issue is where and how we encounter what we experience as valuable--using that term to mean 'having quality or value of any sort' rather than of 'being of great value to us, being beneficent.' I haven't said that with the accuracy it demands; but perhaps you see the force of my question. (I'm not trying to undercut the statement that nature is beneficent, incidentally; merely to locate it at what seems to me the right point.) [5]

Stuck within the modern and Nietzschean language of "value," and confusing "beneficence" with 'benevolence,' Lee seems unable, here, to grasp what Grant is trying to convey with the term "the beneficence of nature": the primacy of good and the given goodness of the whole--the notion expressed in "Faith and the Multiversity" that all that is proceeds from goodness and everything that is, therefore, has a good, a purpose, a given nature that ought not to be transgressed.

Lee, self-acknowledged and inveterate modern, finds himself in a bind. He cannot think the ancient notion of the "beneficence of nature," nor can he abide the modern account of the whole. However, while he finds the modern paradigm both inescapable and intolerable, he also finds it inadequate to his own experience of awe, his own revulsion at evil, and his own experience of hunger--for ecstasy, for the "numinous" (Otto 7; The Gods 53), for a glimpse of radiant goodness, for a way of being that is just and is not dominated by the lust for mastery. That is, he finds reverence as inescapable

as it is inconceivable.

Thinking to go beyond what he calls Grant's "impasse of thought," he transforms his own rational entrapment within the "tight circle" of technology into a spiritual discipline, and into a poetics. In Lee's reading, Grant's thinking ends in "muteness" of mind, "rational deadlock" ("Grant's Impasse" 34), the shutting down of philosophical reason and thought about good. It reaches its key point and its end in the recognition of the spiritual "deprival" ("A Platitude" 137) that is the legacy of the technological project. Lee makes this point of deprival the point of departure for his own mystical understanding of the holy, his own apprenticeship along the "negative way" of relinquishment, detachment, and entrance into nameless, unmediated awe. The mind unable to think the good can only know that it is deprived, but cannot know of what. Grant's "deprival," in Lee's reading, becomes a kind of koan that invites the mystic's entry into the void. This entry involves a short-circuiting of reason and a relinquishing of the will, an abandonment, even an obliteration of the self, of needy, erotic attachment to the personal and to the things and creatures of the earth. It involves the cancelling of every desire, including the desire to reach the holy. With calculative thinking and analytic reason silenced, with the modern will to mastery stilled, Lee finds himself opened to both nothingness (the void) and Being; this openness enables the fully attentive listening to the cadence of 'what is' that is at the heart of his poetics. The 'what is' that constitutes the Being of beings is characterized, in Heideggerian and mystic fashion, as awesome nothingness; it is this that is 'holy,' not the beings themselves.

Held by this mystical sense of the holy, Lee does not credit his wholly emotional, intellectual, visceral, erotic hunger for the good, for what eludes mastery, as an affirmation that the holy is here, in the flesh, in the self, and in the other. For Grant,

that hunger does function as such an affirmation, and the depiction of it, in his writing, usually precipitates an indirect and evocative affirmation. I maintain that, in attempting to arouse the hunger that deprival causes, Grant is prompting his readers to think that hunger, to reflect on its meaning, and begin to discover, not only that good is necessary to their being, but that their need of it is a function of the good, the holy, in them. For Lee, however, the eros for the good that animates his own writing, and the devotion with which he pursues his poetics of listening, in an effort to do justice to the "cadence of being" and to give himself to the call of the other, do not seem to illuminate the notion of the "beneficence of nature," or make that notion any less inconceivable.

For Grant, with his incarnational sense of the holy, Lee's own "rage against [the] division" ("The University Curriculum" 142) in the self that is wrought by the technological paradigm is a function of the "beneficence of nature." Matter capable of such rage, matter capable of both needy and self-giving love, matter wrought to awe and adoration escapes the technological rubric and points up the inadequacy of the modern view of the world as neutral stuff, devoid of wort[illegible]here for the using. This inadequacy, this fissure in the technological paradigm, functions, in Grant's writing, like Leonard Cohen's "crack in everything"; it is "how the light gets in" ("Anthem", The Future). In my view, Grant turns every resource of his own considerable art to pressuring these fissures in technology's "tight circle" and to evoking the capacity in human nature to rage, to hunger, and to love what is good.

In reading Grant from a mystical (and Heideggerian) angle, Lee makes him more of a tragic paradoxicalist than the passionate ironist I would suggest he is. Focusing so exclusively on Grant's account of the "tight circle" of modern thinking [6], he remains silent about Grant's spirited efforts to reanimate pre-modern thinking, and to reanimate

the dimmed language of the good. Dazzled by the dark brilliance of Grant's articulation of our "civilisational contradiction" (English Speaking Justice 78) as liberals in thrall to the tyranny of technology, Lee tends to overlook Grant's passionate efforts to destabilize the mental constructs of modernity, to expose their inconsistencies. Perhaps because he operates within a poetics of 'expression,' of rendering and dramatizing passionate thought as it happens, Lee makes no note of the persuasiveness, irony, and indirection of Grant's own art, his own eloquent rhetoric, with its poetic use of language, its turns and qualifications, its capacity to rouse the spiritual hunger Lee himself exemplifies. In giving Grant a partial reading, Lee also gives his own hunger a partial interpretation. In focusing primarily on what he hungers for, Lee seems not to ask what the hungering means. In leaving this question unasked, he misses going where Grant, I believe, tries to take a reader--into the recognition of the good incarnate right there in the hungering, bodily self--into an affirmation, against the technological rubric, of the "beneficence of nature." For a writer so ready to explicate his own works, Lee remains oddly silent about his core affinity with Grant; that affinity is found in the encounter with what is lovable and with what demands his reverence in his discussions of cadence and in many of his poems.

While the interpretive twist I am giving to the Lee-Grant relationship might suggest that my critical approach will follow Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" rubric, I do not theorize what happens in this relationship as an instance of a general tendency in literature. I simply acknowledge a tussle with influence, and trace its intertextual gyrations. While I find that tussle very interesting, the object is not so much to watch Lee attempting to slay his intellectual father as to see more clearly what it is to think and write as a thorough-going, thoroughly honest and utterly disaffected modern

trying to make the break from technology to reverence.

As my introductory comments demonstrate, I do operate on the assumption that one can discern meanings or patterns in a work of literature that might be saying more than the words intend. I assume that a text 'means' not just through what it says but also in how it says it; attention to the 'how' can both illuminate and destabilize the 'what.' What the author intends, even an author as given to self-explication as Lee is, remains a mystery; my reading is an offering of a pattern I see and hear, given the information that informs my seeing and hearing.

I hope the reading also does some justice to what is on Lee's and Grant's pages. Because this study makes an effort to think the meaning of concepts like holiness and reverence, it takes a meaning-seeking approach to the literary works in question. There is a danger, in this approach, of missing the play of poetic language--especially in one so linguistically playful as Lee--and confining it within what Timothy Reiss calls the "analytic-referentiality" (46) of modern mathematical discourse, that system for fixing the butterflies of thought with the pins of uni-valent accuracy. I hope some of my textual analyses mitigate that danger.

If my reading seems to favour Grant and what I take to be his 'incarnational' understanding of holiness, justice, and reverence, that is perhaps a result of several factors. The first is my own 'incarnational' understanding of those concepts, rooted, no doubt in my early immersion in Roman Catholicism, with its doctrines of substance and natural law and its story of perfect goodness turned flesh. I expect it will always seem to me, as Grant says at the end of <u>Technology and Empire</u>, that "the beautiful [is] the image, in the world, of the good" (143). Because any sense of 'the good' breaks upon me from the creatures who embody it, I am perhaps disabled in my effort to understand

Lee's 'discarnate' mysticism.

The second factor that may be leading me to privilege Grant and to find Lee going, perhaps unwittingly, where Grant takes one, is a sense, not yet fully researched and worked out, that a work of verbal art is a thing of breath and body and thought, a product of aesthesis, that therefore speaks to the whole of a thinking-feeling-sensing being. For Lee to try to use this medium to break away from mediation is perhaps to court the tension I trace in his writing. The third factor is that, for a large part of this study, I am reading Lee reading Grant, taking that reading back to their texts, pointing out Lee's echoes and ellipses. My explications of some of their texts should help a reader to catch my ellipses; so the conversation continues.

What this study should add to Lee scholarship is, first, a fuller look at the relationship to Grant, beyond the obvious debt of thought traceable in the argument and examples of "Civil Elegies." It should contribute to the effort to understand Lee's sense of the holy, which could, perhaps, be more fully explicated if his latest prose and poetry were studied solely in the light of sources like The Cloud of Unknowing, the mystical text he references in "Poetry and Unknowing."

What this study should add to Grant scholarship is a bit more understanding of how his texts work as literature; that topic warrants a full study of its own. Grant has been studied closely by scholars of theology, religion, political science, philosophy, history, sociology, all of whom both explicate him and argue with him on topics as divergent as nationalism, justice, abortion, natural law, theodicy, history, the proper interpretation of technology. While a number of commentators (Joan O'Donovan, Barry Cooper, Laurence Lampert, M. Darrol Bryant, David Heaven, William Christian, for example)[7] recognize Grant's style and conjecture about the purpose of his powerful

rhetorical appeal (a call to thought? a call to repentance? a call to love? a preparation of the soul? a warning?), only Frank Flinn has focussed solely on a particular aspect of Grant's art, in his article, "George Grant's Three Languages." As a student of literature and not primarily of philosophy or theology, I have stayed close to the workings of Grant's text, to the movement of his rhetoric, in an effort to understand more fully his thinking on justice, technology, and the holy.

As this introduction also suggests, no reading of Lee and Grant can be done without reference to Martin Heidegger, whom both read closely, and about whom they kept up a friendly dispute. [8] As the following chapters argue, Heidegger's ontology, his sense of humans as beings-towards-death, leaves its traces on Lee's thought. Heidegger's notions of the sudden revealing of Being shape Lee's poetics of cadence. Grant, too, owes a tremendous amount to Heidegger's exploration of the nature of technology and the nature of technological thinking, willing, and knowing, but he differs from him on some crucial points. For Grant, technology is not a "destining of being," but the result of human choice, human theorizing, and human action. He does not locate the origin of technological thinking in Plato's metaphysics but, following Leo Strauss, in the liberal modernity of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Nietzsche. He is not, as Lampert points out, "committed to awaiting a new beginning in man's way of taking being" (187). As Joan O'Donovan argues in her impressive, book-length study of Grant, Grant differs fundamentally from Heidegger in rejecting the notion that man's radical freedom and resolute projecting are those powers upon which, not only his own being, but being itself depend. Most importantly, as Grant himself says in "Justice and Technology," he cannot accept an ontology, such as Heidegger's, that is silent about justice, about ethics, and about the reality of a goodness that would lead one to suffer injustice rather than inflict

it. As O'Donovan puts it, Grant rejects the inveterate modernity of Heidegger's assumptions: "That man creates himself; that he takes responsibility for his essence; that there is no eternal, transcendent, and unchangeable good for which man is fitted; that there is no justice in things to which man must conform; that there is no eternal law by which man is measured; that all is radically contingent; that the meaning of beings is exhausted by their finite (historical) possibilities" (118-119). As William Christian writes in his biography of Grant, Grant died before he completed his own long-incubated study of Heidegger (364). His published views, consistently reflected in the quick overview above, are very scant. They reflect a criticism that many Heidegger afficionados echo: Heidegger's thinking lacks an ethical dimension. [9] Grant's comments, brief as they are, are the most pointed I have read about the nature of that lack. They are a challenge to any reader of Heidegger who finds in his indictment of technological mastery, and his beautiful accounts of poetic dwelling and of meditative thinking an invitation to reverence. In this study, I read Heidegger under Grant's tutelage, but with the admission that I am still asking how his mysticism--and Lee's--might speak of justice as cogently as I find Grant's Christian-Platonism does.

In Chapter One, I offer a reading of Lee's reading of Grant in "Cadence, Country, Silence." This reading traces the curious way Lee undercuts his own account of Grant's influence and how his reading of Grant tends to trap Grant in closure and paradoxicality. I point out here, but do not yet pursue in detail, how Lee grounds his poetics of cadence on a Heideggerian openness to being that is presented as a step beyond Grant's "implacable ... despair" ("Cadence, Country, Silence" 161). In Chapter Two, my reading of Lee reading Grant continues, with a focus on Lee's commemorative essay, "Grant's Impasse." Again, I challenge Lee's arguments as highly selective, geared

towards emphasizing paradox and situating Grant at the threshold of Lee's own entrance into the cloud of mystical unknowing. In Chapter Three, I take a close look at the art of Grant's writing, arguing that he plies his rhetoric to reanimate the reader's sense of the "beneficence of nature," to rediscover reverence in the midst of technology.

In Chapter Four, I trace the reverential, Grantian notes that I discern in Lee's mainly Heideggerian account of his own poetics, arguing that Lee's hunger for reverence sets up a tension in him between the influence of Grant and that of Heidegger. This tension is part of that core dynamic in Lee that I have identified as the tension between his conviction that reverence is inconceivable and his experience that it is, at the same time, inescapable. Chapter Five offers a reading of Lee's tremendously problematic essay, <u>Savage Fields: An Essay on Literature and Cosmology</u>, as an anguished meditation on the question of the holy and the relation between technology and reverence. I suggest that the essay is a curious effort, on Lee's part, to think the meaning of that central phrase he pressured Grant to eliminate from "The University Curriculum," during his editing of <u>Technology and Empire</u>: "the beneficence of nature."

Th[illegible]dy closes with a reading, in Chapter Six, of three of Lee's poems as exemplary of two tensions: that between content and style, and that between the two different views of the holy I have been tracking--the incarnational and the mystical. I conclude the dissertation with a sketch that indicates how this discussion of Lee's work, and this effort to define 'reverence' and 'the holy' in relation to technology might serve as a starting point for studying a 'literature of reverence' in Canada.

Notes

[1] I am thinking in particular of the reverential notes in works like Bringhurst's Pieces of Map, Pieces of Music; Crozier's Everything Arrives at Light; Dewdney's Radiant Inventory and Demon Pond; Lilburn's Moosewood Sandhills and The Names of God; McKay's Birding or Desire: Poems by Don McKay and Nightfield; Ondaatje's novel The English Patient; Wallace's Common Magic and The Stubborn Particulars of Grace; and Wiebe's A Discovery of Strangers.

[2] Actually, Bringhurst and McKay, for example, do reflect, in prose, on the meaning of reverence. See Bringhurst's "Everywhere Being is Dancing, Being is Known" and McKay's "Baler Twine: Thoughts on Ravens, Home, and Nature Poetry" in Poetry and Knowing, ed. Tim Lilburn (Kingston: Quarry, 1995) 52-64 and 17-28, respectively.

[3] This phrase came up frequently in my conversations with Dr. Robert Butts, Professor of Philosophy, University of Western Ontario, and Editor of the journal, Philosophy of Science, when I worked as his Editorial Assistant, 1992-4. Whenever our conversations strayed (which they did a lot) into the regions of art or faith or ethics--whatever could not be verified by scientific method or "mathematized"--he would tease that we'd just spent a wonderful hour or two in the realm of the "epistemologically empty." That realm always seemed pretty full to me.

[4] Echoes of this understanding can be found in Emmanuel Levinas' thinking on justice and ethics, his contribution to the contemporary effort to detach from the metaphysics of the subject, central to the technological thinking of the modern era. In a conversation with Richard Cohen, he says: "I become a responsible or ethical 'I' to the extent that I agree to depose or dethrone myself--to abrogate my position of centrality--in favour of the vulnerable other.... Ethical subjectivity dispenses with the idealizing

subjectivity of ontology, which reduces everything to itself. The ethical 'I' is subjectivity insofar as it kneels before the other, sacrificing its own liberty to the more primordial call of the other. For me, the freedom of the subject is not the highest or primary value.... I accept that my freedom is anteceded by an obligation to the other" (27). See Richard A. Cohen, Face to Face with Levinas (Albany: State U of New York P, 1986).

[5] Grant did delete the paragraph that included the contentious phrase, but, as I argue in Chapter Three, he replaced it with a lengthier, more impassioned closing that attempts to bring the meaning of that notion 'home' to his readers.

[6] Lee's tendency to turn what Grant finds a "difficulty" for thinking into an impossibility is signalled by an editing note I discovered in Box 44 of The Dennis Lee Papers. Pondering Grant's "The University Curriculum," and the conundrum of asserting the "beneficence of nature" within the modern paradigm, he jots: "In other words, the dead-end is even more total than Prof. Grant suggests."

[7] See, for example, M. Darrol Bryant's study of Grant's use of the meditative form, in "The Barren Twilight: History and Faith in Grant's Lament", in George Grant in Process: Essays and Conversations, ed. Larry Schmidt (Toronto: Anansi, 1978); Barry Cooper's "A Imperio usque ad Imperium: The Political Thought of George Grant," William Christian's "George Grant and the Terrifying Darkness," and Laurence Lampert's "The Uses of Philosophy in George Grant" in Schmidt; David Heaven's "Justice in the Thought of George Grant, The Chesterton Review 11.2 (1985): 167-82; and Joan O'Donovan's close and loving study, George Grant and the Twilight of Justice (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1984).

[8] Early in his friendship with Grant, Lee seems not to have shared Grant's reservations about Heidegger. He writes as an aside in a letter of 19 April 1972: "In case

that sounds like the plea of an acolyte [i.e. of himself as an acolyte of Grant's], let me say that--at this point--I don't anticipate agreeing with what you have fundamentally to say about Heidegger. Nevertheless it matters more to me to know what you do see there than most other things I can think of. Not because I'm preparing to be converted, but because I know there will be real nourishment there, and there is so precious little!" Twenty three years later, in "Poetry and Unknowing," he comments, with a somewhat changed mind: "Heidegger--Heidegger is so problematic. Believe me, this is not a list of the people I find most cuddly" (34).

[9] See, for example, John Caputo's The Mystical Element in Heidegger, in which he studies the relation between Heidegger and Meister Eckhart and comes to the conclusion that "The final disanalogy of Heidegger's experience with mystical experience lies in the fact that Heidegger has thoroughly purged his thought of any moral or ethical dimension. Unlike Eckhart and most mystics, Heidegger is not calling for moral renewal of the self" (236). In his recent rethinking of Heidegger, Demythologizing Heidegger, Caputo wrestles even more grievously with this ethical lack, coming to understand the highly political implications of what appears to be Heidegger's apolitical insouciance and woolly professorial naivete--aspects of Heidegger's thought that early roused George Grant's own reservations about a thinker to whom he was nevertheless greatly indebted.

John Macquarrie, acquaintance and translator of Heidegger, also notes, in Heidegger and Christianity, that "Indeed, it could be complained from his early thinking onward, he consistently avoided ethical questions" (70). Werner Marx, who seeks to "think Heidegger further" (10) in his study Is There a Measure on Earth? Foundations for a Non-Metaphysical Ethics, argues that the "real objection to [Heidegger's] way of determining truth is that it is not capable of providing a measure for responsible action

and critical thought precisely because mystery and errancy are essential elements in it" (94).

Chapter One

Reading Lee Reading Grant: Paradox and Prestidigitation in "Cadence, Country, Silence: Writing in Colonial Space"

While I argue, in this chapter, that Lee's reading of Grant tends to alchemize rhetorical irony into mind-silencing, mystical paradox, I must also acknowledge, first and foremost, that Lee's two prose accounts of Grant are both moving tributes, eloquent expressions of gratitude, and heartfelt claims of affinity with Grant. There is no questioning Lee's account of what Grant meant to him, in his life, and for his art. It is simply that the links Lee draws between himself and Grant are pulled so taut that important kinks of difference get straightened out in the telling. In all their confessional and eulogistic eloquence, Lee's prose commentaries cannot be taken uncritically as full accounts of Grant's "vocation," his project of thought or his prose method. They are both less and more: highly sensitive but very selective readings. On the one hand, they strike me as the record of a certain tussle in Lee's soul, a struggle between admiration and determined intellectual independence. On the other, they are a poet's reading; the interpretation of Grant given in these two essays is Grant read with a poet's imaginative sense of the physicality of thought, of the spatial relation among utterances, of the concrete referentiality of words, and of the drama of thinking. As a poet, Lee responds with particular sensitivity to Grant's concerned sense of technology's power to co-opt language and redefine the terms in which we know ourselves and the world. In his concern, however, he makes no mention of Grant's wily irony, his _own_ able wrestling with language, his deft composition, his turns of thought, the constant qualifiers that prise open the circle Lee would make absolute to let in both doubt and hope. As one

committed to a poetics of witnessing, of rendering passionate thought as it happens, of flowing with the teeming process of time-bound being, Lee appears to overlook Grant's efforts to keep thought both emotionally engaged and critically unenthralled; that is, both suffering the present and informed (as few moderns believe thought can be) by timeless universals.

1. Falling Mute

In speaking to fellow writers at the Rencontre quebecoise internationale des écrivains in Montreal, in the spring of 1972, Lee told his own tale of losing and finding 'poetic voice.' His account came as a response to the question, "What am I doing when I write?" (151) The response is orchestrated in three parts: "Cadence", "Country," "Silence." In the version of the address printed in Boundary 2: A Journal of Postmodern Literature (1974), the first and third sections are each quite short--two pages, and two-and-a-half pages, respectively. They frame the long mid-section account of voice lost and rediscovered, of language gone dead and found renascent--an account that is simultaneously a tale of "Country," of native space lost and (provisionally) rediscovered. At the heart of this tale, constituting its physical and thematic centre, is Lee's description of the impact Grant's work had on him, as a Canadian, as a writer, as a modern human hungry for reverence.

The first and third sections of the essay, "Cadence" and "Silence," are vibrant with "reverence for what is" (159); they are present-time accounts of Lee's experience of listening-writing, of attending to the ever-present surge of "cadence." To use another phrase of Lee's, somewhat out of context, the first section is luminous with "celebratory elan" (166), as Lee entices his notion of cadence into intelligible expression. The third

section has a kind of wincing poignancy as he imparts his sense of the fragile facticity of beings, an awareness that seems to arrive at the height of cadential listening.

In the first section, Lee speaks of cadence as a sort of pre-verbal energy of being, a "taut cascade, a luminous tumble" (152) a "teeming" "energy of infinite process" (153). His "vocation," he says, consists of "listening into [cadence] with enough life concentration that it can become words through me if it chooses" (152). Cadence is, and out of it arises, with the artist's cooperation, what is given to be said, or sounded, or brought to form. Content exists within cadence and fills "out the orderly space of its own more limited being" (153). In the third section, what defines the articulable nature of being--the speakability of the cadence of being--is the "silence" which is its other, its 'not.' The most essential expression of what cadence is, is given in this phrase/refrain, which closes, with slight modification, all three parts of the essay: "finally ... cadence chooses to issue in the articulate gestures of being human" (153). Listening to cadence and responding to it, in art and in act, are, for Lee, central to humanness.

Neither the account of cadence nor the account of silence makes either of those notions a mere theoretic abstraction. Each is given in terms of "witness," in terms of Lee's personal experience of each and in terms of a general reflection on the way things are. While the "Cadence" section intimates a sense of luminous present time, of the ever-presentness of cadence, the "Silence" section is tinged with the sadness of temporality, of time passing. What locates the whole exposition/meditation in historical time, in the troubled time of contemporary civil experience, is the more polyphonic central section, "Country." Here, the voice moves through the calm naming of civil alienation, to indignation at American cultural imperialism, disgust at Canadian acceptance of that imperialism, chagrin at Lee's own complicity, a kind of excited dismay related to Grant's

analysis of modernity. to longing, sad fondness, hope, and quiet reverence.

In addressing the issue of "L'Ecriture et l'errance", the Rencontre speakers tackle the problem of using language in the midst of cultural dispersal, fragmentation, dislocation. Lee inflects this theme as "Writing in Colonial Space." In the "Country" section, Lee gives his own twist to this challenge--a twist that entwines art, politics, history, and philosophy. He credits his ability to understand this quadruple implication, in part, to his reading of Grant. (There is a lot of Heidegger in his characterization of the problem and its 'solution,' but Lee does not mention him explicitly, here.)

Through his reading of Grant, Lee comes to see the problem of writing, of letting the cadence he hears emerge in authentic language, as inseparable from the problem of Canadian national identity:

> Any man aspires to be at home where he lives, to celebrate communion with men on earth around him, under the sky where he actually lives. And to speak from his own dwelling...will make his words intelligible to men elsewhere, because authentic.... But if we live in a space which is radically in question for us, that makes our barest speaking a problem to itself. For voice does in part issue from civil space. (154)

The problem of Canadian national identity arises out of our implication in the American empire, an implication Grant exposes with searing eloquence. As a colonial of the American empire, the world's prime exemplar of modernity, the Canadian is simultaneously and inevitably colonized by technology. The problem of Canadian identity, therefore, comes to be seen as a particular and telling instance of the problem of human identity in the technological age.

The central problem for the modern Canadian, Lee argues, is a problem of dis-

location: as colonials within the American empire, we filter what we know and feel and want through the screen of the American dream. As denizens of the technological empire, we have 'gone at' the world as object, appropriated it and come to 'own' it, but we have therefore failed to make it a home--a habitation that fosters our humanness. In this fabricated world that is not a home, and in this nation that is only a colony, we find, as Canadians, we are not rooted in a distinct and continuous tradition that we chose and that defines us, not rooted in harmonious cohabitation with the rest of the natural world, not connected to a transcendent source of spiritual sustenance and just limits to our will-driven freedom. As natives and humans, Lee finds, we are dis-located.

For Lee as a Canadian writer, this dislocation becomes apparent when he finds he has no indigenous language in which the "local nature of cadence," its "hereness," can emerge (154). His account of falling "mute" as a poet is therefore an exploration of "how, in a colony, the simple act of writing becomes a problem to itself" (155). Characteristically, the problem of 'how to write' is inseparable, for Lee, from the problem of 'how to be.'

Lee's period of "muteness" spanned, roughly, the four years from 1967 to 1971. It was in the midst of that muteness, that inability to use words "authentically," that his sense of civil alienation became a conscious, simultaneously wrenching and liberating conviction. The sense that the words available to him, as a poet, "weren't limber or alive or even mine" (156) coincided with a "recoil" (156) from Canadians' sad tendency (then) to court American culture and deride all things Canadian. As his tale goes, Lee went from recoil to "awakening," an awakening that was sparked by contemporary critiques of the Vietnam war and of 'official' Canada's material cooperation in that war. His awakening brought the alarming "recognition that the sphere of imperial influence was

not confined to the pages of newspapers. It also included my head.... More and more of the ideas I had, my assumptions, even the instinctive path of my feelings well before they jelled into notions, seemed to have come from the States unexamined" (158). This recognition, Lee tells us, was intuitive, inchoate: "none of this got said, except by the revulsion of my nervous system; otherwise I was mute" (158).

Lee's account, to this point, sets the stage for his discussion of Grant and the relation of his reading of Grant to a new-found understanding of why his nervous system revolted against his own colonial enthrallment. He links this new understanding to the rediscovery of poetic voice.

Lee's discussion of Grant's critique of modernity constitutes the 'physical and thematic centre' of "Cadence, Country, Silence" and its anagnorisis. This discussion covers, in fact, only three of seventeen pages. But it does arise at mid-point in the essay and it does function, in Lee's account of voice lost and voice found, as a dramatic illumination and turning point.

In the next two subsections, I want to comment on two key aspects of Lee's treatment of Grant in this 1972 essay. The first is the odd, perhaps unintended diminishing of his own account of Grant's influence, a destabilizing of his moving claim of like-mindedness and gratitude. The second is Lee's prestidigitous rearrangement of the actual order of Grant's argumentation. This rearrangement allows Lee to attribute to Grant the paradoxical self-cancelling strategies that more accurately characterize the movement of Lee's own discourse, in many of his poems and in his prose. More importantly, the rearrangement helps Lee draw even tighter the "tight circle" of technological thinking that he finds so compellingly articulated by Grant, and that he transforms into his own entrance to the holy, his own invitation to reverence.

2. The Tussle with Influence

"Cadence, Country, Silence" is a beautifully orchestrated act of reflection. I have already noted the way "Cadence" and "Silence" frame "Country," the modulations of tone and time among the sections, and the use of the refrain-like phrase "the articulate gestures of being human" at the end of each section. In the Boundary 2 version, the "Country" section is itself divided into ten subsections. The central--Grant--section is the sixth and longest.

Throughout the essay, Lee's reflection does not so much 'progress,' in the linear fashion he distrusts, as circle. "Cadence" and "Silence" hold the whole, the wider context of how it is for Lee as a writer, in 1972. The ten retrospective subsections in "Country" seem to move over the same ground several times, revisiting ideas and experiences, discovering more light, more clarity and understanding in each circuit. The circling, or spiralling, pattern is something like this: civil alienation intuited, muteness felt, civil alienation confirmed, muteness understood, cadence and civil alienation found holding sway simultaneously, the language of civil alienation intuited, civil language and civil ground (traduced, pitiable) rediscovered, muteness transcended. Lee's reflection circles, widening, clarifying, until it comes to the verge of illumination: the illumination of Being on contingency's edge, a mere breath away from non-being (the philosophic counterpart of civil alienation). This mere breath, heard by the attentive, says to Lee, "Write me" (167). His illumination is the subject of "Silence."

Lee is readied for this illumination by Grant's exposition of Canadian enthrallment by the American empire. His imagination is fired by Grant's account of our forefathers' inchoate and ultimately unsuccessful effort to found a country on principles different from the American. He is dismayed by Grant's critique of modern Canadians'

incompletely-conceived dissent from the American dream, disturbed and fascinated by what he takes to be Grant's pronouncements on the inevitable failure of that dissent, and on the silencing of all dissent within the technological rubric. In these analyses, Lee says he finds the reasons for his muteness.

Lee's gratitude to Grant for helping him "to say for the first time where we are, who we are--to become articulate" (161) is deep, and eloquent. The gift is unequivocably named: "To find one's tongue-tied sense of civil loss and bafflement given words at last, to hear one's own most inarticulate hunches out loud, because most immediate in the bloodstream ... was to stand erect at last in one's own space" (161). Lee's praise is unstinting: Grant's articulation of the Canadian's--and the modern's--terrible dilemma is, for Lee, a "first gift of speech ... a staggering achievement" (161).

This tribute is so movingly, vividly expressed that it succeeds in establishing the little legend of the Lee-Grant relationship of influence. The lines of connection or affinity are drawn tight and close. Compared to the thought of Marcuse or Marx or Timothy Leary or Norman O. Brown, Grant's thought, for Lee, had "a greater toughness and depth" (159). Most importantly, "it felt like home. That mattered to me, because I never wanted to spend time again chasing somebody else's standard of what was good" (159). To come home, to find home, was to find a Canadian thinker making sense of the world, for Canadians, and for moderns. More than that, it was to find a voice issuing from a political, emotional, spiritual space remarkably like Lee's own: "a man who knew this paralyzing condition first-hand was nevertheless using words authentically, from the very centre of everything that had tied my tongue" (159). Grant spoke Lee's own "bafflement," gave voice to the "hunches ... most immediate in [his] bloodstream" (161). Grant is drawn, by this account, directly into Lee's centre. Or perhaps, to echo

Blodgett's comment that Grant is the "author of Lee's text" (109), Lee emerges into consciousness and regains articulateness through the medium of Grant's voice. Whichever way we look at it, Lee does effect a subtle merging of identities, a home-coming out of too many alien differences into welcome likemindedness. This hailing of like by like, this merging into oneness, is a kind of love. It echoes the classical notion of love as a conformation of the being of the lover to the being of the beloved.

So how is this tribute destabilized? My sense of the destabilization, which I have not seen noted by any other commentator, is attributable to three factors. First, like Lee, I tend to read with what I called above a sense of 'the physicality of thought and the spatial relation among utterances.' I find lines of force moving among various statements and passages in any piece of writing. These lines of force affect the meaning of the pieces and the relations among them; this is a kind of 'field' awareness. Reading this way, I find Lee framing his tribute to Grant with a couple of comments that seem to undercut that tribute. Secondly, I find myself questioning the love that merges identities; it is ravishing, but it has a subsuming, assimilative aspect: the loss of the edge of difference can be taken as a kind of subtle colonization. (On the other hand, this ability to lose the self in the other is the mystic's genius.) Lee's claims of like-mindedness, heard one way, undercut the notion of influence; they decrease the sense that he received, from outside himself, something that was needful to him because different from him. Must differences only separate; do they not also amplify, and make giving, one to the other, possible? Thirdly, other indications that Lee's reading of Grant is partial (which I will point out in the discussion of "Grant's Impasse") alert me to the little ironic twist that is discernible in his account of Grant's influence: he casts Grant as a key force in the drama of losing and finding voice, then he quietly casts him out.

The undercutting of Lee's tribute to Grant is first suggested by this brief proviso that prefaces the reminiscence of muteness and release: "Today, as I go back and try to stylize the flux to understand it, I am suspicious of the cause-and-effect categories that assert themselves; half the effects, it seems, came before their causes" (156). Lee is constantly on the look-out for distorting or falsifying tendencies in his own thinking/writing, constantly vigilant to detect any signs that his own loathed "textbook case of modernity" ("Poetry and Unknowing" 36) may be operating, leading him to wilfully manipulate or "unselve" any thing, thought, or event. Thinking of reason as Heidegger thinks of reason, in modern terms, as "the most stiff-necked adversary of thought" ("The Word of Nietzsche" 112), Lee sees only the truncating side of reason, defined as analysis and calculation. Operating on this notion, he laments at the end of Savage Fields, for example, that "Thinking proceeds by objectifying and mastering what is to be thought. The process is erratic and intuitive, yet the overall drive is towards a systematic clarity of idea which takes possession of the subject and wrings its structures from it, leaving behind the husk of one more object" (110). His proviso in "Cadence, Country, Silence," then, can be seen as a gesture of vigilance, an effort to "think against thought" (Savage Fields 112), a resistance to the mode of knowing he characterizes in "The Gods" as a matter of imposing on life

equations, models, paradigms

which deaden the world...(95)

However, this proviso can also be read as an effort to keep the reader sceptical: 'Don't take what I am going to say too literally, don't credit it too much.' Grant's role in Lee's experience of losing and finding voice may be, after all, a mere rhetorical creation, a dubious product of that tic that dogs our knowing: 'stylization.' How is one

to avoid reducing the lively everywhichwayness of life to controllable linearity? Lee trusts only poetry's polyphonic rendering of cadence; prose and reason threaten the truth of flux (and only flux is true?), so be on guard.

If the proviso destabilizes in advance the account of Grant's role in Lee's rediscovery of voice, the disclaimers that follow the account further destabilize it and effect a subtle distancing from Grant. They even hint at quiet dismissal. After finding Grant speaking from the centre of his (Lee's) own being, Lee seems to shake himself a little, recollect his "sole self," and proceed to reclaim independence: "I do not expect to spend my life agreeing with George Grant" (161). That is, no sooner does he find himself at "home" than he decides to leave. Heard this way, this first disclaimer injects a new note into Lee's climactic statement of praise and gratitude: "in trying to comprehend the deeper ways in which writing is a problem to itself in Canada, I can start nowhere but with Grant" (161). Grant is a starting point, a prodigious and admired one, but his thought is something Lee must go beyond, in his effort to find meaning in this "'time of dearth'" ("The Death of Harold Ladoo" 59, quoting Hölderlin). Detachment from the mentor is begun.

Fixing Grant in the "bleakness" of "modern despair," sensing "'intimations of deprival'... in waiting and in silence" (161), Lee circles more intently in his reflection. Confronted by "language ... drenched with our non-belonging" (163), discovering that "you and your people do not in fact have a privileged authentic space just waiting for words," Lee sees a way out. To reflect on our space-lessness is to "fall silent"--as he claims Grant does. In the silence of attention, one can begin to hear how words "actually are for us" and so begin to write "with [the] grain" of "an external, uncharged language" (163). Lee does not overtly say that he found Grant doing this, but the recognition is

implied in his saying, earlier, that he found Grant "using words authentically, from the very centre of everything that had tied my tongue." That recognition is present when he attributes to Grant Canadians' "first gift of speech." Lee follows Grant to the point of waiting and silence, and finds that silence a prelude. From Grant, he learns that words can only emerge out of that silence, can only break into authentic speech, when they name our loss, give themselves over to the truth of our condition:

> ...[T]he impasse of writing that is problematic to itself is transcended only when the impasse becomes its own subject.... [T]o be authentic, the voice of being alive here and now must include the inauthenticity of our lives here and now.... Part of the truth about us is that we have betrayed our own truths, by letting ourselves be robbed of them. To say that for real, the betrayal must be incorporated faithfully--in both sorrow and anger--in the saying. (165)

For Lee, Grant achieves this authentic articulation of our condition, and of our betrayal. He manages to wrap words around loss and nothingness. For Lee, Grant shows how technological man, in his objectifying power, holds nothingness in his hands, lives in exile from the holiness, the inviolability, the thatness of all other beings; caught in "the permanent incitement to technique," it could be said that technological man is therefore incapable of justice. According to Lee, Grant shows us this condition as our present reality. The question is, does he or does he not find Grant going beyond diagnosis?

From one point of view, Lee seems to be suggesting that more than the naming of our condition, which Grant achieves, is open to the poet attuned to the cadence of being. In following Grant into the silence that "shushes easy speech" (166), Lee

discovers that in that silence, a person may come upon the truth of the present--a truth called "deprival" or "civil alienation" (Grant's terms), or "spacelessness" or "non-being"--and find that the world goes on. We are, perhaps, not just Grant's "ex-Canadians" but "not-yet-Canadians" (162):

> 'City': once you learned to accept the blurry, featureless character of that word--responding to it as a Canadian word, with its absence of native connotation--you were dimly savaged by the live, inchoate meanings trying to surface through it....['C']ity' meant something still unspoken, but rampant with held-in energy. Hearing it was like watching the contours of an unexpected continent generally declare themselves through the familiar lawns and faces of your block. (164)

What Lee discovers in this attention, in this reappropriation of words "in this space-less civil space," is "a blur of unachieved meaning" a "living barrage of meaning: private, civil, religious" (164). Does he suggest that this is meaning that Grant does not register? About this I am not sure. Lee writes:

> To name your colonial condition is not necessarily to assign conceptual terms to it.... [T]he weight of the silence can also be conveyed by the sheer pressure of the words that break it. Then to name one's own condition is to recreate the halt and stammer, the wry self-deprecation, the rush of celebratory elan and the vastness of the still unspoken surround, in which a colonial writer comes to know his house, his father, his city, his terrain--encounters them in their own unuttered terms and find words being born to say them...[B]eneath that silence, there is a raw welter of cadence that tumbles and strains towards words.... That cadence is home.

(166)

What is suggested here is that, for Lee, cadential listening permits a step beyond the disastrous dynamic of technological modernity that Grant unveils, that "permanent incitement to technique" that is our deepest reflex as "totally free men, faced with a world which is raw material" (161). Attuned to the cadence of being, Lee finds himself open, like Heidegger's poet, to the "preciousness" of "other people, or things, or situations," each standing forth

> as what it is most fully, and most preciously, because the emptiness in which it rests declares itself so overpoweringly.... It is in meeting the nonbeing with which living particulars are shot through--their mortality, their guilt, their incipient meaninglessness; or here in Canada their wordlessness for us--that we cherish them most fully as what they are. Until that time, we may have cared for them only as things we can own. But in that luminous, perishable aspect they assume their own being for us (167).

Alive to the cadence of being, the poet can move beyond technology, beyond the reflex of wilful appropriation, to reverence. Is he saying that the poet can go where the philosopher of deprival (Grant) cannot go and can arrive in the place prepared by the philosopher of poetic Dasein (Heidegger)?

Perhaps the structure of Lee's essay can help answer this question. On his way to illumination, which seems to suggest a decisive step beyond Grant, Lee delivers his most forceful disclaimer on the subject of Grant's influence. He once more casts the 'stylization' of his account of losing and finding voice into doubt:

> as a chronological account of things, this tale of writing, falling silent for

> four years, beginning to write again, may be misleading. It streamlines and dramatizes many things which were tangled, murky and banal as they happened...the chronological account is false, in this case, if it appears as a series of causes and effects. A reader might get the impression of a causal sequence that went like this: poet writes early artificial work; in dissatisfaction, he stops writing; reading George Grant, he finds an explanation for his own impasse; as a result something called 'cadence' happens to him, and he starts writing again.... As I recall, it went more like this: poet writes artificial early work, some of it being a log-jammed attempt to write in a cadence he has heard in Hölderlin and elsewhere; unexpectedly, he finds it possible to write in a rather stilted version of that cadence, and does a book-length poem (published as Civil Elegies); throughout this period, he is reading George Grant in dribs and snatches; for no reason he can see, he stops being able to write, after four years, again for no apparent reason, he starts writing in cadence again and revises the long poem. (164-5)

Grant's role is reduced to less than incidental causality, a mere casual, parallel activity with no special influence, a bit of reading in "dribs and snatches."

On the one hand, this inchoate everywhichwayness seems very much the way daily living is: understanding often emerges, unbidden, the issue of some constant humming just beneath consciousness. The distrust of linear causality Lee displays here belongs to the open-system, field-awareness he struggles to articulate throughout his poetry and prose (and most particularly in Savage Fields): everything affects everything else. Cause-effect analysis does begin to fail as a category of explanation in the

ecological thinking Lee is groping for. On the other hand, the intense attention of editing that brought about the Anansi publication of Grant's *Technology and Empire* suggests that Lee's engagement with Grant's thought involved more than reading in "dribs and snatches." This editing was done during the time of Lee's "muteness"; it could indeed have 'caused' a certain understanding of our condition to crystallize in Lee's thought. But Lee does not mention this editing in "Cadence, Country, Silence."

In this dismissive commentary, Lee says that he finds, in Grant, "an explanation for his own impasse; as a result something called 'cadence' happens to him, and he starts to write again" (165). *Is* he saying Grant's contribution is merely diagnostic? How closely is Lee connecting Grant to the discovery of cadence? Does he find Grant himself breaking the silence and using words that reconnect us to our habitations, root us again, bring us home? For Lee, cadence bursts through the spoken truth of our traduced condition. Grant spoke that truth, for him. Does cadence well up through Grant's words; is it the poetic of his own art? Evidence on the positive side is indirect: When Lee speaks of hearing "a whole swarm of inarticulate meanings [lunge]" up from beneath our everyday words, he uses examples that recall Grant's account of our origins on this continent in "In Defense of North America":

> The whole tangle and sisyphean problematic of people's existing here, from the time of the *coureurs de bois* to the present day came struggling to be included in the word 'city'.... [Y]ou began to overhear the strands and communal lives of millions of people who went their particular ways here, whose roots and lives and legacy come together in the cities we live in.... ['C]ity' meant something still unspoken. (164)

It seems clear that Grant's writing helps bring Lee's "imagination ... home" (163). Does

his writing point the way only, or does it too participate in the "raw welter" of cherished presence? Does his art provide a "means for us to cross the division separating ourselves and our habitations" as he himself says art might do, in "The University Curriculum" (133)? Lee does not say so, overtly. In "Cadence, Country, Silence" Lee puts greatest emphasis on Grant's exploration of the "Catch 22" of thought, on the "implacable despair" this discovery induces, and on the way his prose method "cancels his reclamation of space to be in." I think this evidence suggests that Lee does indeed see himself going beyond Grant's diagnosis.

What is going on in Lee's disclaimers? It could be, as I have suggested, a tussle with influence, a gesture of intellectual and artistic independence. It could also be a gesture of diffidence, an effort to remove personal drama from the centre, to de-emphasize modern subjectivity and emphasize receptivity, to shy away from the limitation analysis can impose--to quit trying to salt the tail of the holy spirit. That is, Lee's erasure of his eloquent and memorable tale of influence could be an effort to remove himself as actor, as a centre of will, and give cadence its reverend due: "this jazzy, majestic, delicately cascading process I hear surging and thudding and pausing is largely without the witness I might be, if it chose to become incarnate in the words I set down" (153). "We do not own cadence. It is not in Canada--vice-versa--nor is it real only for colonials. But it has its own way of being-here for us, if we are willing to be struck dumb first." (166)

I wonder if both of these dynamics may be occurring at once: a little struggle with influence <u>and</u> a defense of cadence--specifically, an effort to protect the unrepresentable nature, the irreducibility of "Civil Elegies" (version two) as a work of art, a reverent rendering of cadence. Why speak of protecting "Civil Elegies"? Lee's

articulation of his operative poetic, in "Cadence, Country, Silence" and elsewhere, is a kind of sane theory-after-the-fact; he reflects on his poetic process by thinking backward through his poems. In "Cadence, Country, Silence," he is clearly thinking backward through "Civil Elegies." By making gestures of distancing himself from Grant, in the essay, is Lee trying to distance Grant from "Civil Elegies"? Would distancing Grant from "Civil Elegies" help prevent the kind of source-seeking reading that might turn a deaf ear to the cadence and polyphony of the poem, reducing it to a series of propositions in free verse? That is, would over-emphasis on Lee's very dense, allusive content (which so obviously owes much to Grant's thought) deflect attention from its cadence, its polyphonic surge of pre-verbal music? Is it this overemphasis that Lee is attempting to prevent by down-playing Grant's role in the rediscovery of voice and in the writing of "Civil Elegies"?

