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ERNEST BUCKLER'S THE MOUNTAIN AND THE VALLEY:

AN EXAMINATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE CHARACTER OF DAVID CANAAN.

by

© Mary G. Tomei, B.A.(Hons)

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
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of the requirements for the degree of
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Department of English

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Abstract

This thesis offers an interpretation of the character of David Canaan, Ernest Buckler's protagonist in The Mountain and the Valley. The interpretation is based on critical intimations provided by the novel's imagery and symbolism. Each chapter traces part of David's pursuit of fulfilment and his quest for self-understanding.

The initial chapters are dedicated to the protagonist's childlike recognition of his prospective adult alternatives and his partial arrival at that plateau within his social milieu. A discussion which allows one to interpret his actions as a decision to remain in Entremont and pursue that region's notion of maturity is followed by Chapter Four which uncovers the folly of these choices and notes a positive change in David's life. This change re-directs him to art and temporarily satisfies him. The next chapter investigates the revival of restlessness in the still youthful David who, aggravated by the passage of a train, is left to entertain a sense of personal insignificance. The novel suggests, finally, that David's climb leads him to the achievement of the maturity and the insight which allows him to die triumphantly and with grace.

Epigraph

Let us, you and I, lay aside all arrogance.

Let neither of us pretend to have found the truth.

Let us seek it as something unknown to both of us.

Then we may seek it with love and sincerity

when neither of us has the rashness nor

presumption to believe that he already

possesses it.

And if I am asking too much of you,

allow me to listen to you at least,

to talk with you as I do with beings whom,

for my part,

I do not pretend to understand.

St. Augustine

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I acknowledge the assistance of, and dedicate the thesis to, Father Time, who let it be.

Introduction

Writers have always had to deal with enormous quantities of impression and fact in order to choose materials for their works. Imagery and symbols, because they are capable of expressing their individual essences and lend themselves to extrapolated meanings, tend to be used extensively, particularly by authors who are concerned to portray the world as it is and the interiors of their characters' minds. Conscious of the multi-faceted potential of the pictorial, such writers have exploited enthusiastically the literary devices associated with visual effects to reveal and complement themes and characters. Ernest Buckler is such an artist and his creation, David Canaan, is such a character. The Mountain and the Valley is, as its title suggests, a novel heavily dependent upon images and symbols. It soon becomes clear that the novel's story ought to be apprehended through the medium that it employs most extensively.

Based on this critical approach, David Canaan's life, internally and externally, becomes more than the wanderings of a rebellious farm boy. It becomes the story of a person searching for fulfilment in a society that is not concerned about him in particular. David

is neither an effigy of the traditional hero, nor is he, being highly sensitive, a typical example of man. He is an active questor who, in other areas, proves ineffectual, and learns to be content to be so. Such a character benefits from the imagery and symbols that Buckler employs in his portrayal.

In terms of time and events, the novel is cyclic, beginning and ending on the last day of David's life and turning on his efforts to climb the mountain. Within this framework, the narrative moves forward according to calendar time. Ineluctable events alert the young protagonist to the possibilities which open in his adult life; but initially, these deter him from completing the mountain climb which might have led to personal growth. In the interim, his life is a series of confused strivings whose goal is the arrival at a place where he can find "the thing that was meant for him."¹ As he grows older, the world widens before him and matters that appear significant, but are actually extraneous to his search, lure and confuse him. Sexual relationships, everyday friendships, and a fascination with the city become diversionary elements in his life. Eventually, his own insecurity is coupled with familial pressure to occasion his momentous, but not wholly free, decision

¹Ernest Buckler, The Mountain and the Valley, 1952; rpt (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1971), p. 226. Subsequent references will be to this edition which has been compared to the original and found to be equivalent in text but variant in accident.

to remain in the valley, subject to its unspoken regulations. Because he is unsettled and insecure, he tries too hard to fulfill the standards of his social milieu, failing and falling in a literal sense. This fall is not entirely negative in its consequences for it tempers him and forces him to move more slowly, conforming to the rhythms of his surroundings --at least until Toby comes to visit and renews the frustration and the deep-seated anxiety of a spirit that is restless and questing. Driven more by discontent than by a conscious desire to search for fulfilment, David climbs the mountain: he goes to a place where he encounters, suddenly, his long sought-for destiny. He realizes that he should have been a writer, writing about the valley and, in this manner, contributing to it. He is fulfilled by this realization and is able to leave behind him, in his final act, his immaturity and life-long quest.