On a number of occasions, in his prose, Lee expresses frustration and disappointment that his work has not been given the hearing he hoped it would receive. This frustration is most clearly voiced in a 1980 interview with Jon Pearce, in which Lee draws his notions of cadence through a close reading of "The Death of Harold Ladoo" (almost as if he were determined, not only to write the poems, but to pre-empt criticism of his work in general):

> I'm troubled, you know, when I discover that some people have difficulty hearing the polyphony in my writing on the page; they don't realize how many shifts there are, how many tonalities are interlaced, until they hear it read aloud. What _were_ they hearing if they didn't pick up that embodied space on the page, that full cadence? Is it their ear or my music that is deficient? (56)

(The close scoring of his music that he presents in this interview suggests that Lee actually has a dim view of his audience's ear: 'The music is there, dammit.') By obscuring Grant's role in his rediscovery of voice, in "Cadence, Country, Silence," is Lee trying to adjust the balance between content and cadence? Is he warding off any objectification of the poem, pleading on behalf of the work of art as an entity that, as Grant says, is "purposiveness itself" ("Faith and the Multiversity" 47), but with a purpose we cannot represent to ourselves? That is, is Lee attempting to protect the poem from the technological habit of mind that, as Grant says, leads us to believe "we have knowledge when we represent anything to ourselves as object, and question it, so that it will give us its reasons" (36)? Perhaps, perhaps not.

The reasons for pulling a veil of disclaimer over his tale of reading Grant and of losing and finding voice must rest with Lee. In any event, I find the dismissal of Grant expressed in language far less vivid than that used in the account of influence; it is no wonder readers remember only that tale and do not remark the dismissal. Still, if the dismissal is conducted to protect the poem from reductive readings and muffled hearings, then the caution is worth taking. Surely any scrutiny of Grant's presence in "Civil Elegies" need not inevitably deafen a reader to its cadence, but the danger is there: a poem only lives for a reader if s/he gives as much attention to the 'how' as to the 'what,' to the point that the what is the how.

3. Watching Lee's Confounding Fingers

One of poetry's delights is its ability to make thought and emotion tangible, to give them flesh, render them visual. Another of its delights is its ability to make the sensuous dimension of words stand forth, apart from their function as signs that refer

away from themselves to something signified. Words, in poems, sound; they make rhythms together; they move; they have shape and texture; by being, they 'mean.'

In speaking of his own poetry, Lee glories in the physicality of his art: in "Cadence, Country, Silence," he claims that what is on the page and in the ear, in his poems, is an embodiment of what he hears as the constantly humming energy of being: cadence. As cadence loops and tumbles, so do the lines of poems. Words too are physical. They are things: lying "in a great random heap ... glittering] with promise" (156), or, when civil alienation and voicelessness take hold, going "stiff, inert ... clogged with sludge." The conflation of the problem of speaking with the problem of being (which has important Heideggerian overtones) translates, in Lee, into the conflation of wordlessness with "space-lessness," dislocatedness. Only by acknowledging that we have "betrayed our own truths" (165), deracinated ourselves, do we gain access to where we really are; dislocation, truly spoken, becomes our location. In a similar vein, in "Polyphony: Enacting a Meditation," Lee claims that his meditative poems do not merely "describe a space" but "enact" one (92). This enactment is achieved in the energetic dancing of given cadence with responding voice; their movement together defines the space they move in, as dancers describe a shape and shape a space by dancing. Lee's sense of the physicality of words, his effort to enact cadential listening/cadential thinking, and his struggle to 'tell the truth' about our state are part of what raises the writing of poetry, in his view, to the height of humanness: cadence issues in the "articulate gestures of being human." That is, poetry connects a human with the reality, the 'thatness' of the world; if this reality, in our technological night, is utterly obscured, poetry must first speak that absence authentically. This authentic naming of absence, or of the "nothing" that Heidegger says has befallen "Being," enables a lighting up of things in their truth

and their "nearness." Alive to the thatness of other beings, a human becomes truly a human, for Lee (as for Heidegger and Grant, but with different implications). The speakability, the knowability, the nearness of Being arrives in the space a human makes for it.

I will revisit this sense of the physicality of poetic speech in Chapter Four, in a focussed discussion of Lee's poetics and the reverential nature of his poetic practice. Right now, what I would like to watch is the way Lee's physical sense of language and of ideas operates in his "Cadence, Country, Silence" account of Grant's revelation of our "space-less civil space." I find his reading of Grant a confounding act of prestidigitation; in rearranging the order of Grant's argumentation, he transforms Grant's exposure of the ironic contradictions in our modern condition into mind-jamming paradoxes. The ultimate paradox is the "impossibility" he says Grant, like no other, succeeds in naming: the impossibility of thinking outside the technological paradigm. It is this paradox that Lee then transforms into "goad and grace": it stymies technical reason, hushes analysis, and opens the ears, the attentive self, to the cadence of being. That is, it enables the (irrational, mystic, Heideggerian) movement from technology to reverence.

In "Cadence, Country, Silence," Lee moves from hymning the like-mindedness he discovers between himself and Grant to restating and commenting on those key points in Grant's thought that helped illuminate, for him, the truth of our present, as Canadians and as moderns. He gathers up Grant's various references (particularly in Lament for a Nation and Technology and Empire) to a pre-modern understanding of the nature and purpose of human existence and compacts them into an interpretation of Grant's portrayal of Canada's United Empire Loyalists. In this first stage of his little exposition, Lee claims that Grant attributes to the Loyalists a cogent refusal of American liberalism--"the

doctrine of essential human freedom" (159). Their refusal was informed, he tells us, by the pre-modern understanding that "reverence for what is is more deeply human than conquest of what is" and that "men are subject to sterner civil necessities than liberty or the pursuit of happiness--that they must respond, as best they can, to the demands of the good" (159).

Fired by that vision of an alternative way of being on the earth, Lee enters sympathetically into the refusal. His passionate commentary on the Loyalists' refusal attributes to that group a visionary grasp of two centuries' worth of technological depredation. He expresses that visionary grasp in terms that he will make central to his own discussion of a violent new cosmology, in Savage Fields:

> That doctrine [of essential freedom] led to a view of everything but one's own will--the new continent, native peoples, other nations, outer space, one's own body--as raw material, to be manipulated and remade according to the hungers of one's nervous system and the demands of one's technology. But not only did this view of an unlimited human freedom seem arrogant and suicidal; it also seemed inaccurate, wrong, a piece of self-deception. For we are not radically free, in simple fact, and to act as if we were is to behave with lethal naiveté. (159)

(The proleptic 'echoes' of Savage Fields are found especially in the words "suicidal," "lethal.") What is happening in this passage is an interesting kind of transference; Lee ascribes to the Loyalists his own reactions to the notion of radical freedom and to the technology that notion spawned. To whom did this notion "seem arrogant and suicidal...inaccurate, wrong, a piece of self-deception?" To Lee, actually, not the Loyalists, who did not much regard the "native peoples" of their new land and, as far

as I know, had no designs on "outer space."

As if shaking himself after his passionate mini-indictment of liberalism, Lee notes, more soberly: "This overstates what Grant finds in the Loyalists." His sentence is a tremendous understatement. Lee admits that Grant actually

> declares that the typical Loyalist was 'straight Locke with a dash of Anglicanism'; the British tradition he held to had already broken with the classical understanding of the good which Grant cherishes. Loyalism was a gesture in the right direction, perhaps, but it never succeeded in being radically un-American; it did not have the resources. (160)

This admission does indeed reflect more accurately Grant's brief discussion of the Loyalists in Lament for a Nation (63, 70-71) and in "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" (67, 68). In Lament for a Nation, Grant describes Loyalist conservatism as

> less a clear view of existence than an appeal to an ill-defined past.... It was an inchoate desire to build, in these cold and forbidding regions, a society with a greater sense of order and restraint than freedom-loving republicanism would allow. It was not better defined than a kind of suspicion that we in Canada could be less lawless and have a greater sense of propriety than the United States. (70)

Such conservatism did retain a belief, contrary to the liberal espousal of the emancipation of the passions, "that the good life made strict demands on self-restraint" (70).

While Lee's warm indictment of modernity involves a somewhat erroneous, anachronistic portrayal of the Loyalist stance, it is also a deeply true account of the counter-datum to modernity that runs through Grant's writing. Lee's response to this counter-datum, which combines a longing for a life lived justly in the light of eternal

good and a recoil from the excesses of unlimited freedom, is very much the response I believe Grant seeks to produce. But Lee's account of how Grant proceeds to achieve this effect is misleading. In his 'adjusting' paragraph, in which he exposes his own overstatement, Lee sounds a note of disappointment, sadness, carried particularly in the words "broken with ... cherishes." The vision of the good and of an alternative way for Canada, that he ascribes to the Loyalists, raises his hopes; the admission that Grant actually presents this alternative as tenuous from the start dashes them. Interestingly, Lee holds Grant responsible for this emotional plunge, when it is in fact the order of Lee's own re-telling, not the actual order of Grant's argumentation that raises and dashes hope. The reordering helps to impart the tremendous sense of loss that Grant conveys, but it is not an accurate account of Grant's method, which is less paradoxical, more complex, and even more dramatic.

As the above quotation from Lament for a Nation shows, Grant gives us, in the same breath, the Loyalists' inchoate groping for an alternative way of being and the recognition that that alternative was undermined from the start. He argues that the Loyalists, on the whole, were moderns, albeit in the tradition of Locke, rather than Rousseau. Some among them did harken back to the conservatism, and the vision of unchanging good, discernible in the thought of Richard Hooker (63). But for most, the sources of their traditions remained largely unthought, more a matter of loyal Britishness than a matter of clear principle that could sustain what Grant calls a "thrust of intention into the future" (12). Nevertheless, those traditions did give these early Canadians an allegiance to the common good above the American pursuit of individual self-assertion. That was the tenuous difference upon which Canadian sovereignty was founded, and that is the fragile foundation that is giving way, in the 1990s (with the help of budget-slashing

slashing premiers) before the pressures of continental capitalism and the dynamism of technology. That imperilled, poorly-founded dream of an alternative is, in part, what Grant laments in Lament for a Nation. But remnants of our founding hope animate Canadians' continued struggle for sovereignty; that struggle, says Grant in "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" (77) is still worth the effort. But so is thinking why it is a human imperative to respect the "common good."

In recreating Grant's argument, Lee patterns his account to suggest that a longed-for good is offered, then taken away: 'the Loyalists established a Canada on pre-modern principles, so there is hope for us in this technological night; but no, the Loyalists were moderns after all; there is no hope for Canada.' In his prestidigitation, Lee transfers this pattern to Grant:

> This undercutting of a past he would have liked to make exemplary is a characteristic moment in Grant's thought, and it reveals the central strength and contradiction of his work. He withdraws from the contemporary world, and judges it with passionate lucidity, by standing on a 'fixed point' which he then reveals to be no longer there. To dismiss his thought for that reason is sheer self-indulgence, of course, for it is to shy back from the extremity of cur impasse to imply that we ourselves have access to more-than-liberal resources which stand up where Grant's crumble. (160)

I will have to take these claims about Grant's method one at a time. I will return to the comment about the disappearing fixed point and the crumbling of more-than-liberal resources in my discussion of "Grant's Impasse," whose seed is so obvious here. For now, I will concentrate on the claim about Grant's "contradictory" saying-unsaying, self-

undercutting method, since this claim governs the rest of Lee's explication of Grant's thought in "Cadence, Country, Silence." Interestingly, this saying-unsaying more accurately describes Lee's own method in this essay, as my account of his passionate claims of influence and his deflating disclaimers demonstrates.

It is true that Grant does go about a negative task in much of his writing, dispelling "inadequate sources of hope" ("The computer does not impose on us..." 129), pointing up the fissures in our modern assumptions about the nature of things, revealing the contradictions in modern liberalism. My contention is that he succeeds in exposing the inadequacy of our tools of knowing and the inadequacy of our modern accounts of 'what is' by invoking our enduring capacity to know otherwise. Always he opens up, most subtly, a questioning, a glimmering recognition of a truly adequate source of hope--the ineradicable attunement of the human to justice, to a sense of highest good--an attunement Lee manifests so warmly in "Cadence, Country, Silence" and elsewhere--and leaves uninterpreted. But, as my discussion of Grant's treatment of the Loyalists argues, he does not himself undercut a "past he would have liked to make exemplary"; he presents that past as undercut from the beginning. In his prestidigitation, Lee transfers the contradictions Grant exposes to Grant himself as a thinker and a prose stylist.

Lee continues his rearrangement and his physical rendering of Grant's arguments: After noting that none of us has "more-than-liberal resources" by which we can judge the present, Lee notes that he "found the account of being alive that Grant saw in the classic tradition ... far closer to the way things are." What resources Lee uses to ground this assertion, this judgement of what is good and what is not, this confident claim about "the way things are," he does not say. Grant's account of the "classic tradition", says Lee, gave substance to his own and his contemporaries' intuitive anti-Americanism: "Our

dissent went as deep as it did because, obscurely, we did not want to be American at all. Their dream was wrong" (160). In his physical way of thinking--his poet's way--Lee translates Grant's clarification of a fundamental and visceral "refusal of America" into spatial terms: "[B]efore Grant, many of us had no way of entering our native space.... Grant gave us access to our past as well" (160). Grant's illumination of our historical and philosophic roots--confused and insufficiently deep though those roots may be--makes Lee see and feel the space around him open up, present itself, surround him differently. It brings him to his heart's home; he finds in a history until now obscure to him a connection with his own best intuitions, his own deep emotional and physical eros for a good to which we are subject, before and beyond the itching of unmoored, radically free will. He finds himself 'located.' [1]

But Lee's drive towards tragic paradox continues, and he once again claims that Grant says and unsays, gives and takes away: "But Grant is scarcely an apostle of public joy. His next perception virtually cancels his reclamation of space to be in. By now, he says, we have replaced our forebears' tentative, dissenting North American space with a wholehearted and colonial American space. The sellout of Canada ... replaces one human space with another." Moreover, that sellout is merely a "surface expression" of the modernity that is "inward" (161). No space is untouched, not even our psychic space. The replacement of "one human space for another" lands Lee's exposition, Grant's thought, and the lot of us, as moderns, inside the closed "circuit" of technology: "Always we are totally free men, faced with a world which is raw material, a permanent incitement to technique.... And even though we can observe the results of that world-view destroying the planet, the capacity for such gloomy perception does not give us access to another world-view" (161).

In Lee's physical reading, we get a Grant who says then unsays, who reclaims space, invites us to enter it, takes it away, then replaces it with another space, the space of our modern, technological entrapment. The key to what Lee is doing here, in his rearrangement of Grant's argumentation, is found in the phase, "his next perception." The 'next-ness' is actually Lee's, not Grant's. What Lee is giving us is not so much a detailed report on the flow of Grant's argument as a metaphorical rendering and reconstruction of his own experience of reading Grant. He discovers, in Grant, some of the vision and principles operative in Canadian history, finds his own best self fired by the greater beauty of those principles, and then finds himself deeply disappointed that Canadians did not succeed in establishing a polis that was shaped by those principles and able to endure into modern times; all of these motions of his soul find expression in spatial metaphor.

Grant's method in the works Lee has most in mind--Lament for a Nation, "In Defense of North America", "Canadian Fate and Imperialism", and "A Platitude" (and in Time as History and English Speaking Justice)--is more like this: He shows our present in searing and startling terms that draw us into a critical perspective on that present; he often intimates, from the beginning, the loss our present represents; he mentions the difficulty of thinking outside of this present; he moves to an account of our past as the roots of the present condition; he depicts the costs of our technological present, and the fissures in its logic; and with ironic commentary, with stark imagery, with subtle invocations of earlier modes of thought about human purpose and human excellence, he hints at an enduring orientation to the good, and leads his readers to a sense of what lies obscured within the modern accounts of the world and of human beings. In most cases, the peril we face in this technological age is a first statement, a

given to be meditated; it is not, as Lee claims, a disillusioning perception arriving after some vision of a more hopeful alternative to the present. It is true that, in most of the works I have mentioned, and in others, Grant does close with a restatement of the difficulty of thinking outside the modern paradigm, but only after he has done his wily best to wrest language from the hegemony of the technological rubric and to make what is missing in the modern cogent. His illumination of the violent or dehumanizing costs of that paradigm help move him, and the susceptible reader, to both a longing for and an apprehension of what it is that technology obscures. Grant touches that very capacity that allows Lee to say that he found the "classic tradition ... much closer to the way things are." That capacity endures and makes a crack in the "tight circle" within which Lee fixes his own account of Grant.

Lee's reading of Grant in "Cadence, Country, Silence," then, is a little more complicated than most of Lee's commentators have assumed; not only is the account of influence undercut, but the Grant we find there is y much Lee's Grant, deftly reordered in a way that underlines the paradoxicality and contradictoriness that Lee transfers from modernity itself to Grant as its expositor. This 1972 sketch of Grant as a passionate paradoxicalist pronouncing on the entrapment of reason within the tight circle of technological thinking gets more detailed and dramatic in Lee's 1990 memorial tribute, "Grant's Impasse."

Notes

[1] Lee's use of spatial metaphor in his account of Grant is entirely consistent with what he finds in Grant, who speaks in terms of space and place and connection to our "habitations"--see his comment, for example in "The University Curriculum," quoted in this chapter, about "the division separating us from our habitations" (133). See also the close of Time as History, which captures the alienation that ensues when people stand over against the material world as masters of it, autonomous subjects disposing of all else as the raw material of their willing: "Our present is like being lost in the wilderness, when every pine and rock and bay appears to us as both known and unknown, and therefore as uncertain pointers on the way back to human habitation. The sun is hidden by the clouds and the usefulness of our ancient compasses has been put in question" (52).

Chapter Two

Reading Lee Reading Grant in "Grant's Impasse": Lee's Arguments for Paradox

While Lee's discussion of Grant in "Cadence, Country, Silence" is contained within a broader consideration of his own poetics, "Grant's Impasse" takes as its subject Grant's work in itself. But that study is inflected at every point by Lee's immersion in his own spiritual and poetic quest. His meditation on his own quest through the medium of Grant's thought, and his meditation on Grant's thought through the medium of his own quest signal both the centrality of Grant as an influence, and the constancy of a quest that colours everything he sees. I do not say this because I find it surprising that a person might ask one question her/his whole life and see the world in terms of that question. It is simply a factor to consider in the act of reading Lee reading Grant.

In "Grant's Impasse," Lee supports his core argument about Grant's "chief achievement"--the naming of an impossibility--by resurrecting from "Cadence. Country, Silence" his notion of 'vanishing fixed points,' stopping short his supporting quotations at rather crucial points, conflating key aspects of Grant's thought and, in general, filtering Grant through a Heideggerian/historicist veil. Overall, Lee's reading of Grant here pursues his earlier statement that neither Grant nor we have "more-than-liberal resources" that do not crumble when we make an effort to stand outside modernity.

In making no mention of Grant's challenges to historicism, his efforts to turn the fissures in our identification of liberalism and technology into an urgent call to thought, or his gestures towards a love that might illumine that thought, Lee attributes to Grant's own meditations an extremity and a conclusiveness I find, as I have said, arguable. Why Lee does this is partly answered by the conclusion he himself arrives at, in this essay:

Grant, as he reads him, shows Lee a way out of the trap he experiences his own modern mind to be, and a way to enter upon the path of the holy. To borrow a bit of Native myth that Leonard Cohen uses in Beautiful Losers, Lee casts Grant in the role of "Oscotarach, the Head-Piercer" (145) who relieves him of the burden and barrier of reductive, analytic thinking by simply cracking up his reason with paradox.

In this chapter, I review the argument of "Grant's Impasse," challenge the key argumentative tactics Lee uses in his rather extreme interpretation of Grant, and take a look at Grant's own wily, ironic art. I argue that Grant's highly rhetorical essays, rather than resting in "muteness of mind," put up an energetic fight to reanimate a sense of the "beneficence of nature" and of the presence of the good, the holy, incarnate in time. The chapter closes with a discussion of the 'Heideggerian veil' through which Lee reads Grant in this essay. Since "Grant's Impasse" focusses on the essays Lee edited for Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America, I will pay most attention to those pieces, referring to others in less detail.

1. "Grant's Impasse": The Basic Argument

Like "Cadence, Country, Silence," "Grant's Impasse" is structured in three parts. Each of the three sections closes with a poem that represents Lee's act of "answerable understanding" (Steiner 7) of Grant's thought. The brief opening section gives an anecdotal account of the paradox Lee considers his chief legacy from Grant; that paradox is explored in Lee's "The Cat and the Wizard," written (significantly) in the (small-n) nonsense-poem mode of his children's poetry (see Parsons 62). According to Lee, the poem probes the tragic perception that he finds central to Grant's thought: We are radically divided beings. As Lee puts it, "Humans are being human when they love their

own." Love of their own, Lee's interpretation goes, leads to love of the good. But, Lee finds Grant concluding, "love of our here and now ... and love of our higher and deeper destination ... cannot be held together in thought in our era" even though "the two are inseparable" (13).

The second, longest part of the essay presents Lee's thesis about Grant's "project of thought," and his achievement as a writer and a philosophical thinker:

> George Grant was a witness. His primary vocation in writing was to suffer with all his mind, and all his body, heart and soul, the emergence of the nihilism which had been unfolding over the past centuries from within the project of modernity. This nihilism stemmed from the increasing difficulty of discerning any sense in which we are subject to the claim of the good; indeed, any sense in which "claim" or "good" have substantial meaning at all. It fell to Grant to give witness to this civilisational end-game.
>
> As well, his vocation was to articulate--for the first time ever, I believe--a short but crucial advance in the unfolding of that nihilism.... Finally, his calling was to dwell nobly in the muteness of mind which he had uncovered, while cleaving to older truths in memory and desire, and living the best practical life he could.
>
> That's not a vocation any sane person would choose: to bear witness to the closing down of articulate meaning in one's civilisation. But the vocation chose George Grant. Reckoning with his work means reading it in that light. (20)

With this eloquent and audacious claim (delivered to a group of historians, theologians, political scientists, all seeking to explicate Grant from the angle of their own profession),

Lee again rivets his attention on the "tight circle" of technological thinking that admits of no rational exit, shuts down any philosophic thought about the 'good,' and disables all critique. He argues that Grant's identification of this dilemma for thought "constitutes an original contribution, and a decisive one, to the philosophical unfolding of our era" (23). Citing Grant's "Tyranny and Wisdom," Lee claims that the point of that essay is to show that "Strauss had claimed a contemporary cogency for ancient truths which he was unable to make good in concrete thought" (23). In going beyond this mentor, says Lee, Grant redefined the "task of philosophy now." It was "not to think from outside modern nihilism. It was to articulate coherently the impossibility of doing so" (23).

After recapitulating Grant's analysis of modernity, Lee then proceeds to describe "two 'tightenings'" (25) in Grant's exploration of the "tight circle" which he christens "Grant's Impasse." The first, articulated in "The University Curriculum" and "In Defense of North America," is the discovery of the way moral and critical judgement founder when the modern mind attempts to judge any particular technique. For example, when one attempts to judge the present university curriculum, which Grant considers a massive technique for turning out people capable of serving the ends of technology, he finds he can get no critical purchase on that curriculum. The curriculum inculcates assumptions about what is good and what good is that leave one with no contrasting datum. Similarly, the effort to judge our modern present hits a complication: "'the substance of our existing, which has made us the leaders in technique, stands as a barrier to any thinking which might be able to comprehend technique from beyond its own dynamic'" (27).

Lee finds a second "tightening" in Grant's short, passionate closing piece, written for Technology and Empire, called "A Platitude." According to Lee, the "strategy of

thought which Grant depicts in this second tightening has changed. The thinker is no longer moving from 'problem' to 'critical/ethical solution' to 'collapse of that solution'--finding that each new solution turns out to re-embody the problem. Instead he tries, in a scarcely imaginable gesture, to break directly out of the impasse, to think a more-than-liberal reality which he can identify as the thing he's deprived of--and discovers that he has skidded into white space, unthinkability, ground zero" (27). Desperately, the mind "forages for categories simply to name the unconditionally claiming realities which modern thought has ruled inadmissible." (No better description has yet been written of the drama of thought Lee enacts in Savage Fields.) Failing in that attempt, says Lee, Grant discovers that the failure itself nevertheless opens one, as Lee puts it, to "a mode of silence which might mediate (in his beautiful phrase) 'intimations of deprival.... It is this ... silence from which he speaks in 'A Platitude'" (29-30).

To close this central section of his essay, Lee offers up his poem "The Gods," which, as he says, "wrestles with the intimations of deprival in its own way, that of poetic meditation" (30). Both he and Grant, Lee suggests, find themselves, perforce, practitioners of the negative way, for whom the good is beyond thought and knowing, a kind of absence, some ghostly trace, signalled only by deprival. Discovering that the "substance of our existing," our way of being, cuts us off from the awesome reality of what is, both Lee and Grant (Lee suggests) choose to "speak in silence [rather] than squeak in the gab of the age" ("The Gods" 99). That is, they forego the connection of words with publicly-accepted referents; what they want to speak of finds no purchase in the dynamic and violent world they inhabit; their 'fixed points' are no longer there. What they want to think has no public language to clothe it, so they speak a language of absence, daring incomprehension and skirting the edge of non-sense. They loose an

eloquent howl, intoning a hunger for a holiness gone and unknowable. Or, as Grant says, wittily, in "A Platitude," they simply "pass an antique wind" (141).

In Lee's reading here, Grant is once more pulled in close to Lee's centre; Grant is made the path-blazer to the spiritual opening Lee seeks, where the modern mind, sick of itself, accepts its own brokenness. In that rational brokenness which he says Grant suffered, Lee senses the possibility of another apprehension of the holy and another function for language.

The brief third section of Lee's "Grant's Impasse" depicts Grant as tragically stuck in dilemma, and sketches the direction Lee wants his own meditations to take, in "the difficult terrain Grant opened up" (35). That is, given the absolute silence that our modern paradigm of knowledge has laid on 'the good,' 'the holy,' he seeks a way to utter, nevertheless, his ineradicable sense of the ineffable, his sense that the world is "moment to moment ... valuative" (35). This search is clearly, now, an effort to go beyond Grant. Lee frames the dilemma that Grant's thinking and his career as a writer ran into in this way:

> * how many times can philosophic thought articulate the
> rationale of its own closure? Yet,
>
> * If the impasse is real, what other project of thought
> is there to pursue? (35)

Faced with the spectacle of Grant's thinking and <u>writing</u> foundering with nowhere else to go, Lee seeks a different fate for himself and his art. He seeks to accept the "silence" Grant named and spoke from as a fateful gift, a sort of Heideggerian "turn" in the "destining of being" ("The Word of Nietzsche" 110), a grounding of poetic and devotional practice, akin to the utter receptivity of cadential listening. Perhaps "this

analysis of rational deadlock in the West" is actually "indispensable, strategic, the substantial step which had to be taken at this juncture" (34). As a meditative poet, he continues to explore what is beyond rational deadlock.

Lee concludes "Grant's Impasse" with "Three Poems from 'Nightwatch'"--at that time still a work in progress. This excerpt speaks of rejection of all that "America" symbolizes, acceptance of loss of the loved earth ("our own") and a mystic embracing of the "hunger," the "silence," the "path of no-going" "Whose price is my life." This path leads, presumably, to what Lee calls at the beginning of the essay "our higher and deeper destination"--love of eternal good, which, he so rightly notes, our modern focus on self and possession obscures.

Lee makes good on his intent to follow the "lines of enquiry" (35) he says are opened up by his reading of Grant. But, in the effort to touch 'what is' and find it "moment to moment ... valuative," he strains towards a release from the things of the earth, the loves of the flesh, and the glories of human thought, hungering after an opening to the 'numinous,' an awesome source of good unmediated by these creaturely ties. That he finds that relinquishment a pain-filled tearing is spoken with spectacular energy and poignancy in his 1993 long poem, Riffs. His mystic, self-relinquishing turn is then made even more overt in the now-published Nightwatch: "That creatures are not enough ... And roots are not enough ... And precious, precious the dear ones--but also, that / dear ones are not enough ... Was I not given such / peerless companions that I might learn to say, in love, Not/you, dear heart; nor you; nor you-- / go by?" (167-8)

That Lee sees these poems as a step beyond Grant's "rational dead-end" is suggested in his comments in "Poetry and Unknowing," in which he overtly leaves what he considers Grant's stymied project of thought behind: "Our form of reason is impotent

towards meaning. But mind doesn't need yet another speculative elaboration of its triumphant dead end. It needs the chance to sit, and love through its eclipse" (43). While Lee's thinking still gets a boost by orbiting past the mass of Grant's thought, the energy of repulsion now vies with the pull of influence. That pull is strong in "Civil Elegies." It is powerful and deep in 1970: in a plaintive little note tucked into Box 47 of The Dennis Lee Papers, Lee reflects on his relationship to various Canadian authors: "I define myself against some of these people, define myself by others of them. I define myself against Frye, in another way against McLuhan; I define myself by George Grant." Both pull and resistance are voiced in "Cadence, Country, Silence" where the debt to Grant is qualified by a gesture of detachment: "I do not expect to spend my life agreeing with George Grant" (161). In "Grant's Impasse," seventeen years later, Lee is still "finding [his] way in the strange landscape [Grant] charted" (25), but four years later, in "Poetry and Unknowing," he seems resolved to leave behind the lament at rational deadlock and to go where he claims Grant's thought could not--into loving acceptance of reason's eclipse. In this latest essay, in my view, Lee continues to cast a shadow over the most obvious 'incarnational' claim that Grant keeps coming around to and that Lee himself keeps unwittingly enacting: that standing in awe, in spontaneous adoration, in love of the other, is the best of human thinking; as the fully conscious and wholly visceral encounter with that which we cannot manipulate, it is the height of rationality, the erotic knowing we have forgotten we know, a gracious openness to justice. In his inability to make this recognition, Lee continues to support his own more extreme version of Grant's thesis about the power of the modern paradigm to entrap our thinking. He persists in considering the holy unknowable, something desired because absent, something that is, on the whole, unmediated by the things of the earth.

2. Courting Paradox: Lee's Argumentative Tactics in "Grant's Impasse"

I have said that Lee's treatment of Grant in "Grant's Impasse" revives his earlier, "Cadence, Country, Silence" view of Grant's method as a matter of withdrawing "from the contemporary world, and [judging] it with passionate lucidity, by standing on a 'fixed point' which he then reveals to be no longer there" (160). Within this paradoxical method, says Lee, Grant demonstrates that all "more-than-liberal resources" by which one might judge the liberal-technological present "crumble" (160).

This paradox of is/is not is vertiginously delightful. In a poem, it would tumble fixed perspectives and open a different way of seeing. In a prose pronouncement (though a highly poetic one) on a thinker's method, however, the paradox traps Lee in contradiction; by what standard does Grant "judge" the present? Does he or does he not conduct a critique? If he does, he must have a standpoint for seeing our present in alienating terms. If he does not have a standpoint, then how can he conduct a critique? If Grant's "more-than-liberal resources" for judging the present "crumble," then what happens to his judgements? Do they disintegrate into babel? I'm afraid the image another image begets: a collision between Paradise Regained and 'The Roadrunner': Christ on the mountain peak interrupted in his survey of all time and space by a saucy beep-beep that leaves him mountain-less, wildly pedalling air. It is entirely possible that even probing this claim of Lee's simply exposes my own mind as locked in binary logic and caught in a linguistic straight-jacket of "analytico-referentiality" (Reiss 46). However, since the claim is part of Lee's effort to show that Grant's chief achievement was to articulate the impossibility of thinking outside modern assumptions, it has to be dealt with as a commentary on method.

To be fair, Lee is likely drawing his image of vanishing fixed points (consciously

or not) from Grant's comments in "A Platitude" on what happens to the language of "the good" within our modern paradigm: "...the words fade. The language of what belongs to man as man has long since been disintegrated.... [A]ll languages of good except the language of the drive to freedom have disintegrated, so it is just to pass some antiqu. wind to speak of goods that belong to man as man" (140, 141). In the discussion of Grant's art, I will take a closer look at this essay, and at the context of these words.

When he speaks of fixed points that Grant shows to be "no longer there," Lee is referring to the "ancient truths" ("Impasse" 23) that are the substance of Grant's faith. The understanding these "truths" bear is not part of our modern account of the whole, not part of our public discourse. Those truths, like 'goodness,' 'justice,' 'beauty,' even 'love' have been so redefined that anyone who accepts modernity uncritically might simply define them as 'what I like,' 'protecting my rights,' 'pleasing to the senses' and 'answering my appetite.' As Lee says, in "Grant's Impasse,"

> When goodness, justice, truth and the rest of their now-spectral kin are denied any participation in a sacral and claiming order, indeed are denied any reality at all beyond that of historically-conditioned accident, there is no restraint we can plausibly invoke against the grossest acts of inhumanity.... There is finally nothing in the liberal account of things that can tell us why Mother Teresa might be 'better' than Hitler. (21)

Lee does go to the centre of Grant's concern regarding the consequences of our present account of knowledge. His imagery does capture the sense that, within the liberal paradigm, ancient truths have lost cogency and efficacy. The question is, does Grant simply say they fade away into contingent 'values' or does he make an effort to counter that fading?

Lee argues that Grant came to the conclusion, in opposition to Leo Strauss, that those truths could not be "coherently articulated, or thought, or (sometimes) even entertained in a more-than-vestigial way, by anyone shaped by the civilisation we belong to" (23). Lee hears Grant suggesting that we are so shaped by this civilisation that even the sense of "being claimed" by these truths can find no rational expression:

> [T]he state of affairs can be characterized thus:
>
> *Human beings are made to be claimed by the real.
>
> *Yet so centrally have we become technique--in our doing, willing, and conceiving--that we can no longer think what it would mean, to be 'claimed by the real.' Our basic mental categories are now incommensurable with what those words point to, our minds no longer work that way.
>
> *Yet we can't stop trying to think such a claim, because the world which our minds now are equipped to process is a world we can barely live in.... The eventual result is a rational muteness, a silence of reason. (24)

It is rather hard to understand how a person with a "textbook case of modernity" ("Poetry and Unknowing" 36) can utter that first proposition so unequivocably and then go on to say the thought is unthinkable; does Lee give the proposition nonsense status? He does mean to demonstrate that the awful disjunction of our time is caught most terribly in the sense that we can say words we can't think and can feel truths we can't know. In [illegible]e to this, it would seem to me sensible to say that there is something askew with what we think knowing is if what we feel is discredited, made nonsensical by that definition. Rather than giving over to "unknowing," why not rethink "knowing"? However, this is not the route Lee takes. On his way to unknowing, he charts his path

by what he finds in Grant. That he is taking a mystic, discarnate, and dualist path through Grant is signalled by his use of the term "real" to signify 'the good.' That is not a key term in Grant's vocabulary; the "real" is not something only transcendent. The real is all around us, quite unavoidable in its durable physicality; how we define the real may leave out the notion of given goodness, but its presence and physicality remain; through humans' experience of this stubborn physicality, the understanding that what is here participates in good may revive.

In basing his argument about the crumbling of ancient truths on Grant's argument with Strauss in "Tyranny and Wisdom," in claiming that "Grant concluded ...[that] Strauss had not demonstrated how to articulate the truths of Athens or Jerusalem concretely--without transforming them to fit the modern mindset, which would by definition unselve them" (23), Lee gives this essay a particularly bald reading. His suggestion that "Tyranny and Wisdom" is full of 'conclusions' obscures the high degree of questioning and challenging that Grant carries out in this extremely reticent and inconclusive essay. Lee's argument is based on a couple of statements that need to be put back into context and considered in relation to the overall rhetorical intent of the piece.

In the essay, Grant reviews a debate between Strauss and Hegelian scholar Alexandre Kojeve that was sparked by Strauss's study of Xenophon's Hiero, the only classical treatise solely focussed on the subject of tyranny. Broadly, the debate revolves around the question of "whether classical political science or modern political science (as perfected in Hegel) can the better understand the relation between the tyrant and the wise man or indeed any of the basic political questions" ("Tyranny and Wisdom" 84). More specifically, Kojeve and Strauss debate the immediate political issue of whether or not the "universal homogeneous state" (82) is the best or the worst social order.

In his review of the debate in the first half of "Tyranny and Wisdom," Grant clearly agrees with Strauss against Kojeve. Strauss argues that the classical Greeks achieved a transhistorical judgement that a social order based on total domination of human and non-human nature would be "destructive of humanity" and "the most appalling tyranny in the story of the race" (95). Since, as Strauss argues, "modern men are committed to unlimited technological progress ... for its own sake" (100-101) it would seem the ancients foresaw through philosophic reason the lineaments of the emerging technological tyranny. Their thought was therefore not bound by a particular epoch, so perhaps classical philosophy is superior to modern historicism; thought can exit the tight circle of its present historical paradigm. The tyranny the ancients foresaw and that Strauss sees limned in Hegel's universal and homogeneous state is one marked by a total lack of wisdom in the rulers, a refusal to recognise "that there are politically relevant natural differences among men which cannot be abolished or neutralized by progressing scientific technology'" (96), a shutting down of critical thought and dissent against the order. Since the universal and homogeneous state would be taken as unquestionably good and as the realization of the end of thought, then no philosophical search for a good beyond human domination would be countenanced. Since the state is universal, there would also be nowhere for the dissident philosopher to hide, to conduct a critique from outside the reach of that state. This shutting down of all critique, for Strauss, is the terror of tyranny: "'Kojeve would seem to be right although for the wrong reason: the coming of the universal and homogeneous state will be the end of philosophy on earth'" (96). Grant takes an obvious delight in Strauss' exposure of the logical flaws in Kojeve's account of what will constitute such a state. He also takes a few pot-shots of his own. In recounting Kojeve's argument that Hegel was the last great philosopher

and Napoleon the necessary tyrant who brought about the best and final social order (our present), Grant remarks, "This implies that for Kojeve the events of 1830-1945 and after have simply been the completion in the world of that universal and homogeneous state which was initiated in one geographic area by Napoleon and which was completely understood by Hegel" (90-91). He needs no more than the plain reference to this epoch to express polite derision about this stance.

In the last half of "Tyranny and Wisdom," Grant conducts his commentary on this debate. He indicates his points of agreement with Strauss but focusses mainly on two principal "lacunae" in Strauss' argument, two areas in which his reticence weakens his case and leaves questions. Grant presses Strauss to be more explicit on two key points: his claim that the Greeks rejected technology, or the use of science to dominate nature, and his claim that Hegel did not achieve a synthesis of Greek and Biblical teaching. Grant poses the questions that are raised by Strauss' argument: did the Greeks really reject the application of science to technique, or is Strauss reading into a few scant texts a more explicit rejection than is really there? If the Greeks did reject technology, were they right in doing so? If Strauss is right, and Hegel did not achieve a synthesis of classical and Biblical thought, since he took as Biblical "the Hobbesian doctrine of nature [which] cannot be reconciled" with the classical assertion of the "beneficence of nature or the primacy of the Good" (104-105), what is Strauss' understanding of the Biblical doctrine of nature? If Strauss is advocating a return to classical political philosophy, that return necessarily means going back before Christ. If he has to go back before Christ in order to get free of the error of modern political philosophy, does that mean he sees Christianity as having played a role in the coming to be of the modernity that denies timeless truths? Through his probing of Strauss, Grant conducts his own questioning of

"Biblical religion": was Christianity, as historicism says, just one phase in the movement of progress, and not true for all time? As a phase, is it in part responsible for the rise of technology? Or is there an essential and timeless truth about Christianity that was present, through intimations, to the Greeks, and enduringly present, even through its distortions, in modernity?

In pressing Strauss to bring forth more evidence about the Greek rejection of technology, and to say more about the nature of Greek mathematics and science, which had religious dimensions, Grant is suggesting, then, that we can gain access to ways of thinking different from the modern; he is just dissatisfied with the extent of Strauss' explications. He comments: "My difficulty in comprehending Strauss' position lies not then in giving some meaning to the idea that the dominant leaders of our society are committed to unlimited technological progress, but rather in understanding what it meant to the classical political philosophers not to be so committed, even more in understanding what it would mean not to be so committed in the contemporary world" (101). In Lee's reading, the last part of this comment in particular is an expression of the impossibility of thinking outside modern assumptions; however, what Grant speaks of is a "difficulty," and he does so within a specific context. Within context, his comment is made in an effort to get Strauss to be more explicit about his views on Biblical religion--its relation to Greek thought and its relation to modern technology.

In arguing that Strauss needs to bring forward more texts to show that the Greeks did indeed reject intervention in nature, Grant notes that "it has been possible for modern scholars to believe that there could be no cogent reasons for turning one's back on so obvious a good as the conquest of nature, and so to read the Greek political philosophers as if they were a preparation for the greater wisdom of the age of progress" (99). If

Strauss does not make his explications more complete, he could be open to challenge from this historicist point of view. Grant says, rather goadingly: "it would be possible to say that Strauss is reading into these [few scant quotations suggesting the Greek rejection of intervention in nature]... a clarity about their rejection of the conquest of nature which is not present in their writings, and that he does so because of his concern to show a consistent alternative to the modern conception of the science of nature" (99). Lee translates this hypothetically-phrased goad into the conclusion that Strauss failed to "articulate the truths of Athens or Jerusalem concretely--without transforming them to fit the modern mindset, which would by definition unselve them" (23). Rather than transforming the Greek refusal of technology "to fit the modern mindset" Strauss could be charged, suggests Grant, with trying to be more Greek than the Greeks. Moreover, Strauss is not trying to articulate the truths of Jerusalem at all, and that is what concerns Grant.

In questioning whether the Greeks were right in limiting technology, and in asking Strauss to be explicit and critical about the basis on which they did that limiting, so that he might be able to understand what it would be, for Greeks or moderns, not to be committed to "unlimited technological progress," Grant is issuing a specific challenge. He really wants to know how Strauss' "plea for the superiority of classical political science over the modern assumptions [will]... come to terms with" Feuerbach's claim that "'compassion comes before thought'" (103). How does Strauss see the Greek limitation of intervention in nature in relation to what Grant calls the "one argument on the modern side which the interests of charity require should be presented"? "[N]o writing about technological progress and the rightness of imposing limits upon it should avoid expressing the fact that the poor, the diseased, the hungry and the tired can hardly

be expected to contemplate any such limitation with the equanimity of the philosopher". Strauss, says Grant, "is clearly aware of this fact. One could wish however that he had drawn out the implications of it in the present controversy" (103). If Strauss is to deliver a full counter to historicism, he needs to be explicit about his views on Biblical religion, which puts compassion, as opposed to philosophy, at the centre of all human being and doing; he needs to relate Biblical religion to Greek thought and to modern technology. Was Biblical religion in part responsible for the rise of technology? In asking these questions, Grant seems to be pressing Strauss to consider if the compassion that is central to Christianity was present in Greek thought as well. If it was present, then to what degree did that compassion enter into the Greeks' thinking about intervention in natural necessity? That Strauss is not explicit on these points, why he is not, and the effect of his reticence in weakening his argument against Kojeve are the focus of the rest of "Tyranny and Wisdom."

Grant understands and honours Strauss' reluctance to make statements about Biblical religion, a reluctance arising from an unwillingness to undermine people's "trust in the main religious practice which is open to them" (109). Even if "Strauss should in fact think that the Biblical categories have been in part responsible for a false and therefore dangerous conception of nature among modern philosophers, he would not necessarily think it wise to speak openly or forcefully on the matter"(109). But in not being explicit about the role of Biblical religion in Western history, Strauss leaves unspoken any alternative view to the one offered by Kojeve-Hegel, and incomplete the challenge to historicism. Grant, however, as a Christian, can and does head right into a critique of Christianity's role in the coming-to-be of technology, not in this essay, but in others before and after it: "The Uses of Freedom," Philosophy and the Mass Age, "In

Defense of North America", "Faith and the Multiversity". He does so because he has faith that the core of truth in Christianity remains free of the interpretations people have made of it.

It would seem, from the conduct of his argument, then, that Grant is not pointing out, as Lee suggests, the impossibility of thinking outside the modern-historicist paradigm. Grant has not said, conclusively, that Strauss' efforts simply demonstrate the impossibility of articulating "the truths of Athens or Jerusalem concretely" ("Grant's Impasse" 23). Rather, Grant seems to be showing that a more adept counter to historicism is needed. As seems to be his constant practice, he is delineating our modern problem for thought, in the open questioning that is, for Grant, more truly philosophy than the tyrannous answering offered by Hegel. In Grant's view, a full questioning encounter with Christianity and its relation to both Greek thinking and modern technology is required. Do Greek philosophy and Christianity meet or do they not meet in asserting the beneficence, the primacy of the Good, and the centrality of love? What is the proper relation between compassion, the desire to alleviate suffering, and awe-filled contemplation of an inviolable order? "In Defense of North America," as we shall see, suggests what that relation might be.

Grant's insistent questioning of Strauss in "Tyranny and Wisdom," then, seems to be something different, less absolute, than the conclusions Lee draws about the inability to articulate ancient truths "without transforming them to fit the modern mindset, which would by definition unselve them" (23).

Lee's notion of crumbling resources and un-selved truths are tactics in his strategy of reading Grant as a paradoxicalist pronouncing on the silencing of the eternal, the checkmating of reason, and the muting of all language of the good. These notions suggest

that Grant judges the contemporary world from the standpoint of his faith in the beneficence of nature, the primacy of the good, the centrality of love, then risks rendering his critique incomprehensible by telling us that those beliefs have been eliminated from the modern paradigm. Now, does this land him in nonsense or does it just affirm that the modern paradigm is simply that, a model for thinking that can be known and judged as a model, and even tested for cogency in light of its consequences and against what cannot be included within it--namely a whole range of human experience that it cannot adequately accommodate, and a whole range of thought and belief that does still resonate with the deepest impulses of many of our species? Does the fact that those tenets of Grant's faith have been denied by modern thinking make them irrevocably mute? Is their muteness all Grant is expressing, or does he make an effort to give them voice again? To begin to answer these questions, it will help, as with "Tyranny and Wisdom," to look at Lee's tactic of elision and replace the passages Lee uses to support his argument in their context.

In "Grant's Impasse," Lee focusses on Grant's image of the "tight circle" within which modern thinking revolves, in his effort to show that Grant identified "the impossibility of thinking" from "outside modern nihilism" (23). As mentioned earlier, Lee finds what he calls the first "tightening" of the impasse of thought in "In Defense of North America" and "The University Curriculum." He finds the second "tightening" in "A Platitude," written especially as a closing piece for Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America. In all three of these essays, Grant's naming of this problem for thought seems to serve a clear, rhetorical purpose in the sweep of the exposition, which Lee does not at all consider.

In "The University Curriculum" and "A Platitude," which I will look at more

closely in the discussion of Grant's art in the next chapter, the passages Lee cites precipitate very important 'turns' in the argument. In both cases, Grant builds his case for the problem of thought that the modern paradigm imposes and makes his comments about the tight circle or, in "A Platitude," the disintegrating of the language of good, the nadir of his meditation. Out of that nadir, in both essays, comes a re-stirring of hope that the thinking and the knowing that have been obscured are being reanimated in the rage of the heart against a paradigm and a civilisation that threaten to cut people off from the greatest mediators of their humanness.

In discussing the curriculum of the modern North-American English speaking university, Grant movingly exposes the impulse to mastery and the potential for tyranny in the science curriculum, which coexists alongside the great impulse for wonder that persists among many scientists. He bemoans the capitulation of the arts curriculum to the moral neutrality of the fact/values fiction of sociology, depicts the besieged state of that curriculum, but also honours the ability of art itself to keep alive the "thirst for meaning ... which is the enemy of tyranny" (127). The problem that most concerns him here is the technological redefinition of good and of excellence--which edges out the pre-modern "accounts of human excellence" (128) found in the perfection of contemplation and charity exemplified by Socrates and Christ. It is within this redefinition of good, "the monolithic certainty" that excellence is "the pursuit of technological efficiency [as] the chief purpose for which the community exists" (128-129) that modern thinking about anything, including the curriculum, revolves. It is this redefinition that Grant refers to as "the tightness of the circle in which men find themselves in the modern civilisation" (128). Here is Lee's account of the problem for thought Grant depicts in this essay and in "In Defense of North America":

> To achieve such a critique [of the "knowledge industry"], we turn to one of the ideas or standards that form part of the inherited repertoire for critical thought or moral judgement. But we then discover, on looking closer, that this outside arbiter or higher principle is no longer any such thing. In the course of the modern period, it has become transformed out of all recognition; it has become seamless with the technique we're trying to think about, in that both now arise from a common origin--broadly speaking, "technology"--and dissolve back into it. So it gives us no purchase for critical thought. (26)

Lee's account conflates passages from the two Grant essays in question, which are very similar. Here is the excerpt from "The University Curriculum" which informs Lee's account of the problem for critical judgement:

> The tight circle then in which we live is this: our present forms of existence have sapped the ability to think about standards of excellence and yet at the same time have imposed on us a standard in terms of which the human good is monolithically asserted. (131)

The closing part of this passage, which Lee does not quote, mitigates the sense of paradox that Lee emphasizes:

> [S]ince we are educated in terms of that curriculum it is guaranteed that most of us will judge it as good. The criteria by which we could judge it as inadequate in principle can only be reached by those who through some chance have moved outside the society by memory or by thought. But so to have moved means that one's criticisms will not be taken seriously from within the society. (131)

Grant is not saying that one cannot think outside modernity, only that help is needed to do so. He is not saying that it is impossible to speak outside the modern, only that it will be hard to get a hearing. When he says that one moves outside the society, and therefore outside the tight circle, "through some chance," he is evoking Simone Weil's notion of Providence as chance--the grace that cannot be controlled, only invited by sheer need. When that chance movement happens, then the truths that are lacking in the modern account regain some intellectual and emotional cogency. Rather than shutting the circle up tight, Grant simultaneously brings it to consciousness and points out what will crack it; he demonstrates the critique that is possible if one has touched other truths. Exit is not guaranteed, but the need to exit is niggled into awareness. The deference in his comment about not being taken seriously is both an acknowledgement that exiting the circle cannot be made a willed campaign, and a token of what Laurence Lampert calls the Socratic indirection of Grant's method in these works of the middle 'sixties.

In both "The University Curriculum" and "In Defense of North America," Grant seems to raise the problem for thought in order to point out and destabilize the "faith" that modernity is founded upon--"that trust in the overcoming of chance which leads us back to judge every human situation as solvable in terms of technology" ("In Defense of North America" 34). In both cases, he delineates the origin of that "trust" and points out the irony in the fact that the thinking that was to have freed people from superstition and religious dogma has itself become a religion and taken dogmatic hold on thought. The passage from "In Defense of North America" that informs Lee's account of the problem, above, actually mitigates the fatalism and absolutism of Lee's formulation, when quoted in full. The sentence Lee leaves off is this: "To describe this situation as a difficulty implies that it is no inevitable historicist predicament. It is to say that its overcoming

could only be achieved by living in the full light of its presence" (34). "In Defense of North America," a beautiful epitomizing of the themes of Technology and Empire and indeed, of most of Grant's work, does 'live' and speak in that full light. Here, the intellectual and experiential origins of North America's present are delineated; the violent lineaments of that present are exposed; eloquent expressions of what the modern paradigm obscures are offered; a tremendous compassion for the hardships that founded North America society and a mixture of respect and concern for the lack of theoretical depth in our society are expressed. Instead of exerting himself to articulate the impossibility of thinking outside the modern, Grant actually takes pains to illuminate our present paradigm as a set of assumptions, not as the unquestionable givens most of us take them to be. In taking the problem for thought as absolute, Lee is taking modernity as absolute. Grant, on the other hand, says there is more to being human than being modern. He also suggests that seeing modernity for what it is is the first step to remembering and loving what it obscures.

In his 1966 Preface to the second edition of Philosophy in the Mass Age, Grant gives a little insight into the method I am suggesting he is using here. If the obvious destructive "effects that a society dominated by technology has on the individuals that comprise it" force us "to question the goodness of society, [then] we are forced to question the ultimate presuppositions upon which its immediacies depend." If we then "question these presuppositions, we are driven to look elsewhere for more adequate accounts" (vii, viii)--to more ancient thought. In "The Uses of Philosophy in George Grant," Laurence Lampert elaborates on the method Grant hints at here. Given the entrenched and exclusive nature of the modern paradigm, Lampert argues, the proper approach for philosophy must be one in which "the most important questions" arise "in

and through" an unflinching look at our present condition: "Philosophy as a clarification of the public things is the clarification of a disaster. And philosophy cannot aim to transcend this disaster by making history with new truths, nor can it assuage the disaster by the direct teaching of old truths" (186). Instead, "the thinness and deficiency of the modern must become apparent from within.... The philosopher's single task is to facilitate this disillusionment with the public truths in order that the search for a timeless wisdom be initiated" (189). This is a little different from Lee's claim that "The task of philosophy now ... was not to think from outside nihilism. It was to articulate coherently the impossibility of doing so" (23). The indirection Lampert points out is necessary because, as Socrates knew, "the wisdom that needs to be learned cannot be directly taught" (194). As Grant would say, what is needed, in thought, feeling, and method, is a courageous and abiding sense of irony (Schmidt 19).

Finding himself rather dissatisfied with Grant's own reticence about "those positive teachings which he occasionally alludes to as his own means of survival" (192), Lampert concludes that what Grant finally produces is actually not a critique; what he produces is an alienating description of our present condition, through which the modern indicts itself: "It is misleading to call Grant's work on the modern 'criticism' for, as Grant sees it, when the modern is clarified in its fundamental nature its deficiency is simply apparent; it convicts itself.... Grant's analysis of the modern is not conditional on the truth of some particular conception of man's nature." That is, his 'fixed point' for critique lies not in the ancient truths about which he is so reticent, but simply in the inadequacy of the present. "In fact, Grant maintains that it is the evident inadequacy of the modern that confirms the truth of the historic conception and not vice versa.... [H]olding some version of the ancient wisdom to be true is not the reason he analyzes

the modern world as he does" (194, 195).

To inflect what Lampert says just a little differently, I would say that Grant's faith in certain 'ancient truths' helps inform the felt inadequacy of the modern; faith in those truths makes the hunger that arises out of that inadequacy intelligible. The hunger is itself the standpoint for critique. But Lampert's analysis is very helpful; what it recalls (though he does not refer to it) is a passage from "Revolution and Tradition" that illuminates the firmest standpoint for critique, from which Grant operates: "[I]f there were to be twenty-one thousand civilizations or an infinite number after ours, in which all memories of Athens and Jerusalem had been destroyed, it still would be the condition of men to live within and not beyond good and evil" (87). There is, for Grant, as Lampert says, "that which belongs to man as man; man has an essential nature, a trans-historic nature, a nature that resists infinite manipulation by technique, a nature that will revolt against being taken as infinitely malleable and infinitely free" (189). That is, Grant holds that there is in human nature a essential attunement to good, an intuition of eternality; the capacity to find the modern world inadequate helps us think that intuition. If we can feel the inadequacy of the modern, and begin to think what our disaffection might mean, then, Grant seems to be arguing, we have begun to exit the circle. While Grant is keenly aware of the difficulty of thinking the content of "good" in the midst of the modern paradigm, and while he does depict this technological civilisation as "a world we can barely live in," as Lee puts it, it does not seem that he goes so far as to say we are caught in a "permanent double bind" ("Grant's Impasse" 24). Where Grant sees "difficulty" ("In Defense of North America" 34) and "a barrier to any thinking which might be able to comprehend technique from beyond its own dynamism" (40), Lee, in the partiality and elision of his reading, sees "impossibility" and "impasse."

In driving towards his thesis that Grant wrote himself into rational deadlock and muteness of mind before the question of the good, Lee turns the irony of Grant's vision and method into paradox. In setting up the paradox that he says governs Grant's entire project of thought, Lee tells us, in "Grant's Impasse," that Grant taught him to understand that, while "Humans are being human when they love their own" and that such love 'schools' us "to love less immediate forms of the good," it is in the nature of our tragic fate that "love of our here and now ... and love of our higher and deeper destinations ... cannot be held together in thought in our era" even though "the two are inseparable" (13). Interestingly, this paradox he ascribes to Grant is very similar to the one I have said governs Lee's own work: the simultaneous unthinkability and inescapability of the holy. Grant, in fact, makes quite different observations about the relation of those two loves. A look at his comments on the two loves in "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" may temper the sense of "mind-jamming contradiction" (24) that Lee creates with his emphasis on incompatible concepts and unthinkable congruencies.

In his account of the two loves, in "Grant's Impasse," Lee reverses Grant's order of presentation in a way that suggests chronological steps, progressive/historicist movement and a certain dualism of body and spirit. While Grant speaks of "love of the good" and "love of our own"--in that order, which I think is significant--Lee performs another little act of prestidigitation. He reverses Grant's order and translates these notions into "love of our here and now" and "love of our higher and deeper destinations," invoking the idea of the holy as 'other-worldliness.' Lee's term "deeper" does suggest that he sees the good as incarnated in time, but when he speaks of "higher ... destinations," his spatial metaphor becomes dynamic: "destinations" picks up the note of onward movement, of leaving behind, passing beyond--as if the holy were elsewhere, not

here, in the "aspect of obligation ... present," as Max Horkheimer says, "in the phenomena themselves" (Cri'ical Theory 21).

Grant's treatment of the two loves, on the other hand, has no hint of this dualism and progressivism. Here is the passage from "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" that informs Lee's discussion (and informs the consciousness at work in "Civil Elegies"):

> In human life there must always be place for love of the good and love of one's own. Love of the good is man's highest end, but it is of the nature of things that we come to know and to love what is good by first meeting it in that which is our own--this particular body, this family, these friends, this woman, this part of the world, this set of traditions, this country, this civilization. At the simplest level of one's own body, it is clear that one has to love it yet pass beyond concentration on it. To grow up properly is not to be alienated from one's own body; but an adult who does not pay reverence to anything beyond his own body is a narcissist, and not a f·ll human being. In many parts of our lives the two loves need never be in conflict. In loving our friends we are also loving the good. (73) (emphases mine)

The order of presentation of "love of the good" and "love of our own" suggests the enduring, timeless nature of the good, its independence from historical process. The good is present, incarnate in our own, though greater than our own; we 'meet' it as something already there, awaiting our recognition, and informing our love. Similarly, passing "beyond concentration" on one's own body is surely not the same as passing beyond the body or beyond one's own, from the immediate to the less immediate. We meet the good in the other and know it in ourselves and in others simultaneously; the self is not left

behind. The good is present, incarnate, and touched through eros, not something accessible only through mystic relinquishment of the things of the earth. Such love is our "end" or purpose, for Grant, part of our givenness, our nature, part of "the whole," not a "destination" as Lee puts it, through time, at the end of a process.

In speaking of the two loves, Grant clearly maintains that in loving our own, we are loving the good; he does not discuss the issue of whether or not this remains true for anyone who finds the notion of "good" unthinkable. In fact, as he says in "A Platitude" (and echoes in "Revolution and Tradition," above) "I have never found any who, in my understanding of them, have been able, through the length and breadth of their thought, to make the language of good secondary to freedom" (141). Good is conceivable. In "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," Grant simply holds that loving finds us in the presence of eternal good: "In loving our friends we are also loving the good"--no 'either/or', no 'away from this and on to that.' It is the act of loving itself that enables participation in the good that is primary, since that good, for Grant, is love. Contrary to Lee's claim of the absolute unthinkability of the union of the two loves, Grant holds that "In many parts of our lives, the two loves need never be in conflict."

But this passage needs to be put back into its context, to see how it is that Lee might have come to his view of the two loves as unthinkable in their unity, in our time. As Grant says, conflict does arise between love of the good and love of our own. When it does, it is not so much a difficulty for thought, as Lee suggests, as a deep wound to our peace of mind and to our very nature. The passage on the two loves in "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" is brought into the discussion to illustrate just how deep modern alienation can go and how painful it can be; the pain of alienation would not be so great if love of the good were more easily extinguished, if it were not entwined in human

nature.

The alienation Grant speaks of arises when a person realizes she cannot escape participation in an evil she loathes. (It is this alienation Lee explores so wonderfully in "Civil Elegies.") This painful participation, Grant argues, is the "fate" of Canadians who realize that the society that is very much their own is engaged in a war, in Vietnam, whose justification is deeply suspect. Grant finds it impossible to accept the official liberal account of the Vietnam war as a defense of freedom; it is, rather, a battle between two expressions of the same technological-imperialist drive to dominate the world--Western capitalism and Eastern communism. That violence, rooted in the liberal account of "nature" as "controllable ... externality" destabilizes the liberal doctrine that identifies "technology with evolution and evolution with movement of the race to higher and higher morality" (72).

Canadians, Grant argues, are unable to preserve an innocent and sovereign separateness from the imperialist violence in Vietnam, no matter how much some of us might loathe it. Canada is complicit in the Vietnam War, he writes, not simply because "our branch plant economy is making a packet out of the demolition of Vietnam" (64) but, more fundamentally, because we actively share and live within the faith that is central to the American empire: "the belief that human excellence is promoted by the homogenising and universalizing power of technology" (69). So long as we are hooked unreflectingly, in theory and practice, into the technological project, we have no ground for refusing either the ideology or the encroachment of domination. We have therefore very little capacity left to realize a distinct identity, let alone one based on an apprehension of sacred limit and a commitment to the common good. Canada finds itself at once imperialized and imperializing, both its liberal intentions and its conservative

allegiances radically compromised. For those repelled by the violence of imperial war, love of our own becomes deeply problematic. For any society going at the world and its beings as raw material or as external stuff in the way of our dynamic willing, love, as consent to otherness and the desire that the other be, is almost blocked at its core.

Grant compares his own and others' revulsion at the Vietnam war with the revulsion many Germans felt toward their own country during the Second World War. We begin to share the fate of "many noble Jewish and Christian Germans who were torn apart because no country but Germany could really be their own, yet they could no longer love it because of their love of the good" (73). This revulsion, rather than showing the unthinkability of the relation between love of the good and love of our own, makes that relation only too thinkable. "Our own" is our key means of participating in the good; when we cannot love it because it seems to have no good in it that calls to the good in us, that participation is made difficult. What ensues is strife in soul and body, and a tremendous hunger for the palpably loveable. The suffering is so great because our nature, for Grant, is in need of good and our own is as inescapable as our flesh:

> The depth of the alienation is seen in the ambiguity of the words "one's own".... [T]he events in Vietnam push one towards the divide where one can no longer love one's own--to the point where the civilisation almost ceases to be one's own. Yet it is impossible to give up the word "almost." Think of being the parent or the child of a concentration camp guard. One would want to say: "This person is not my own," and yet one could not. The facts of birth are inescapable. So are the facts of belonging to the civilisation that has made one. It is this inevitability which leads to the degree of alienation and disgust which some people feel in the present

situation. (76) (emphasis mine)

Instead of the exclusive, either/or approach Lee's phrasing suggests, Grant's method here and elsewhere is to emphasize, not paradox, but irony. The terrible irony he faces in "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" is that our need of the good is so much a part of our nature that suffering and diminishment of our humanness ensue when any of its chief mediators--like citizenship and love of country--is impaired. Yet, the fact that that need is so ineradicable can be read as a source of hope. It is this need that, in my view, Grant plies his art to arouse. Where Lee finds Grant merely pronouncing on a terrible problem for thought, and announcing its closure, I find Grant making an eloquent effort to stir passionate thought.

3. Intuiting the Holiness of the Body: Lee's Act of Conflation

Now, Lee is an acute reader. There must be something, beyond his preoccupation with keeping Grant his companion along the mystic's negative way, that induces him to say that it is the two loves that "cannot be held together in thought in our era." In "Grant's Impasse," his statement is meant to set up the paradox of impossibility and unthinkability that Grant, he says, discovered. He means to point out the very real unthinkability, within our paradigm, of the idea of eternal good. If we cannot think the idea of "eternal good" because we think of good as a value we create in our freedom, then it follows, for Lee, that we cannot think Grant's thought that "in loving our own, we are loving the good." While incommensurability and unthinkability have little to do with Grant's treatment of the two loves, he does concern himself, throughout his work, with another deep disjunction, another case of incommensurability. What Lee is doing in making his claim about the two loves is conflating the relation between love of the

good/love of our own with the relation between eternal justice/modern technological science. By conflating love of our own with technology and love of the good with justice, Lee is suggesting that "our own" is exclusively this technological civilization. Grant shows us that, while this civilization is our own because it is what we come into as an inheritance and what we perpetuate in our doing and thinking, it is, ironically, an own that alienates us from what is most essential to our humanness--attunement to good. That, for Grant, is more enduringly our own.

In "Grant's Impasse," Lee does enumerate the actual incommensurables in Grant's thought; he errs in including "sacramental meaning and the fact/value distinction" in the list but he does capture key items:

> Grant wrote often of the need for holding classical truth and modern truth in the same thought. The good and technology; sacramental meaning and the fact/value distinction; natural law and freedom to invent the world; reverence and mastery. And for years I thought this was the programme he himself was trying to accomplish--to think the unity of ancient and modern, to find rational categories that would let them stand as commensurable. But that was wrong. Grant coveted such a reconciliation, but he didn't publish a single word that attempted to achieve it (19-20).

(No, he did not publish propositions or 'solutions,' but he did publish alienating descriptions of modernity, eloquent reminders of other truths, articulate gestures of hungry questioning, and energetic calls to thought.) In adding the two loves to this list of incommensurables, and in phrasing the problem for thought in the way he does, Lee draws close to the most radical consequence of the disjunctions Grant identifies.

As I mentioned above in the brief discussion of "The University Curriculum,"

Grant deals most overtly, in Technology and Empire, with the way the technological redefinition of good surrounds us. The disjunction between technological science and justice is more implicit. Lee's framing and phrasing of Grant's central problem -that "those two loves cannot be held together in thought in our era"--seems more closely informed by Grant's thinking in English Speaking Justice. Nowhere in Technology and Empire does Grant use the phrase "held together in thought." That phrase of Lee's more closely echoes this passage in English Speaking Justice:

> [The ancient account of justice] has not been thought in unity with the greatest theoretical enterprises of the modern world. This is a great darkness, because it appears certain that rational beings cannot get out of the darkness by accepting either truth and rejecting the other. It is folly simply to return to the ancient account of justice as if the discoveries of the modern science of nature had not been made. It is folly to take the ancient account of justice as simply of antiquarian interest, because without any knowledge of justice as what we are fitted for, we will move into the future with a 'justice' which is terrifying in its potentialities for mad inhumanity of action.The purpose of this writing has been to show the truth of the second of these propositions. In the darkness one should not return as if the discoveries of modern science had not taken place; nor should one give up the question of what it means to say that justice is what we are fitted for; and yet who has been able to think the two together? (94) (emphases mine)

By conflating the problem cited here with the tension between the two loves, Lee is on the verge of intuiting an affirmation that is central to Grant's thought and that informs

his rhetorical method in Technology and Empire and elsewhere. This affirmation, intimated in Grant's discussion of the two loves, is one Lee doesn't seem to know he knows: the body, that first meeting place of love, that visceral locus of love of the good, is holy. This affirmation is simultaneously an affirmation of the beneficence of nature and the transcendent ground of reverence. As the italicized lines above suggest, Grant's rhetorical method includes an attempt to remind us of that holiness by showing us the body in peril. While I find that aspect of his method present in many of his essays, it is in English Speaking Justice that method and theme overtly merge.

In English Speaking Justice, the holiness of the body and the question of good are thought in terms of one another. Grant's discussion of the waning of liberal justice before the "dynamic conveniences" (88) of technology culminates in the example of abortion--the ultimate case of a 'body in peril.' Abortion, for Grant, is also the ultimate example of the modern redefinition of good as a value we ascribe, rather than a reality we discover. In this discussion, in my view, he also brings us to the most fundamental questioning about what is "our own" and what it means to love it. The thought-startling questions he poses, in exposing the "unthought ontology" of Judge Blackmun's ruling in the Roe vs. Wade case--the fetus is not a person--can go right to the heart of a reader's sense of himself/herself as inviolable. If the human fetus, same species as the mother, is "genetically unique 'ab initio'" but not a "person," then, what makes it not a person and the mother a person? On what basis does the mother have rights and freedom and the fetus none? "What is it about any members of our species which makes the liberal rights of justice their due?.... [H]as the long tradition of liberal right any support in what human beings in fact are?" (76) Can scientific knowledge, taken as the whole of knowledge, ground justice? If science has shown that all that is is merely neutral matter,

the product of mechanical necessity and chance, and if humans are wills, radically free to manipulate matter as they choose and to define "good" to suit their conveniences, then what has been called in question is "whether anything is good" (93)--categorically. Can justice as convention, and justice as calculation of self-interest for the sake of comfortable self-preservation really ensure justice for all, including the weak and those unable to calculate? If we cannot say that there is a 'dueness' in the other so undeniable that it would lead us to put our own body on the line, then what is there about our own body that requires that others treat it as inviolable?

Grant's argumentation in English Speaking Justice shows that the body, that "own" that first speaks to us of what is good, and gives us our first intimation of sacredness, is imperilled. When Grant says that what has been called in question is whether or not anyone has any "rights" and whether or not "anything is good" (since science says nothing is), he seems also to be asking whether there is anything at all that is loveable about anyone or anything. Can there be love of one's own if there is not love of the good? Can there even be love, if there is no overriding good? Is love itself even possible within the modern account of the whole? But, Grant seems to be asking, what else but love can recognize as inviolable the matter that science tells us is negligible and disposable stuff? What else but love opens us to the undeniable purposiveness of beings that we cannot represent to ourselves, or know objectively?

In his method, Grant seems to be most concerned to show that the bond of flesh is the first capability of love; as such, it is the presence of the eternal and the locus of the sacred. I think he is suggesting that, while we have a body, we have an "own" and an opening to love and to justice. Our bodies, for Grant, meaning no paradox, are our means of transcending the finite, the instrumental, the practical, what can be completely

surrounded by the mind, defined and possessed. The body is what brings us into the presence of the eternal, the unmanipulable, what is categorically other and simultaneously loveable. In his thinking on sexuality, for example, Grant comments that, in our time, physical love may be one of the few ways humans find "the supracontractual ... possible." The "hunger and thirst for ecstatic relations" (English Speaking Justice 12) can move us beyond the madness of solipsism and the dreariness and immanence of self-serving calculation. (See also "Value and Technology"). In "Conceptions of Health" (1962), a witty deconstruction of the Freudian 'religion,' Grant observes that

> sexuality is for many not only the road to gratification but to ecstasy. 'With my body I thee worship.' The object of worship among the orgastic may be limited to the immanent and may therefore be justly characterized as idolatry. Nevertheless, in their very worshipping they seem to discover something sacred in nature that has been lost by those held by the philosophy of human power and self-confidence. The rediscovery of that sacredness may be a condition for the rediscovery of worship that is more than natural. For all its dangers, idolatry may be the only road back to worship. (132-133)

The joy of sexuality, in Grant's thinking is joy in that, in the best of cases, it is not engineered or controlled, not the product of the self-seeking and mastering will; as joy, it is, like "art, philosophy, and prayer" ("The Uses of Freedom" 524), free of the instrumental and the objectively finite. It is, like these three, beautifully rational. Such joy knits up body and mind, feeling and knowing, and it is beyond calculation, something to receive, as a gift from the beneficence of the whole.

As the mediator of good, the body is also, in Grant's thinking, the enabler of

justice and an organ of knowing. With Simone Weil in mind, for example, Grant says that "In the dispensation we live in now, the body is our infallible judge. What we do to our own bodies and to other peoples' bodies, is our partaking in justice here and now. We can't learn anything about justice apart from our bodies" (George Grant in Progress 104). Nor can we attain to knowledge of good "by a mysticism without price" ("Faith and the Multiversity" 55). Rather, as suggested in the discussion of the 'two loves', knowledge of good is mediated by daily living. Here is how Grant puts this ancient thought in English Speaking Justice:

> In the western tradition it was believed that the acting out of justice in human relationships was the essential way in which human beings were opened to eternity. Inward and outward justice were considered to be mutually interdependent, in the sense that the inward openness to eternity depended on just practice, and just practice depended on that inward openness to eternity. (90-91).

In "Justice and Technology," where he makes an effort to express "what has been lost which is essential to thought about justice" in the "coming to be of 'technology,'" Grant says, in a similar vein:

> ...[I]n affirming that justice is what we are fitted for, one is asserting that a knowledge of justice is intimated to us in the ordinary occurrences of space and time, and that through those occurrences one is reaching towards some knowledge of good which is not subject to change, and which rules us in a way more pressing than the rule of any other good.... [W]e can know justice as our need in the sense that it is necessary to happiness, and we can have intimations of loving its harmony (240--241).

That that knowledge is not "without price," however, is what is intimated in the words that best sum up for Grant the demanding nature of justice, its seeming strangeness and otherness: "Christ said: Happy are those who are hungry and thirsty for justice (Matthew 5:6). Socrates said that it is better to suffer injustice than to inflict it (Crito 49b-e; Gorgias 474 b ff.)" (237). For anyone with a nervous system, those are terrifying thoughts. Their terror is expressed, for Grant, in these words from Weil: "'Human nature is so arranged that any desire of the soul which has not passed through the flesh by way of actions, movements and attitudes which correspond to it naturally, has no reality in the soul. It is only there as a phantom'" (243). While the thought of meeting a demand contrary to selfish convenience or even self-preservation (i.e. a demand that carries us "beyond being") has less and less theoretic grounding in the technological age, Grant nevertheless contends that our bodies tell us something different: The affirmation about justice (that it is beautiful)

> can be put negatively by saying that if we are realistic about our loves and realistic about any conceivable conditions of the world, and if we apprehend the unchangingness of justice, we must understand that justice is in some sense other to us, and has a cutting edge which often seems to be turned upon our very selves. I have tried to express elsewhere the unchangingness of justice as given in the fact that we can know in advance actions which must never be done. What I mean by realistic about our loves is that justice is very often not what we want in any recognizable sense of 'want.' What I mean by realism about the conditions of the world is that I cannot imagine any conditions in which some lack of harmony in some human being would not be putting claims upon us--the meeting of

which would often carry us whither we would not. (241)

There are, unavoidably for most, demands that call us beyond self-interest to re-establish the harmony that is justice itself. For Weil and Grant, in their Christian-Platonist understanding, the quintessentially just or harmonizing act is the crucifixion: perfect goodness, made flesh, is nailed on the cross of necessity; in that act, perfect love bridges what is good and what is necessitous. For most of us, Grant is saying in "Justice and Technology," less demanding demands are simply there in the nature of living; few can get by without going out of their way for another, at some cost, but always beautifully. While there is love, there is this giving of the self that has a price but, as Grant says, is "necessary to our happiness."

Some intimation of justice as more than calculation is therefore always available, Grant hints, by virtue of the fact that humans are bodies living among bodies. But, because our accounts of the nature of things so radically shape our doing and perceiving, we need to pay attention to what our bodies might be saying about the need for justice and the desire for good.

Even if the opening to justice is achieved, as it is in "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," through revulsion at our own, that response of revulsion still reminds us that what is most our own is our visceral and rational attunement to good, our bodily and rational participation in the "beneficence of nature." This argument follows the pattern Grant sets in his opening comments to Lament for A Nation: "One cannot argue the meaningless of the world from the facts of evil, because what could evil deprive us of, if we had not some prior knowledge of good?" (3) That "prior knowledge" is woven into our nature, in Grant's view. Or, as he puts it in "A Platitude" (which Lee calls the "ground zero" of the unthinkability of good) "we are never more sure that air is good for

animals than when we are gasping for breath" (141). The breath we are in need of may be almost absent, but the need and the gasping define us in its terms.

I think Grant is suggesting that what most needs to be given voice, and made politically communicable in our time is the holiness of the body. In his act of conflation, in "Grant's Impasse," Lee intuitively sidles up to this central concern in Grant's work. But in saying that all Grant achieves is an articulation of the impossibility of thinking the holy, Lee seems to veer away from a conscious encounter with his own intuition. His impasse thesis says nothing of those signs, in Grant's writing, that he is putting out enormous effort to reanimate the thought Lee most wants to know: that the whole is good, that nature is beneficent, or, as Lee puts it in "Grant's Impasse" (in thoroughly modern and rather less lovely terms) that "the world [is] moment to moment ... valuative" (35). In overlooking the signs of this effort, and fixing Grant in the paradoxicality of the "impasse," Lee does "eliminate much" (The Collected Works of Billy the Kid 11).

Lee does reflect Grant's views truly in acknowledging the power of the modern paradigm to exclude what is other to it. He understands, with Grant, that we are radically dependent beings: what we think shapes what we do; what we do shapes what we think. Our definitions define us; our language imprisons us. What surrounds us also penetrates us; what we are taught we almost become. For Grant, however, this dependence is itself an ironic refutation of the modern view of the human as radically free, a will unattached to nature. As he is fond of saying, paraphrasing Strauss on "the classical philosophers," "man cannot help but imitate in action his vision of the nature of things" ("The University Curriculum" 72). That we are inevitably affected by the living consequences of our thought suggests that body, or matter, is not neutral, external stuff, but part of

what Donne calls "That subtle knot, which makes us man" (55). The fact that, as Lee puts it, "What we hunger for as humans, and what our rational minds can accomplish, are disjunct" ("Poetry and Unknowing" 42) suggests, for Grant, that there is some terrible fault in our modern account of the world. However, he seems to find that very faultiness hopeful.

What Grant sees as a challenge to thought, and a terrific responsibility for thinking and speaking, Lee turns into closure. In suggesting that the only escape from the modern paradigm is an escape into unreason, Lee implies what is pretty much a common belief today: that we are indeed trapped in historicism. That is, our thought cannot escape our particular historical period; our language entrenches and confines us within the discourse and the episteme of the age; there are no transhistorical truths, no unchanging nature of things, and certainly no timeless knowledge of any nature of things. Thought is conventional; reason-as-instrument both changes with the fashion and changes the fashion. Therefore no cogent, rationally convincing critique of the present is possible, no alternative imaginable.

While Grant accepts our thought's dependence and does not for a minute underestimate the power of the language of the "polis" to shut out meanings not convenient to its intents and purposes, he does not admit the absolute dependence of thought and he does not accept that public cogency is the only cogency. Nor does he agree that the cry of the heart that rages against the desacralized modern account of the world is something irrational. It is the best of rationality. The alternative accounts of the world that make that cry rational are accessible, he says in "The University Curriculum," and elsewhere, through the "reliving of buried memories of what the greatest, whether eastern or western, have known of human excellence" (132). For Grant, the very

inability of the liberal paradigm to say anything about our own immediate sense of good and evil shows the inadequacy of that paradigm. That inadequacy, Grant suggests, can drive us right out of that paradigm to seek a more illuminating account of our capacity to feel horror at evil and joy at the sight of goodness. What we have to listen to and wonder at and think, is that visceral response that remains within good and evil and that hints at the beneficence of nature. As "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" affirms, Grant considers alienation from the public agenda possible; thinking and feeling otherwise from the modern puts us, to a small degree, outside it. But we have to make that agenda explicit and come right up through the middle of everything that disgusts us, threatens us, and starves us in that agenda in order to understand what is other to it. That is, a notion like the "beneficence of nature" can only function as a standpoint for critique if the paradigm that denies that thought is first found emotionally, intellectually, and politically/ethically wanting. The nature that revolts against the modern, as Lee's does, is what Grant seems to make his firmest standpoint for critique; while we are bodies, or rational animals, that standpoint won't crumble.

4. Lee, Grant, and the Heideggerian Veil

Leaving the full implications of his own revolt unarticulated, Lee fixes Grant in rational deadlock. He closes his 1990 study with this vivid depiction of his friend's fate: "there was a price to pay for such lucid news of extremis: Grant's Impasse came to be consciously home" (34). While Grant is left keening in the impasse, Lee offers a further conjecture that opens the path Lee's own meditations will take: perhaps that "rational deadlock" Grant identified "could well come to be recognized as indispensable, strategic, the substantial step which had to to be taken at this juncture" (34). In making this

conjecture, Lee intimates how closely Heidegger is bound up in his reading of Grant.

While this is not the place for a full study of the Grant-Heidegger relation, it is important to note just how radically Lee's conjecture is at odds with Grant's thought, how thoroughly it rests within modern assumptions, and how closely it accords with Heidegger's historicism and his thinking about technology.

Lee's conjecture suggests that the shutting down of reason and the defeat of public discourse about the good, about limits to matter's malleability, have been both necessary and good. What would follow from that logic, which is suggested by the form and language of his conjecture, is a series of implications that it would be hard to believe Lee intends. His view of necessary and salutary next steps suggests that all the terrible consequences of modern nihilism and technological excess have simply been part of an inevitable process, and a good process. In working the silencing of the eternal into an inevitable historical process, he cannot help but imply that the technological exploitation of human and non-human nature has been a necessary step towards a new condition, the working out of an immanent force in history. It is in this implication that his thinking resembles Heidegger's and distances itself from Grant's.

The language of strategic next steps is the language of progressivism and historicism, key features of modern thinking. This thinking, in Grant's view, is a complete immanentism: flux and becoming are all; matter as blind force is all. Within this thinking, all that is is in process; nothing is determined because nothing has a given nature or purpose; nothing transcends time because everything is made in time and through time, beginning in nothingness and ending in nothingness. Even good is made in time, rather than holding sway as what is primary and timeless, as the mysterious, transcendent source of all that is. Grant traces aspects of this progressive/historicist

thinking to the secularizing of what was already a dangerous notion of providence: "From the assumption that God's purposes are unfolded in historical events, one may be led to view history as an ever-fuller manifestation of the good" (Lament for a Nation 89). When the liberal doctrine of progress subsumes this notion of providence and eliminates the notion of highest good or God, then "history [becomes] the final court of appeal." If all that happens is just a necessary next step in the working out of an inevitable historical process that supposedly realises a greater good, then, for Grant,

> force is the final argument. Is it possible to look at history and deny that within its dimensions force is the supreme ruler? To take a progressive view of providence is to come close to worshipping force. Does this not make us cavalier about evil? The screams of the tortured child can be justified by the achievements of history. How pleasant for the achievers, but how meaningless for the child. (89)

In Grant's view, the liberal, immanentist account of the world has unleashed a force that ultimately deconstructs liberal notions of rights and limits. By making the good a product of time and history, completely dependent upon human willing and action, liberal thought has made it provisional and subsidiary to power. The good no longer belongs to an unconditional order that puts obligations upon people and shapes their actions here in time. As Grant notes frequently, liberal "doctrine" identifies "technology with evolution" and "evolution with movement ... the race to higher and higher morality" ("Canadian Fate and Imperialism" 72). But, as Marxists and capitalist 'conservatives' alike are forced to discover, the dynamism of technology, posited upon the neutrality of matter and the absence of sacred limits, proves unstoppable (see "Revolution and Tradition"). There is no ground, within the logic of technology, for invoking a moral

limit to technological 'progress.' The assumptions that underlie technology are incompatible with the assumptions about given limit, highest good, or purpose underlying morality.

When Lee suggests that the necessitous shutting down of the rational language of good leads to the possibility of "encountering the world moment to moment as valuative," he is seeking a way beyond the liberal account of the world as wholly knowable in terms of objective fact and subjective value. He is seeking another way of being that is not posited upon exploitive knowing and doing. He is perhaps seeking an ecstatic affirmation that what is is holy, a conviction that is pre-rational and super-rational, a 'yes' of one's whole being. Such a 'yes' is implied in Grant's interpretation of the human response to beauty as an illumination of good, present in the world, and best touched through the operation of reason infused with love. Yet Lee, in his closing comments, overlooks that note in Grant and remains wholly within the language of the modern. In speaking of the experience of the world as "valuative," he avoids the bedrock, unconditional thought that nature, or the whole, is beneficent, good. And while he takes a step beyond the liberal view of nature as neutral, he uses the language of modernity to do so. Nature may be "valuative" or open to being valued by us as good or evil, worthy of respect or not. Its goodness or otherwise is still dependent, in this phrasing, upon human experience of its worth.

Lee's conjecture that the salutary, necessary, and destined shutting down of reason can lead to an illumination of the ineffable resonates with Heidegger's account of technology and its relation to the human. Heidegger argues that the obscuring of Being by technology has been Being's necessitous way of coming into a new relation with the human; out of the utter concealment of Being, there can come a flash of unconcealment.

Being can reveal itself again in the full light of its truth to those who open themselves in full attentiveness to its absence. .

Being, for Heidegger, is that which is, the 'thatness' of things; the "truth" of that which is, is "unconcealedness." In the age of technology, Being holds sway as absence, as concealment; it is hidden within a completely neutered world where all that is makes itself available to technological man as "standing reserve" ("The Question Concerning Technology" 17). All that is can now be "challenged forth" (15) as raw material for use. As raw material, what is "challenged forth" to yield up its usefulness is no longer even an object, as something other than man; it is simple material, with no objective character, ordered into the designs of technology. Its own 'thatness' is completely obscured.

Being's complete hiddenness in our era, argues Heidegger, has been wrought by the metaphysical understanding of Being as that which lies behind beings as their suprasensory cause. Being has been pushed back behind beings and beings have taken man's full attention. However, this metaphysical understanding and the consequent forgetting of Being as that "which lies nearest" (with nothing behind it) ("The Word of Nietzsche" 111) have been necessary. That metaphysical thinking has not been the choice of humans, but a fate in nature working its way through humans.

Being, in our time, Heidegger argues, reveals itself as concealment; that concealment first made itself manifest in Plato's metaphysical notion of the Being of something as its "idea ... the nonsensuous aspect of what is physically visible" (20). With this conception, a darkness fell over the nearness and visibility of Being--a necessary darkness--and made technology--the willful use of things as standing reserve--possible. Metaphysics is "in essence ... nihilism" and "an epoch of the history of Being itself." It

has "come to pass from out of the destining of Being itself" ("The Word of Nietzsche" 110-111). Technology is both the culmination of metaphysics and the prelude to its overcoming. Technology is Being's way of calling humans into a new relation to Being. In fact, humans fulfil their humanness, for Heidegger, by cooperating with the destining of Being:

> Yet precisely because man is challenged more originally than are the energies of nature, i.e., into the process of ordering, he never is transformed into mere standing reserve. Since man drives technology forward, he takes part in ordering as a way of revealing. But the unconcealment itself, within which ordering unfolds, is never a human handiwork, any more than is the realm through which man is already passing every time he as a subject relates to an object.
>
> Where and how does this revealing happen if it is no mere handiwork of man? We need not look far. We need only apprehend in an unbiased way That which has already claimed man and has done so, so decisively that he can only be man at any given time as the one so claimed. Wherever man opens his eyes and ears, unlocks his heart, and gives himself over to meditating and striving, shaping and working, entreating and thanking, he finds himself everywhere already brought into the unconcealed. The unconcealment of the unconcealed has already come to pass whenever it calls man forth into the modes of being allotted to him. When man, in his way, from within unconcealment reveals that which presences, he merely responds to the call of unconcealment even when he contradicts it. Thus when man, investigating, observing, ensnares nature

> as an area of his own conceiving, he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing-reserve. ("The Question Concerning Technology" 18-19) (emphases mine)

When Being is utterly obscured, when its absolute hiddenness rouses a questioning about it, its mystery can then begin to break upon anyone who has passed beyond being mere man. The human attuned to this mystery realizes itself as "Dasein," the locus for the appearance of Being. Being then, as what is nearest, comes into "the clear" or "the open" as the fact that anything is at all--the 'thatness' of beings. Their thatness resides in the fact that beings come to be out of nothingness, are constituted by the whirling of time in the temporality that is their essence, and hurtle through time to their own death, their return to the abyss. The history of technological depredation, in this view, has been necessary. It has been the working out of the immanent force that Being is. This immanent force has been moving humans along, in an historical process, to a new stage, where our technological power, combined with our ability to encounter Being in its truth, allows a new relationship to Being. For those who most acutely sense that Being is obscured, for those who sense the final inscrutability of earth, in spite of our assaults upon it, for those who acknowledge the unfathomable mysteriousness of the gods, as the beings most alien to us, awe will return.

The implication in Heidegger's account of technology as a destiny that is using humans in a special way is that technology has become a means for humans to become Nietzsche's deserving masters of the earth. This glorification of necessary process, in Heidegger, along with his identification of Being with temporality, lacking in the

inviolable eternality Grant is at pains to intimate, is partly what leads Grant to call him "the most consummate of the historicists" ("Justice and Technology" 244). For Heidegger, nothingness (the abyss, chaos) is primary. For Grant, the good, which infuses the things of time with sacredness, is primary.

The claim that all the ravages of technology have been the work of Being fulfilling its destiny seems both a callous acceptance of evil and a denigration of true freedom and rationality in the human. If historical necessity has required the eradication of other species and the assault on whole ethnic groups, then it is hard to see how one might love and revere Being as the power working its way through such history. Grant, by contrast, faces the incredible dynamism of technology, the awful totality of this way of thinking, doing, and being, and still retains a sense that fate is the result of human decisions. Humans can always be opened to another way of understanding and inhabiting the earth. To give up this hope would be to deny the beneficence of the whole and the enduring participation of the human in that goodness. In contrast to Lee's Heideggerian sense that technology itself is leading us to a new way beyond itself, Grant suggests that what is needed is not a pushing beyond technology in the same spirit of will that folds us into technology's dynamism, but a remembering of an unrealized alternative.

That alternative finds eloquent expression at the very heart of what might be called Grant's "signature" piece, "In Defence of North America." In this essay, which both opens and epitomizes Technology and Empire, Grant thinks through the character of North American civilization and the nature of technological modernity in terms of one another. The essay questions who we are, as North Americans and moderns, and what we are becoming. It acknowledges the difficulty of answering those questions, of getting a critical purchase on the novelty of a society whose premises are becoming a world-wide

ethic, then proceeds to grapple with them. In an act of historical remembering, Grant mines the meaning behind the "platitude ... that the U.S. is the only society which has no history (truly its own) from before the age of progress" (17) and places Canada within the context of that history. Our religious roots are "Calvinist protestantism," our philosophic roots Hobbesian liberalism, and our historical roots or "primal" experience rootlessness itself:

> we are still enfolded with the Americans in the deep sharing of having crossed the ocean and conquered the new land. All of us who came made some break in that coming. The break was not only the giving up of the old and settled, but the entering into the majestic continent which could not be ours in the way that the old had been. It could not be ours in the old way because the making of it ours did not go back before the beginning of conscious memory. The roots of some communities in eastern North America go back far in continuous love for their place, but none of us can be called autochthonous, because in all there is some consciousness of making the land our own. It could not be ours also because the very intractability, immensity and extremes of the new land required that its meeting with mastering Europeans be a battle of subjugation.... When we go into the Rockies we may have the sense that gods are there. But if so, they cannot manifest themselves to us as ours....There can be nothing immemorial for us except the environment as object. Even our cities have been encampments on the road to economic mastery. (17)

Out of these roots has come a society lacking a tradition of contemplation, committed to

mastery of a world considered "unimportant and indeterminate stuff (even when it was our own bodies)" and convinced that the will-driven realization of freedom for all through technology is "the highest good" (27, 28).

Even as the costs of this society--laid out by Grant in a passionate tour de force of rhetorical composition (24-25)--expose themselves; even as we come to know in our "flesh and dreams, the results of generations of the mechanising of the body"; even as we "see all around" us "the excesses and follies now necessary to people who can win back the body only through sexuality" we must not forget, cautions Grant "what was necessary and what was heroic" in the conquest of the land that led North Americans to take such conquest as the highest good. The present drive to "the unlimited mastery of men by men" that was unleashed by our 'primals' is still understood by many as the necessary and moral subjugation of the spontaneity of nature in the name of human freedom.

Given this definition of good, Grant argues, we come upon the difficulty that Lee makes an impossibility: "As moderns we have no standards by which to judge particular techniques, except standards welling up with our faith in technical expansion" (34). This sense of technology as a totality is one that Grant shares with Heidegger. With Heidegger, he also believes that a full encounter with technology is the way to discover its 'other.' However, unlike Heidegger, Grant does not accept our technological present as a 'destiny': "To describe this situation as a difficulty implies that it is no inevitable historicist predicament. It is to say that its overcoming could only be achieved by living in the full light of its presence" (34).

To live in the full light of technology's presence is not, as in Heidegger, simply to make oneself open to the sudden unconcealment of Being as the nearness of that which

is. While the movement through technology to its other is indeed for Grant a movement to openness, to receptivity, what is discovered in that enlightened attention is not the temporality of Being and some special status of the human. Rather, in experiencing the spiritual hunger aroused by the total objectification of the world and the self, a person might find reawakened the human attunement to justice, to what is beyond manipulation and that enjoins our obedience. To overcome technology, Grant says, is to find renewed the human capacity for reverence and contemplation, for encountering "that which lay beyond bargaining and left one without an alternative" (37). Where Heidegger finds man being called to a new relation to Being, to a full realization of his status and power, and to "an essential relationship between technology and man in respect to their essence" ("The Turning" 39), Grant suggests that the human who discovers technology's 'other' rediscovers some of what is necessary to full humanness and health. What that might be, he says, he glimpsed himself in a way of life marked by

> public and private virtues having their point beyond what can in any sense by [sic] called socially useful; commitments to love and to friendship which lie rooted in a realm outside the calculable; a partaking in the beautiful not seen as the product of human creativity; amusements and ecstasies not seen as the enemies of reason. (36)

Grant's efforts to discover the roots of technology in certain decisions humans have made in the modern era about God and the self and nature can be read as efforts to counteract the Heideggerian sense that technology is a mysterious and inevitable 'sending' of Being. In perhaps one of the most liberating and hopeful passages in his writing, he makes the audacious suggestion that our present could well have been otherwise:

> [I]t may perhaps be said negatively that what has been absent for us is the affirmation of a possible apprehension of the world beyond that as a field of objects considered as pragmata--an apprehension present not only in its height as 'theory' but as the undergirding of our loves and friendships, of our arts and reverences and indeed as the setting for our dealing with the objects of the human and non-human world. Perhaps we are lacking the recognition that our response to the whole should not most deeply be that of doing, nor even that of terror or anguish, but that of wondering or marvelling at what is, being amazed or astonished by it; and that such a stance, as beyond all bargains and conveniences, is the only source from which purposes may be manifest to us for our necessary calculating (35).

The link between contemplative awe and justice is clearly drawn here, as is the link between justice and "our necessary calculating." Man must intervene against the forces of nature to some degree; man is by nature and by necessity a maker. But his intervening and making might have been something quite different had the full wondering attentiveness to "what is" and to given purpose been allowed to shape that making. The North American inheritance of thought and religion, Grant argues, lacked a tradition of contemplation; in that lack, reason was separated from love, and human will, cut off from any sense of given goodness, came unmoored.

The technological present, for Grant, is therefore no destining of Being; its roots are discoverable, in part, in the structures of human thought. To discover what is missing in our present account of the nature of things, Grant puts pressure on those structures, tells their cost, and feels out their fissures. Rather than pronouncing on the silencing of reason, as Lee would have it, in both "Cadence, Country, Silence" and "Grant's

Impasse," Grant seems to ply his art to reawaken thought that is both critical and contemplative.

Chapter Three

George Grant's Art: Recalling the Beneficence of Nature

To see more clearly what Lee's impasse thesis eliminates, it helps to take a closer look at the art of some of Grant's essays. How is it that these essays could move Lee, for all the idiosyncrasies of his reading, to locate his own life's work "in the strange landscape [Grant] charted" ("Grant's Impasse" 25)? How does Grant attempt to move a reader to thought; how does he awaken the hunger for the holy Lee so poignantly demonstrates? In what follows, I argue that, against the modern, desacralized view of the world as neutral stuff, Grant focusses his art and argument on reanimating the understanding that there is something in human nature that the modern paradigm fails to account for, something in human nature that revolts against the objectification and desacralizing of the physical world. Along with that understanding might then come an understanding of the mysterious "beneficence of nature." If that understanding can be reawakened, then thought about good and the centrality of love may be revived.

In claiming that Grant's work ends in muteness of mind, Lee overlooks the frequent calls to thought that Grant issues, both in the movement of his rhetoric, and in the direct appeals that close so many of his essays. At the end of Philosophy in the Mass Age (1959), for example, he appeals to scientists, artists, practical people and philosophers to join together--in what Lampert calls a "sort of rethink tank" (181)--to overcome the distinction "between nature as the simply dominated and nature as the simply contemplated" (124). In Time as History (1969), Grant's pain-filled encounter with Nietzsche's thought, the call is to recollect the ground of reverence and to move "beyond remembering, to desiring and thinking" (52). In 1970, Grant closes his Gerstein

lecture, "Revolution and Tradition" one of his most tortured meditations, by affirming that the darkness of the age and the nature of humans will re-arouse thought about the good: "However ridiculous or redundant it may seem among the busy pandemonium of our multiversities, the question of good appears inescapable" (94-95). In "Knowing and Making," his 1975 address to the Royal Society, he makes his call a goad to the inheritors of Oppenheimer's dictum, which puts no check of 'should' on the technological 'can'--itself a strange imperative--"'If something is sweet, you have to go ahead with it'":

> [I]n the presence of the obvious disregard of thought in our era, the demand to think does not disappear. The very glory of the scientific community is that it produces some members who cannot avoid thinking beyond the dogmas of the scientific paradigm. The scientific community cannot become an engrossed irrationalism without committing suicide. (67)

In English Speaking Justice (1974), the call is indirect, both a keening and a goad, aimed, again, at those responsible for what should be the humanizing power of education:

> Analytical logistics plus historicist scholarship plus even rigorous science do not when added up equal philosophy. When added together they are not capable of producing that thought which is required if justice is to be taken out of the darkness which surrounds it in the technological era. This lack of a tradition of thought is one reason why it is improbable that the transcendence of justice over technology will be lived among English speaking people. (95-96

This certainly sounds bleak, but it does not, at that, end in impossibility. The key to hope is found in the word "improbable," as William Christian argues in "George Grant and

the Terrifying Darkness" (177). He notes that Grant's use of the word echoes Plato's qualification, in The Republic, that the just state is an improbability, not an impossibility because its realization depends on grace, or receptivity. This echo suggests that Grant is calling his readers to both critical and receptive, or contemplative, thought, to a reuniting of love and reason that this era has strangely divided. In the art of his writing, Grant seems to do his part to effect that reuniting.

The centrality of the body in Grant's thinking seems to carry over into the art of his writing. This is particularly demonstrable in the essays of Technology and Empire. While Lee may be missing the mark in calling these essays "anomalous in [Grant's] thought" ("Grant's Impasse" 20), he is instinctively right in sensing their distinctness. But I would say it is a distinctness of style, not of thought. Of the six essays in that volume, "In Defense of North America," "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," "The University Curriculum," and "A Platitude" are stylistically remarkable. Along with Lament for A Nation and Time as History, they are the most artful of all Grant's works. (For that reason, they are even more resistant than his other essays to easy paraphrase.)

Grant's voice, in almost all of his work, is engaged, personal, lyrical. A remarkable combination of the colloquial and the classically cadenced, it is the voice of intense, open-eyed meditation and hungry questioning, not the voice of objective scholarship or scientific conclusiveness. In this sense, Grant's writing is consistent with his (daringly unpopular) understanding of learning and teaching in the humanities as an "erotic" activity ("The Battle Between Teaching and Research"). In the Technology and Empire essays (as well as in Lament for a Nation and Time as History), there is, besides the lyric voice, an energetic effort to reanimate language; Grant struggles to make more-

than-modern assumptions, like the beneficence of nature, rise right up out of the body of modern words. In addition, there is a shapeliness to the sweep of the argument in these works. The compositions <u>mean</u> by the way they move; the turns and changes in the rhetoric enlist the emotion and imagination and ear of the reader in the act of understanding. In the four essays Lee has in mind (which are also the four he most influenced as an editor), we also find vivid, in-forming motifs that give the language a metaphorical power and enhance the sense of the work's craftedness. In most of his work, but especially in the most artful pieces, Grant seems to me to write right at the body--as a holy thing.

In what follows, I will look at Grant's efforts to retrieve the meaning of that phrase that, as I noted in Chapter One, Lee-as-editor banished from "The University Curriculum"--"the beneficence of nature." To see that Grant's art does make that effort, and to loosen a little the "tightening" of Lee's "impasse" thesis, I will look closely at the art of "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," "The University Curriculum" and "A Platitude."

In "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," the body as the immediacy of the good seems the implicit perception, and the implicit affirmation, informing both the movement of the argument and Grant's charged and metaphorical diction. Two views of nature, and, by extension, of the body, are brought up against one another through overt statement and through the medium of contrasting imagery. The writing is shaped by a central motif that suggests the tug between tyranny and wisdom, between subsuming, reductive force and the love of good that dignifies and liberates. The body is thus made the battleground where justice and technology, wisdom and tyranny, confront one another.

Language that evokes a sense of the body's vulnerability and sacredness is played

off against language that images inexorable force. (I have already suggested that this motif is operating in English Speaking Justice, where Grant shows us the body, as "our own," in peril.) The human as rational animal, spirit and flesh, is evoked in direct opposition to the view of the human as externalized object. Affirmation and threat are given together, but with the emphasis on threat, until the reader is just about gasping for respite from force. By the end of the essay, those "noble Jewish and Christian Germans" so searingly filled with love of the good, the body's unbreakable bond of flesh that ties us to "our own," and those "practical men" committed to preserving "what little sovereignty we [Canadians] still possess" (78) remain the few "particulars" that are not subsumed by the dynamic encroachment of the technological empire.

The first view of nature is given in Grant's opening 'position statement'; it is here we find the idea of "the beneficence of nature" stubbornly retained, only slightly rephrased:

> To say that one holds a tragic view of life would be to follow Nietzsche in thinking that Dionysian tragedy was a higher stance than that of Socrates; I do not think this. And the words optimistic and pessimistic are surely most accurately used, following Leibnitz, to describe what one thinks about the nature of things, whether the world is good or not. It is quite possible to use the word "fate" and to think that "nature" is good and not contradict oneself. It is in my opinion a sensible way to talk about events, though obviously it is far from the liberal dogmas within which most people are taught to think (63). (emphasis mine)

This assertion that "nature is good" is followed by the (anti-historicist) comment that the study of history "illumines one's search for the good in the here and now." From the

standpoint of these assumptions, which affirm the presence of good and clearly and confidently snub the "dogmas" or assumptions of modernity, Grant heads into the centre of everything that would contradict his faith.

His meditation on Canada's fate, which is simultaneously a meditation on the fate of humanity, will take him from the buoyancy of this "sensible way to talk" to one final, wrenching question:

> [W]hat lies behind the small practical question of Canadian nationalism is the larger context of the fate of western civilisation. By that fate I mean not merely the relations of our massive empire to the rest of the world, but even more the kind of existence which is becoming universal in advanced technological societies. What is worth doing in the midst of this barren twilight is the incredibly difficult question. (78)

Between Grant's opening affirmations and this bleak cry of the heart comes the alternate and ascendant account of nature, unfolded in terms of its painful costs and consequences. The confident first person singular, resisting the dogma of the age, becomes the suffering collective of the first person plural. However, between the faith-filled opening and this dark ending, there also comes the account of the two loves and the ironic affirmation that love of the good is an enduring part of human nature. It is that affirmation, present from the beginning, that seems to keep Grant in the "barren twilight" of questioning, one shade away from black.

The turn from the confident affirmations that open "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" to the power that opposes those affirmations is swift and dislocating. The second view of nature begins to assert itself, right on the heels of Grant's reference to "the good in the here and now." It is first intimated by Grant's comments on the violence

in Vietnam: "It is clear that in that country the American empire has been demolishing a people, rather than allowing them to live outside the American orbit. The Americans are forced to that ferocious demolition..." (63). The view of nature implied here works its way through to explicitness: references to "the destruction of a people," "demolition of Vietnam," "increasingly ferocious means," "mass crimes of the age of progress," "the slaughter of decent men of decent motives," "our guts shot away" culminate in the naming of that "externalised view of human life" central to "the progressive spirit." Grant lays out the consequences of that view, or way of thinking (as quoted earlier): "The dominant tendency of the modern world has been to divide history from nature and to consider history dynamic and nature controllable as externality. Therefore, modern men have been extremely violent in their dealings with other men and other beings" (72). But that "dominant tendency" is not something peculiar to Americans or to any group of people; it is not a power outside any person, but present in the structure of modern thought--hence the collective 'we' and 'our.' How we think shapes what we do. The assault on bodies that Grant decries originates in our thinking; as rational animals, we are being torn apart.

In his efforts to alienate us, his readers, from technology, so that we can see it for what it is, Grant shrewdly uses the lever of liberalism. To help us see what a tyranny technology imposes, he appeals throughout this essay to our sense of ourselves as free, unfettered in thought and action. More deeply, he appeals to our sense of ourselves as physical beings to whom freedom from violence is due. But that appeal is made negatively, through images of force. In his opening statement, quoted above, Grant catches modernity's terrible irony--that technology arose out of the very liberalism it cancels--in the phrase "the liberal dogmas within which most people are taught to think."

Our way of thinking, as liberals, has become technology's trap: "Americans are forced to that ferocious demolition because they have chosen to draw the line against the Chinese empire..." (63). Contrary to the fact/value distinction and the modern assumption that the will and reason are Archimedean points outside nature, we are ourselves caught up in the force those assumptions unleashed.

Grant offers a little respite from force by noting that "many Canadians ... are not yet so empty that they can take lightly the destruction of a people" (64); there is a compulsion towards good in these Canadians that finds them "forced to admit the sheer evil of what is being done in Vietnam" (64). However, in Grant's rhetorical play of forces, that power of conscience comes up against modernity's new compulsion: "at the same time [we] say that we have no choice but to stand with the Americans" (64). Against the power of conscience, or radical attunement to good, the invasion of modernity escalates:

> Our involvement is much deeper than the immediate profits of particular wars. Our very form of life depends on our membership in the western industrial empire.... [I]t depends on the very faith that gives meaning and purpose to the lives of western men. To most Canadians, as public beings, the central cause of motion in their souls is the belief in progress through technique.... (64)

Grant often says, with mordant irony, that technology and liberalism are our new religion--what we accept as given, what binds us as a community, and what gives meaning to our lives. He seems to bring this "central cause of motion" in our souls together with the violence that ensues from that faith that is "the very substance of our lives" (65), to make his readers feel indeed violated and disgusted at the core--physically

and spiritually.

In the mid-section of this essay, Grant recapitulates the argument and pattern of Lament for a Nation, depicting Canada's history as a trenchant tale of force in which every turn and opportunity and decision in our history has meant a diminishment of real freedom and sovereignty. The sense that Canadians are caught and forced and quite un-free is intensified by Grant's account of Canada as "a product of two north-western empires." As a product, a thing made, not grown, Canada was shaped by the fateful thinking that "liberated" Western culture from "all ideas of the sacred as standing in the way of the emancipation of greed" (66). In the dissolving of all sense of the sacred, this culture was "liberated ... from knowledge of any purposes which transcended the economically rational" (66). In "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," the demolition of Vietnam--the breaking of the inviolability of bodies--is "economically rational"; the greed we were freed to works against true liberty.

Just as English-speaking Canada shared this ironic 'liberation,' the Quebec French, Grant argues, are just now (in 1967) "awaker [illegible] modernity" and seeking their "independence" from tradition in a way that "leaves them wide open to the conquest by a modernity which at its very heart is destructive of indigenous traditions" (67). Independence from tradition, which includes a tradition of reverence and therefore an attachment to what might preserve beings in their particularity, simply delivers the newly liberated into the tyranny of technology, which respects no particulars.

Just as the circle of modernity seems to be closing up tight around us, Grant, in a characteristic move, opens "A little space for the rose-breath to fill" as Yeats puts it ("To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time" 35). The tale of Canada's subsumption into the American empire also includes the turn we did not take. Grant subtly reminds us that

nature is beneficent and that fate is the product of rational (and lamentably unwise) choices, not an inexorable dynamic of nature, or of Being, as Heidegger would have it. He does this by calling to memory (one healing power, in his philosophy) "the losers of history"--Hooker and Swift. This 're-membering' starts to heal what modernity tears apart, because, as Grant suggests in Time as History, it makes present to the whole person what has been forgotten. Remembering is also salutary in that, in reading what the losers wrote, "we see what kind of society the winners have made" (67). In Swift's "comic" critique of the Whigs, we can see more clearly that the particular violence of modern imperialism is indeed "man as Hobbes has said he is realising his potentialities" (69). (As Grant puts it in "Tyranny and Wisdom," Hobbesian man is one who "lacks awareness of sacred restraints" (104).) In calling Swift's vision "comic," and, shortly after, in praising (with faint damnation) the United Empire Loyalists, Grant recalls his opening position, that one can "use the word 'fate,' and ... think that 'nature' is good." That is, the violence that has arisen out of the fateful decisions of people is not all there is to 'the whole'; the fact that we can see that violence for what it is means that there is a larger good that is primary.

Having disgusted us with the image of technological violence, and dismayed us with the sense of Canada's almost impotent entrapment between world empires, Grant inserts a note of the loveable. In reminding us of the losers of history, and of the dimly lovelier view of political life the Loyalists held, Grant rouses a longing for a "particular" that might resist the tyranny of technology. For Grant, that "particular" is Canada:

> I do regret the disappearance of indigenous traditions, including my own. It is true that no particularism can adequately incarnate the good. But is it not also true that only through some particular roots, however partial,

> can human beings grasp what is good and it is the juice of such roots which for most men sustain their partaking in a more universal good? (68-69)

Bringing this note of lament--combined with tentative affirmation--into the midst of indictment, Grant arouses a hunger for things to be otherwise, and for a good that is not bound to time. He reanimates a connection to good by way of very physical images--roots and food. In the next instance, though, against the image of a loved particular, Grant immediately presses "the homogenizing and universalizing power of technology ... the dominant doctrine of modern liberalism ... [which] must undermine all particularisms" (69).

The tale of force continues, as the tale of the spread of Western imperialism makes its way to the First World War. That war, says Grant, left Canada "in the slough of despond" and lacking that "political courage" whose "victory ... over immediate and individual economic advantage" has always been the only hope for "Canada's survival" (70). For Grant, that war set English and French Canadians against one another, led Britain to capitulate to the Americans, broke Canada's tie with Britain and therefore with the remnants of an older tradition of thought, and left Canada wide open to the "American empire", where "American supremacy is identified with the belief that questions of human good are to be solved by technology." That solving is immediately caught up into the motif of force as the word "tyranny" emerges into the discussion. The violence of "the expanding technological society" is nakedly laid out as incomprehensible within the liberal view that technological progress promotes the growth of freedom and political good. The Vietnam War is a way of 'solving' a threat to American dominance; the ability to 'dissolve' a people was unleashed by a way of thinking about the world that

"dissolved all ideas of the sacred as standing in the way of the emancipation of greed" (66). Grant's appeals to the liberal in his reader are given their most ironic twist at this point in the argument: our modern view of ourselves as autonomous wills, radically free, has delivered us into tyranny.

But what the checkmating of liberalism does is raise the question as to what it is that does constitute our freedom. It is at this point in the sweep of his argument that Grant again prises open the circle of our entrapment, stays the march of force, and introduces his passage on love of the good and love of our own. What a breathing space is found in that affirmation that "in loving our friends we are also loving the good" (73). As the earlier discussion of the two loves argues, that affirmation is not undercut; Grant insists that such love is part of our reality.

The placement of the tale of the two loves and the account of those "noble Jewish and Christian Germans" who could not love their country "because of their love of the good" points up a recurring feature of Grant's rhetorical strategy. At pivotal points in his various accounts of the darkness that surrounds the question of good in our era, Grant introduces a living example of goodness and justice, as if to say, 'If thought of timeless good cannot be adequately expressed in propositions, it can be embodied, and in that way, known.' As early as 1952, Grant inserts into his critique of Bertrand Russell's denial of moral, or practical, reason the example of E.D. Morel, whom Russell praises as "unforgettable" in his "quality of self-forgetfulness" in "exposing the abuses of the Belgian government in the Congo" (100). Here, Grant uses Russell's admiration as a way to catch him up in contradiction and cut a chink in the smug amorality of modern positivism. What but a sense of unprovisional obligation makes Morel's actions beautiful, and what but an answering beauty in Russell finds them so? Similarly admirable people

emerge in Grant's indictments of modernity in, for example, "The Minds of Men in the Atomic Age" (1955), "The Uses of Freedom" (1956). In Lament for A Nation, at the height of his tale of Diefenbaker's agon, Grant speaks his tribute of Howard Green, whose "actions during those months make him one of the rare politicians who literally deserve the prefix "'Right Honourable'" (28). The list goes on: those people who try to "incarnate meaning into the structures of the automated age" in "Value and Technology" (29); the youth who care enough about education to throw themselves into publishing "This Magazine is About Schools" in "The Great Society" (75); Abbie Hoffman, in "Revolution and Tradition," in whom Grant finds "the good more visible ... than in Julius Hoffman" (his prosecutor) (89); and, most notably, that "friend" dying "long before what he was fitted for could be accomplished" who helps Grant out of the extremity of his meditation on Nietzsche in Time as History by acting as a moment of living tradition. In passing on to Grant, or "surrendering to me his recollection of what had been surrendered to him ... a remembered reverence" that friend is the embodied refusal of the modern paradigm that has no place for reverence. The good denied by the modern paradigm is simply present; the task is to let the love of that good enter our thinking.

In bringing his "noble ... Germans" into the "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" discussion, Grant introduces into the imaginative space of his tale of force a lovely resistance and living affirmation. The fact that they live in the most terrible irony does not negate the loveliness they embody.

The consciousness of this image must be held in the mind as the reader watches how Grant continues to build disgust with our political own: "What is being done [in Vietnam] is being done by a society which is in some deep way our own" (74). Grant

is using disgust here to raise the assumptions of modernity to explicitness. This act, in a way, is an offer of freedom. To awaken from unthought assumptions is painful. Necessarily, the language that does that awakening is as "painfilled" as the language in Plato's tale of "the breaking of the chains, the climb out of the cave into the light of the sun" ("Justice and Technology" 244). But, for Grant, the consciousness that pits our love of good against revulsion at our political own is a real liberation. We now know where we are: "Vietnam is a glaring searchlight exposing the very structure of the imperial society. Even if hopefully the violence there should ease off, the searchlight has still been cast on the structure. We can never be as we were, because what has been done has been done" (75). For Grant, such knowledge, like the knowledge enjoined by the Delphic Oracle, "know thyself," is an enemy of tyranny. As he says in Time as History, "as the present situation is what it is in any case, it is better to know that situation for what it is, than to live in it without so knowing" (25).

This liberation to the truth and by the truth by no means resolves all difficulties. Grant goes on to 'tighten' our fate: The imperial violence of the Vietnam war

> is being done by a society which more than any other carries the destiny of the West, and Canadians belong inevitably to that destiny. Canada could only continue to be if we could hold some alternative social vision to that of the great republic. Yet such an alternative would have had to come out of the same stream--western culture. Indeed our failure to find such an alternative is bound up with the homogenising path of western history. (74)

To hear these words and 'not go under' as Lee would phrase it, it helps to keep in mind Grant's opening claim about "fate" and the "beneficence of nature," to keep in mind his

noble Germans, and to read the meaning of the revulsion his tale rouses. The truth about our presence is only bearable if the thought about beneficence is held and that disgust is understood. To keep alive the salutary awareness and the "rational alienation" (76) he has tried to arouse, Grant keeps on pressing against inadequate sources of hope. In suggesting that the efficacy of dissent is a liberal platitude, an illusion, Grant intensifies the sense of alienation; the reader is brought to the point of deepest dissent, a visceral response of knowing, as Simone Weil says "how not to respect the empire of might" (Intimations of Christianity Among the Greeks 53).

In intensifying the reader's sense of alienation, and admitting no easy escape from our fate, Grant arouses the most acute questioning. He notes that the alienated "inevitably find it more difficult to know how to live in this society than those who have expectations from radical activity" (77). What but our natural attunement to good makes that alienation so hard and that questioning at once inevitable and healing? "To question the dominant world religion [of technological progress] is indeed to invite an alienation far greater than the simply political." Again, for the liberal in us, it is galling to think we have been subsumed, body and mind, by an as-yet-unthought "religion." And it is deeply painful to be cut off from active citizenship. But the questioning that does the alienating is one of the few freedoms left. An affirmation that the need of good and the presence of it endure comes right up out of that questioning.

Another characteristic turn ends this tale of force and this ironic reminder of our essential and liberating attunement to good: "Nothing here written implies that the increasingly difficult job of preserving what is left of Canadian sovereignty is not worth the efforts of practical men" (77). There is an echo here of Grant's 1967 comment in "The Great Society" that "At all times and in all places it always matters what we do"

(75). This statement is itself perhaps informed by the understanding of "just practice" as an "openness to eternity" quoted earlier from English Speaking Justice. The fact that Canadians are not drafted into battle in Vietnam "is due to what little sovereignty we still possess" (78). Grant has offered a glimpse into what sovereignty and the preservation of any particular depends upon--an attunement to good; out of that attunement, which alienation itself reveals, comes Grant's final wrenching lament: "What is worth doing in the midst of this barren twilight is the incredibly difficult question." While this stance does indeed come close to despair, close to a sense of the utter absence of the good in time, I think the words, in the context of the whole essay, do open a small space for the rose-breath. The question Grant poses is grievously "difficult" but not impossible. The darkness that has fallen on the question of good is "twilight," not yet night. If the body can rethink its holiness, in hungry questioning and visceral dissent from the empire of might, then perhaps not everything is lost.

"The University Curriculum" shares with "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" the motif of subsuming force and the wily use of readers' liberal sentiments to leverage critical thought and dissent from technology. Again, Grant seeks to dissociate us from modernity by exposing its presuppositions and its consequences. His particular focus here is on a defense of philosophy and reverence against the tyranny of the technological redefinition of good as mastery. Just as the mediators of the good are reduced and contracted to a few "particulars" in "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," the humanities, as the locus of free thought about human purpose and "the meaning of things" (127), are here revealed as "a smaller and smaller island in a rising lake" (122). That element of contraction ultimately transforms itself into the image of "the tight circle." As Lee notes,

"The University Curriculum" is the place where this image first enters Grant's repertoire of repeated motifs and phrases.

In writing about the university curriculum, Grant directly confronts the modern paradigm of knowing and the structures of power it serves and is served by. In particular, he puts a lot of energy into undermining the "fact-value" distinction. He exposes this cornerstone of the paradigm as an unquestioned dogma that, in fact, is not self-evidently true, but is merely the product of a set of social circumstances; it actually belies its own neutrality in that it "assumes a particular account of moral judgement, and a particular account of objectivity" (119). In 'going after' this central distinction, which has done so much to separate us from the rest of the natural world, or to divide us from "our habitations" (133), Grant makes it possible for a sense and understanding of "the beneficence of nature" to re-emerge.

Two concepts of "the whole" are played off against one another in the course of Grant's meditation. The first is the "'totality of methods'" aimed at control that is summed up in the term "technology" (113). The second is the whole as the "cosmos" within which the human finds his place. Through the openness of questioning and wonder that are at the heart of philosophy and reverence, humans once thought they might "understand what was best for [themselves] and the species" within the cosmos, and so to conceive the "highest end" for each being (121). This second concept of the whole, then, suggests there is a good in things themselves and that this good is discoverable as part of the good that is the whole. This second concept of the whole constitutes what Grant calls elsewhere "a system of meaning" ("A Platitude" 138). That is, it locates the self within a good greater than the self, where purposes are discovered, not fabricated by the unrooted subject according to the whims of the moment.

Grant brings this second concept of the whole into the discussion at only a few crucial points to show what is imperilled by the totality of technology. Each allusion or direct reference to it makes another of those spaces "for the rose-breath to fill" noted in the discussion of "Canadian Fate and Imperialism." In each case, the reference or allusion is a remembering that reaffirms some aspect of human nature that the modern paradigm eliminates. At the same time, each brief reaffirmation brings home the cost of the technological paradigm. About five of these breaks in the monolith of modernity punctuate this twenty-page essay; the fifth constitutes the eloquent invocation to openness that is the culmination of Grant's meditation.

The punctuating pattern that results from these periodic references sets up a contrast that permeates the diction; language of 'wholeness,' health, real freedom, sustenance, the holiness of the body, resists the language of subsumption, control, objectification that is associated with the technological "totality" (which term itself implies a sum of separate bits rather than an organic continuum). In addition, the turns or qualifications that these references introduce into the flow of the essay enact their meaning; they keep thought open and resist the closure of technology's tight circle.

Playing along beneath the language of totality are suggestions of the exclusionary and disintegrating effects of the fact-value distinction. Grant's final invocation of the whole is at once a last effort to break out of the enclosing totality of the technological rubric, to retrieve what the fact-value distinction excludes, and to reintegrate what that distinction divides--namely, the wholeness of the "rational animal."

The first opening to a "whole" beyond the control of technology involves a reference to "wonder" (116). It is a welcome respite from the images of subsuming power that precede it. Up to this point in the discussion, Grant has demonstrated how

technology has folded in on itself as a self-serving power rather than a way "to serve the hope of man's perfecting" (113). The irony of this in-folding is told at the expense of "the dominant classes of the society" who set the curriculum, decide "what is important to be known" but earn their dominance through servitude: "Members of the dominant class make the decisions which embody the chief purposes of any society, but their very dominance is dependent on their service of those purposes" (113). The play of polyptoton (or traductio) on the root "dominant", followed by the swift antithesis between "dominant" and "dependent" suggests the instability of human power before the dynamism of technology. In the next breath, the term "dominant" transfers to technology itself: "The dynamism of technology has gradually become the dominant purpose in western civilization" (113) The grand irony in the treatment of the dominant classes is that technology levels them to sameness with everyone else; that sameness is underscored by the subsumption of antithetical pairs under one point of agreement: "[O]ne finds agreement between corporation executive and union member, farmer and suburbanite, cautious and radical politician, university administrator and civil servant, in that they all effectively subscribe to society's faith in mastery" (113).

This motif of sameness bares its underside when Grant names "the chief purpose of the curriculum in Canadian universities" (114). That purpose speaks what is implied in "mastery"; the universities are no more than factories, designed "to facilitate the production of personnel necessary to that type of society" (114). The shutting down of difference implied by that commitment to that purpose is conveyed by the repetition of the term "agreement", and its reformulation as "a vast consensus." Against this power of "monolithic agreement," the essential "Debates" that should be the soul of learning are silenced: there is no debate "about what it concerns a human being to know ... the

question about knowing cannot be raised seriously" (114).

On the way to the opening to "wonder," Grant continues to depict its opposite. He sustains the production or factory motif with reference to the "chief job of the universities" as "cultivation of those sciences which issue in the mastery of human and non-human nature" (115). The image of technology's subsuming power continues with the cancellation of the "older rubric of 'natural' and 'social'" sciences (115). The threat technology poses to human freedom (already suggested in its snatching of dominance and its press for "production") is made overt: "For example, biochemistry may be said to be concerned with the chemistry of life and therefore included under natural science. It is in fact concerned more and more with humanity--indeed with the very roots of humanness." Here the polyptoton slides from the generality of "humanity" to the more intimate level of "humanness"; the understanding of knowledge as power and technology as force is made to hit home. The inviolability of the body as one of Grant's chief concerns comes explicit. "What could be more a 'social science' than one which opens the possibility that sun and man will no longer generate man?... Indeed, the modern unity of the sciences is realized around the ideal of mastery" (116). While specialised knowledge proliferates, there is still a monism of purpose; even the term "proliferation" (with its implication of fecundity) proliferates (three times in three lines) only to hand itself over to the force that shuts out real variety: the "interdisciplinary unit which holds the studies together around the varying means of mastery" (116).

It is at this point that Grant makes his 'opening for the rose-breath'; he steps back briefly from this unchecked dynamism for a pause that suggests what 'objectivity' (as opposed to 'objectification') is really about: an effort to see things whole (though, as he says in "Art and Celine," it isn't so easy these days to do that 'steadily'). His comment

on wonder makes an effort to transcend the time-bound, history-making restlessness and relativity of technology to say something that might be enduringly true:

> It would, of course, be absurd to deny that the pure desire to know is present in many modern scientists. In my experience, such a desire exists in the community of natural scientists more than in any other group in our society. Also, I would assert on principle that such a desire belongs to man as man. (116)

In this brief passage, Grant makes a small effort to re-member our wholeness; awe is part of our nature, a rational and emotional response to the world. The sad thing, though, is this: "What I am saying is that in North American science the motive of wonder becomes ever more subsidiary to the motive of power" (116). The affirmation of what belongs to the loveliness of the whole--wonder and the pure desire to know as enduring parts of human nature--is given right alongside the power that threatens it; so the cost is told.

Grant gives his motif of human "production" another intense expression before turning to his critique of the theoretic construct that has most 'facilitated' the project of mastery, the fact-value distinction. The un-freedom of the science curriculum in the universities has already been suggested by the difficulty of preserving wonder in the face of pragmatic power. With a pile-up of imperatives, in a blast of anaphora, Grant lumps research and teaching, on multiple levels, into the one agenda:

> Physics and chemistry and biology departments must aid in the production of an enormous range of personnel reaching out from their own discipline towards other faculties of the university, particularly medicine and engineering. They must train experts to advance knowledge by research....

> They must produce enough specialists to maintain the tradition in the high schools. They must teach as much of their subject to engineers, doctors.... They must introduce their subject in general courses... (117).

This exhausting litany of imperatives is a natural preparation for the more immediate look at "the control of human nature" that "the technological society requires" (118). Grant shifts his focus from the physical sciences to the social sciences and locates the legitimation of this control in the fact-value distinction. The anxiety that the spectacle of psycho-cybernetics induces is again reflected in his rhetoric. The motifs of de-humanizing factory production and overwhelming proliferation re-emerge, intensified by the repetition, parallelism, isocolon that enact what the motifs image:

> A society in which there are more and more people living in closer and closer proximity will need enormous numbers of regulators to oil the works through their knowledge of intelligence testing, social structures, Oedipal fixations, deviant behaviour, learning theory etc. The old adage about the need for more science to meet the problems that science created will be illustrated in the proliferation of these techniques. (118)

The understanding of technology as a self-referential totality is deepened by this depiction of science as both rescuer and batterer of the human psyche.

The objectification of the human that this passage depicts is the ironic outcome of modern academics' application of the fact-value distinction. This distinction, says Grant, "was originally formulated by Weber as a means whereby the academy could hold itself free from the pressures of the powerful" (119). The effort to locate 'fact' in the realm of scientific knowledge and 'value' in the realm of human freedom and choice was originally an effort to protect intellectual and political pluralism. However, what has

happened, in Grant's view, is that we have wound up with a "monism of technological values" and the dismaying assertion that "reason cannot tell us anything about good and bad" (119). Facts are objective, values subjective: "[T]he very idea that good and bad are subjective preferences removes one brake from the triumphant chariot of technology." (119).

Grant exposes the fact-value distinction, as mentioned earlier, as something assumed as a given, taken on faith, and preached "as a doctrine beyond question." Ironically, it is far from neutral; it assumes

> that what man is doing when he is moral is choosing in his freedom to make the world according to his own values which are not derived from knowledge of the cosmos. To confine the language of objectivity to what is open to quantifiable experiment is to limit purpose to our own subjectivity. (120)

Built into our paradigm of knowledge, then, is the unquestioned assumption that freedom to make the world is good, that nothing shapes or limits that making but subjective preference, that objective facts say nothing about what is good. Beneath the critical irony that Grant applies to the modern paradigm here is that question that rises to overtness, later, in "Tradition and Revolution." It is that question that the threat of technology requires a conscious person to ask: "are men intended to be masters of the earth?" (94)

For Grant, some of the most deleterious effects of this theoretical construct of the fact-value distinction are evident in "the intellectual uncertainty" about the place and purpose of the humanities within the university curriculum. If that curriculum is built on the assumption that mastery of human and non-human nature is the most important purpose, then how can the study of history, philosophy, literature contribute to either

knowledge or its application?

It is at this point that Grant reaches back before modernity in his effort to remember the whole, and introduces another opening. The humanities today, he argues, grapple with uncertainty regarding their purpose and value, wondering "what of importance can be known other than that which is given in those sciences which proceed from quantifying and experimental methods" (120). Against the monolithic certainty of the natural and social sciences that support the project of control, and against the vacillating irrelevance of the humanities, Grant poses an image of true freedom, Socrates' understanding of "the purpose of education" as "the search through free insight for what constituted the best life for men in their cities" (120-121). This search, as mentioned earlier, puts the human in company with all other beings, and within the whole of time and eternity--the cosmos; all knowledge was directed towards meaning, the understanding of what is and what is the purpose of what is. The "liberal arts," says Grant, were seen as "a preparation for that philosophy" and were therefore part of the quest for human meaning.

Grant's review of the various modern formulations of the purpose of the humanities leads him to a discussion of their present character (in 1967) as "non-evaluative analysis." The cost of this self-definition prompts two little openings to the lovelier "whole," two further efforts to remember dimensions of humanness denied by the modern paradigm. While Grant praises the non-evaluative approach as having revived "the pure desire to know ... cognitive power and ... rigor" he also laments that such analysis "cuts men off from openness to certain questions" (125). Interestingly, the example he choses to illustrate this point brings us right back to the question of what is good to do to the body, right back to his continuing concern with the holiness of matter.

A study of Tolstoy and de Sade, under the rubric of non-evaluative analysis, would tell us "what two remarkable men have thought about the place of sexuality in human life ... [but] the most important question cannot be raised within the study: that is, whether de Sade or Tolstoi is nearer the truth about the proper place of sexuality." The price of this capitulation to the fact-value dogma, Grant argues, is this: humanities scholars "have gained their unassailable status of mastery and self-justification by surrendering their power to speak about questions of immediate and ultimate meaning--indeed by generally asserting that such questions only arise through confusion of mind" (126). Against this rather ignoble powerlessness, in which even the humanities have been subsumed into the technological monolith, Grant makes a small protest: "it can still be asked whether the impotence of mind towards meaning is man's necessary condition" (126). Against the utter closure of the impasse that Lee sees, where thought cannot exit technology's circle, there is this simple questioning that opens a small space for the rose-breath; it can still be asked.

Grant's closing meditation on the role of the humanities in the technological society drives towards another opening to what endures in human nature. The emptiness of the "totality" that technology is, its perverse imitation of the wholeness of community, is caught in Grant's images of its excluding power:

> To repeat, the dominant ethos in the society is provided by an autonomous technology. But the space programme, necessary imperial wars and the struggle for recognition in the interlocking corporations can provide purpose only for a small minority. Purpose for the majority will be found in the subsidiary ethos of the fun culture. It will meet the needs of those who live in affluence but are removed from any directing of the society.

(126).

To the liberal in his readers, Grant's small array of choices for human living will have an alienating effect. His next set of images moves the alienation closer to the flesh:

> One is tempted to state that the North American motto is: 'orgasm at home and napalm abroad,' but in the nervous mobile society, people have only so much capacity for orgasm, and the flickering messages of the performing arts will fill the interstices.... The public purpose of art will not be to lead men to the meaning of things, but to titivate, cajole and shock them into fitting into a world in which the question of meaning is not relevant. (126-127)

The motif of tyranny, which turns against both the human mind and the human body, is suggested here in the image of humans manipulated into fitting a meaningless world through the jangling and scrambling of their nerve ends. It is a sad fall from the image of the humanities assisting the "search for free insight" to the image of their degeneration that Grant now offers: "The humanities in the universities will become handmaidens in this task. This will not mean that they will be weak in numbers or prestige or resources because their task will be great" (127).

The insult to the body and the mind that Grant registers here is swiftly followed by the injury dealt to the human sense of worth by the science that teaches "us that we are accidental inhabitants of a negligible planet in the endless spaces" (127). Ironically, the injury of being reduced to accident and negligibility itself seems to call forth the very beneficence of nature that the modern account denies. It prepares the opening that follows:

> If truth leads to meaninglessness, then men in their thirst for meaning turn

> to art. To hope to find in the products of the imagination that meaning which has been cast out of the intellect may, in the light of Socrates, be known to be a fruitless quest. Nevertheless, it is a thirst which is the enemy of tyranny (127).

For Grant, what is affirmed in this turning to art, is that humans cannot do without meaning, or some account of the self as held within a whole with a purpose beyond the self. The thirst that reveals the modern account as inadequate may not be easily translatable into a generally-held proposition, but it is a movement of the rational animal outside the circle of technology.

The last segment of "The University Curriculum" formulates the problem that leads Lee to his impasse thesis: the disabling of critique by the modern paradigm. Grant's chief means of shedding light on the structure of technological thinking in this section is the ironic goading of liberal sensibilities. "If we are to live in the modern university as free men," he writes, "we must make judgements about the essence of the university--its curriculum" (127) These judgements must be "based on what we think human life to be, what activities serve human fulfilment, and what place higher education should play in encouraging the realisation of these activities" (128). Having said that, he proceeds to deconstruct the notion that the fact-value distinction has set us free from "'dogmatic' and 'a priori' ideas of excellence--like those "two great accounts of human excellence" found in the lives of Socrates and Christ. To what Grant perhaps hopes is the chagrin of the liberal, it seems that our freedom to create "Purpose and value ... in an essentially purposeless world" is a sham. The liberal ideal of a pluralist society is undermined by liberalism itself. The freedom to make the world has unleashed the making that is technology. Within the totality of technology, that making is the single

ethic: "the pursuit of technological efficiency is the chief purpose for which the community exists" (129). The pluralism liberalism sought becomes "a monolithic certainty" (128). In the same vein, whereas liberal education was to have achieved a freeing "scepticism about the highest human purposes ... in fact there is no scepticism in the public realm about what is important to do" (129). Progressive hopes gave rise to mastery for its own sake. Even the efforts to release people from the oppression of traditional distortions of sexuality, has, with technology, turned the "sexual humanism" of Freud into a greater oppression. Modern psychology, responding to the problems technology has caused, has unleashed the techniques and produced the "regulators" for the "control of human nature on a grand scale" through "behaviourism" (131).

It is within the context of Grant's exposure of the self-undercutting nature of liberalism that the image of the "tight circle" arises. That circle reveals the power of the technological totality to disable critique of itself, even knowledge of itself. In the particular instance, what is disabled is critique of the curriculum. However, Grant has spent considerable energy showing how the unquestioned standards that our thinking revolves within are actually questionable. The results of the liberal notion that value is a fabrication quite unattached to nature have been exposed. The freedom that was to have come from the fact-value distinction has been shown to be illusory. That in itself is a freeing discovery that might re-enable critique.

While Grant suggests no "facile exit" from "the tight circle of modern fate" (130), his meditation comes upon the opening that keeps that circle from becoming absolute: the human need for a meaning other than mastery. The control that denies that things are good in themselves simply does not feed human nature. "The sheer aridity of the public world" will drive people to seek "excellence"--by which Grant seems to mean that

perfection of purpose which transcends the instrumental, the immanent, the controllable and utterly knowable. Grant has faith that the need of a good beyond our making is so strong in humans that people will seek the "virtues [which] have been publicly lost...in the heat of life where many sparrows fall. Much suffering will be incurred by those who with noble intent follow false trails. Who is to recount how and when and where private anguish and public catastrophe may lead men to renew their vision of excellence?" Here again, as ever, the passion of Grant's thought gives his writing a rhetorical, or artistic, intensity, as images proliferate, colloquial word order is inverted, and rhythms enter by way of the rhetorical schema.

Why will it take "private anguish and public catastrophe" to renew the "vision of excellence"? The comment recalls Strauss' comment on the beneficence of nature, quoted by Grant in "Tyranny and Wisdom." The Greeks were so held by the beauty and eternality of an order they could only begin to perceive that the suggestion that man might have the power to radically change this order through intervention, seemed irrational; that order would simply resist efforts to change it: "'The opinion that there occur periodic cataclysms in fact took care of any apprehension regarding an excessive development of technology or regarding the danger that man's interventions might become his masters and his destroyers. Viewed in this light, the natural cataclysms appear as a manifestation of the beneficence of nature'" (102). That the order of the whole is good, that it intimates a way of being for the human that protects human wholeness and freedom, is what natural disasters--what Grant calls "monsters" in "Knowing and Making"--signify. To use an example Grant was not aware of in 1968, if our use of fossil fuels burns a hole in the ozone layer and the health of the earth is impaired as a result, then, within this understanding, that impairment is the 'goodness'

or unmanipulability or sacredness of the whole speaking to us. If modernity takes excellence as mastery over nature, then to break out of that conception will, for many, take an encounter with what resists mastery, with what breaks up that paradigm of thinking, being, feeling, doing. Grant does not pretend that that breaking up, on a personal or societal level, will be easy.

Grant has described the university curriculum as a tight circle of unexamined--and in some cases unsupportable--assumptions. While these assumptions remain unexamined, the difficulty of judging the curriculum remains. But, as Lampert argues, the inadequacy of the modern indicts the modern. The hunger that Grant believes many will feel if they encounter that inadequacy may stir a different questioning throughout the curriculum:

> In the realm of the academic, one of the essential therapies will be the reliving of buried memories of what the greatest, whether western or eastern, have known of human excellence. This rediscovery of the past will not be accomplished by those who view it as the task simply of technical scholarship, unrelated to what we are now; but by those who in many aspects of their lives, political, sexual, religious, etc., seek in the past the truth which they have here found wanting. (132)

Grant is not saying that such study will simply provide formulations different from the modern. It is the act of questioning, of encountering what can be felt but cannot be accounted for within the modern paradigm that begins the recovery of the whole. In fact, he goes on,

> All sorts and conditions of students will find in a multitude of subjects means to transcend the aridity of the technological traditions. These means may be realized most openly and nobly by those who spend their lives in

> the most modern studies. Philosophy may be regained by those immersed in understanding the immediacies of the public world; reverence rediscovered in psychiatric researches. (132)

This is an expression of faith in the primacy of good and in the human attunement to it; what is other than the modern can be rediscovered through immersion in the modern. Reverence can be touched right through all the constructs that deny it.

In the two publications of this essay before Lee edited it for Technology and Empire, the above passage was followed by this closing statement:

> It is possible, nevertheless, to assert one criterion by which all the manifold attempts at therapy may be judged. Do they help men to find that nature is good? Such a criterion may seem to be so universal as to provide no specifications. Yet this is the fact that modernity has made clear by its denial. Human excellence can be rediscovered only by those who are able, even in the midst of the present, and 'en plein conscience de cause,' somehow to assert the beneficence [sic] of nature. (57)

As I commented in the Introduction to this study, Lee found Grant leaping over necessary stages of argument before he could use that final phrase. We don't know what tussle Lee's reading might have caused; but the phrase, "the beneficence of nature", did go--underground. It was there already by implication in Grant's mention of "private anguish and public catastrophe." It is there in the passage Grant adds to the essay, one of his most eloquent, in the language that awakens the thinking of the body. The writing here can rouse a visceral and rational need for a good that enfolds us and that is not the product of restless will:

> Do they [all the potential therapies] mitigate the division which comes

> forth from the modern vision? Do they help to overcome the way that we envision ourselves as 'creative' freedom and all else as objects either useful, threatening, or indifferent? In its political context that division has led us, in our very drive to universalise freedom, to build the acme of the objective society which increasingly stifles the spontaneity of those it was built to free. (132-133)

The price of that "division" of ourselves from the rest of the physical world, in the subject-object/fact-value paradigm is not freedom, but the stifling of spontaneity, of the natural joy that arises out of physical and spiritual participation in a larger good. Here, again, language raised to the level of art imitates thought. The polyptoton or traductio, a device frequent in Grant's writing, works in this context to draw "division" and "envision" out of "vision"; we take the consequences (division) of our thinking (vision) right on the flesh. The idea of "division" is enacted in the antithesis between "'creative' freedom" and "objects either useful, threatening, or indifferent." In the ordering of those adjectives, too, objects are pushed successively further from us, from use to threat to indifference. While "freedom" and "free," and "build" and "built" exchange both sounds and energies and add force to the word "drive," the dentals, fricatives, and plosives give way to, or collapse into the sibilants in "society," "increasingly," "stifles," "spontaneity." Both the sound and the thought of these lines imply the infolding of the technological totality. The drive to mastery, which is meant to seem such a celebration of energy, is depicted here as the death of natural joy. Technology, as a totality, is not whole; its infolding and self-reference are exclusionary and defeating. With spontaneity stifled, a whole dimension of humanness is potentially cut off.

The submerged phrase, "the beneficence of nature," gains cogency as the passage

continues. The human's need for place, for connection, for belonging within the cosmos is evoked. The price of modern thinking takes its toll on the physical and spiritual wholeness that a human is:

> The division widens so that it has almost killed what little remains of those mediators--common sense, reverence, communities and art (perhaps even finally sexuality)--which are the means for us to cross the division separating ourselves and our habitations. At any time or place it is a strange destiny to be a 'rational animal'--and indeed strange that there should be such--but the loss of these mediators makes that strangeness almost unbearable by tearing apart that which we are--rational animals. (133)

Like "anguish" and "catastrophe" this unbearable tearing apart is an ironic affirmation of the beneficence of the whole. Modernity's ethic of mastery, its terrible reductive conclusiveness about nature as neutral stuff, and its dogma of the fact-value division work against "common sense." As Lee both says and demonstrates, throughout his writing, "the world which our minds now are equipped to process is a world we can barely live in" ("Grant's Impasse" 24). Common sense tells us there is good and evil; common sense gives an immediate apprehension, to most, that other beings are inviolable, but the paradigm that decides what is knowable runs counter to that common sense. What we think we know and what our body knows we know are in conflict. Similarly, the desacralized view of nature undermines the understanding of reverence and takes away the unprovisional quality of obligation to otherness. The legitimation of mastery and greed works against community; the notion that the only truth is scientific truth relegates art to the status of mere subjective musing, disconnected with the world

of fact, and therefore not a means of knowing. If there is no sacredness in the other, then even sexuality as a mediator between reason and body is broken down; sex is then the mechanics of the body only, instead of the ecstasy of the whole rational animal that puts us in the presence of the unrepresentable purposiveness of the other.

Grant does not propose, with Strauss, that we simply try to reproduce the thinking of the ancients about the nature of humans and the cosmos. As he says elsewhere, new knowledge and new understandings have been discovered and cannot be negated. "Socrates' prayer for the unity of the inward and the outward was spoken in an antique world, the context of which it could not be our historical business to recreate" (133). Nevertheless, while we cannot change the "context" of our living, there is an understanding, for Grant, that can pierce through the mass of modern thinking and change the way we inhabit the context. In fact, the very denial of that understanding by the modern paradigm seems to invite that piercing. Grant's final turn, in this essay, makes an opening for a sense of the goodness of the whole:

> Yet the fact begins to appear through the modernity which has denied it: human excellence cannot be appropriated by those who think of it as sustained simply in the human will, but only by those who have glimpsed that it is sustained by all that is. Although that sustainment cannot be adequately thought by us because of the fragmentation and complexity of our historical inheritance, this is still no reason not to open ourselves to all those occasions in which the reality of that sustaining makes itself present to us. (133)

Here Grant is not making that direct call to thought that I traced through many of his other pieces. The difficulty of thinking the good is certainly named, but the emphasis is

on what is necessary to thought about the whole--openness and attention to what our nature, even in the pain of its tearing, is saying to us. In these last few lines, the "tight circle" is cracked and a little light is admitted. Grant reclaims the wholeness of the word "fact," letting it include both thought and feeling. "All that is," the whole that does not shut down thought and mechanize feeling the way the technological totality does, is 'glimpsed,' admitted, made "present" and left there to 'sustain' those hungry enough to "open" themselves to it.

While this reading of "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" and "The University Curriculum" suggests that Grant's art works subtly to bring us home, out of an alien "own" back to what Lee calls so beautifully "heart residence" (*Nightwatch* 203), Lee finds Grant articulating our rational exile from good. The extremity of that exile is expressed, for Lee, in Grant's intense seven-page piece, "A Platitude."

In "Grant's Impasse" Lee claims that in "A Platitude" Grant "tries, in a scarcely imaginable gesture, to break directly out of the impasse, to think a more-than-liberal reality which he can identify as the thing he's deprived of--and discovers that he has skidded into white space, unthinkability, ground zero" (27). From where we know Lee's essay is headed--into a search to speak the "ineffable" without recourse to "rational language"--it is clear that Lee is making Grant his prophet of silence. Unable to name what Lee calls "the unconditionally claiming realities which modern thought has ruled inadmissible" Grant "opens himself ... to ... a mode of silence which might mediate (in his beautiful phrase) 'intimations of deprival'.... It is this ... silence from which he speaks in 'A Platitude' and which he recommends in fear and trembling" (29, 30). What does Lee hear Grant speaking, out of that silence? Only, it seems, the fact and name of deprival:

> But what are these 'intimations of deprival?' It is in keeping with Grant's penchant for pure generic analysis, during the several years in which he diagnosed the impasse definitively, that 'A Platitude' doesn't contain a single example.... In Grant's writing in the late sixties, the intimations of deprival are fitful at best. The first reality for the philosophic mind is the muteness of reason in a structurally nihilist civilisation (30, 34).

Lee does find an example of what he understands "intimations of deprival" to be in a passage from "In Defense of North America." In that passage, Grant speaks of encountering in Europe a way of living that was still shaped by the commitment to a reality beyond the instrumental and the self-servingly practical, to obligations and joys beyond calculation. But is that the kind of "intimations" Grant speaks of in "A Platitude"? Interestingly, Lee the prestidigitator is still at work here. He is looking for <u>what</u> it is we are deprived of; that is, he is looking for what Grant calls "intimations of good"--what the experience of deprival opens one to. Here is what Grant says: "Any intimations of authentic deprival are precious, because they are the ways through which intimations of good, unthinkable in the public terms, may yet appear to us" (141). The intimations of deprival Grant speaks of in "A Platitude" are those notes of "anguish" he hears around him. These expressions are visceral and rational reactions to the inadequacy and "aridity" of the age, overtly named in "The University Curriculum." It is the fact of those intimations that Grant finds reassuring. The fact that people experience those intimations of deprival witnesses to the beneficence of nature, and human attunement to good.

It has to be asked, does Grant skid "into white space, unthinkability, ground zero"? Does he break the silence only to name "deprival"? Again, I think there is more

happening in "A Platitude" than this enactment of the impossibility of naming certain "unconditionally claiming realities." To find that 'more' it is necessary to retrieve the passages Lee suppresses and to speculate a little differently on why Grant writes what he does the way he does in this intense and beautiful seven-page piece.

Lee's excited reading of "A Platitude" is an act of high-energy fusion that burns off subtleties. Out of Grant's seven pages, he strings together, in his own essay, almost two pages of quotations, all of them taken from the first four pages of "A Platitude," before the dramatic 'turn' in Grant's meditation occurs.

To read "A Platitude" wholly, it seems necessary to accept it as a meditation, a spiritual questing and questioning, an opening of thought and receptivity rather than a closure by pronouncement. Questions abound; qualifiers proliferate; the subjunctive mood destabilizes gloomy indicatives and invites expressions of faith in which doubt necessarily still trembles. So much of what Grant says here is prefaced by "It may be said" or "That may be the case" or "Be that as it may."

The meditation itself centres on language, as Grant follows the demise of language of the good and then makes his questioning turn. In that turn he hears language re-membering itself. This re-membering turn is precipitated by his attention to the notes of anguish in the protests of contemporary freedom-fighters; he hears those notes breaking the language of the modern. In his closing three pages, to which Lee does not refer, Grant questions his way towards the illumination that deprival invites.

The essays preceding "A Platitude" in Technology and Empire move the source of technological violence closer and closer to the centre of our being. At that centre Grant also locates the source of greatest refusal, the bit of soul that cannot be fed by the technological account of reality. As technology and what ultimately resists it collide, the

war in "our substance" threatens to tear us apart as rational animals. In "A Platitude", Grant starts at this centre: "We can hold in our minds the enormous benefits of technological society, but we cannot so easily hold the ways it may have deprived us, because technique is ourselves." Between the opening and closing indicatives, "can hold," "is," come the qualifier "cannot so easily" and the subjunctive "may have." Technology brings certainty; technology's 'other' remains tentative. Still, Grant does not say we absolutely "cannot" think what we are deprived of; we "cannot so easily" (137) do that. His qualifier opens space for the rose-breath. Now, Lee himself prefaces his quotation of this opening line with a qualified statement: "we find we can no longer name--not in the world of public discourse, predictably enough, but scarcely even to ourselves--the thing we lack" (28). But he does not hold on to these qualifying notes as his argument proceeds, nor does he ask how Grant's qualifiers operate.

In his reflection on the "disintegration of those systems of meaning, given in myth, philosophy and revelation ...[which] mitigated both our freedom and the indifference of the world" (137), Grant begins to enact the struggle between the language of the modern and the language of the good. From the very start, he strives to earn his right to say the word "deprival." In saying that the antithetical elements, "freedom" and "indifference," need mitigation, he recalls the "mediators" of "The University Curriculum" which help make the world, not indifferent, but a habitation. Exile is intimated; the effort to rouse disaffection with the modern continues. Our account of ourselves "as creative freedom, making ourselves, and conquering the chances of an indifferent world" (137) makes it "difficult to think whether we are deprived of anything essential to our happiness." The suggestion is, if we have freedom, then we ought to have happiness. Yet the language begins to imply that something indeed has been lost and

happiness is not complete. Grant releases into his tentative phrasing words like "stripped" "indifferent world" "analysed to disintegration" to suggest loss, alienation. At the same time, he contrasts these with others like "highest purposes" "meaning" and "mitigate". (To be sure, a lot of contemporary thought registers revulsion at the notion of highest purpose and meaning--all in the interests of preserving freedom, and often without explaining why freedom is precious.)

Grant concedes that "It may be said that to use the language of deprival is to prejudice the issue" and that "What we lost ["illusions, horizons, superstitions, taboos"] may have been bad for men" (137-138). But his concession is a tactic in the struggle: "But this does not change the fact that something has been lost." He entertains the argument that "the older systems of meanings [sic] have simply been replaced by a new one" but he gathers energy for his struggle from that concession. Again, against the lovely "enchantment of our souls by myth" we get the less congenial language of will: "the building of the society," "the overcoming of chance," "systematic interference" (138). But, in the spirit of wonder, Grant also generously concedes that this interference "was undertaken partly in the name of that charity which was held as the height in one of those ancient systems of meaning." He argues then that the modern spirit of conquest folds in on itself in an effort to make 'meaning' out of itself, and fails in that attempt. The "celebration of the accomplishments in space is not so much directed to the value of what has actually been done, but rather to the way this serves as verification of the continuing meaning in the modern drive to the future" (138). This drive to express unlimited freedom "is not in itself a system of meaning" in that, so the implication goes, it is not held within any sense of unchanging purpose. "Even in its realisation, people would still be left with a question, unanswerable in its own terms: how do we know what

is worth doing with our freedom ... freedom for what purposes?" (138). When freedom is its own end, it can give no content to that end. Another concession is followed by another bid for the right to say "deprival": "Such may indeed be the true account of the human situation: an unlimited freedom to make the world as we want in a universe indifferent to what purposes we choose. But if our situation is such, then we do not have a system of meaning" (138).

This skirmish precipitates an eloquent note of near-defeat, which extends the image of "disintegration":

> All coherent languages beyond those which serve the drive to unlimited freedom through technique have been broken up in the coming to be of what we are. Therefore it is impossible to articulate publicly any suggestion of loss, and perhaps even more frightening, almost impossible to articulate it to ourselves. We have been left with no words which cleave together and summon out of uncertainty the good of which we may sense the dispossession. (139) (emphases mine)

It is this passage, more than any other, that Lee attends to as he formulates his notion of the impasse, the impossibility of thinking and articulating a dimension of reality that we nevertheless sense. Impossibility certainly weighs, but Grant does make a distinction between the public and private dilemma, and there is that qualifier "almost" before the private impossibility. Lee acknowledges both the distinction and the qualification when he states, early in "Grant's Impasse", that "within the language of the polis ... the eternal was all but mute" (23). But the conclusion he reaches is absolute; distinctions and qualifiers are laid aside: the impasse results in "muteness of mind," and reason "checkmated" and "lobotomized."

The image of the breaking up of the language of good by the dynamism of technology is intensified by other dimensions of Grant's rhetorical art. Diction and schema embody the thought:

> The drive to the planetary technical future is in any case inevitable; but those who would try to divert, to limit, or even simply to stand in fear before some of its applications find themselves defenceless, because of the disappearance of any speech by which the continual changes involved in that drive could ever be thought as deprivals. (139)

The onomatopoeia of "drive," with its energetic dental and sharp long 'i' contrasts sharply with the softer sibilants of the preceding words: "summon out of uncertainty the good of which we may sense the dispossession." "Drive" sets this long compound-complex sentence in motion. To risk being fanciful, it could be said that the semicolon before "but" can't hold off what is "inevitable"; the efforts to stop this drive, imitated in the short infinitives "to divert," "to limit" with their sound-stopping "t"s, fails. The last effort, "to simply stand in fear," weakens as it is swept into a longer syntactical unit. The comma after "defenceless" proves a negligible barrier for the power of the hard consonants and consonant blends of "disappearance," "continual changes," "drive," "could," "deprivals." The infolding and self-referentiality of the technological totality is again suggested by Grant's play of polyptoton on "development"/"develop," by the self-reflective repetition in parallel structure of "exercise of freedom," the repetition of "meaning" and by the repetition of "only," as it increases its charge from adjectival to adverbial use.

In facing all that militates against 'thinking' deprival, Grant nevertheless holds on to the hope expressed in the word "sense." After the passion of the paragraph studied

above, his prose calms a bit as he defines what he means by deprival by identifying what it is not--not economic deprival, not "those accidental deprivals" specific to "our own psychic and social histories," not the absolute "deprivation" of "torture or pain or ... madness" (139). Rather, what he listens for are essential deprivals, related to the nature of things, "which suggest the loss of some good which is necessary to man as man" (140).

From the sense or intimation of deprival, Grant moves to the effort to think that deprival. He notes that in our time the healing of "the darkness of the rational animal" will need to be done right in and through the structures of present thought:

> men who desire to think must include in their thinking those modern therapies which arose outside any connection with what was once called philosophy. This inclusion of what might be health-giving in psychoanalysis and sociology will be necessary, even within the knowledge that these therapies are going to be used unbridledly as servants of the modern belief that socially useful patterns of behaviour should be inculcated by force. (139-140)

Just as Grant speculates in "The University Curriculum" that those hungry for what the modern world excludes will rediscover "reverence ... in psychiatric researches," here he suggests that clarity about personal deprivals will help clarify essential deprival. That thinking can rise right up through the modern: "To listen for the intimations of deprival requires attempting a distinction between our individual history and any account which might be possible of what belongs to man as man" (140).

The very speaking of that last, antique phrase, brings about another turn. From the near-defeat related to the breaking up of all coherent languages, to the sensing of

deprival, to the possibility of thinking deprival, the meditation swings back to the sense of disintegration: "Yet even as one says this, the words fade. The language of what belongs to man as man has long since disintegrated" (140). Grant then rehearses a bitter litany of modern formulations, things we have been "told" to think, about the creating of the self in history, the relativity of any account of human excellence, the inability to "transcend such historical perspectives [except] in the quantifiable" (140). The modern dismissal of this way of understanding the world is recounted, complete with the scorn that attends that dismissal:

> Aren't such excellences just a crude way of talking about values, pretending that they have some status in the nature of things beyond our choosing? We are back where we began: all languages of good except the language of the drive to freedom have disintegrated, so it is just to pass some antique wind to speak of goods that belong to man as man. (140-141)

It is this movement that leads Lee to describe the encounter with the "second tightening of the impasse" so dramatically, in his image of the thinker trying to "break directly out of the impasse, to think a more-than-liberal reality which he can identify as the thing he's deprived of" and skidding "into white space, unthinkability, ground zero" (27).

Grant concedes that the assumptions that shape modern thinking and modern language admit no thought of "what belongs to man as man." However, he does not pronounce the struggle between the language of the modern and the language of the good completed. He holds onto the very real experience of deprival, right through another wavering: "Yet the answer is also the same: if we cannot so speak, then we can either only celebrate or stand in silence before that drive. Only in listening for the intimations

of deprival can we live critically in the dynamo." Then comes the wavering before the certainties of the modern:

> Whether there are intimations of essential deprivals which are beyond elimination by the calculations of the present spirit is just what must remain ambiguous for us.... When we sense their arising, at the same time we doubt that which we sense. (141)

Again, this division in the self between feeling and thought is one of the greatest costs of the modern paradigm, in Grant's view. But it is also the condition for a reaffirmation of what is not accounted for in that paradigm.

It is at this point in the meditation that the major turn occurs in the struggle between the language of the modern and the language of the good. Again, what enters the thought is an image of some human exemplar in whom the presence of good or the hunger for good comes clear:

> But even among some of those who use the language of sheer freedom as protest, there seems to be heard something different than the words allow. Because they have been taught no language but the modern, they use it not only to insist that the promises of the modern be fulfilled, but also to express their anguish at its denials. (141)

The language of the modern is something we must be "taught"; the sense of and need for what it denies arise naturally. In spite of all his acknowledgement that the modern does disallow any talk of "what belongs to man as man," Grant readmits that inadmissible thought; he hears it being thought in those cries of anguish that quite transcend the modern and judge it as inadequate.

Faith in the ineradicable attunement of the human to good is then allowed

expression:

> Any intimations of authentic deprival are precious, because they are the ways through which intimations of good, unthinkable in the public terms, may yet appear to us. The affirmation stands: how can we think deprivation unless the good which we lack is somehow remembered? (141)

In Grant, remembering is not a dispassionate act, not simply an intellectual act. In "The University Curriculum" and in Time as History, remembering is a matter of making present to the whole feeling, thinking, loving being a truth that is not part of the theoretical apparatus of the operative paradigm. Remembering in that sense is a mode of participation in what is not bound to time. The image Grant evokes to extend this thought is significant: "To reverse the platitude, we are never more sure that air is good for animals than when we are gasping for breath" (141). The strangulation of the language of good is not complete; in the gasping the good is spoken.

The struggle on the side of the language of good gains some strength. Grant makes overt his sense that the technological redefinition of good is both a threat and a grace; the structure of good remains in the very thought that denies the possibility of any given goodness, prior to subjective preference:

> I have never found any who, in my understanding of them, have been able, through the length and breadth of their thought, to make the language of good secondary to freedom. It is for this reason that men find it difficult to take despair as the final stance in most circumstances. (141)

Those who say freedom is good, the highest good, are, for Grant, invoking something intransgressible. Mind still works within an intuition of sacredness.

But Grant does not pretend that all answers have been given; a challenge for

thinking remains:

> if we make the affirmation that the language of good is inescapable under most circumstances, do we not have to think its content? The language of good is not then a dead language, but one that must, even in its present disintegration, be re-collected, even as we publicly let our freedom become ever more increasingly the pure will to will. (141-142).

Lee's final comments in "Grant's Impasse" suggest he is searching for that recuperation of language: "Can we say anything coherent about the experience of ineffability--that is, of encountering the world moment to moment as valuative, while lacking any rational language in which to articulate such experience?" (35) But Lee makes no mention of Grant's call to reanimate the language of good. His account of Grant, in "Grant's Impasse" as in "Cadence, Country, Silence" leaves Grant in the silence. He decides that reason has been "checkmated"; what is left to us is the possibility of a use of language that is beyond the rational--cadential speaking.

Grant's reflections on what will aid the "re-collection" of the language of the good are reflections on the beneficence of nature. Echoing "Tyranny and Wisdom" and "The University Curriculum" Grant claims: "We know that this re-collection will take place in a world where only catastrophe can slow the unfolding of the potentialities of technique" (142). That is, we will hit limits; for Grant, those limits are indestructible good. With artful indirection, Grant approaches thought of the good, eschewing easy certainty, using doubt as an opening to affirmation. That good is also indefinable; the human mind cannot wrap certainty around it. Grant's aporia burgeons, and is reflected in the anaphora on versions of "we cannot know":

> ...[W]e cannot know what these particular possibilities [of technological

> mastery] tell us about the potential in the human and the non-human. We do not know how unlimited are the potentialities of our drive to create ourselves and the world as we want it. (142)

He then evokes the very limit he tries to raise to consciousness in all his writing--the limit in human nature that, once felt, points up the crack in the modern account of ourselves as limitless freedom made to manipulate nature as indifferent, neutral stuff:

> ...[H]ow far will the race be able to carry the divided state which characterises individuals in modernity: the plush patina of hectic subjectivity lived out in the iron maiden of an objectified world inhabited by increasingly objectified beings. When we are uncertain whether anything can mediate that division, how can we predict what men will do when the majority lives more in that division? (142)

The almost pauseless rush of these long sentences enacts the "hectic" nature of this living and the restless discomfort of the divided state. That state itself is ironically depicted as a tyranny of meaningless freedom, an "iron maiden" which actually encloses subjectivity. Grant's use of this medieval torture-machine as an image for technology could be seen as arising out of his own struggle with "gynarchy" (140)--a struggle he identifies as one of the personal deprivals he must clarify on the way to knowledge about essential deprivals. On the other hand, it could be seen as powerfully apt: the woman-shaped box filled with spikes in which the tortured were enclosed captures well the capacity of technology to turn even our bodies into a hell for others.

The more the world and its beings are "objectified" the more the supposed freedom of subjectivity is threatened. The opening out of this enclosing totality is the opening afforded by that piece of the soul that resists domination by the "empire of

might":

> Is there some force in man which will rage against such division: rage not only against a subjectivity which creates itself, but also against our own lives being so much at the disposal of the powerful objectifications of other freedoms? (142)

The battle between the language of the good and the language of the modern moves to the most intimate level of the human; the language of the good is contained in that "rage."

Grant then turns his questioning to the limits in non-human nature. The passion of his thought is caught in the altered syntax. The passage begins with an instance of anastrophe--"Neither can we know what this unfolding potentiality tells us of the non-human" (emphasis mine)--and continues with a kind of disrupted, hard-to-manage rhythm, that both imitates the unknowing the words express and suggests the resistance of matter to malleability:

> As we cannot know to what extent the non-human can in practice be made malleable to our will, therefore we also do not know what this undetermined degree of malleability will tell us of what the non-human is. Is the non-human simply stuff at our disposal, or will it begin to make its appearance to us as an order the purposes of which somehow resist our malleabilizings? Are there already signs of revolts in nature? (142)

These lines simultaneously bear the expression of authentic non-knowing and carry suggested affirmations. In the latter respect, they function almost as rhetorical questions. Grant's own "intimations of deprival" and his sense that those intimations are being expressed in the notes of "anguish" in others suggest that he would answer 'yes' to his

questions. They certainly suggest a 'yes' to the question about the "force in man which will rage against" the division our paradigm wreaks in the rational animal. By extension, if we hit a limit in the human that resists malleabilizing, it is likely that we are hitting similar limits in non-human nature.

Nevertheless, the uncertainty about the extent of malleability lends force to the modern account of matter as neutral stuff; there is no fully-thought refutation of that account. However, this uncertainty is balanced by another kind, which does work against the modern account and continues the recollection of the language of the good: "has anyone been able to show us conclusively throughout a comprehensive account of both the human and non-human things, that we must discard the idea of a presence above which potentiality cannot be exalted?" (142-143) The modern account of matter has shown it to be malleable, but the modern account of knowing has itself not adequately refuted that "presence"--indestructible good. This counterbalancing "situation of uncertainty" serves as a further opening to what is not accounted for in the language of the modern:

> In such a situation of uncertainty, it would be lacking in courage to turn one's face to the wall, even if one can find no fulfilment in working for or celebrating the dynamo. Equally it would be immoderate and uncourageous and perhaps unwise to live in the midst of our present drive, merely working in it and celebrating it, and not also listening or watching or simply waiting for intimations of deprival which might lead us to see the beautiful, as the image, in the world, of good. (143)

Any stirring of the sense of the sheer inadequacy of the modern is presented as a gift. That sense is a hunger, a need Grant believes is essential to human nature, and that

hunger can clear the sight. Deprival suggests a need for good; that need suggests there is more in the human beyond the definition "technique is ourselves." Grant's meditation seems to have wrested from the language of the modern at least a possibility, "a might" that beauty may speak to us in the language of the good.

In casting Grant as his prophet of silence, Lee pays him a tribute; the attentiveness that forms the core of his poetics requires a salutary silence, a relinquishment of restless will, a stilling of reason defined as calculation. In his reading, it is Grant who identifies that necessary stilling; in that identification, Lee finds a marker on his path to the holy. For Grant, however, the silence of attention and the tempering of self-will belong, finally, to reason known in its wholeness as including the receptivity of understanding and the illumination of love. It is out of that silence that he speaks his call to thought and his eloquent stirring of human hunger for the good. Focussed on the great difficulty laid on any thought about good in our era, Lee says nothing about that stirring, in Grant's art, or in himself as a reader. Nevertheless, that stirred hunger for reverence is at the heart of his poetics and his poems.

Chapter Four

Dennis Lee on the Track of the Holy: Poetics

To say that Dennis Lee's career as a writer tells one long tale of a man on the track of the holy is only to say the obvious. What is a little less obvious is the way in which he thinks his way through George Grant in the course of his anguished search. What he says he learned from Grant is how and why it is that the holy is absent in the way of being, thinking, and doing that holds sway in the era of technology. For Lee, Grant brings home modern man's utter oblivion of the sacred, and the human, political, and ecological consequences of that oblivion. Claiming to hear only this "news of extremis" in Grant, Lee casts Grant as his philosopher of deprival, his prophet of silence. For Lee, Grant witnesses to the silencing of the eternal, the unthinkability of the holy within the modern paradigm, and the collapse of rational language before the question of the good.

As I have argued, Grant's meditations on modernity, while bleak and grievous, do not finally pronounce on the utter impossibility of addressing the question of the good in our time. In fact, he finds that question, and intimations of the enduring presence of the good, rising up right in the midst of the paradigm that would deny them.

To arrive at his image of Grant as stuck in rational deadlock, Lee must overlook Grant's efforts to destabilize the certainties of modernity and to rouse critical thought. He must overlook Grant's subtle efforts to reanimate a sense of the beneficence of nature, discernible in the structures of human thought and human response, discernible in the revolts of human and non-human nature against the objectifying power of technology. These revolts suggest to Grant an essential human attunement to good and

the fundamental unmanipulability or sacredness of the beings and things of the earth--a notion that has yet to be reconciled with the scientific account of matter. To overlook this dimension of Grant's thought and art is to give him a partial reading. In giving Grant a partial reading, Lee also gives a partial account of the affinity between them. What he leaves out is the way they meet on a ground of reverence, and in a hunger for justice.

Finding in Grant only a diagnosis of the antithesis between technology and reverence, Lee seeks his own ways beyond that antithesis, and beyond Grant. He finds the demand of the holy, a call to reverence if not to understanding, in his attention to the "cadence" of being, in his insight into the fragile facticity of mortals and things, and, most recently, in an experience of awe that is beyond reason and unmediated by the beauties of the world or the eros of the body.

As I have said, Lee's deep alienation from the technological present and his need-filled search for the holy seem very much a part of the response Grant's own art can elicit. Most of Lee's poems inhabit the world Grant's work lays bare. In Lee's writing, the cogency of some of Grant's key perceptions comes clear. Grant is concerned that the modern paradigm kills all myths or systems of meaning that reveal "to most men their own mode of being in the world" and that lead to an understanding of "the true purposes of human life" ("Value and Technology" 22). With the death of all systems of meaning that might mitigate "both our freedom and the indifference of the world" ("The University Curriculum" 137), we are left with "a society of existentialists who know themselves in their own self-consciousness, but know the world entirely as despair" ("Religion and the State" 58). Such a group of existentialists is met in the figures who people Lee's poems, often the Anansi crowd. But Lee's poems also say the 'yes' implied in Grant's question: "Is there some force in man which will rage against a subjectivity

which creates itself, but also against our own lives being so much at the disposal of the powerful objectifications of other freedoms?" ("A Platitude" 142). In Lee's poems and prose, as in the cries of those "who use the language of sheer freedom as protest," we can hear, as Grant does, "something different than the words allow." Like those protesters Grant has in mind, Lee transcends modernity while using "no language but the modern ... to express [his] anguish" at what the modern denies ("A Platitude" 141). Out of his hunger for the holy, for something larger than the self that he might "centrally serve" ("Riffs" 78), there arises the thought Lee cannot put mind around: goodness is primary and here; the "beneficence of nature" is perhaps not a dead phrase.

Many of Lee's poems situate themselves squarely in the midst of what Grant calls the daily "nerve-wracking situations of justice." They give us a consciousness that dares that "openness" Grant speaks of, an openness that is the opposite of control, dares receptivity to beings in themselves, and dares the wonder/perplexity that comes of trying to see "the whole." The poems face squarely the terrible simultaneity of what Lee calls "the slaughterhouse / world" and "the luminous presence" ("Riffs" 43). In some of the stances Lee's speakers take towards other beings and things, we get a glimpse of the holy as Grant conceives it--that sacredness in the other that calls for sheer loving consent and acceptance of the ultimately unrepresentable fact of otherness. It is this response that, for Grant, is most truly the antithesis of the willful self-assertion that technology is posited upon. In my view, these stances in Lee's poems enact, even against the overt claims of the poems, an affirmation of the holy as incarnate, now, in the midst of technology.

But Lee's own reading of those stances remains entirely within the modern paradigm. For Grant, any act of justice that takes a person out of his way for the other in small or great ways confirms the primacy of good and the participation of beings in

what is eternal, beyond the cycle of becoming. For Lee, however, any sudden arrival upon the "deep, unscheduled ground of caring" ("The Death of Harold Ladoo" 56) signals no more than beings' heart-rending temporality. The wonderful tenderness and compassion that arise before the fact of mortality do not speak to Lee the way they do to Grant. Within Grant's faith, those responses affirm that humans are not only beings towards death but beings towards good. Humans can love in a way that participates in the generative love from which all being proceeds--the love that wants the beings to be. Even in his most recent account of the path of "unknowing," Lee gives only a partial reading of his own hunger for the good, his own need to have the holy or the sacramental break luminously upon him. Concentrated on the hunger, he does not, perhaps out of diffidence, fully face what that hunger says about the hungry. In his hunger, in my view, Lee is already there; the good is not absent from the world at all. The need of it signals, however grievously, the fact of it.

The rest of this study follows Lee on the track of the holy, first through his statements of poetics, including his strange Savage Fields, and then through certain of his poems. In both the poetics and the poems, I find a striving between Lee's use of the limited resources of the modern to express his hunger for the holy, and the 'more' "than the words allow," that touches an understanding of the holy that is closer to Grant's.

Insofar as he stays within the modern in his efforts to touch technology's 'other,' Lee's language bears strong traces of his reading of Heidegger. Heidegger exposes the nature of technology with amazing lucidity. Like Grant, he claims that the very oblivion that reigns within technology enables the encounter with what technology conceals. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Heidegger himself does not finally escape modern assumptions. His understanding of technology as the "destining of being"

reflects modern historicist thinking and modern immanentism. Even his beguiling notion of man as the "shepherd of being" ("The Turning" 42), cannot quite dispel the sense that Heidegger still posits man, in his "great essence" (40), as master of the earth, for whose sake and purposes all other beings exist. Moreover, there lingers about his writing a sense that only those who realize their "great essence" deserve to be called human. Such conditionality is what marks the diminished modern sense of justice, in Grant's view; all the hushed reverence for Being, in Heidegger, is rendered a little suspect by this absence of regard for the unconditional and personally costly call of the other that was central to an older understanding of justice and the holy.

1. Cadence: Lee in the Tug Between Heidegger and Grant

In his various discussions of his work, Lee makes little separation between his life and his art. In his view, his writing is not so much 'about' a search for the holy, or about the suffering of the modern, as the search and the suffering themselves. In calling himself a "meditative poet," Lee suggests that poetry is, for him, a way of knowing (or not-knowing), a way of opening himself to the perplexity of the whole. As his discussions of "cadence" tell us, he also sees his poetry as a way of giving voice to the ever-present energy of being. On the whole, Lee produces a poetry that is "meditative," "polyphonic" (his terms) and confessional in style, at times therapeutic in function, and essentially mimetic in theory.

To say that Lee produces a 'poetics' is to overstate the case. He presents no full-fledged body of theory about poetry, but he does have definite ideas concerning what his poetry is 'about,' what it does, how it stands in relation to the world, how its composition is conducted, what governs its form and its coherence. "Polyphony: Enacting

a Meditation," Savage Fields, and his interview with Allan Twigg, "When to Write," do venture into some talk of what poetry or literature in general 'ought' to be and do, but Lee's comments in all of these finally come to rest in an acknowledgement of what his own struggle is trying to achieve.

Lee's various (but not numerous) discussions of his poetics actually set up an interesting tension between his content and his method. In "Cadence, Country, Silence" and in the 1981 interview with Allan Twigg, he accepts a rigorous circumscription of his poetry on the level of content. As we have seen already, he declares, in 1972, that his work dedicates itself to naming and thereby transcending the imp[illegible]e of writing that confronts the colonial writer. His commitment is to 'incorporate' "faithfully ... in the saying" both the "inauthenticity of our lives" and the fact that we have "betrayed our own truths" (165). To be authentic, poetry today, for Lee, must tell the truth of where we are, as Canadians and as humans.

In speaking with Allan Twigg, Lee takes the stringent rigour further, going more deeply into the notion that we have "betrayed our own truths." In this case, Lee considers the relation between poetry and "meaning." His discussion here resonates with Grant's understanding of "meaning" sketched above. In the pre-Cartesian world, he rehearses, "dimensions of meaning were experienced as residing in the day-to-day world. 'What-is' was sacramental, it mediated meaning" (170). What Lee seems to be suggesting here is that time was then seen in relation to eternity and man in relation to God; the things and beings of the earth and the acts of everyday participated in a goodness--or fell away from a goodness--and a purpose that were more than finite, and were given in the nature of things. Things and beings were acknowledged as having a good in themselves and hence a sacredness. Humans were not seen as radically free, with all the world at

their disposal. Nor were the things of the earth 'indifferent.' To quote Colleen Thibaudeau, another Canadian poet, radically unlike Lee, they had "the same meaning as angels ... occupied with us" ("This Elastic Moment" 80); they could illuminate patterns and meanings in human existence. The shattering of this Elizabethan world-picture produced, Lee argues, the puzzle of liberal modernity: the fact-value/subject-object distinctions, a desacralized view of the world, and the resulting crisis of 'value.'

In his conversation with Twigg, Lee gives a swift and sweeping account of poets' response to that crisis, ending with his own response: the Romantics wrestled with the crisis; Symbolists kept looking for ways to show that "mundane reality must be a symbol of a higher level of reality"; "post-symbolism" made meanings up; moderns like Joyce and Pound imposed old myths on the modern world in the "hope that the patterns of art will somehow make sense of life," but succeeded only in de-valuing "the day-to-day reality further and further" (170). Lee's own contemporaries, he claims, use their media to excite sensation as a substitute for meaning; they just exacerbate the problem. To underscore the subjectivity of "value" is to "'murder the real,'" to push 'what is' further and further into the abyss of meaninglessness, of 'value-neutrality.' Against all of these responses to the crisis of meaning, Lee describes the task he sets for his poetry: "the only step ahead I could find in The Gods was to try and identify our condition, to enact it consciously and then name it" (171). (Ironically, this closure within which and of which Lee speaks, in stringent acceptance of a world stripped of inherent meaning, becomes the 'myth' that makes his world intelligible and gives meaning to his words.)

Against this sombre circumscription of his content, which also implies an interdiction of certain dimensions of metaphor and symbol, Lee poses his notion of "cadence." While he will not say the world is holy because such saying would

immediately be taken as a subjective fabrication and therefore a "murder of the real," he nevertheless feels called to worship what he senses as a "given"--"cadence." Right through the content that laments the desacralizing of the world and the negation of all givenness, Lee hopes that the rhythms and voices of his poems make present what is prior to human consciousness and outside the manipulating powers of human subjectivity. It is, curiously, with more joy and unabashed belief than most of the poems express that Lee explores his notion of "cadence" in his prose commentaries.

Lee's characterization of "cadence" as a kind of pre-verbal (but not pre-linguistic) energy of being owes much to Heidegger. The sudden poignant insight into the precious contingency of beings and things that arrives at the height of attention to cadence also owes much to Heidegger. But, to my ears, certain inflections in Lee's accounts of cadence and insight tug him around towards Grant. This is not to say that Lee's thinking on cadence is wholly derivative. The experience is his own; his communication of it simply bears the traces of his reading. There may be traces of others beside Grant and Heidegger; for example, it is possible to pick up hints of Olson's notion of projective verse in Lee's account of cadence, polyphony, and the meditative "open" form ("Enacting a Meditation" 59). It would also be worth questioning the relation of Jack Spicer's "outside" (The Collected Books of Jack Spicer 273) to Lee's "cadence." However, what I am interested in seeing, here, is how attention to the tug between Heidegger and Grant in Lee's accounts of cadence and unbidden insight can light up the difference that holds the three in relation--Heidegger, Grant, and Lee--so that Lee's understanding comes clear. These differences hinge on their understanding of the holy.

Lee's three prose accounts of cadence are found in "Cadence, Country, Silence"

(1972), in an interview with Jon Pierce called "Enacting a Meditation" (1979) and in the revision of that interview, "Polyphony: Enacting a Meditation" published in Tasks of Passion: Dennis Lee at Mid-career (1982). These accounts of cadence tend to be risky business. It would be terribly easy to reduce Lee's "jazzy, majestic, delicately cascading process surging and thudding and pausing" ("Cadence, Country, Silence" 153) to the echo of his own pounding blood reverberating in hands cupped over ears--nothing external to himself at all. Lee's claim that the cadence of "what is" ("Polyphony: Enacting a Meditation" 90) can only be 'mimed' by the kind of polyphonic modulation of multiple voices that marks his own poetry could easily be taken as a justification for exploding a labile and frenzied sensibility on the page and calling the result a mimesis of 'reality.' One could imagine it being dismissed as a bit of poly-phoney baloney. Even a sympathetic hearing might balk at Lee's proscription of "monophonic" poetry and his prescription of the polyphonic brand--his own. Why overlook the power of irony, the speaking of devastation in a deadpan? But then, irony requires a norm for contrast, something hard to come by in an age of anomie.

What follows is mostly a sympathetic hearing. What it must get by is a surge of exasperation at the proscription, the prescription, and, in "Polyphony," the engineered-interview form that is simply the opposite of real dialogue. This unfortunate form is one that Lee has favoured from the time of his 1967 Toronto Life essay on education, through his contribution to Notes for a Native Land (1969) right up to his recent "Poetry and Unknowing." In all of these, the interlocutor is not engaged as an interlocutor but used as a relatively voiceless object that Lee bumps against to set his musings and declamations off on a slightly different tangent. Once the exasperation is put by, however, and a grin sets in, it is possible for a reader to see how Lee's curious quirks

of control simply underscore the difficulty involved in achieving the degree of receptivity and trust that attention to otherness (justice) demands.

In "Cadence, Country, Silence," Lee's focus is on cadence itself, as what is prior to poems, prior to consciousness, prior to the self. The account is beautiful; it is warm with awe and receptivity and convincing diffidence. Cadence is here described as the medium of poems and also the medium in which beings exist: "I sense it as presence, both outside myself and inside my body opening out and trying to get into words" (152). Cadence is the music, the vibrancy, the articulability and the articulation of "what-is": "I can sense it churning, flickering, dancing, locating things in more shapely relation to one another without robbing them of themselves" (152). It is "largely without the witness I might be, if it chose to become incarnate in the words I set down" (153).

In "Polyphony," Lee seems to write, first and foremost, out of a concern that his audience learn to "read a meditation rightly--to follow its meditative quest" (88). His overall stated intent is to consider "the way [cadence] shapes a meditation" (82), the way meditative poems arise out of attention to cadence and "mime its gestures of being" (83). Throughout the piece, which is presented in a series of thirty-two short movements, Lee dramatizes the effort to think "cadence" and its relation to poems by enacting a meditation on meditation.

In that meditation on meditation, Lee works his way through multiple 'takes' on the process of miming cadence by orchestrating multiple inflections of voice. Voice embodies cadence. The polyphonic movement of a meditation through multiple inflections enacts the encounter of attentive voice with given cadence. What is signified, "the content" of the meditation, is mediated by the signifier, "the meditating consciousness"; "voice," the sign, is that "in which the two are embodied and enacted" (87). Polyphony

is then both "the inflected trajectory of the poem's content" and "the inflected trajectory of the poem's consciousness" (87).

Midway through the meditation, at section sixteen, Lee shifts attention away from the technique of meditative poems to "the way cadence is present for you, when you're actually writing" (90). (Is this a deliberate slip from the first to second person, to signal the effort to put subjectivity aside?) The wrestle between the subjectivity that makes up meaning (world ordered by the mind) and the givenness out of which meaning proceeds (mind ordered by the world) becomes conscious. For another eight sections, Lee tries to focus more on what cadence is and less on what his poems do, that is, more on the given and less on technique: "Cadence impinges as a kind of magnetic din, a silent raucous multiform atmospheric tumult you move around in, very clean though; and _always_--when you perceive it, when you don't.... It's there, that's all. It's _here_ .... Not just to sponsor poems" (90). If the poems participate in cadence, they should bear a "music" that "does exist at [a] pre-signifying level" (90): pre-signifying but not pre-meaning; meaningful without discursive content, but continuously referring to--intoning--what is there, as given, before consciousness. Polyphony, now playing second fiddle to cadence in Lee's account, is said to provide "the utterly supple medium" that can 'mime' "that summons" of "perpetual live energy" (90, 91).

Having moved his own poetry a little into the background, Lee can say:

> I could write hymns to [cadence], almost. And not to the poems: to what I hear.... [Cadence is] not rarefied, not removed, it's not Ideal; this worries me, almost--does it mean worshipping whatever is, good and evil, like goulash? Because it's always just there, thudding like somebody breathing, magisterial .... Oink .... Selah .... I barely know. What _is_ it?

(91)

In this doubting of his worship, the philosophic and ethical voice enters, perplexed by the simultaneity of good and evil. This voice is the voice that begins to resonate with Grant's, but still it skirts the perception that good is primary, evil its denial, and worship of the given a spontaneous act of reverence and resonance with the eternality of the world. At this point that voice remains muted; it will come up stronger, later in the piece. In this instance, the voice locates itself clearly in the tug between Grant and Heidegger. As many Heidegger scholars note, this almost-mystic of Being seems finally to stand outside the ethical because he stands outside the complex, and, at times, horrific world of politics. Being for Heidegger just is what is, and humans are humans, not because of any call to the good, but because they are the locus of the appearance of Being; they are the beings in whom will is most developed and conscious, and who are most capable of the willing acceptance of the destiny that disposes of beings. Lee's voice, at this point, also seems immersed in the part of Rudolph Otto's The Idea of the Holy, which speaks more of pagan tremendum than of tremendum as the basis of the ethical and the holy, which is the focus of the second half of Otto's book.

In these mid eight sections, Lee introduces his concept of "'cadential space'" (92) which intensifies a sense of the tangibility of this pre-verbal energy of being. Space is the 'where' of cadence; space is what the movement of cadence reveals, in its 'thereness' and its shapeliness. Cadence as tangible becomes more understandable as something there, prior to the writer, something that demands attention and participation. In attending to cadence, says Lee, "you hew to the grain" (91); voice that moves with the three-dimensional, curving, tumbling, looping energy of cadence more closely respects the nature of this given. The process of writing with the grain of this energy is intuitive:

> [I]t's cadence that guides you.... You feel out how the grain flows, gradually, intuitively, in each new piece you start. And you let the poem flow with it.... That's moving straight. That's travelling direct, in the cosmos that cadence sponsors and makes manifest.... [You feel] such a deep sense of release into what is quick and still and implacably there, that it nourishes you utterly. (92, 93)

In miming "textured space," voice enacts a "lived coherence"; fidelity to cadence, to the truth of what is there, which includes the truth of what the poet is feeling and trying to say, gives the poem its coherence.

Interestingly, a 'turn' occurs in the process of Lee's meditation on meditation. The piece modulates out of this middle group of eight movements, which have been trying to balance cadence and polyphony, into the last eight, which unabashedly hymn cadence and bow before it. That turn is precipitated by a brief reprise of the earlier tones of proscription and prescription. At the end of section twenty-three, Lee slides back into vituperation as he attacks the "unacceptable ... monophonic poem whose voice is badly cramped, and which still insists on reducing the whole variegated world to its simply pygmy wavelength" (94). Perhaps this act of proscription, so at odds with the openness and generosity he feels called to by cadence, stalls the meditation, threatens to wreck it on its own self-contradiction. Stalled, Lee catches himself: "This is phoney, you know.... I've been talking as if you can reduce a meditation, refer it all back to the technical moves of the writer. As if you can screen out that magisterial cadence, and ignore its sponsoring presence in the poem" (94-95).

Clearly humbled, Lee (oh so consciously) explains what has stalled him: "Cadence, and the mind-set of this era: they're incompatible. Cadence is something

given, far greater than my own mind or craft, intimate, other, and which compels my awe. But the only analytic language for talking about it is the modern one--the poems as a product of technique, the 'creative' artist fashioning order from the raw material of the world or his subconscious. All that stuff. I don't believe a word of it. Yet I'm a creature of modernity, and I still fall into the approach that's bred into us" (95). Here Lee puts his finger on the tension I have said he has set up between his content (the holy is absent) and his style (the holy, or the given, 'sponsors' poems). Lee's turn is not free of the traces of a "didactic staging of discovery" [2]; nor does his explanation of what is happening in that turn tell the whole story. In spite of his self-consciousness, Lee does not reflect on how his descent into injustice, his slide into vituperation and proscription, brings him up against attention's unlovely 'other': closure, exclusivity. In rejection of that unlovely other, his ears and being seem to get opened wider to the otherness of cadence.

The final eight movements of the piece are quieter. Somehow, while there is more talk of the self on a personal level, there is less of the self in these movements than in the preceding ones, where the focus on polyphony necessitates a lot of rather heated and urgent self-regarding discussion of Lee's writing process and his own poems. In the final movements (which are almost monophonic in their quiet seriousness), there are more qualifications, more puzzlement, more questions, more ambiguity, shorter statements, as Lee speaks of cadence as something he 'worships' and gives himself to in "sheer and simple attending" (96). Self assertion loses its hold before the acceptance of cadence as "awesome" "hereness" (96): "when it does take over, the attending--in which there's no choice; the only 'choice' would be <u>not</u> to attend ... --the attending itself is what you are asked for. It feels like the first obedience that's enjoined on you .... [T]he writing ... is

the fullest erotic response to cadence, for me at least. And a medium cadence chooses. And the practical thing it flows into, in your life" (97). Here Lee comes wonderfully close to the holy as Grant understands it--that inviolable presence of the unrepresentable other that inspires a person to give himself away in sheer acceptance and attention. This giving away of the self is also, for Grant, a finding of the self; it is both "need-love" and "gift-love" ("Faith and the Multiversity" 74).

In "Polyphony," Lee does ponder the link between listening to cadence and "the devotional discipline" (97). In "Poetry and Unknowing," he has his interlocutor suggest a link between these two, then he rather coyly evades the issue. In "Polyphony," he does acknowledge that "sheer and simple attention" to cadence is a kind of "knowing" but one "my head doesn't translate" (96). It is an "utter knowing," a "central knowing" (98). His sense of cadence as a good that claims one, that is primary and that has no opposite, whose negation is not something in itself but merely a refusal, now touches Grant's Augustinian-Thomistic sense of the Good. While Lee claims no "great effect upon [his] day to day life" (97) resulting from this reverence for cadence, he does venture that "Maybe there is some connection between cadence and the ethical or socially responsible or religious dimensions of life" (98). He says he is just not equipped to speak of that connection. (This is an admirable reticence, actually, in a time when the language of the good is caught, as Grant says, in a "labyrinth" ("Faith and the Multiversity" 38) and gesture, as ever, speaks more directly and more modestly.)

Lee also comes close, in his talk of cadential listening, to Simone Weil's thoughts on "attention," which partly inform Grant's own. Lee's need for "obedience," for giving himself to the call of the other, echoes Weil's understanding of "consent":

> This virtue of intellectual attention makes it an image of the Wisdom of

> God. God creates by the act of thinking. We, by intellectual attention, do not indeed create, we produce no object, yet in our sphere we do in a certain way give birth to reality.
>
> This intellectual attention is at the intersection of the natural and the supernatural part of the soul.... We confer upon objects and upon persons around us all that we have of the fullness of reality when to this intellectual attention we add that attention of still higher degree which is acceptance, consent, love.... [T]he supreme justice for us is acceptance of the coexistence with ourselves of all creatures and all things which make up the existent. It is permissible to have enemies, but not to desire that they should not exist.... [That] consent is supernatural love, it is the Spirit of God in us. (Intimations of Christianity Among the Greeks 188, 189, 195)

While the consent Weil speaks of argues the eternality of beings and the primacy and presence of good, the reverence Lee feels for other beings gets understood as a response of compassion inspired by their finitude.

In trying to feel out a connection between his sense of the awesome, the holy, and one's comportment towards other beings (that is, justice), Lee reveals his temperamental affinity with Grant. He comes close to escaping his dualist tendencies in his sense of cadence as 'without an opposite.' But his way of translating the holy, the ground of reverence, remains within modern terms and pulls him around towards Heidegger. What breaks upon his consciousness, at the height of attention, is not, as Grant would have it, an intuition of the "beneficence of nature" or the primacy of the good. Rather, what he comes to in this knowing, as in "Cadence, Country, Silence," is the fact of mortality, the

fragile contingency of beings: "the most immediate thing there is about things: that they are at all. Instead of not being.... [C]osmos is perpetually recreated by the unspeakable energy of be-ing--of being at all" (98). Having just grazed Grant's sense of the eternality of beings, in their goodness, Lee veers off again into the binary logic of being/non-being and into the modern fixation on temporality.

Lee's accounts of cadence resonate with Heidegger's notion of the fateful "thrownness" of beings, discussed in the previous chapter, and with the further sense of the kinetic "pure draft" into the "Open" that constitutes "be-ing" ("What are Poets For?" 106). It resonates as well with Heidegger's understanding of "language" as that which differentiates beings and makes their being knowable and speakable. In addition, Lee's articulation of his own experience of insight into the contingency of beings has much in common with Heidegger's notion of the "einblick" ("The Turning" 45). This "einblick" is a sudden illumination, to human Dasein, of Being--the force of kinetic 'thereness' and 'thatness' that sends being on their way to nothingness. I will draw the Heideggerian parallels first with Lee's notion of cadence and then with his experience of illumination, as described so eloquently in "Cadence, Country, Silence."

Lee's sense of cadence as "the process of be-ing" that is prior to consciousness and that 'locates' "things in more shapely relation to one another without robbing them of themselves" has affinities with the understanding of language that Heidegger explores in the essay simply called "Language" in the collection Poetry, Language, Thought. In "Language," Heidegger presents his notion that "language speaks." He thinks his way through this notion by conducting a quiet, intimate, beautifully illuminating, and (in its odd silence about the Christian connotations of "bread and wine") rather perverse reading of Georg Trakl's poem, "A Winter Evening." The

essay has a four-fold focus: poetry as the revelation of the truth of Being; poetry as that which locates man within that "fourfold" of earth-sky-mortals-divinities that Heidegger borrows from the Greeks (see Gorgias); poetry as the enactment of language; and language as that which subsists.[3]

As that which subsists, language is the force of differentiation, individuation, and relation. To extrapolate from Heidegger's actual claims, it would seem that what he means most fundamentally by "language" is the power of matter to emerge into diverse form, into multiplicity, and into temporality; the single word "is" breaks into the polysyllabic, polyphonic discourse or song of beings. Language allows the correspondence of humans to Being itself; as linguistic beings, we are capable of thought, that is, of encountering the "is" of what I always think of as Louis MacNiece's universe: "Incorrigibly plural" ("Snow" 26). As linguistic beings, we are also capable, in Heidegger's view, of producing, of spinning more things out of the "is" of earth. Language gives rise to the thinking and speaking of humans, and makes it possible for humans to make for themselves a "world"--a dwelling place on the earth in which things are provisionally held in distinctness and in relation--shapely, artful, 'telling' relation.

In speaking of cadence as that which "sponsors" and "makes manifest" a "cosmos" ("Polyphony" 93), as that which locates things in relation while allowing their distinctness to shine, Lee touches Heidegger's notions of "world," and of "rend"/"rift"/"dif-ference"/"pain"--functions of the force called "language." In claiming that the cadence of Being comes to consciousness in and through the language of poetry, Lee also invokes Heidegger's exaltation of the poet who lives in the 'between' of gods and humans.

The arranging of "things in more shapely relation to one another" is the act of

setting up a "world," a place for human habitation. This arranging is possible because "language" is; this arranging occurs through "language." Language calls things into relation. Things are made visible in themselves when called into a "world" and called out of the invisibility of mere use-objects, raw material, or inscrutable "earth." In being arranged into a world, "Things be-thing--i.e. condition--mortals.... [T]hings, each in its time, literally visit mortals with a world" (200). The arrangement that occurs, is "world," a dwelling that holds in relation the "fourfold." "The world grants to things their presence. Things bear world. World grants things" (202). A "thing" is an object, taken into the human world, that links humans to the secretive earth out of which they arise, and links humans, as mortals "capable of death," to the divinities, who are the traces of the gods whose domain seems to be that other inscrutability, awesome nothingness, the power that both engenders beings and takes beings back into itself. By "stilling" the restless use of objects as equipment (invisible in themselves), things draw human attention to Being. This attention is attention both to 'thatness' and to the force that draws beings out of nothing to nothing, allowing them in the meantime the temporary endurance called existence.

The arranging of things in relation in a "world" is a matter of separating things into distinctness. That place of separation, that "middle" that holds things apart but also toward each other, as belonging to one another, is called by Heidegger the "rift." The making of the rift between things is a matter of "pain" (not to be thought "anthropologically as a sensation that makes us feel afflicted") (205). This pain is the pain of "dif-ference," the carrying of things out of undifferentiated matter or primal energy into distinctness but also into intimacy with one another. In this "intimacy" (202), things give shape to a world; in doing so, they become most themselves as things. Held

in intimacy by "dif-ference," things and the world that locates them are "stilled" for a time, gathered and appropriated to one another (207). The power of "dif-ference" is the "peal of stillness" that calls things into "world," and holds each thing that "is" in its passing. This power, this c- nstant "peal" and calling, subsists as language: "Language speaks as the peal of stillness.... Language, the peal of stillness, is, inasmuch as the dif-ference takes place. Language goes on as the taking place or occurring of the dif-ference for world and things" (207). It is the dynamic, moment by moment, happening and passing of things. In ordinary terms, language is, as I said earlier, the articulability of things: their particularity uttered by the difference that distinguishes them, their particularity achieved in differentiation, their particularity utterable in the division of sound from silence. Language is also the articulation of things. I am thinking 'articulation' here, not just as utterance or expression but as the arrangement of things in a relation that constitutes them as what they are--like the articulation of the bones of the arm at the elbow that helps make the arm an arm, or even the fact of an arm itself (if the elbow were broken or malformed) that articulates the relation between torso and hand, just as hand articulates the relation between self and world.

That language "is," for Heidegger, is what makes it possible for humans, as linguistic beings, to be human. Their humanness resides in their connection to Being. In its destining, through metaphysics, in the oblivion of technology, and into the ultimate revealing that that oblivion invites, Being uses humans. Humans' actions and ways of thinking and perceiving and using language participate in Being's historical way of revealing itself--either as presence or as absence. Because of this special connection to Being, humans have the power to call things into a world, to make a dwelling, that is, to enact the nature of language. This power, however, is dependent upon listening to the

stillness of "dif-ference" and responding to it. Such listening is attention, not just to beings, but to Being, not just to words, but to the silence that defines them. Response to "dif-ference" is human "speaking"--i.e. the making of a world in the act of thinking or in the act of building and dwelling (209) (i.e. sojourning on the way to death). This attentive "speaking"--which includes making--is different from the talk and action of everyday. It witnesses to the fleeting thatness and the temporary hereness that Being imparts to beings, instead of arising out of and perpetuating the forgetting of Being through misplaced attention to beings as fixed objects or entities. Such attentive speaking, says Heidegger, puts one on the track of the holy and begins to restore things in the wholeness of their relation within a world.

In his characterization of cadence, then, Lee taps Heidegger's sense of the subsistence of language as a persistent, differentiating power that both enables human dwelling and human speech and rises up to consciousness, in the act of attending, through human speech. In marking the language of poetry as the special medium for cadence, Lee also echoes Heidegger's exaltation of poets, as the "sayers who say more sayingly" ("What Are Poets For?" 138). For Heidegger, it is the poet, who, in Pascal's "logic of the heart" (127), recognizes and reaches past the oblivion of Being to sing the song of the wholeness of beings, held in relation within Being, revealed in the truth of their temporality, their unfixity. In the circumscription of his content, Lee speaks the oblivion of Being, which, with Heidegger, he equates with the holy. In the effort to let the cadence of Being rise up through the recognition of its oblivion (the betrayal of our truths), he seeks to sing Heidegger's song of existence (138), of reverence escaping beyond technology. In his struggle for authenticity in his work, as against the fabrication of something "made up" ("Cadence, Country, Silence" 153), Lee gestures towards those

"'poets in a destitute time'" of whom Heidegger speaks--Hölderlin and Rilke. Like them, he sets out, in the world's night, on the track of the holy, of the "fugitive gods" (94). Lee must surely have found himself in this comment of Heidegger's: "It is a necessary part of the poet's nature that, before he can be truly a poet in such an age, the time's destitution must have made the whole being and vocation of the poet a poetic question for him" (94).

Heidegger's notion of the holy has, in one aspect, something rather serene about it. It seems to refer not to the sacredness of beings themselves but to the wholeness of things in relation to one another--the momentary "stilling" of things into the benign, pastoral "fourfold" which itself simply underscores the mortality or temporality of man. Interestingly, Lee takes this serene notion and makes it, at the least, noisy and dynamic: "Cadence enacts the space of cosmos. 'Cosmos', as what is. And 'space' as the still and tumultuous process in which cosmos is perpetually recreated by the unspeakable energy of being--of being at all. To be tuned by cadence is to vibrate with the calamitous resonance of being" ("Polyphony" 98). When Lee's "calamitous" sense is heard in relation to his musings on the ethical dimension of attention to cadence, it takes on an inflection that distances him somewhat from Heidegger. Heidegger's sense of Being is also "calamitous" in so far as Being holds sway as an inevitable "destining" that is, in the final analysis, nihilistic: temporal, fleeting, necessitous, and turned towards death. But this calamitousness, in Heidegger, is accepted serenely. The ethical warmth and human compassion in Lee's intonation of "calamitous" distances him from the bucolic 'apartness' of Heidegger's fourfold; it moves him toward the world of the polis and the everyday "nerve-wracking situations of justice." The 'holy' as a kind of apolitical and insouciant unity of being, in Heidegger, becomes, in Lee's treatment, something closer

to the demand of the other to which "obedience," ethical comportment, and costly self-giving constitute the response. As these notes enter his reflections on cadence, Lee inflects the language of Heidegger with the consciousness and concern he shares with Grant.

2. Lee and the Illumination of Being: Inflecting Heidegger With Undertones from Grant

In "Polyphony," as in "Cauence, Country, Silence" talk of cadence leads Lee to speak of Being and of beings in their contingency, but in tones that tend to emphasize their givenness, their demanding sacredness. In "Cadence, Country, Silence" Lee gives quite eloquent expression to that sense of contingency/sacredness which leads me to locate him in the tug between Heidegger and Grant:

> There is a moment in which I experience other people, or things, or situations, as standing forth with a clarity and a preciousness which makes me want to cry and to celebrate physically at the same time.... It is the moment in which something becomes overwhelmingly real in two lights at once. An old man or woman whose will to live and whose mortality reach one at the same instant. A child who is coursed through with the lovely energies of its body, and yet who is totally fragile before the coming decades of its life. A social movement charged at the same time with passion for decent lives and with the pettiness, ego-tripping and lack of stamina that will debase it. A table, at once a well-worn companion and a disregarded adjunct.
>
> Each stands forth as what it is most fully, and most preciously, because the emptiness in which it rests declares itself so overpoweringly. We

> realize that this thing or person, this phrase, this event need not be. And at that moment, as if for the first time, it reveals its vivacious being as though it had just begun to be for the first time.... It is in meeting the nonbeing with which living particulars are shot through--their mortality, their guilt, their incipient meaninglessness; or here in Canada their wordlessness for us--that we cherish them most fully as what they are. Until that time, we may have cared for them only as things we can own. But in that luminous, perishable aspect they assume their own being for us.... To accept nonbeing at home in what is, to accept what-is at home in nonbeing, is perhaps the essential act of being human. Certainly it is the beginning of art. (167, 168)

This pattern of movement from attention to cadence as the energy of Being to illumination of the Being of beings is, again, a discernibly Heideggerian one. Whether that is a conscious imitation on Lee's part can't be decided from the texts, but essays like Heidegger's "What Are Poets For?" "The Question Concerning Technology," and "The Turning" do anticipate Lee's account of cadence and his experience of illumination or insight.

In these essays, Heidegger conducts his thinking on Being by thinking through various poems and fragments of Hölderlin and Rilke. In "What Are Poets For?", he unravels one particular passage in Rilke by drawing on Leibnitz' understanding of the Being of beings as "Natura ... the vis primitiva activa"--Being as will. Being as will, as life-force, is, as for Nietzsche, something greater than any individual being; it is a dynamic "destining." All that is, Heidegger suggests, comes about as something willed from out of the energies of nature, the "pure forces serried" ("What are Poets For?"

124). To be in being is to have been "ventured" (101), to have been released by the life force into life, into the laws of nature, of gravity, of finitude, of necessity--given over to the recalcitrance of earth. Released into this process, beings are both thrown and drawn, unprotected, into the "Open," the destiny that moves them towards the other side of life: death. Death, he intimates, gathers beings back into their source. To use terms Heidegger does not use, and to connect with the earlier discussion on language, to be, so the suggestion goes, is to be tossed into particularity by the force of will, as what is primary; it is to be articulated, or 'said'--spoken out into the silence and sent on the way to nothingness. It is this sense of existence that appears to inform Lee's perception of beings as "shot through" with nonbeing. It is also what is spoken so directly in his poem "One More Morning" in the "Nightwatch" series:

... I saw that

we are the ones who need not be. And can only be once.
Born kicking. Raised in the little round
of sun and labour and sleep. And then,
phhht!--and never to be again.
One short bright blaze, between a dark and a darkness.

And though there are different clocks for the things which are,
the poplars and mountains superb in their separate durations,
and Andromeda burns on a longer fuse, a supergalactic
blip in the lifespan of cosmos,
yet we are all, all of us gifted with
coming and ceasing to be,
in the beautiful one-shot pride of our physical bodies, and

precious enough to die. (190-191)

In his tale of illumination in "Cadence, Country, Silence," in which each being "stands forth as what it is most fully, and most preciously, because the emptiness in which it rests declares itself so overpoweringly" Lee recalls Heidegger's account of the "turning" of technological man away from the oblivion of Being into the lighting up of Being. According to Heidegger, man, along with other beings, is "ventured" into "the Open"--the path of life on the way to death. However, man, in the age of technology, refuses death, turns against "the Open" and objectifies and commodifies things and beings--including, almost, himself. He attempts to secure things and beings, or fix them as objects rather than as entities participating in the "venture" of life, of time. As Heidegger says, in turning against the Open, in the self-assertive willing that is technology, man puts himself in greater danger than the original venture that tosses all beings out into temporality. The danger is that man will remain oblivious to his nature and his destiny. In commodifying all things, he makes the 'thing-ness' of things and the Being of beings, disappear. In this utter commodification, Heidegger argues, technological man "levels every ordo, every rank, down to the uniformity of production, and thus from the outset destroys the realm from which any rank and recognition could possibly arise" (117). That is, man turns a blind eye to the dif-ference (Being) that gives things and beings their particular 'thatness.' He obscures the power that holds mortals and gods, earth and sky in relation, that arranges things and other beings around man into a world and gives him what Heidegger sees as greatest goods--"rank" (as master of the earth/"shepherd of Being") and (Hegelian) "recognition"--affirmation of his being in the light of the "fourfold." Things and beings as commodities cannot locate man in the "fourfold," cannot put man in relation to the "divinities" (178). Things and beings turned into

commodities obscure Being, cannot be known in their wholeness or holiness and cannot mediate belonging, for man. Things and beings held in the "enframing" of technology ("The Question Concerning Technology" 20), which "reveals the real as standing reserve" (21), present themselves as stuff for use; fixed as objects, they lock us in a frame that is the perversion, for Heidegger, of a momentarily stilled "world" where we are at home in that draft towards death he calls Being.

The "turn" towards the holy again, for Heidegger, begins in the simultaneity of this danger and what he calls, quoting Holderlin, "'the saving power'" (28). Man in the age of technology forces things to yield up their power for his use; he pro-duces or "challenges forth" (15) objects and energy for his own purposes. In this challenging forth, he is actually imitating the life-force that brings things forth out of nature. He is also engaging in an activity that is like, but inflected differently from, the bringing-forth or revealing that is poesis. The danger, for Heidegger, is that man will fail to recognize that, in technological making, which is his collaboration with Being, his special status among beings is realizing itself; the "destining" of Being is fulfilling itself. Being has brought forth man as the one who can pro-duce, the one who shares the power of language. If, in his fear of or fascination with technological things and technological power, man fails to see that technological bringing forth is a function of Being, he will fail to realize his essence as "shepherd of being"/Master of the earth. Technology, for Heidegger, is a disguising of Being; it is Being's way of revealing itself in our era. Being reveals itself as absence; it is protected in this oblivion. Having realized his essence as co-producer with Being, technological man is both far from and nearer than ever to the revelation of Being. His willful producing in technology both intensifies his forgetting of Being and readies him for the revelation of Being as the destining power of all that

is.

In "What are Poets For?" Heidegger speaks of the "turn" away from this dangerous oblivion as the fulfilment of will, in the human. Beings are ventured into the "Open" by the life-force that is will; man "goes with the venture" (119). That is, in the willful self-assertion of technology, which is a turn against the "Open"--the draft towards death or the abyss--man actually imitates the life-force. As this imitation reaches its peak, the cooperation of technical man with Being as will tips over into willingness; technological refusal of the abyss, or of death and temporality, is transformed into acceptance of the abyss. Having put himself in danger of forgetting Being, technological man puts himself closest to the danger that is Being itself--the danger of oblivion, of temporality and death, which Being/the life-force/will, tosses us towards.

Those who intuit and suffer most acutely the oblivion of Being are, for Heidegger, the poets. They transform the invisibility of beings turned into representable objects for use into presence within the heart. That is, beings distanced from Being, made into objects of calculation, become invisible in themselves. Once seen as endangered in this way, things and beings become subject to the "saving power"; they can be taken into the "logic of the heart" (127). Here, they are protected in the "interior of uncustomary consciousness"--a kind of "love"--"in which everything is for us beyond the arithmetic of calculation, and [which] free of such boundaries, can overflow into the unbounded whole of the Open" (128). In that moment of transformation, as Lee puts it, "we cherish [things and beings] most fully as what they are." For Heidegger, this transformation is soonest carried out by the poet who names oblivion, who peers into nothingness, who faces death. In this action, the poet is "'more daring / by a breath'" (131) than all other humans. That is, poets more daringly "say," bring to articulation,

both the present forgetting of Being--the present "abyss"--and the truth of Being, the 'is-ness' of things on their way to nothingness. Just as Being 'says' us into our destiny towards death, poets say that saying. They release, in words, that "breath" that speaks of hereness and fleetingness. They speak a longing for the mystery of Being and for the sudden revelation of Being that locates man in the "fourfold" of a world. For Heidegger, the task of the poet is the task Rilke recognizes: "our task is to impress this preliminary, transient earth upon ourselves with so much suffering and so passionately that its nature rises up again 'invisibly' within us. We are the bees of the invisible. Nous butinons éperdument le miel du visible, pour l'accumuler dans la grande ruche d'or de l'Invisible.' (We ceaselessly gather the honey of the visible, to store it up in the great golden beehive of the Invisible.)" (130), returning all that is to the protection of primal nothingness.

The ability of poets to name the abyss, and so to name Being, is itself a function of the destining of Being. Poets who reveal the truth of beings in their temporality, says Heidegger, reveal Being beautifully. In this revealing, however, they are used by Being; they are the locus of the "turning" of Being out of oblivion. Their capacity to "say" or to "reveal" is not self-generated, but is given to them by Being itself. As Lee suggests, such moments of insight cannot be engineered: "we can be open to [that insight] only rarely" (167). In the attentive thinking that is the essence of language, those of "'great essence'" Heidegger claims, "lend a hand to the essence, the coming to presence, of Being.... [They] first learn to dwell in the realm in which there comes to pass the restorative surmounting of the destining of Being, the surmounting of Enframing" ("The Turning" 40, 41). They are the ones to whom the beings say what Lee hears: "'Write me.'"

The surmounting of Enframing that Heidegger speaks of is enabled by an intuition

of the emptiness of beings. This emptiness is actually brought to light by technology, which, for Heidegger, empties beings of Being by focusing overmuch on beings. In this emptying, which is actually a fortunate "injurious neglect of the thing" (49), the truth of Being--as nothingness, as unfixity, as temporality--comes to pass: "in all the disguising belonging to Enframing, the bright open-space of world lights up, the truth of Being flashes.... Insight into that which is--thus do we name the sudden flash of the truth of Being into truthless Being.... Only when man, in the disclosing coming-to-pass of the insight by which he himself is beheld, renounces human self-will and projects himself toward that insight, away from himself, does he correspond in his essence to the claim of that insight. In thus corresponding, man is gathered into his own ... that he, within the safeguarded element of world, may, as the mortal, look out toward the divine" (47). That is, in providing the locus for the revelation of Being as temporality, man transcends himself, is drawn towards his destiny and his highest "rank"; he becomes, though Heidegger veils this thought, Nietzsche's "overman," deserving master of the earth, fully conscious "mortal" in the draw of temporality and death, illumined by divinity, the mystery of Being. He participates with Being in actively, willingly, letting the beings be in the world that constellates around him. As Lee says, in much 'homier' terms, "in that luminous, perishable aspect [things] assume their own being for us."

In this unbidden insight, which is the height for man, Being is at last revealed, for Heidegger, as <u>no thing</u>. Two millennia of focusing on beings and things, he claims, have blinded us to Being: "That which is, <u>is in no way that which is in being</u>. For the 'it is' and the 'is' are accorded to what is in being only in as much as what is in being is appealed to in respect to its Being. In the 'is,' Being is uttered: that which 'is,' in the sense that it constitutes the Being of what is in being, is Being" (46). (emphasis mine)

Being is the life-force rather than the things that exist; it is what is nearest to us, and, finally, furthest from us insofar as we try to know it as object; it is the draft and the draw out of and back to oblivion. "Is" points, not to fixity, not to the permanence or stubborn resistance of thing or of inscrutable earth, but to fleetingness. Humans raise themselves to their nature and their destiny as they come to the conscious acceptance of and surrender to this fleetingness and arrange themselves within it; without this consciousness, for Heidegger, they lie like a stone or recalcitrant earth, without a "world," unlocated.

Lee's tale of illumination, precipitated by attention to cadence, revolves around this Heideggerian notion of the simultaneity of being and nonbeing. However, a tug towards Grant is found in the 'flesh' he gives to Heideggerian thought. Rather than Heidegger's ritual jug or spanning bridge ("The Thing") or plain generic thing or being, Lee gives us the warmer images of child, old woman, well-worn table, and, what is not to be found in Heidegger, political movement. Through these beings and things, he tries to think, in wholly modern terms, a sense of the holy, of the precious, of what is to be cherished. Mired in the modern, he translates his response as a movement of tenderness, on the part of the vulnerable, toward the vulnerable, aroused by the recognition of temporality, or mortality. But in taking his search for the holy into the realm of the ethical, or the realm of justice and obligation towards the other, he does go beyond Heidegger in thought.

While his ethical consciousness takes him beyond Heidegger, Lee nevertheless remains within the vocabulary of the modern:

> Nobody sane can give thanks for what seems to be evil: death, deprivation, corruptibility can hardly be slotted into place in some higher

> scheme of things, explained away with relief as convenient aids to ontological contemplation. We do well to see how relative and simplistic our notions of evil usually are. But that can be no excuse for wriggling off the hook which evil and suffering still compose. That said, however, your first response to things that strike at life and goodness undergoes a change, when you discern that every thing that is is most fully itself in the presence of its own emptiness. (168).

I find this passage fairly cryptic. Lee's enduring consciousness of good and evil, and his unsettled perplexity at their simultaneity seem to come perilously close here to an affirmation of evil as necessary. Whatever strikes at life and goodness seems ready to slip, in this consciousness, into the inevitability of Heidegger's "destining." Unable to think the "beneficence of nature," or the reality of beings and things as their indestructible goodness, Lee has only the modern notion of death and nonbeing to define, by contrast, the worth and preciousness of what is in being. The warmth of his compassion, his translation of Heideggerian thought into the realm of everyday, demanding justice, lead him towards a perception of the holy as the sacredness of beings that are good in themselves, but he cannot get there, in the language of the modern. He cannot make the kind of statement that Grant offers, in opposition to the modern paradigm of knowing: "Good is what is present in the fulfilment of our given purposes. To avoid the modern view of temporality as futurity I use a different example. A child is good, not only as a preparation, but in so far as it is at all" ("Faith and the Multiversity" 42). Its goodness is not dependent on its becoming something more than itself or transcending itself, or attaining a greater fullness of being, as Heidegger would have it, by becoming the locus for the lighting up of Being. Its preciousness is not

dependent on its incipient nothingness and not dependent upon its function in making a "world" for man; its goodness, for Grant, is its first and enduring fact. His use of the phrase, "in so far as it is at all" does not need Lee's Heideggerian extension, "Instead of not being" ("Polyphony" 98). The emphasis, for Grant, is on the irreducible mystery of "is." The goodness of a being, beyond manipulation and calculation, constitutes its eternality; it issues to others the demand of justice. While the thinking of that thought directly eludes Lee's language of the modern, the thinking, or living, of it is nevertheless intimated in the warmth he gives to his lovely phrase, "the articulate gestures of being human" and in the enactment of those gestures in a number of his poems.

Lee's thoughts on cadence and polyphony bear the traces of his search for reverence in the age of technology, his use of Heideggerian language and structures of thought in that search, and his intuition of the unconditional demand of justice that strikes a "ping" of "affinity" (Colleen Thibaudeau) with Grant. In Savage Fields: An Essay in Literature and Cosmology, this search continues, informed again by Lee's debt to and argument with the thought of these two key influences.

Notes

[1] This phrasing echoes Heidegger's sense of the lighting up of beings achieved in the act of poesis, of setting things is relation
to one another.

[2] This is a particularly memorable phrase used with some frequency by Dr. Balachandra Rajan in a graduate seminar, 1982-83, on "The Poetry of Inconclusiveness," Department of English, University of Western Ontario.

[3] It is a measure of Heidegger's utter modernity and his distance from the ethical thinking of Plato that, in his use of the notion of the fourfold, he makes "pain" or the tearing of dif-ference, the constant becoming and falling away of temporal things, the principle of relation. In Plato's Gorgias, the principle of relation that makes the whole a 'cosmos' is harmony, justice:

> ...[W]here there is no communion, there can be no friendship. And wise men tell us, Callicles, that heaven and earth and gods and men are held together by communication and friendship, by orderliness, temperance, and justice; and that is the reason, my friend, why they call the whole of this world by the name of order [cosmos], not of disorder or dissoluteness. (470-1)

Chapter Five

Savage Fields: Courting the Beneficence of Nature

In his spirited and rather exasperated counter-argument to various critical reviews of Savage Fields: An Essay in Literature and Cosmology, Lee asks of his own hypothetical "savage fields" paradigm: "How do you think that situation, without just getting a headache?" (181) It's a good question, capturing well the difficulty of reading the essay and trying to grapple with its cogencies, conundrums, and audacious (mis)readings. While no fully adequate grappling with Lee's book has yet been conducted, this is not the place for it. However, the work cannot be passed over in a study of Lee's search for the holy. I include a look at Savage Fields in this study for two reasons. First, it adds to an understanding of his poetics, if we understand by that term not only his views on what poetry or literature is and does, but also his views on 'making' in general. Secondly, the book itself constitutes yet one more meditation, in most curious form, on the question of the holy and the relation between technology and reverence. Specifically, it can be read as an extended, and rather tortured effort to think that phrase Lee banished from Grant's "The University Curriculum": "the beneficence of nature."

"[T]hat situation" in the comment quoted above is the new cosmology Lee finds emerging out of the self-deconstruction of the liberal account of the nature of things. Within this new cosmology, "planet" or the "whole of what is" (9) is constituted by two simultaneous but distinct "fields" or domains. To name these domains, Lee uses terms borrowed from Heidegger, extracted from the context of his lovely, luminous, but rather detached and apolitical musings on art (see "The Origin of the Work of Art" in Poetry,

Language, Thought) and given a savage twist. The first domain is "earth ... the ensemble of beings which are all or some of: material, alive, and powered by un-self-conscious instinct"; the second is "world ... the ensemble of beings which are either conscious, or manipulated by consciousness for its own purposes" (4). Everything that is--buildings, lawns, humans--belongs wholly to both earth and world. Wholly material planet makes itself manipulable; in its manipulability, its availability to be turned into a world by humans, planet actively "worlds." Humans as world-makers do not do something to planet; they are part of the material planet that gives rise to that doing, much in the fashion of the "destining of Being" that, for Heidegger, uses humans to give necessary rise to technology.

In Lee's model, then, planet "earths" and "worlds" at the same time, all the time. Yet, as he clarifies further in his rebuttal essay, "Reading Savage Fields," this simultaneity is accompanied by mutual inscrutability; world cannot know earth on earth's terms and earth cannot know world on world's terms. Planet in its 'world-ing' must use its own self, as earth, without being able to know or respect earth in itself. This worlding is consciousness as we know it, Lee claims, within the liberal paradigm. It is also language as we know it, within liberalism. Recognizing now, in his re-thinking, that to ascribe consciousness and speech to world only is to recreate again the "one-sidedness" (173) of modernity, Lee identifies as the next challenge for thought the question of what consciousness and language are, in earth's terms. It is within the "liberal model ... [that] consciousness is the sole and hemmed-in seat of being human" (173). How is one, as he says at the end of Savage Fields, to "think his earth-belonging without merely possessing it conceptually, thus re-making it, un-selving it" (110). Here, as ever, Lee continues to seek an escape from mind as he knows it and from knowing as inevitable distortion; he

is courting awe, trying to open himself, beyond reason as we construe reason today, to what _is_ in itself, to a goodness that stays the impulse of domination--a goodness he simply cannot think.

In our era, Lee argues, the simultaneity of the two domains of planet is marked by strife; world (the domain of technology) operates by subsuming earth into its designs and purposes. Everything material gets fashioned into an object of consciousness, either as instrument or thing known. Earth resists the exposure of such mastering knowledge and instinctively revolts against the uses made of it. Earth seeks to reclaim what has been taken up into world, since earth is primary. All that is, is, first and last, material. In fact, as Lee argues, citing neurobiology's study of the physical seat and operation of 'mind,' it would seem that earth itself has actually given rise to that operation of mind that, in our time, turns against it in the mode of knowing that has become the objectifying and manipulating force of technology. With the advent of neurobiology, says Lee with a kind of gloomy glee, liberalism checkmates itself; liberalism and its scientific disciples must now admit that their methods invalidate their premises.

The cosmological-ontological intuition, or the sense of the nature of things that he finds operative in works like Ondaatje's _The Collected Works of Billy the Kid: Left Handed Poems_ and Cohen's _Beautiful Losers_, spells for Lee the end of the liberal paradigm of neutral earth and value-inputting consciousness. Both authors, Lee says, think within the 'dualness' of planet and "go to some pains to reject [the] dualism" of liberalism. "Often they treat [that dualism] as an unfortunate component of their characters' world-view but they try to avoid it as a determinant of their own" (5). Feeling out the intuition he believes is operative in these works, and drawing on Horkheimer's sense of contemporary "revolts in nature" (_The Eclipse of Reason_ 91) (a

notion Grant echoes), Lee sees the liberal notion of matter's limitless, value-free malleability crumbling. Limits are announcing themselves and matter is fighting back.

During his novice glimpse into neurobiology, Lee also argues that the utter materiality of all that is, including the mind, destroys the notion of the subject as something immaterial, standing apart from the physical universe. The progress of objective, scientific knowing has reached its limit, in Lee's view, as the organ that does the knowing turns its tools of knowing on itself. The last value-free material thing to be known is the brain. As the value-free mechanisms by which brain produces consciousness become known, "'Consciousness'" is exposed as "merely an epiphenomenon, a subjective interpretation we have mistakenly projected onto the brain, but which has finally floated clear of its object" (52). All mental operation can be known as the firing of synapses; all thought and feeling can be traced back to the physical mechanisms that produce them. [1] With this exposure of the physicality of mind, Lee argues, the liberal division of the planet into neutral fact and subjective value is defeated. The division between thinking self and simultaneously available and inscrutable earth melts. Consciousness is, but not as a separate and transcendent function; consciousness is part of the materiality of planet. The resulting wholeness is what Ondaatje and Cohen image, Lee argues, but the mode of being of that wholeness is horrific; world and earth are locked in suicidal strife; planet is one long convulsion.

There is a certain cogency in Lee's model: on the one hand, it does seem that human knowing and making (human consciousness and technological mastery) have, indeed, in our time, penetrated every inch of the planet so that nothing remains untouched or unaffected by our making and manipulating. Everything is "earth," yes, but by now everything has also become "world"--a thing shaped or affected by human

power. Even untrodden reaches of the Antarctic are affected by what humans have done to the ozone layer; our intervening has changed the composition of the oceans, radically reduced and altered myriad species. There is a terrible loneliness, somehow, in discovering that one may never encounter anything that simply is as earth has given it to be, from within itself, with no trace of human decision. There is a strange blow of shame and hunger in thinking that perhaps even going somewhere and seeing untrammelled earth, in plain worship, is to intrude upon it, to loop it into the human world as object. Though he does not use this image himself, it could be said that Lee finds our wholly technologized world--what Horkheimer calls our "totally managed" planet (Critical Theory vii)--a dismaying room of mirrors, the Hall of Versailles turned an 'everywhere': humans can go nowhere without seeing themselves and their works and effects.

On the other hand, Lee's model of simultaneous 'dualness' brings home the sense of whole system, of ecology; there is no outside. Not only do humans affect planet's materiality, everything that is affects everything else. Planet is a dynamism of interrelationships; all that is is affected at every moment by the web that sustains it. Given this belonging-together of everything that is, how are we to understand the unique power of human knowing and doing; how are we to understand technology; how are we to understand the power of judgement that can see what we are within and imagine an alternative? For Heidegger, again, our present state is a destining of Being; the 'specialness' of humans is part of a co-creative stance with Being. Lee is partly drawn to the conclusion that what we are within, in this technological era, is something destined. But, for Lee, there is a part of the self--something resonating with what Grant is intimating--that revolts against the lineaments of that supposed destiny, questions

whether the present need have been, and wants to find our reality otherwise. As is his pattern, Lee suffers the paradox of finding himself within an intolerable logic that his whole being resists; again, he does not overtly probe the full meaning of his suffering.

The tangling conundrums of Savage Fields provoke this kind of question: 'If consciousness as a separate knowing faculty has been debunked, has rejoined "earth" as material and instinctual, then what is thinking? What is doing Lee's thinking?' More importantly, if a human can suffer and loathe the strife, the way of being, thinking, and doing that technology is, then where in either the liberal or the savage fields picture is the faculty that judges that strife and does that suffering? Why take nature so monolithically? Why forget, as Theodore Roethke says, "Great Nature has another thing to do / To you and me" ("The Waking" 758)? [2] Why not probe that mystery of the coincidence of human materiality and human transcendence of materiality in acts of free choice, like love and justice? Among the commentators on Savage Fields, David Godfrey, E.D. Blodgett, Steven Scobie, and two of Lee's greatest admirers, Robert Bringhurst and Sean Kane, have all tried to grapple with some form of "logical flaw" (Godfrey 153) they find in Savage Fields. All react to the rather indiscriminate 'symmetrization' and absolutism in Lee's argument. Most trace as well aspects of Lee's misreading of Billy the Kid and Beautiful Losers. I will say just a few things about the misreadings, as a way to make an attempt on what I see as Lee's logical flaw. I will then connect that flaw to Lee's characterization of the holy.

It is only fair to sort out one's sense of logical flaw by listening first to what Lee says he was trying to do in Savage Fields. As he says in "Reading Savage Fields," the whole project of writing Savage Fields was for him an effort to think outside the discourse of modernity, to let go of the notion of thinking 'about,' of surrounding what

is to be known by the mind in order to make the known an object. Instead, what he says he was trying to do was to "subvert" "the liberal categories" of thought. Perhaps unwittingly imitating "F.", Cohen's desperate and high-wired guru of engineered enlightenment, Lee suggests that what he was trying to do was make our confusion, in Cohen's terms, "a butterfly net for magic" (202):

> How can we think at all, if we relinquish the fundamental syntax of thought with which our era furnishes us?... That is the guiding question of Savage Fields. And if a reader reaches a point of puzzlement, vexation, and discomfort at that prospect, he has arrived at the starting-point of the book's exploration. To proceed further, he must have a certain capacity for kinetic passivity.... The goal is, precisely, to let one's sense of structure be re-shaped (162).

A reader is invited, he says, to "step inside" (163) the new paradigm of dual but not dichotomous planet-order. Inside that paradigm, one comes to know herself as "an event in the strife; there is no purchase outside it for the mind, for there is no outside" (164). Inside the inside of the doubleness of planet, where instinct and consciousness are different modes of the same material whole, a person will find herself rendered "inarticulate" when trying to use the subject-object, fact-value rubrics; she will find "the whole language gone mute" (164). Lee's pattern of encountering a silencing of mind from which a new way of thinking and being and thinking Being might arise is obviously operative here. Obedient attention to cadence, the opening of the self to cadence so that cadence may shape consciousness here becomes an openness to the confounding, simultaneous dualness of planet. That openness is a suffering, both as agony and as receptivity, a willingness to be shaped, a great desire to get quit of the rubric that has

obscured the sacredness of beings and the beneficence of nature. In inviting his readers to loosen their hold on objective knowing and to let the doubleness of the planet shape their consciousness, Lee is suggesting that, with Savage Fields, to get the point is to myth it.

Lee's thinking of the model is first given in his reading of Ondaatje's The Collected Works of Billy the Kid: Left Handed Poems. Works like this, Lee tells us, first gave rise to his intuition of planet as dual. Lee asks some very important questions here about certain trends in the literature of the time. Why so much violence? What is the character of that violence? What is the literature that finds this violence pervasive and defining trying to do? In feeling out that violence, in attempting to stand within the consciousness that seems to pervade Ondaatje's work, Lee comes to his sense of savage strife and to his conclusion that, in the cosmos recreated by Ondaatje, which mimes with startling cogency for Lee the reality of existence in our era, "'To be' is to be in strife" (11); "strife has become our generative given.... A thing or a person is now an event in the warfare of world and earth" (37).

Lee's reading does make the tense blend of mechanical and organic imagery in Billy the Kid leap into relief. His account of "Six Moments" or phases in the strife does light up the character and the rhythm of the violence that pervades the collection. Lee's reading does convincingly find in the collection intimate instances of the assault of "world" on "earth"; the collection does light up earth's anguished revolts. It does remind us, both uncomfortably and poignantly, of the materiality, the fragile fleshliness of humans and other creatures. It does capture the quirky strangeness of other creatures as 'other.' But do Lee's conclusions do the work justice? That is, do they speak to the heart and the whole of the collection? Does Ondaatje depict a world where there are no

alternatives for being human other than perpetrating the violent assault of world on earth and suffering in return the assault of earth and of one's own tortured and manic instincts? That is the way of being that Lee says Ondaatje's Billy exemplifies. Does Ondaatje show a planet where "there is no longer any appropriable meaning ... to 'right and wrong,' 'good and evil,' 'justice,' 'holiness,' 'truth'" (43)? Does Billy the Kid "join world in total impotence towards any source of meaning beyond world's own barbaric and suicidal dynamic" (44)? Does it even "participate in the erosion of planetary meaning, and of humankind, which it has found such splendid strategies for recording" (12)? Lee claims that, in the world of Billy the Kid, "It is not as if men 'decide' to shoot, to mechanize, to control with mind--and no more can they decide not to" (43). Is there, in Ondaatje's vision, truly no choice left about how to be human or how to inhabit the earth?

Perhaps a start to dealing with these questions is to point out the curious lapse in Lee's reading of Billy. The Kid is no doubt a scary character; he's no Nicholas Nickleby. He has disciplined his body into hair-trigger readiness to kill and he does exhibit a preternatural alertness to the energies of nature, especially in their threatening mode. Lee argues that the character of Billy is exemplary of "world" as savage domination of earth. "[B]ecause his affinity with earth is stronger than anyone else's ... his need to smash earth is greater than anyone else's" (39). That, in sum, is Billy, in Lee's reading. But does Billy, as Lee argues, subscribe to the "moral of newspapers or gun"; does he "eliminate much" (Billy the Kid 11) from his vision so that he can kill coolly, "casually, almost absent-mindedly, out of the periphery of his vision" (39)? Lee builds his argument about Billy's character on this passage from the collection:

> MMMMMMMM mm thinking
>
> moving across the world on horses

body split at the edge of their necks

neck sweat eating at my jeans

moving across the world on horses

so if I had a newsman's brain I'd say

well some morals are physical

must be clear and open

like diagram of watch or star

one must eliminate much

that is one turns when the bullet leaves you

walk off see none of the thrashing

the very eyes welling up like bad drains

believing then the moral of newspapers and gun

where bodies are mindless as paper flowers you dont feed

or give to drink

that is why I can watch the stomach of clocks

shift their wheels and pins into each other

and emerge living, for hours (11)

In Lee's reading, Billy does "eliminate much"; he does "turn when the bullet leaves you." Lee seems to overlook the "if." Now, the "if" could be read as preface to a newsman's way of saying what Billy actually does. 'If I had a newsman's brain, this is how I would explain what I do.' The alternate reading is to take the "if" to suggest that, with such a "brain" he would do the following things, but, not having "a newsman's brain" he does something quite other. [3] The passage suggests that it is because he does not have a newsman's brain and does not think "bodies are mindless" that "for hours"

he "can watch the stomach of clocks"--nicely mechanical and not fleshly--enact their mechanical pain and piercing "and emerge living." Within the ambiguity the syntax introduces here, "emerge living" could refer either to the clocks or to Billy; it refers to Billy, then the suggestion is that watching clocks does not take the toll on him that seeing the "thrashing" of murdered beings does. The phrase "for hours" could modify "living" but likely modifies "watch." Watching human innards spill is <u>not</u> something Billy can do for hours, but ignoring that spilling is also something he does not do.

That Billy does not eliminate much, does not reduce reality to the simplicity of a newspaper account or the mechanical insouciance of gun is suggested by the numerous horrified, mesmerized accounts Billy gives of dying bodies. Right in this very passage, he recounts what Lee says he doesn't wait around to see: "the thrashing / the very eyes welling up like bad drains." Then, in the next passage, we get Charlie Bowdre's death, and Billy's lasting response to the spectacle of frailty: "the eyes grew all over his body" and

> Jesus I never knew that did you
> the nerves shot out
> the liver running around there
> like a headless hen jerking
> brown all over the yard
> seen that too at my aunt's
> never eaten hen since then (12)

As Steven Scobie also comments, one must not forget Billy's shooting of Gregory, which seems to be inflected by a certain human compassion:

> I'd shot him well and careful
>
> made it explode under his heart
>
> so it wouldnt last long...(15)

Now, it would be ludicrous to get into a vindication of kinds of killing, but it would seem that Billy does not attempt to suppress "earth" or the consciousness of earth to the degree Lee claims he does. He is also not cool, which is to say he has not fully technologised himself into a killing machine.

On the other hand, there is Pat Garrett, who likewise schooled himself to kill and succeeded: he schooled himself, as Billy did not, and as Billy indignantly recounts, to eliminate friendship and to become that rather more frightening perversion of humanity, a "sane assassin":

> Pat Garrett, ideal assassin.... Ideal assassin for his mind was unwarped. Had the ability to kill someone on the street walk back and finish a joke. One who had decided what was right and forgot all morals.... An academic murderer...--a sane assassin sane assassin sane assassin sane assassin sane assassin sane (28-29)

As the crazily hissing syntax suggests at the end of this passage suggests, Billy (the voice of this collection, after all, as Scobie reminds us) finds the notion of sane assassin pretty frightening. Garrett has put himself beyond good and evil; he enters evil and remains unaffected, his mind "unwarped"; Billy, however, has <u>not</u> been left unwarped. In George Grant's terms, that warping, that damaging would itself be an instance of the beneficence of nature, a sign that things and beings are not neutral and have a good and a limit that cannot be transgressed without harm. Garrett, unwarped, <u>is</u> within the "nihilism" Lee finds holding sway in the planet of savage fields. That Billy is not suggests that there is more to planet than this air-tight paradigm contains.

When reading Lee's claim that there is no appropriable meaning in this cosmology for right and wrong, for justice and goodness, it must also be remembered that the killings for which Billy is sought were all done during what all agreed was a war. Billy, criminal as he is, nevertheless feels a sense of moral outrage at the injustice of being tracked down for actions sanctioned as justifiable battles. What is worse, in his eyes, is that the killing for which he is now wanted was one for which Judge Houston had offered Billy amnesty--a recognition that Houston, to his discredit, Billy tells us, will not "do anything about" (83). These comments are not made to refute the dualness of planet and the fact of strife but, rather, to temper the absolutism of Lee's account of Billy. That account tends, finally, to reduce the complexity and interest of the character and of the character's world.

To retrieve my other questions: Does the world Ondaatje depict close out all other options for being human other than savage worlding? Is technology's 'other' utterly absent? The modern world is indeed caught in the throes of technological making, of manipulation with little regard for the nature of the matter manipulated or for the ecosystem of which that matter is a part. Ondaatje does reveal the human penchant for violence against the earth. But that this is not the only kind of making-activity open to humans is suggested by Sally's healing interventions and by the loathing with which Billy recounts Livingston's perversion of the spaniels.

Billy's retelling of John Chisum's tale of Livingston's dogs is framed by the image of Sallie lovingly petting and protecting Henry, her basset hound, clumsy product of deliberate (technological) breeding to slow the strain down to suit the pace of French fox-hunters. Livingston, in his madness and "perverse logic," in his utter, tyrannical disregard of otherness, produced

> 40 mad dogs, clinically and scientifically breeding the worst with the worst, those heaps of bone and hair and sexual organs and bulging eyes and minds which were chaotic half out of hunger out of liquor out of their minds being pressed out of shape by new freakish bones that grew into their skulls (61-62).

Livingston meets his end when his mad dogs eat him. When "the vet found them, they were grotesque things.... These originally beautiful dogs were gawky and terrifying.... He couldnt even recognize that they had been spaniels or were intended to be" (61). Billy's telling captures the vet's horror and sadness at this transgression of nature. The heaping of phrases in the description of the dogs betrays Billy's pain before the craziness and pity of the image. The syntax catches the thrashing of the mind at the hurt and the chaos of it all, in sympathy with the suffering of the dogs. Right after the tale of Livingston's dogs, we learn that Sallie, Livingston's sane and loving opposite, has managed to undo some of the damage done to Henry by deliberate inbreeding and manipulation. Before the mad-dog tale, we learn that, when she brought Henry over from England, the dog "could hardly walk up a stair at first because it was so heavy and long" (59). After that tale, Billy comments that "Henry could deal with the steps now" (62).

A consciousness of the holy, the inviolable, is discernible in Billy the Kid through the pained inflection of that tale of the dogs, discernible in the gentleness of Sally, and even discernible in Billy's pain-filled inability to "eliminate much." The utter materiality of Ondaatje's planet is no way denied by these examples. To the contrary, these examples hit the bedrock of sacred unmanipulability--which is what Lee so wants to affirm--and they show a human possibility of relating to that unmanipulability, not savagely but reverently. They take Ondaatje's work beyond the amoral silence about justice and good that Lee says it rests within.

Lee's overlooking or undervaluing of the dogs incident and of Sally's healing work seems to have something to do with both his theory of making and his notion of the holy. For Lee, making is either technological domination or, in the case of literature, faithful mimesis of 'the way things are' on the planet. Similarly, the operation of human mind, for Lee, is either thinking that surrounds and un-selves things, or short-circuited silence that opens one to direct receptivity of the other, in itself. Where is there space for irony and play, for questioning and conjecturing, for receptive and thoughtful awareness, for imagining, even inventing? In the world of Savage Fields such flexing of the mind is oddly absent.

Is Lee's poetics of rather literal mimesis the operative poetic in Ondaatje and Cohen? Are they mainly concerned with depicting the way things are, faithfully? Are they indeed caught in a depiction of a cosmology that shuts out any consciousness of right and wrong, justice and goodness, as Lee claims? Dave Godfrey argues that they are not; they are querying different modes of being, but they are also playing with texts, with ideas, with myths and the human penchant for myth-making. As "tricksters" (159), they are also playing with their audiences and doing some swift-footed skirmishing with the human tendency to fix reality in absolute shape, in reductive answers. Ondaatje both reveals and conceals Billy; Billy is a puzzle. Ondaatje perpetrates the fiction of letting Billy tell his own story; he gives us one more way of thinking about Billy. He puts this story right alongside the other texts on Billy--historical accounts, pulp fictions accounts. What his account does, that the others do not, is refuse to answer all the 'why's' of Billy. To speak a glimpse into someone's or something's nature, and to speak as well what remains unknowable about that nature seems to me a reverential act, rather at odds with the absolute objectification and defining of modern positivist knowing.

Insofar as his text does connect with the world of the reader, does Ondaatje imagine a world where humans and earth are on a continuum? Yes. He also shows a world where, contrary to Lee's claims, there still is choice; not all is blind mechanism or amoral savagery. Strife is certainly present and resonant; the strife of the book does resonate with what we know about being in the age of technology. But that strife is still found alongside gentle making and healing, puzzlement, insight, even a morality that distinguishes ways of being human. The book actually inflects those ways--as I suggested with Billy, Sally, Garrett, Houston, and Livingston--with a sense of good and evil.

What Lee can't seem to decide, in his treatment of Ondaatje and Cohen, is whether or not they themselves retain a critical purchase on the savage cosmology he finds them revealing. On the one hand, as I noted earlier, he claims that Cohen and Ondaatje envision planet as a dual wholeness and treat the dual<u>ism</u> of the liberal world-view as an "unfortunate component of their characters' world-view." On the other hand, he decries the fact that their works, as literature of the savage fields, "may turn out to collaborate with the very things against which (in the main) [they testify]" (11-12) They even possibly participate "in the erosion of planetary meaning, and of human kind, which [they have] found such splendid strategies for recording" (12). Now, if Cohen and Ondaatje are able to treat the liberal world view as something that can be judged "unfortunate," they must be speaking from a point of view that allows them to <u>judge</u> as "unfortunate" that assault of world on earth which the false consciousness of liberalism unleashes. Liberalism aside, if they can judge as unfortunate the suicidal domination of the material world, they must have some alternative way of being in mind, even some norm of life-cherishing health.

Admittedly, "unfortunate" is a carefully-chosen morally-neutral word. But, if to

be is to be in strife, amoral strife, then by what power might one judge that strife "unfortunate," undesirable, even wrong? If there is something in the writing of these two authors that suggests to Lee that they are judging the strife, then that "something" must be accessible to other readers. That something would give the reader a critical purchase on savage strife as well; it would hold the works back from participation "in the erosion of planetary meaning." In fact, that judging consciousness that decries dualism and resists savagery would actually affirm 'meaning.' To decry and resist savagery would be to speak from an intuition and presence of good, of what is transgressed. The presence of this intuition in the consciousness of the authors, and therefore in the voice of the text would, finally, insert a salutary irony into the mix and deconstruct the totally closed cosmology Lee is positing. How Lee can even say "meaning" if he believes the amoral strife is total, is a mystery. How he can say that art of the savage fields exacts "as its price the abandonment of any vision of human possibility beyond what modern world-consciousness can sustain" is a conundrum. What is doing the visioning; what is knowing the loss of meaning? Out of what human capacity are these questions arising in Lee? What human capacity so longs to know the world as sacred?

As I have said, Savage Fields is one grievous effort on Lee's part to know the sacred, the beneficence of nature. But how does he conceive the sacred, the holy? In Savage Fields, Lee names one of the six "moments" in the pattern of strife he discerns in Billy the Kid a moment of "union" (25). This moment of "union" offers a glimpse into Lee's characterization of the holy. "[T]he moment of union reconciles [the two domains] deeply, rather than merely allowing them to coexist without fighting" (25). The passage from Ondaatje that Lee cites in support of his claim is the following: "I began to block my mind of all thought. Just sensed the room and learnt what my body could do....

There were animals who did not move out and accepted me as a larger breed" (17). To begin to touch the holiness of matter and of other beings, a human, for Lee, must relinquish "mind"--mind as that dominating consciousness Lee names as the prime instrument of savage worlding. It is the stilling of mind Lee seems most interested in, here, to support his thesis about consciousness. It is the stilling of mind, an escape beyond reason, that, for Lee, makes an opening for an intuition of the holy.

Yet, in his passage, Ondaatje also shows that another way of knowing arises: an opening of the whole sensorium to the presence and body and inviolability of the other. The passage goes on:

> I ate the old grain with them, drank from a constant puddle.... I saw no human and heard no human voice ... never ate flesh or touched another animal's flesh, never entered his boundary. We were all aware and allowed each other. The fly who sat on my arm, after his inquiry, just went away, ate his disease and kept it in him. When I walked I avoided the cobwebs who had places to grow to, who had stories to finish. The flies caught in those acrobat nets were the only murder I saw.

The fact that Billy finds peace where no humans are is not an absolute; he also finds peace with Sally Chisum, so the condition of the holy is not the absence of humans. With the animals, Billy finds peace with his instinctual nature, but that does not mean consciousness comes to an end. The earth-consciousness that Lee says he cannot think seems to be intimated here. It is not that there is no thinking; Billy thinks the cobwebs and the fact of their stories; he both thinks and feels and enacts a reverence for boundaries. He is earth, here, and instinct, along with the other animals, but he is more. Humans have more power; part of their humanness resides in how they choose to use it.

Billy chooses, in this moment, to use it to govern himself, in reverential relation to others. This capacity of choice, this bit of the self that is free beyond determinism and capable of loving obedience to indestructible good, needs to be incorporated into the account of "world" consciousness, which Lee tends to equate merely with savage, unavoidable domination; it also needs to be incorporated into "earth" consciousness, which Lee tends to see as the sheer dionysianism of fulfilled instinct.

Granted, the next moment in Ondaatje's tale brings, as Lee points out, a return of assault. In Lee's view, the destruction of this peace by an assault of earth triggers the only reaction Billy knows--world assault. "The sequence is paradigmatic" (25).

The sequence does lend cogency to the ideas of earth assault and world assault, and vice versa, but Lee's paradigm does not capture the whole complexity of the experience. Billy's re-entry into violence is not an assault on earth simply because it is earth. Rather, Billy's peace is broken by the rats who, eating grain left by humans to ferment, begin to behave in a way even somewhat out of nature for rats. Billy points out the distinction between sane rat behaviour and insane: "after a heavy rain storm burst the power in those seeds and brought drunkenness into the minds of those rats, they abandoned the sanity of eating the food before them and turned on each other and grotesque and awkwardly because of their size they went for each other's eyes and ribs..." (18). The Biblical cadence is powerful; the heaping syntax of the whole passage--one long sentence that goes on for twenty-one lines--imitates the crazy grief of the experience and echoes the syntactical howl in the tale of Livingston's dogs. In that grief and horror, so closely following upon a passage of peace, there seems to be more said than simple unjudging acceptance of an unavoidable pattern of strife-bound being. Lee says Billy and humans in the savage fields have no choice but strife, punctuated perhaps

by the occasional truce, but still strife is primary. Billy's grief here suggests the contrary; a good needful to humanness is harmed by the craziness that ensues. Billy's peace in the barn and his grief and horror at the rats' accidental madness also suggests a consciousness of a way of being together on the earth other than strife.

Lee comments that Billy the Kid offers "no explanation of why" justice, holiness, good and evil "should have lost their meaning" (44). "The impasse of the book's moral vision is not something he has willed then, nor that he enjoys.... [I]t is not a question of Ondaatje's personal attitude in the first place. The closing down of options for being human is pre-personal ... he cannot choose for the process not to occur" (44). On the basis of a misreading of the principal character in the collection, studied in detached fashion from the human ecology that surrounds him, Lee comes to that conclusion. What that conclusion cannot accommodate are all the inflections that evoke a consciousness that escapes the paradigm, a consciousness that rhymes with Lee's own suffering at the spectacle of strife. As Lee says towards the end of the book, "World's attempt to escape the ontology of world appears to be the central motif of the literature of savage fields" (103). Out of what different consciousness does this attempt come? To retrieve a metaphor from my discussion of Grant, it would seem that the part of the human that rejects the consciousness of domination and retains a consciousness of an 'otherwise' of being on the earth opens a space in the technological circle for the rose-breath to fill. In that space, the attunement of the human to a good beyond manipulation can sing, even if the song is a song of grief at the diminishment in the way of being wrought by the surrounding press and presence of technology. In that space for the rose-breath resides an enduring testimony of the beneficence of nature, of the resistance in the human and in non-human nature to the objectifying power of technology. It is the opening through

which one might glimpse that freeing otherwise of being-and-making that Grant conjectures in "In Defense of North America"--an acceptance of humans' necessary intervening and calculation in order to make a habitation for our so much frailer bodies, and a shaping of that intervention by a stance of awe, a consciousness of otherness. Making shaped by a respect for the given goodness of what it is, might become a gardening of the earth, a working-with its nature and limits, rather than a rape.

Interestingly, Lee's final, jotted "Entries", which Bringhurst wisely renames "'Exits'" (81), include a vow to "Cherish the gaps, holes, leaks, fissures, shortfalls, failures in world's juggernaut ascendancy. Think the coherence, non-smarmily, of world's inability to achieve what it wants--along with the coherence of its ability to achieve what it wants" (110). What Lee perhaps should have added was 'Think the meaning of my own visceral and spiritual rejection of a model that cannot answer the full range of my humanness.' Think what is being spoken in the musing that the paradigm of strife "could be wrong in being a bad way to be" (109). The gaps in closure Lee's "Entries" point up suggest there is a largeness beyond the model that points up both its inadequacy and a greater complexity in the nature of things that is worth encountering.

I am reminded, by Lee's "Entries," of Grant's closing words to Time as History:

> We must not forget that new potentialities of reasoning and making happen have been actualized (and not simply contemplated as mistrusted potentialities, as for example in Plato) and therefore must be thought as having been actualize, in relation to what is remembered.... It may be that at any time or place, human beings can be opened to the whole in their loving and thinking, even as its complete intelligibility eludes them. (52)

Lee, in courage, has dared that intelligibility. In daring to think the present, he faces its

danger: "The coming decades hold undreamed-of forms of tyranny.... The irrational will be rationalized and put to use, pre-eminently by the military apparatus." (108) In his anxiety, he echoes Grant's grievous lament at the end of English Speaking Justice that "without any knowledge of justice as what we are fitted for, we will move into the future with a 'justice' that is terrifying in its potentialities for mad humanity of action" (94). With Grant, Lee offers his perplexing conundrums as a call to thought about the lineaments of the present and the nature of what is.

In the trajectory of his meditation in Savage Fields, the tragic conclusion that our present planet-order shuts down any possibility of being beyond strife operates somewhat like Lee's encounter with the wordlessness of his civil space in "Cadence, Country, Silence" and his recognition that he has not escaped the language of technique in "Polyphony." It brings a turn towards a stance of reverence. But the turn is, in this case, a double-take. From the amoral universe he finds in Billy the Kid, Lee turns in longing to the image of an 'otherwise' than strife--what he calls the "Isis continuum" of Beautiful Losers, the image of pre-fallen unity of being, in which earth is known as sacred, where God has not died. However, this 'turn' turns sour [illegible] recipitates Lee into a further encounter with loss of meaning. That further encounter precipitates yet another turn into the hunger that finally gets expressed in "Entries." When the "Isis continuum," in his reading of Beautiful Losers, turns out to be one more fabrication of dominating, manipulative world-consciousness, he is once again stripped of comfort. Out of that hunger arises a resistance to the cosmology of strife, an openness to anything that might escape this intolerable logic. Once again, by the end of Savage Fields he has thought his way to the end of analytic thought, to the point of need, a readiness for awe or joy--a gift from the unthinkable holiness of what is.

What effectively rouses this hunger for the holy in the meditative trajectory of Savage Fields is the encounter with the possibility of redemption from history, from modernity, from the desacralizing fact-value dichotomy found in the promise of "miracle news" in Beautiful Losers. In his last of several characterizations of the "central action" of this book, Lee suggests that it is a "psychomachia"--Cohen's psychomachia: "The fundamental action of Beautiful Losers is the attempt of the governing consciousness to imagine an escape from the ontological condition of world" (102). No less is Lee's treatment of the book a similar psychomachia--a tale of hopes raised and dashed, of the possibility of finding the world confirmed as holy, of matter confirmed as sacred, of God confirmed alive and nature as beneficent, followed by the tragic debunking of that hope. With hopes dashed, and critical detachment abolished, Lee offers to rewrite Cohen's book:

> In effect the beginning of the novel is the first half of Book Two, read as defining the norms of world-space from which Cohen is recoiling. His blockbuster attempt to escape consists of imagining the action of Book One, where the narrator's enlightenment 'proves' that planet is independent of man, and beneficent, and hence that world-consciousness really can be transformed. And the conclusion of the novel is the first half of Book Two (again), which re-enters daily world-space and enacts Cohen's recognition that he cannot escape it. Book Two concedes that Book One was itself a product and confirmation of the titanic pathology of world-consciousness. And F.'s knee-jerk self-definitions throughout this movement, which continue even as he admits defeat, grow understandably more and more frantic and excessive (102-103).

Beautiful Losers is one of those literary products that will just not sit still for any definition of what it is 'about.' It may simply be an orgy of indiscriminate thought; it may be an invitation to thought, with no prescription. It may be a matter of value-free play with alternate myths. It may be a spoof on the quest of the orgastic gnostics of the sixties and one of their gurus, Norman O. Brown. It may be a serious entertainment of polymorphous perversity. It may be an exploration of the holy and an effort to remember it in the midst of modernity; it may be a devastating pronouncement on the impossibility of remembering the holy, in the midst of the savage field of our technologized present. It may be the spectacle of one man going madder than Nietzsche as the extent of the desacralization of the world breaks upon him, asserts itself within him. It may be one passionate wake-up call to Canadians and to moderns, to relinquish the mania for control, to still the willed charge of history-making, to learn the land and the body, for once, to learn the reverential openness of self that is so threatened by the effort to pin reality with fact and analysis. It may be one long prayer of longing, one wild effort to make the self empty so it might receive. It may be one long prayer to the eternality of the earth, the ineradicable presence of good that can be mediated by the sublime and the banal alike, and that can give rise to almost unimaginable forgiveness of unspeakable evil. It is, for sure, like poetry, a gift of language that allows an exuberant release from linear thinking, an entry into the world of question and the world of like and as and connection, an ecology of inclusiveness and complexity. For our purposes here, Beautiful Losers is the work that reveals most poignantly Lee's desire to know nature as beneficent.

I will not take on a detailed encounter with Lee's reading of the novel but will confine myself to some comments that that reading engenders about Lee's thoughts on making and on the holy. What Lee is enchanted by in Beautiful Losers, is the image of

earth as the Isis continuum, which suffers all and heals all and forgives all. What he is disenchanted by is the notion that this vision of earth's forgotten sacredness is simply F.'s fabrication, spun out of his radical freedom, spun out of his despair. Among the wild abundance of F.s' pronouncements, what seems to hold Lee, in his interpretation, is caught in this passage, a telling parenthesis given in the midst of the technological orgy of the Danish Vibrator:

> (O Father, Nameless and Free of Description, lead me from the Desert of the Possible. Too long I have dealt with Events. Too long I laboured to become an Angel. I chased Miracles with a bag of Power to salt their wild Tails. I tried to dominate Insanity so I could steal its Information. I tried to program the Computers with Insanity. I tried to create Grace to prove that Grace existed. Do not punish Charles Axis. We could n[illegible]e the evidence so we stretch our Memories. Dear Father, accept this confession: we did not train ourselves to Receive because we believed there wasn't Anything to receive and we could not endure with this Belief.) (225)

For Lee, this confession is an exposure of F. as the embodiment of modern radical freedom; it makes all F.'s miracle news, his tale of the sacredness of the earth one more instance of fabrication, one more value-free product of technological mind. It is evidence, for Lee, that modern man has, like F., "'nothing but a System'" (99). The Isis continuum, the ability to "dwell in planet in fear and trembling, or in reverence, or as creatures within a created order" is, for the modern human trapped in world-consciousness nothing but "raw data," an object of thought, not a 'life-possibility.'

Lee makes of F. a convincing exemplar of radical freedom. The engineering of grace, the inability to receive because of the conviction that there is no givenness

independent of the human, no greater good he is within, are, for Lee, quintessentially modern:

> When there is no longer any pattern for being human which has absolute sanction, man must invent himself. It is the inception of radical freedom. Yet the result is very bitter. A man has limitless scope to be anything to [sic] all--and nothing at all to be.... Radical freedom means a plethora of alienated selves, free-floating I-systems, mocking a self which has been unselved of all but the will to create itself. (99-100)

Lee acknowledges the suffering this status visits on F., but, again, what he does not pursue is the meaning of that suffering. He argues, instead, that Cohen does not succeed in transcending F. F.'s admission of fabrication, in Lee's view, derails the book, and prevents Cohen from either fully imagining another way of being or producing an honest encounter with the problem of savage fields. Lee's fear that a made thing cannot be a true thing, his fear that a fiction cannot mediate what is, seems operative here. His tendency to understand art as a mimesis of the given, and the artist as the obedient medium of the given tends to diminish the active participation of the artist in discovering insight. In taking F. literally, he seems to be suggesting that a novel cannot mean beyond its characters.

But F.'s manic suffering of his ingrained modernity may also be read as Cohen's way of intimating--all provisionally, all questioningly--the holiness of what is. F.'s suffering could be read as the rage of that unmanipulable part of the human, that ineradicable goodness that resists the meaninglessness of the modern paradigm. Sick of radical freedom, perhaps F. encounters radical givenness. His suffering of his illusion of utter freedom, when put in context with the rest of the novel, can be seen as one more

instance of the need that Edith as Isis and that Catherine Tekakwitha meet, in their differing ways: the need for compassionate acknowledgement of one's inviolable otherness. More than dionysiac power, Edith-as-Isis-as-Earth is otherness. She both embodies that otherness, suffers its transgression, and reaffirms its eternality by forgiving her transgressors infinitely. Even in the crazy Danish Vibrator scene, there is a suggestion that God--as indestructible goodness--is not absent. In the perspective of the world as holy, what is most due, astoundingly, even to Hitler, is forgiveness. To destroy a destroyer would be to acquiesce in his vision of the nothingness of beings, the absence of an irreducible core of good in them. To forgive him is to acknowledge that core, and its persistence even through the most violent nihilism. To forgive him is to enact a transcendent justice beyond calculation. Likewise Catherine, in all the strangeness of bodily deprival, offers a glimpse into that irreducible core that enjoins justice. Her experience can be read as an effort to put herself aside to witness to the eternality of the body, its status, not just as medium of carnal ecstasy, but as the locus of what cannot be rendered an object, what is finally irreducible, even in the midst of deprival.

I offer this sketch of an alternate reading because it underscores by contrast Lee's tendency to regard the holy as the ecstatic unity of body and mind, the unironic luminousness of being that irradiates consciousness and relaxes the need for distinction and choice. Seeking and not finding this uncompromising and absolutist notion of the holy, Lee finds no form of being conscious that is not manipulative, and so finds himself in the closure of savage fields.

As Savage Fields demonstrates, Lee's search for the holy seems a search for an unambiguous proclamation of sacredness, of ecstatic unity of being beyond the difficult world of politics, beyond the various world where goodness and fallenness cohabit and

both receptivity and vigilant choice are needed. Held by this notion of the holy, he tends to de-emphasize the understanding of reverence as that acknowledgement of obligation to others, an obligation that, enacted even in the midst of the desacralizing rubric of technology, subverts the totality of technology and witnesses to a goodness beyond manipulation. In his curious absence of self-understanding, perhaps to be expected in one so utterly self-conscious, Lee locates the reverence of his own work in its method, its polyphonic miming of the cadence of being. In keeping his focus there, he seems to overlook the reverence that is intimated in what happens in the poems. In the midst of various laments for the loss of meaning, there come intimations of reverence, perhaps borne on the music of cadence, but piercing up into the drama of the poems. Even in the midst of the modern paradigm, Lee's speakers sometimes achieve, not the ecstatic confirmation of the Isis continuum, but the costly affirmation of an enduring call to justice. That's a poignant luminousness, and not an easy arrival at the holy. That is the real locus of the beneficence of nature. So close it seems to have eluded him.

Notes

[1] I note, simply as a matter of interest, an interview I heard recently on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Sunday Morning radio show. Dr. Michael Persinger, Director of the Behavioural Neurosciences Laboratory at Laurentian University, Ontario, is currently conducting studies that suggest that the religious experience of divine presence is the result of the firing of neurons in the brain; God, he says, is the brain's chemistry. In laboratory simulations, using an electrical charge no greater than that emitted by a domestic hair-dryer, he can cause a research subject to experience what mystics, in the past, have described as the immediate apprehension of an awesome power, understood as divinity. During the July 28, 1996 interview, he described his research and concluded that it will enable humanity to take a further step in the detachment from myth.

[2] When teaching this poem to an undergraduate English class at the University of Western Ontario, in April 1974, Dr. John Graham commented, with some exasperation, that he was amazed that it did not occur to a group of healthy twenty-year olds that Roethke's "another thing" was sex. In my reading here, I am invoking the power of poetry to offer multiple meanings: sexual ecstasy and compassion, discernment, the ability to imagine things 'otherwise.'

[3] As Dr. Stan Dragland has pointed out to me, not only does Billy not have a "newsman's brain," he quietly subverts a newsman's interview with him, at the end of the collection. His subversion helps him elude objectification by the newsman's reductive mode of knowing.

Chapter Six

Poetry and Reverence: Lee's Poems

This study of Lee in the light of Grant has been an effort to understand reverence as an encounter with the eternality or indestructible beauty of a being, an encounter that knows that being as beyond manipulation, and beyond reductive explanation. Reverence discovers in the other a goodness more central to its nature than even temporality or mortality. Within this understanding, to behold reverently is to be enlightened by love, to be taken by what is luminous and inviolable in the other, and to be opened to the demand of justice that its inviolability puts upon one. This stance is so difficult to think in the modern era, Grant and Lee acknowledge, because human knowing in general, as Savage Fields laments, is shaped by the notion that there is no nature of things, nothing but neutral matter and radically free human subjects.

In Lee's writing there can be found a hunger for reverence so strong and enduring that it shapes the whole of his career as a poet to date. But in the expression of that hunger, there are also traces of the very thinking that, in our time, has disabled the understanding of reverence in its fullest 'incarnational' sense. Lee's language is riddled with the vocabulary of absence, of temporality, of transience and non-being. His sources for understanding the holy tend to be, on the one hand, the inescapable modernity of Heidegger, and, on the other, a mysticism of the void. Lee's hunger for the holy finds its way into words in terms of the ancient and enduring mystical desire for release from self, loss of self in void or in ecstatic oneness, a desire for sudden epiphany, for a flash of mystic awe. Otherness, in Lee's vocabulary, is mainly the otherness of the absent gods, otherness experienced as dreadful power and overwhelming awe--"tremendum."

His tendency to adopt a Heideggerian focus on non-being, necessary absence, random illumination, and a mystic sense of otherness as transcendent power deflects attention from the enduring call of the sacred otherness of fellow creatures, met in the trouble and joy of day to day living.

Within the understanding of reverence discoverable in Grant's writings, the worth of other creatures is not posited solely upon their incipient nothingness; their given goodness or holiness is never a matter of absence--is more stubbornly present than that--and not dependent upon some amoral destining of Being for revelation. What is has a given nature, a good, an ineradicable "beneficence." The mystic strain in Lee does, in one way, work against this incarnational sense since it moves him to seek the holy directly, beyond thought, beyond mediation by the things and beings of the earth; it obscures the presence of the good and the beneficence of the whole. In another way, though, the hunger for awe, for a movement beyond self-focus and beyond knowledge as power, prepares the self for the openness to the other that is the condition of justice--that comportment towards beings that is imbued with reverence. For all the vocabulary of Heideggerianism and mysticism, there nevertheless arise in Lee's works gestures of care and generosity, tugs of creatureliness, that inflect his work with this further understanding of reverence, this further consciousness that escapes his formulations. The speakers of his poems, situated in the world of Grant's everyday, "nerve-wracking situations of justice," come upon a call to justice, from time to time, that suggests the notion of holiness as inviolable and demanding otherness, there before one, in the flesh. At times, lamentably, this core of holiness is encountered only when transgressed in what Lee calls the "slaughterhouse / world" ("Riffs" 136). But in those poignant gestures of care and generosity that illumine the poems, there is found the "more than the words

allow," the intimation of an enduring sacredness not given in the formulations of the holy Lee tends to invoke. These intimations offer a glimpse of a way of being that escapes the limitations of modernity, and broadens the understanding of the holy as more than the ecstatic mind-boggle, the release from analytic reason, and from the poor self of flesh that Lee sometimes seems to be tracking.

Just as Lee's work has been one long quest on the track of the holy, a search for a ground of reverence, it has also been, concomitantly, an unbroken meditation on the power of technology to disable reverence and thought of reverence. His most recent volume, Nightwatch: New & Selected Poems 1968-1996, brings home to the reader how thoroughly struck and held Lee was and continues to be by Grant's exposition of the nature of technological modernity. Thirty years' worth of poetic practice and poetic vision are concentrated upon a central conviction: life at the end of the twentieth century is, for Lee, a constant suffering of the ravages of 'technology'--understood as the whole modern project of mastery and the paradigm of knowledge that has fuelled that project. Never quite escaping the victim motif, many of Lee's speakers are brought to desolation by what he calls, using a particularly distasteful and mechanical image from the jargon of the day, the "mindset" of modernity. Those ravages are, chiefly, spiritual, but also emotional, social, artistic, political, ecological. To cite the two poems that serve as the chronological and actual bookends of Nightwatch, the world of "Civil Elegies" remains the world of "Heart Residence." From the anguished sense of "continental breakdown" in the first poem to the calm pronouncement that "we are catastrophe" in the last, Lee takes the measure, and measures the toll, of technology.

As he does so, he also explores, variously, "what must be done...to save his soul" ("Civil Elegies" 18). In the process, the refusal to "goodbye" the green earth and "civil

grey" of the first poem becomes the effort to goodbye the "creatures" of "Heart Residence." From "bloody-minded reverence among the things which are" in "Civil Elegies" (41), Lee moves to a point in his search for the holy that finds those creatures "not enough." From his poignant supplication in "Civil Elegies," "earth you / strangest, you nearest, be home" (41), he ponders, in "Heart Residence," what it would mean to accept what is only a consideration in "Civil Elegies"--that humans have "No / home but hunger" (204). Yet, right through the Heideggerian existentialism, the stringent resoluteness of "Civil Elegies," and right through the mystic hunger of his most recent poems, there can be detected an intimation of reverence as the encounter with a bedrock of justice, greater than temporality, more persistently present than any lore of the void might allow. This encounter is achieved right in the midst of modernity, in and through and in spite of its language and its truncating logic.

In what follows, I will trace this basic pattern of arrival upon a ground of reverence through Lee's two long elegies and "Heart Residence," using the versions of these pieces that appear in Nightwatch: New and Selected Poems 1968-1996.

In "Civil Elegies," Lee both epitomizes and argues with Grant's account of Canada's fate in Lament for a Nation and Technology and Empire as he reads and understands that account. In its recapitulation of the crushing difficulty of the pioneer encounter with the land (Grant speaks, tellingly, of the encounter of the land with the pioneers), in the bitter indictment of the rape of that land and of the political sell-out of Canadian difference to the consumer economy of the U.S., in the moral revulsion at Canadian complicity in the Vietnam War, in the comparison of that war's atrocities to the genocide of Hitler's war, and in the poignant struggle with the flesh-rooted love of one's terribly compromised "own," "Civil Elegies" unmistakably occupies the

imaginative space mapped by Grant. However, in this poem, this act of "answerable understanding," Lee both rehearses and resists what he takes to be Grant's message--the dire news that Canadians have lost at once a nation, a future, and access to the good. Canadians may have failed to establish a society that could withstand the twin forces of continentalism and technology, but there remains, nevertheless, for Lee, "the long will to be in Canada" (41). There also remains the body of Canada, broken, traduced, but there. In defying Grant's pronouncement that, for those who love the good, "citizenship is an impossibility," Lee makes a gesture of recuperating citizenship and redefining the good. He will find a way to be on the earth, in this lacerated city. Eschewing a notion of good as something other-worldly; a matter of what he calls in "Grant's Impasse" our "higher and deeper destinations," he seeks a way of being that will do for now, a provisional decency in the absence of good, sustained by resoluteness, free of illusion and any desire for the holy. However, while he formulates his response in this vein, I would argue that he goes exactly where Grant's rhetorical irony sends one--into the suffering love that is at once the affirmation of the ineradicability of the good, of the persistent need of and attunement to the good, and the deepest source of the community of which citizenship is one manifestation. Lee uses the language of the modern--the language of "will"--but he enacts a gesture older than the modern, the love of a stubborn core of good that can be obscured but not annihilated by the vicissitudes of time.

The commitment to reclaim a clear-eyed will-to-be from a history of colonial victimage and alienating complicity is forged in the speaker's long wrestling with his disgust at his own 'colonization,' with his own ingrained modernity, and with his longing for mystical release. The whispered message borne on the surface level of content might be translated in this way: 'If I cannot love the good and love my own, I will love my

own; if there is no longer present, for modern humans, a "Master and Lord" ("Civil Elegies" 18); if the sense has vanished that human life takes place in the presence and reality of that "Lord," then one must accept this torn and perplexing world as it is.' "But some will come to themselves, for there is / no third way at last" (41). In the last of the nine elegies, Lee's speaker eschews idolatry--of God, of the void, of permanent passionate rebellion against imperial force--and determines "to honour each one of my country's failures of nerve and its / sellouts" (40). He will honour these, relive his Canadian origins ("the storm-wracked crossing, the nervous descent, the barren wintry land") and find "a place among the ones who live / on earth somehow" (41). He will reclaim and cherish his own.

The 'either / or' of loving the good or loving one's own that is intimated here seems to arise out of a rather absolutist understanding of 'the good.' On one hand, in the speaker's hankering after a "Master and Lord" the good is conceived as what Lee calls "the real" in "Grant's Impasse" and elsewhere. The speaker yearns for a time of unbroken unity of being, of residence in a sacramental universe, when "The poets spoke of earth and heaven"--a time when "There were no symbols" (29) and language was rife with unambiguous 'is.' In such a time, Lee suggests, consciousness directly touched "the real"; 'what is' was not obscured by the designs of a consciousness that considers itself the sole source of reality and value. Beside this now-inaccessible sacramental sense of the good, the poem also posits the good as something other-worldly. This notion is suggested negatively in the recognition that "...we are not allowed to enter God's heaven, where it is all a / drowsy beatitude" (40). The other-worldliness of the good is most acutely rendered in the speaker's meditations on the lore of the "void." The approach to holiness bought at the expense of earthly attachments is exemplified by Hector de Saint-

Denys-Garneau, the speaker's "blessed stricken / original" (37), who nursed

> the adorable death of the Son in [his] own imperious cells a man made
> empty for the love of God, straining to be only
> an upright will in the desert, until at last the world's hypnotic glitter
> was made single, in the grace of renunciation. (36)

In turning away from the sense of an other-worldly God, and in rejecting the extremity of Garneau's Christian mysticism and his violent self-abnegation, the speaker seems to be turning away from all hope of sacredness, all hope of living within a consciousness of the holy as traditionally conceived. Echoing Grant's account of the fading of the language of the good in "A Platitude" (which itself may have been an echo of Lee's 1968 version of "Civil Elegies" which read "fade" instead of "withdraw"), Lee writes:

> And though we have seen our most precious words
> withdraw, like smudges of wind from a widening water-calm,
> though they will not be charged with presence again in our lifetime, that is
> well, for now we have access to new nouns.
> As city, tower, hunger, body, land. (42)

(Some of these nouns are new, by the way, since the 1972 version, which names "water, copout, tower, body, land"). This acceptance of the muting of the language of the good and this implied acceptance of the absence of the good suggest the pattern of experience described in Heidegger's "The Turning."

While the speaker rejects the Christian terms of Garneau's path of relinquishment, he does not entirely reject the mystic path, the way of the void. While he ponders the possibility that "there is no regenerative absence" (39), no time of waiting for the return of the gods, he does nevertheless experience, not by intent, the mystic route of utter

detachment, the relinquishment of all desire and all idolatry, including desire for the void: "And when the void became void I did / let go, though derelict for months" (40). In that void-become-void, in that arrival at desolation and the end of caring and wanting, it seems all systems of meaning did collapse for the speaker--as Lee heard Grant saying they have. All accounts of man's purpose and nature failed. However, what that entry into the void enables is the understanding of things played out in "Cadence, Country, Silence"--that the void or the non-being, the mortality, the "incipient meaningless" of things defines their being, etches the contours of their fragile presence. Without considering the notion of eternality as a goodness and reality independent of time, the speaker makes a kind of "turning" into the "Open" of mortality and nothingness; with Heidegger, he accepts the void as determinative of beings:

> Freely out of its dignity, the void must
> supplant itself. Like God like the soul it must
> surrender its ownness, like eternity it must
> re-instil itself in the texture of our being here. (41)

On the one hand, this passage can be read in 'incarnational' terms: God, goodness, eternity, must be rediscovered in time, as sacramentally present in beings and things. On the other hand, within the logic of the poem's argument and intellectual apparatus, it is perhaps more accurately read as a Heideggerian refusal of the supposed fixity of inauthentic, death-denying certainties, a surrendering of "ownness," of apartness from the cycle of becoming and dying away. This surrender of transcendent and indestructible reality constitutes an entry into the radical contingency and transitoriness that, in Heidegger's thinking, constitutes being. The void, or the defining fact of nothingness, must become the source of 'value'--God, the soul, eternity--and "re-instil itself in the

texture of our being here." That is, being and non-being--"this void and that void" (167)--as Lee says in "Cadence, Country, Silence," must be encountered together in anything that exists. The act of cherishing must arise out of an encounter with the fact of death, not out of an encounter with a transcendent core of good that constitutes the beauty, eternality, and inviolability of a being. Bereft of the radiance of a life that takes place in the presence of a God conceived as "Master and Lord," the speaker accepts Heidegger's random flash of authentic being into inauthentic being; he is prepared to be "sustained in fits and starts / by the deep ache and presence and sometimes the joy of what is" (41). If the "good" has absconded, is silenced, vanished, inaccessible to our love, then the speaker makes his choice to love his broken and traduced "own"--those desacralized icons of absence: "city, tower, hunger, body, land" (42).

There, on the level of concept and diction--what I have called, above, the surface level of content--"Civil Elegies" argues with Grant and situates itself within the modernity of Heidegger. However, on the level of inflection and gesture and cadence, in the play of voices and argument, in the drama of living the reality of the "nerve-wracking situations of justice," there can be discerned another understanding of the good, the holy, as a demand that calls forth the generosity of self-giving. This demand, as beyond all bargains and conveniences, is a kind of "Master and Lord"--is an utter obligation, but is not simply other-worldly. It is, rather, the goodness "beyond being" as Grant says, and incarnated in the beings who inhabit time but are more than time's accidents, more than passing instances of an immanent, evolving force of being. Love of the good and active compassion are spoken in the decision to love the 'thereness' of Canada, the suffering particulars. It is spoken in the poem's gradual reclaiming of the body, its affirmation of a needy and other-focussed eros, which Dale Zieroth traces so

convincingly in his article "Reclaiming the Body / Reclaiming the Nation: a process of surviving colonization in Dennis Lee's Civil Elegies and Other Poems."

Just as Grant's "noble Jewish and Christian Germans" in "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" could not escape the bond of flesh that tied them to their own, the speaker of Lee's "Civil Elegies" finds himself painfully but irrevocably rooted, not only in his time and place, but also in his humanness and creatureliness, in all the persistent irony, ambiguity and compromise involved in being human. His rootedness is imaged most concretely by Nathan Phillips Square and by Moore's Archer, that stern presence which dominates the square. As Stan Dragland points out in his study of the poem, the square provides a constant centre, through all nine elegies, for the meditative movement back and forth in time, through geographic and psychic space, and through the actual time of the poem as it traces the change of seasons from spring to fall. The square provides the ambiguous civil centre for the meditation and for the speaker's rootedness in his country's fate. In the midst of that civil space, the Archer stands as an admonishment and a grim reminder of the givenness of land and otherness that has been transgressed and exploited in the effort to make a human space. It focusses the equally powerful pull of the speaker's rootedness in the suffering earth and underscores the "void," the effort of desacralization, involved in human domination of the land--which suffers because it has as sacred givenness, a "beneficence."

The cost of his double rootedness, the therapeutic confrontation with it, and the stance of justice that rootedness implies, are enacted in the speaker's contention with the lure of the void, of mystic detachment, the temptation to loose the bonds of flesh and of compromised, shameful, but inevitable civil belonging. Through this struggle, through the pain and hungers of spirit and flesh, the speaker's compassion and commitment are

found and tested. He must first discover in his "own" and in his attachment to it the admixture of good and evil to which the only viable response is a simultaneity of love and forgiveness. In the process, what undergoes a change is the quality of attachment, from complicity and possessiveness to a mixture of cherishing and needy supplication, a desire to belong to both earth and city, and to serve something beyond himself.

The painful play of attachment, revulsion, and desire for release constitute the polyphony of the poem. The ache of attachment, the strength of revulsion, and the powerful but inadequate lure of the void each have their voice. However, both the depth of revulsion and the refusal of utter escape into a life-denying void ultimately underscore the power of attachment, the solidity of the bond of flesh, and the persistence of the speaker's attunement to and need of an incarnate goodness beyond manipulation--something to serve, to give himself to. The harmony of all these striving voices can be heard as the call of justice.

That call is first heard in the words of longing in the first elegy. Here, where words of hope contend with the un-saying power of bitter derision, the speaker describes "the city I long for" (15). The place is no eden; "green trees still / asphyxiate." The distressing present does not dissolve like a bad dream, but "the people complete their origins," "jam their works of progress" and question the purpose of human existence, "asking where in truth/they come from and to whom they must belong" (16). The longing is for a way of being that begins in awe--like the loving awe of Grant's "In Defense of North America," touched with a note of Heideggerian and pagan "dread" and "tremendum": "in dread to live the land, our own harsh country, beloved, the prairies, the foothills...to furnish, out of the traffic and smog and the shambles of dead / precursors, / a civil habitation that is human, and our own" (16). The works of

modernity cannot be undone, but, the speaker surmises, perhaps the stance towards the things and beings of the earth can be turned from exploitation to reverence.

While the spectre of "empire" arouses a derision that undercuts this vision, the attachment persists and comes to voice again in Elegies Four and Five. What the speaker ponders here is the nature of "caring" (25), of the stance of justice, and its terrible cost. In Elegy Four, the lure of detachment and "oblivion" (26) throws into relief the power and the pain of attachment. Here the speaker queries the regenerative possibilities of detachment, wonders if the faltering unreality of present existence is an invitation, through detachment, to a new way of being together with the things of the earth: "is void our vocation?"

> Dwelling among the
> bruised and infinitely binding world
> are we not meant to
> relinquish it all, to begin at last
> the one abundant psalm of letting be? (24)

The question, phrased in mystical and Heideggerian terms, carries within it the consciousness of the earthly travail that calls forth another response, different from the textbook notion of easy relinquishment and assured regeneration; mention of the "bruised and infinitely binding world" works against the phrase "relinquish it all" and precipitates Lee's marvellous "goodbye" passage, which, to my ears, is one of the most eloquent in his whole body of work.

The spirit of hard-earned reverence in these twenty-six lines brings to mind the passage from Simone Weil which focusses the incarnational dimension of Grant's thinking on justice: "Human nature is so arranged that any desire of the soul which has

not passed through the flesh by way of actions, movements and attitudes which correspond to it naturally, has no reality in the soul. It is only there as a phantom." The desire of the speaker's soul for a state of unified being, for ecstatic existence in a "psalm of letting be," does not hold; what takes its place is the more demanding desire that the beings be, in all their bruised and beloved there-ness. That desire is pulled right through the speaker's flesh and consciousness as he laments "If only / here and now were not fastened so / deep in the flesh."

There is great compassion in the extended question that spans these twenty-six lines. The passage begins by intensifying the sense of being "fastened," heaps up the precious particulars all tugged and wrenched about syntactically by the proliferation of conjectural 'goodbyes' that effect no leave-taking at all, and closes with the speaker still "constantly / fastened":

> ... how should a man,
>
> alive and tied to the wreckage that surrounds him
>
> the poisoned air goodbye, goodbye the lakes,
>
> the earth and precious habitat of species,
>
> goodbye the grainy sense of place, worn down in
>
> words and the local ways of people, goodbye the children returning
>
> as strangers to their roots and generations
>
> ....
>
> ... all spirited
>
> men and women ceaselessly jammed at their breaking
>
> points goodbye who have such little time on earth and constantly
>
> fastened

> how should a man stop caring? (24-25)

How should a man "goodbye" these particulars; how should he "stop caring?" How is that done? The questions challenge the notion of easy relinquishment introduced in the previous passage.

In the elegy's third passage, the text-book lesson on the via negativa and Heideggerian "letting be" resumes. The language here is much cooler than the language of the second and fourth passages that frame it, passages that live in the suffering world Grant exposed to Lee. In this cooler passage, we are told that "the death of lakes, the gutting of our self-respect, / even the passage of Canada" bear a meaning larger than personal loss. They tell the philosophic tale of transience and nothingness:

> Everything we own will disappear; nothing
>
> belongs to us, and
>
> only that nothing is home. (25)

The lesson of relinquishment is rehearsed:

> And this is what the things were telling us: if we can
>
> face the rigours of detachment, meaning our
>
> life, our job, our home, permitting it to
>
> break over us, letting it
>
> bring us down till every
>
> itch and twitch of attachment loses its purchase

then we will be "set / free to cherish the world which has been stripped away by stages." Facing into the void will bring about a renewal, an in-flashing of being as beings stand forth "in the clearness of open space," freed of human possessiveness, "none our property" (26).

Almost as if in reaction against the diminishment of the suffering of the "goodbye" passage to the "itch and twitch of attachment," the speaker's civil voice returns in anger. It moves this elegy into its fourth and final movement by lashing out against what Sean Kane calls the "other-worldly voice" (140) that preaches the formula of detachment and renewal:

> But what good is that in a nation of
> losers and quislings? and for the few tenacious
> citizens of a land that was never our own, watching the
> ore and the oil and the shore-lines gutted
> for dollars by men from abroad, watching Canadians
> peddle their birthright and for these others, good
> stateless men and women and may they do down in civil fury--
> how should they clutch and fumble after beatitude, crouching for
> years till emptiness renews an elm tree,
> and meanwhile the country is gone? (26)

Caring is harder than relinquishment, and made even harder by the attraction to detachment. Those who fight, as Grant says in "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," for "what little sovereignty we have left"--Lee's "few tenacious / citizens"--pay the full price of care and justice in Lee's "Civil Elegies":

> ... they take the world full force on their nerve ends, leaving the
> bloody impress of their bodies face forward in time, and I believe
> they will not go under until they have taken the full measure of empire. (27)

In Elegy Five, the speaker finds himself again in a tug between the burden of attachment to a disgraced "own" and a hankering for the "real" (28), an unsullied,

unambiguous good. Here, the price of caring is even greater; here, attachment to one's own threatens to exile one from the good. A tension arises between creatureliness and a sense of higher destinations. The "headlong particulars" which attach the speaker "sucker us in" (28); they are not enough. They "lose their animal purchase and cease to endorse us" (28). In the inadequacy of creaturely attachment, the longing for a reality that is more than the creatures is aroused:

> this awakens the ache of being, and once again the lonesome ego
> sets out dragging its ignominious hankerings across the world,
> which does not regard them. (28)

But the needy human self persists: "Perhaps we should / bless what doesn't attach us, though I do not know / where we are to find nourishment" (28).

The terrible simultaneity of good and evil break over the speaker as his love of the "children" who fill the square with "raucous celebration" is brought up flush against the fact of war and the "char-broiled tykes of the Mekong Delta" (29) (a phrase new since 1972). At this point, the horrible flippancy of that epithet for the Vietnamese children really pushes the limit of poetry. On the one hand, the term aptly demonstrates the speaker's sense of sick dislocation, of unreality: he is horrified by the incongruity of being in peace while the utter injustice of the slaughter of innocents is occurring at a distance at the hands of one's own civilization--while what should never be done is being done because it can be done. On the other hand, the term touches what, arguably, should not be touched by language designed to have an effect; the atrocity, like the torture of the child in "Riffs," should not be made a means to an end beyond itself, should not be exploited as a rhetorical gesture, or what Lee calls "a blur of aesthetic alternatives" ("The Death of Harold Ladoo" 55). The fact is its own language. Either way, the

baffling simultaneity of violence abroad and the "placid sky" above the speaker leave him with a sense of non-being, here understood as the absence of good, forced complicity in evil: "daily our / acquiescence presses down on us from above and we have no room to be." While the rational alienation Grant speaks of is very bitter for Lee's speaker, it is not total, as it is not, for Grant. The bond of flesh and the power of soul that makes the speaker capable of moral disgust are a burden for him, but, even in the suffering of that burden, the fact of good asserts itself: "It is the children's fault as they swarm, for we cannot stop caring." That caring keeps the speaker from utter acquiescence, total indifference, or complete oblivion of the good; good remains incarnated in him, through the attachment that costs him dearly: "except for the children it's peaceful here / too, under the sun's warm sedation" (30).

It is the price of attachment that begins to change the nature of the attachment, from possessiveness to self-giving love. In Elegy Seven, that price is measured by the intensity of revulsion as attachment becomes demonic. Here, the meditation enters one more 'home' instance of the possessiveness, the exploitiveness of modernity and its notion of radical freedom, as the speaker describes the intense loves and friendships that are "lacerations" (33) to his soul. The world of relationships lurches between the "game" of "projecting our / monstrous images" (33) onto the other and moments of sanity when "our gentleness for our beloved / is straight and incomparable" and lovers "reach a kind of ease in their bodies' loving" (33). But those moments are few; the effects of living in a civilization that is actively oblivious of the sacred dominate the rest of the elegy. Attachment to that civilization means complicity, but getting away from it is impossible. Try as they might to demolish the self they cannot love, to punish the self with hurt and failure and dishonour, the speaker and his friends simply persist: "every year attaches

itself behind and we have more to drag" (34).

As revulsion reaches its peak, the meditation, in Elegy Eight, turns to the lure of Garneau's void. The speaker's longing "to be made whole"--to live and act in the fullness of the good--leads him to consider the way of that "catatonic exemplar" (37). But what holds is the tension between "all that great longing" that "keeps / banging back against the miscellaneous clobber of day to day" (36). The things and beings of the earth will not let go; even though "new precious attachments" "stun us till what is authentic is obliterated," it is "by these distractions we are saved" (36). The spectacle of Garneau's life-denying mysticism turns the speaker towards a new kind of attachment, a commitment not to

> silence the world till I learn its lovely syllables,
>
> the brimful square and the dusk and the war and the crowds in motion at
>
> evening waiting to be construed,
>
> for they are fragile, and the tongue must be sure (38).

This turn leads to the relatively subdued resignation of the ninth elegy--the acceptance that perhaps "there is no regenerative absence" and therefore no great good to renew, the acceptance of our "conquered" state (39), the acceptance of life "wrenched out of whack" (41). The will to be, and the will to "lose our forebears' will to lose" (41) seems to be the good the speaker now seeks. But from underneath that stringent resoluteness and sober resignation comes the closing (but never final) note that gathers up the struggle with troubled, unwanted, but unshakeable attachment and gives that attachment back, in a new key. The self that faces the world, standing over and against it with sad and resolute will is suddenly relocated, in a new relation to it. Will becomes prayer and supplication. The speaker faces the world as other, as something with a

reality to be approached in love and in receptivity to its givenness:

> Earth, you nearest, allow me.
>
> Green of the earth and civil grey:
>
> within me, without me and moment by
>
> moment allow me for to
>
> be here is enough and earth
>
> strangest, you nearest, be home. (42)

While Lee uses Heidegger's terms for being, as what is nearest--as what is--and yet furthest and strangest because beyond human mastery, he touches the bedrock of justice central to Grant's thought: he makes the earth, as other, primary, before the self; open to obligation, he asks that it "allow" him near, so that he may go out of his way to serve it, lovingly.

It is throu_ . the bond of flesh, the unbreakable attachment to the things of the earth, that the speaker of Lee's "Civil Elegies" touches a ground of reverence and arrives at a stance of justice. In Lee's other masterful elegy, "The Death of Harold Ladoo," where he meditates even more explicitly on the modern "loss of awe" (59) and denial of the "numinous" (60), a reader can trace again the pattern whereby creaturely attachment mitigates the violence of a desacralized world, and justice is affirmed.

Throughout "The Death of Harold Ladoo," the speaker wrestles with the modern reflex of falsification, of fabrication, as he struggles to find words of "grief" and "high release" (45) to honour the life and death of his driven writer-friend, Ladoo. He produces, in part one of the two-part elegy, not so much a poem within a poem, as a poem against a "poem"--that is, an effort at authentic expression against the "something someone made up" of "Cadence, Country, Silence." Not only does he undercut the bits

of stilted 'high style' elegy that are given in italics, he also argues with his various accounts of what and who Harold was, and what their friendship meant. As Lee himself comments in his first "Polyphony" interview, where he discusses "The Death of Harold Ladoo" in detail, the first part of the elegy keeps this local focus; the second part broadens out, in an effort to achieve a larger understanding: what do his and Harold's experience say about modernity? As Lee says in that interview, the poem, by virtue of this more capacious meditation, takes "the condition of our whole civilization" as "its real subject" (51).

Now, Lee says that the psychomachia of the elegy is an effort to resist "formalizing" and fixing and cutting down to size the "still undefined flux of what-is, which defies formulation by the miracle of its painful, bare-naked being" (50). That effort at resistance is very much the effort he puts at the centre of his poetics--the effort to avoid complicity in the modern assignation of made-up meaning and value by simply trying "to identify our condition, to enact it consciously and then name it" ("When to Write" 171). This effort arises out of his acknowledged stance of provisional reverence; it remains within the temporality and transience of Heidegger's sense of being. It inhabits, intellectually, the 'between' time, between the absence of the gods and their return. While this stance acknowledges, in respect and in refusal of mastery, the indefinability of the holy, it also overlooks the intimate presence of the good right there in the speaker's resistance, his sense of obligation to Harold, his capacity to "cherish," and his concern "to resist real evil."

Along with this tacit affirmation, which Lee does not acknowledge, there can also be found at work in "The Death of Harold Ladoo" something central to the traditional elegy: the arrival at consolation through the healing balm of the beneficence of nature.

While Lee says he discovered he could write an elegy that argues with "Lycidas," it can be argued that he nevertheless enacts, in and through and in spite of his own conscious entrapment within the modern, an arrival upon a firmer ground of reverence, something deeper than flux, that shares more with "Lycidas" than he says.

The rather savage difference between Milton's dead orphic poet and Lee's frenzied anti-orphic Ladoo might seem a measure of the distance between Milton's time and ours, but perhaps there is a greater nearness than is obvious, if the relation of inversion were considered a kind of nearness. The assurance of harmony between human and non-human nature may not be so far from the suffering sense of the brokenness of that harmony, which Lee focusses on. While the sweet relation between Milton's two pastoral swains and the "tug of cherishing war" (56) between Lee's speaker and Ladoo may seem distant, they could also be seen as only superficially unalike in style. Milton's elegist may not be so far from Lee's: the speaker of "Lycidas" sings high honour to his dead friend; Lee's speaker wrestles his way through images of Ladoo to a "deep, unscheduled ground of caring" (56). Similarly, Milton's corrupt prelates, who come in for some pretty shaggy vituperation, are close cousins to Lee's "scumbags" who "flourish" while "good men die in their rising prime" (47). In both poems, there is a contrast set up between the art of the dead poet/novelist and the art of the elegist, which turns from orphism or anti-orphism to a kind of civil song that takes the measure of injustice, then comes upon, consciously or otherwise, a more lasting justice. While Milton's procession of flowers, itself considered a dalliance "with false surmise" (124) dwindles to mention of the "elm ... down now, dismembered" in Lee's elegy, it is the brush with nature, with creatureliness, that moves both poems to "ruth"--compassion--and a kind of consolation. The joyous affirmation of faith that ends Milton's poem, of course,

is far from Lee's closing determination to live and speak in the absence of the gods, waiting for a return of the "passionate awe" and "high clean style" he associates with Milton's time. Nevertheless, the speaker manages, in spite of his conviction of the absence of the holy, to say "I loved you, and I owed you words of my own" (66). He comes upon the holy about which Lee is silent. In the trajectory of the poem, the arrival at this stance, and at the various moments of peace that precede it seems to be precipitated by a touch upon the flesh.

The speaker's need to speak of his friend arises in the midst of "the twitchy calm of the neighbourhood" (45); at momentary peace with the human world and with the "scrubby lane" where "Darkness rises through the leaves," he feels "remiss and / nagged by an old compulsion." What is it that arises in his nature that demands that the life and death of one skinny manic not go unhonoured and unmourned? A world of raw material and meaningless neutrality does not make such demands. All of human and non-human nature press towards the celebration / elegy: "the dusk and the hush and the / pressure of naked need" (46).

The first half of part one wrenches through various efforts to remember and mourn and face the death of Harold honestly, and to face the truth of why he feels compelled to write. When he broaches the conceit of Harold as "pure word," the fact of flesh asserts itself: "But Harold--Harold, what bullshit! sitting here making up epitaphs. / You're dead. / Your look won't smoulder on Jarvis again..." (47). This fact moves the speaker closer to honesty: "And suppose I come closer, come clean-- / what's in it for me?" The effort here is to push through willful fabrication to find what is there for real. Thought of the suffering of Ladoo and other friends, undone by the modern "denial of spirit and flesh"--the desacralized character of the age--brings the speaker to acknowledge

"their curious gentleness, and also the need / in extremis to be" (48). But dogged by distrust of his own modern penchant for manipulation, for making up meanings, the speaker rejects the notion that the Anansi crowd, "Driven, caring, proud" made "community somehow" (49). The same people are now described as "honking egos" (50) and Harold is addressed as "you bastard, goodbye: you bled me dry" (51). Lofty elegy is reduced to one splenetic phrase: "goodbye, and good riddance" (51).

Respite from vituperation and disgust comes, it seems, on the evening breeze: "here, on this leafy street, / I wince at those hectic unreal selves" (51). The speaker's thoughts turn to his need for "roots, renewal, dwelling space" (51), and to "Intricate rhythms of the commonplace: a friend, a sky, a walk through green ravines--and I am at home" (52). Rage briefly subsides, rises again through more descriptions of Harold's extremis and the speaker's vicarious enjoyment of that "intensity" (54), peaks and again gives way to a touch from the world of nature, maligned as it is, and supposedly emptied of God: "The wide night drifts and soars ... our dump though once sublime" (54). Though sublimity or holiness seem to have vanished, somehow a stance of greater justice is enabled: "A man should not make of his friends a / blur of aesthetic alternatives" (55). The speaker is again more able to hold the complexity of human living and being in mind. He tries to say that "what was real was not the adrenalin highs, / the hype and ego-baths" (55), then pulls back from such either/or thinking and adds "Not only that" (55). Out from under the frenzy and compulsion, he says, there arose among Ladoo and friends "a / deep tough caring ... the plain gestures of being human together" (55). Now, "what fastens me / is not the books but the lives. / And my heart spins out to hold each one, to / cherish them entire" (55-56). Held by this care, the speaker faces most truly the death of Harold Ladoo: "And yet to / die, Harold, that's hard. To die-- / simply to

die, and / not to be" (57). The litany of all the life of the body and the mind that death ends looses the grief that does Harold--and life--some justice. Interestingly, the caring here is not simply precipitated, as it is in the existentialism of Heidegger, by the encounter with mortality; instead, the encounter with mortality, with the worth of another, is enabled by the caring, which Lee seems to intuit, here, as a more primary capacity of the human.

The speaker's meditation in part two on the loss of the numinous, and on the violence of modern idolatry--the modern effort to make meanings up that drove Ladoo to frenzy--follows a similar rhythm of periodic moments of respite offered by the touch of nature. The speaker makes that pattern conscious and comments on it: momentary peace, when "things fit themselves now, graciously / easing into place" is only a part of the flux: "that too has its proper measure, and cannot stay on / beyond its own good time" (63);

> epiphanies will come
>
> as they will come, will
>
> go; they are not
>
> trademarks of grace; they
>
> do not matter, surprise.
>
> "Everything matters, and
>
> nothing matters." (64)

Within the intellectual framework of these words, there is no enduring goodness or beneficence from which the flashes of joy proceed; they are not "trademarks of grace." The holy escapes overt saying and cognition, and the mind turns to the jamming of the mystic's koan: "'Everything matters, and / nothing matters.'" However, this effort at

mystic acceptance and calm equanimity is pressured by a return to Harold's death, which is now faced in the truth of violent detail: "the lurid scuffle that / ended the thing--your body / jack-knifed, pitch dark, in the dirt" (65). Harold, in the speaker's understanding, suffered acutely from the violence and meaningless of the age; in the absence of the 'real' or the 'good,' he lived and wrote in a "world that would not work unless you wrote it, / and no longer worked when you did" (65). His frenzied writing, his effort to make up meanings, perhaps, simply drove meaning further away; he could not touch the 'real.' However, in facing Harold's death, the speaker, unwittingly it seems, does come upon the real, what I have been calling the incarnate holy, discovered in the obligation, "beyond all bargains and without an alternative" (English Speaking Justice 93) the speaker says he owes to Ladoo: "I loved you, and I owed you words of my own" (66). In the starkest confrontation with Harold's bodily being, the speaker arrives at the endurable real, what escapes his own malleabilizing and puts a demand upon him. While that confrontation tears out of the speaker the tribute owed, he discovers that the love he feels is not simply a function of that confrontation. "Though I feel nothing for you / I did not feel before your death" (66). That is, the speaker's recognition of Harold's preciousness is not dependent upon his recognition of Harold's mortality. The love he feels is the love called forth by Harold as a living being, hungry for the good. In this recognition, Lee takes a step away from Heidegger and closer to Grant.

In coming upon this bedrock of justice, the poem situates itself in a poetics (a poetics of reverence it might be called) that is somewhat different from the poetics of absence that Lee turns into poetry at the close of this meditation. On the surface level of content, the speaker commits himself to honouring "the gods in their former selves" (honouring the absence of the holy),

> albeit obscurely, at distance, unable
>
> to speak the older tongue; and to wait
>
> till their fury is spent and they call on us again
>
> for passionate awe in our lives, and a high clean style. (66)

What the poem, in my reading, actually enacts, is an arrival at the incarnated holy, upon a ground of reverence. The goodness that calls forth "passionate awe" is not at a distance, but as near as the heart that does loving justice to a friend. Rather than putting words around absence, Lee writes the holy in "The Death of Harold Ladoo."

The hankering after void, mystic detachment, courses through Lee's early, disavowed sonnet-sequence, Kingdom of Absence, takes its place in the landscape of soul-search in "Civil Elegies" and emerges as the stoic acceptance of the absence of the gods in "The Death of Harold Ladoo" and the poem "The Gods." In "Riffs," Lee offers a white-hot, language-dissolving enactment of a painfully botched effort to touch the numinous through physical joy; here, the desire to give the self to an other, to touch a good that he might "centrally serve" (160) takes him, almost but not quite, to the other side of desire. Here, as elsewhere, the terrible power of attachment tells the true cost of any effort at mystic relinquishment. In Lee's most recent series, "Nightwatch," the lore of the void is transformed into incipient discipline.

The "Nightwatch" series has a note of summation, a gathering up of all the concerns of Lee's previous work, an echoing of his many voices, a life-review. It plays out at the risky edge of mere reduction to male menopause, a self-indulgent mid-life crisis, an instance of trend-imitation in the draw to simplification after the excess of consumerism. At this risky edge, though, the poem-sequence does not tip over into the

banal but redeems the modern: this "bitch of a shrunken time" ("The Gods") can, too, be the locus of holy quest. Here, the mystic's dark night of the soul is updated in the speaker's tale of "scotch in the dark" (181), toxic marriages, bungled desires, civil impotence, the soul-drain of consumerism. Here, Lee's speaker again attempts to find the holy beyond beings and to take up residence in "hunger," in need for no object, in the emptiness beyond the subject. Because the desacralized world he lives in leaves him so desperately hungry for the good, he seeks the self-abnegation of utter worship, and the point of unmediated awe where the boundaries of the knowing mind melt, and possession by the unknown is all there is, so that all categories of knowing are undone. This stance is caught in the poem simply called "Hunger," where the search for the holy lures him beyond lament for absent gods:

> For we rose. And thought. And trashed our sacramental
> birthright.
> But I have lived 45 years, and never once
> have I inched beyond the safety of lament...
> But that's not what I _feel_. It's a playful itch,
> a volt of desire, which
> hankers towards what
> _God_ was a blasphemy of--never yet
> have I danced full-tilt with my secret appetite:
> to live in awe. (201)

Here, Lee recognizes there is a way to the holy that is incarnational:

> To live at last, in awe.
> And I know, many reclaim that

sanity at the margins, where our bodies still sense

the tang of indigenous meaning. Returning to

granite, to cedar and loon--old

amniotic siblings.

Or, catgut hosannas; held in that burnished ache of sound, how the

soulmeat champs and respires!

Even graft and torture provoke it, the outraged

sense of a justice we half belong to, half can't find. (202)

Yet even here, the incarnational understanding does not reach to an affirmation that the holy is present in the one who possesses that sense of justice; justice is conceived mainly as an order outside the self, not an order, as Grant understands it, that both transcends the self and includes the self, and that is known through participation. Moreover, while Lee's speaker acknowledges that some might find an incarnate holy, he makes it [illegible]r that his path is still the path of absence, of hunger: "what I know best / is the simple need.... No storms of presence" (202). The incarnational way is not, in all consciousness, for him.

However, beneath the surface level of content, again, that way seems to be operating. In "Heart Residence," the poem that directly follows "Hunger" and closes the volume, the speaker makes an effort to relinquish all in the reach for unmediated awe. But, for all that he makes the mystic's <u>claim</u> "That creatures are not enough," and makes the effort to school the self to say goodbye, I find such a tug in the language of those creatures that I almost think the poem, as a thing of breath and flesh, pulls itself back to the creatures and won't quite let its speaker go. The pattern of seeking one notion of the holy, but coming, unwittingly it seems, upon the incarnate holy, upon a firmer

ground of reverence, is perhaps most intensely present in this small piece.

The ostensible effort of "Heart Residence" is to relinquish ownership, to relinquish what Grant calls creaturely "need-love," the gulp of eros. The relinquishment is, indeed, done "in love" (204), and goodness knows in our time the effort to put the ego aside is a first step in getting quit of the modern paradigm. More than that, however, the poem tries to imagine the human as no thing of earth, as a denizen, rather, of void, the mystic's state of detachment: "I hear we have no home. No / home but hunger." It imagines being as transitoriness, and imagines authenticity, perhaps, as acceptance of that transitoriness, that unfixity: "Yet what will endure in time? and whom do I own?" There is something of Heidegger's "turning into the open" here, turning with the venture of Being that sends all beings to death, turning away from attachment to beings to encounter the mystery of Being in its shrine of nothingness.

Yet does detachment get enacted, even though it is--albeit provisionally, in question form--said? The poem is a short one for Lee, four stanzas in free verse with varying line-lengths and numerous caesurae at lines' end. These caesurae make a halt in the syntax of sentence-sense that sounds like a clutch of emotion, heart in the throat, momentarily holding the sentence back from completion. That clutch of syntax and emotion seems to enact a resistance to detachment.

Each of the first, second and fourth stanzas deals with one particular attachment: the creatures, a well-loved "patch of ground," family. Hear the resistance to letting go as the halt precedes the naming, in the next line, of what is to be relinquished:

> Hawkmoth and tanager snag me; muskies re-
>
> call me
>
> ....

wired in their unwitting circuits, bobtail and carapace all

species invade me

....

yet though I crave it,

kinship and diastole the

creatures are not enough.

And roots are not enough. Such

bounty I came to! heart residence on earth, and I have loved

a patch of ground too well

....

I was practising my life among

rocky companions, but the

place is gone

....

And precious, precious the dear ones--but also, that

dear ones are not enough

....

gifted with luminous

friends ...

and quickened by eros--hard in its seasons, but holy and

gracias, rare woman; and children who fasten my heart.

....

Was I not given such

peerless companions that I might learn to say, in love, Not

you, dear heart; nor you; nor you--

go by?

The diction as well, both in sound and significance, works against detachment. What the speaker would leave behind is named in words that sound the stubbornness of earth. The recalcitrance of physicality is mimed in their hard consonants, especially hard "c" or "k" and "r": "Hawkmoth and tanager ... muskies ... raccoons ... bobtail and carapace ... rocky companions ... children who fasten my heart." To read these lines aloud is to find the language slowing the tongue, demanding attention, enlisting the throat in the action of preventing breath from leaving too quickly.

Similarly, the action of these loved beings and things is given in verbs of resistance or power: "snag," "haul me back," "invade me / tangling my reified soul once more in the bone fraternity," "claimed," "entered my blood," "quickened by eros," "fasten my heart." In this tug of the "reified soul ... in the bone fraternity," in this being-taken by the other, I hear the bedrock of justice again named more powerfully than the transitoriness of beings. While their enduring "in time" is questioned, their eternality--their irreducibility--is given more convincingly in the language. In being snagged and hauled and entered and fastened, the speaker is also, perhaps unwittingly, discovering obedience, the giving of the self to the other, that connection (in "bone fraternity") that does not subsume and lets the other be wholly present in the openness offered to it. This giving / being taken sounds so much more strongly and definitely than the tentative questioning, "Was I not given such / peerless companions to say, in love, Not / you, dear heart; nor you, nor you--/ go by?

What is happening here? Perhaps the effort of mystic detachment is Lee's way of

ending world-consciousness. Perhaps what gets spoken in the cadence of the poem is earth-consciousness, earth-belonging. In drawing the speaker back into itself, earth perpetrates no assault; it asserts the belonging-together of the lover and what is loved. Against the "hunger" that is called our "home," there is the bone fraternity of which the speaker says, "I crave it." In that need-love, what is loved is encountered in its goodness, which is primary, and not necessarily fleeting.

While this reading suggests that the speaker is caught between two concepts of the holy, what the poem may actually be doing, after all, is simply demonstrating the cost of a detachment the speaker is nevertheless committed to seek. What its tensions invite, however, is a questioning: why is the cost of detachment so high? What is the meaning of that powerful tug of creatureliness? These questions are only partly rhetorical; in my reading, Lee is coming upon the incarnated holy, the beneficence of nature. He goes where I believe his friend and contending angel, George Grant, can take a susceptible reader.

Conclusion

George Grant returns many times in his writings to a perception gleaned from Leo Strauss--that humans cannot help imitating nature as they understand nature. Modern technological manipulation of non-human and human nature, in the thinking of Grant and Lee, is rooted in our conceptions. If we, in the collective, consider the planet and all its creatures as stuff at our disposal, what can limit the impulse to use, to use up, to transgress? Humans may turn away from the path of exploitation out of fear for our own survival; adverse consequences of unchecked depletion and despoilment of the earth may lead us to legislate limits. Before Lee's gloomy perception "we are catastrophe" is utterly realized, we may discover how this struggling mass of humanity might live lightly on the land, in cooperation with the givenness of nature.

But turning back from technological exploitation out of a concern for self-preservation is not the same as knowing, beforehand, what should not be done, even if it can be done. To articulate that 'should not' publicly would be to articulate what is disallowed by the modern paradigm of knowledge. To articulate, positively, what is owing to other creatures and why it is owing would be to say that there is a goodness in things and beings that needs to be discovered and heeded, a given "order" Grant would say, that makes the whole a cosmos, not a chaos. In Grant's view, not just the earth, but also the creatures of the earth, especially the weak and the disadvantaged--other species, the unborn of our own species, the defenseless elderly, the handicapped, the poor--are imperilled by our present inability to say why any of us should go out of our way for another being. He does not say that people do not, daily, enact that justice that is beyond self-interested calculation; he is simply concerned that what is legitimized as knowledge

in our scientific era leaves no room for understanding and making publicly efficacious either those acts of reverence or the encounter with given goodness--the unrepresentable purposiveness of another being--that inspires them. His whole career was one long effort to illuminate the nature and consequences of the thinking that leaves no room for the unconditional and transcendant demand of the other he calls justice. It was one focused committed striving to reanimate the thinking that would make that demand cogent once more, to bring home a sense of the 'incarnate' holy. Against the technological rubric, his writing seeks to preserve the possibility he articulates at the end of his searing encounter with Nietzsche's thought in Time as History: "Perhaps reverence belongs to man *qua* man and is indeed the matrix of human nobility" (50).

As I have argued, Dennis Lee found in Grant's work an illumination of the reasons for his own visceral rejection of the assumptions and forces of this technological civilisation. But, for Lee, Grant's work pronounces on the final unthinkability of all that the technological paradigm eliminates--an understanding of the holy, a ground of reverence. In his reading, the difficulty for thought that Grant uncovers becomes a salutary impossibility; the utter silence that has been laid on the holy by the modern paradigm, the terrific hunger that our desacralized age inflicts, become, for Lee, openings to a mystical sense of the holy, the awesome. For much of his career, he tends to interpret the encounter with the holy as an encounter with the Heideggerian nothingness that illuminates the fragility of beings. In his most recent work, the sheer hunger for what the world around him does not provide speaks to him of an awesome holy, beyond all knowing, that draws his being. It draws him beyond attachment to the things and creatures of the earth and beyond the wilful self-assertion and self-seeking that have been the driving ethos of technological modernity.

have been the driving ethos of technological modernity.

I have argued that while Lee is drawn to a notion of the holy as transcendent and discarnate awesomeness, he nevertheless enacts, in a number of his poems, and in the reverence of his poetics, an understanding of the holy that is close to Grant's. In the warmth of creaturely attachments he frequently demonstrates, he comes upon the demand of the other that, for Grant, is the holy incarnate. Both the presence of these gestures in his writing and the revolt of his nature against the desacralizing tendencies of our era speak to me of the nearness of the holy that Lee, curiously, leaves in silence. In doing so, he leaves unspoken the point of greatest affinity between himself and his older friend --an eros for justice that gives life to their works, and a capacity for reverence that announces itself in the midst of the technological paradigm that would deny it.

I suggested at the beginning of this study that Lee's work can be located within a new (perhaps renewed) reverential consciousness that seems to have emerged among contemporary writers. A full study of what may be a 'literature of reverence' would look at the various forms and inflections of reverential consciousness. It would look to see what this consciousness does to the handling of beings and things in poems and stories: how do they enter the world of making; how are they known and wrought? Who moves reverence from theme and theory to enactment, and how? What is the understanding of knowing and of language that informs such works? How does the poetics of listening and attention that poets like Lee, McKay, Lilburn and Bringhurst speak of operate in such a literature? Is there, perhaps, a new--reverential--motive for metaphor in the kind of shy rapprochement of human and non-human nature that we get, for example, in a poem such as Don McKay's "Poplar" (Night Field 56)? In the midst of the world that Lee calls "catastrophe" can an attentive spirit arise that, like "Poplar,"

tremble and be wholly trepid,

to be so soft she can listen hard,

and shimmer, elegant and humble

in the merest wisp of wind?

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