David's story unfolds in segments so that the reader is provided with a narrative based on particularly significant and meaningful events in his life. Each one of these major events is important to the development of the entire character. For this reason, a detailed examination of each part of The Mountain and the Valley yields an understanding of the milestones of David's existence, and paves the way for a final assessment of him as a complete being. Buckler has chosen to reveal David in very specific and separate instances, leaving

the complete and final definition to the reader who must piece the sections together. This approach is also open to the critic and has been adopted in the discussion which follows. Therefore, the method of the analysis is two-fold in that it is concerned with the pictorial and the thematic which are worked into the structure of the novel. It pivots on the meaning of the significant moments in David's life; and it depends upon a close reading of the visual qualities of the novel. For the sake of clarity, the cyclic composition of the work is generally disregarded and events are considered chronologically.

Chapter One: Growing Awareness

In his fiction, Ernest Buckler presents a vivid world of images that contributes to the thematic structure of his work. Symbols, objects, or events that refer to things beyond themselves, are also extensively employed. In The Mountain and the Valley, the author strives to expose, by means of evocative and revelatory phenomena, the interior life of David Canaan. He exerts himself in this manner because he is not as concerned with the exteriors of life, with action, as he is with the landscape of the interior, the motives of the character. This interest in the psychological aspect of the individual is clearly portrayed in the novel itself and in a short article that deals with the theory of Buckler's art:

I didn't fret too much about action. For myself, as soon as complications in a book start popping, I always feel like muttering to the characters: "Oh, for heaven's sake, stop scurrying around advancing the plot! Sit still a minute till we get a squint at your insides." For I think that insides are far more important. . . and interesting than outsides. That action—despite the wired—upper-lip and prose-clipped-with-mat-scissors school—is far less important than its motivation.

¹Ernest Buckler, "My First Novel," in Ernest Buckler, ed. Gregory M. Cook (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 23.

In the novel, the comments on the work of E. M. Forster reinforce Buckler's preoccupation with the interior life:

At first. . .[David] hadn't liked the books. They had more to do with the shadow of thought and feeling which actions cast than with the actions themselves. They seemed blurry. Reading them was like study. But now he found them more rapturously adventurous than any odyssey of action. (p. 244)

"The shadow of thought and feeling," "the insides," these are the things that deserve attention and these are the things that are revealed by Buckler's concrete representations.

In "Part One: The Play" there are two images of major significance that speak of David's position in the world. They are the excursion up the mountain and the play that ends the chapter. Four lesser images reflect the alternatives in life with which David is faced, and three others contribute to a sense that there is an element of choice. There is hope that he may choose correctly but there is a possibility that he will fail to decipher his future properly.

Buckler's narrative opens with the scene in which the young David is filled with expectation over the proposed excursion up the mountain, "into the deep, safe, unfathomable, magically-sleeping woods." His preoccupation with the event is of such intensity

that he dreams about it. In this dream, David walks along two roads—one with his brother and father, and one by himself. They walk and walk but never arrive. Chris, David's brother, also has a dream in which he fails to arrive but his goal is different. While he desires sexual maturity, David looks for a camp, or a place of refuge, in a romantic setting. Yet, it is the failure to arrive that is, significantly, foreshadowed by David's dream. Throughout the novel, David will attempt again and again to climb the mountain and claim his vision. The experiencing of a vision that will clarify his position in the community is the goal towards which he must strive. Although it is the basis of the novel, he will not arrive this time, as the dream indicates.²

Unaware of the significance of this portent, David, Chris, and Joseph, their father, strike out for the mountain camp. When they come to the bridge, they stop to urinate and David, standing somewhat apart from his father and brother, as he does in terms of

²David is a "maverick" or "free spirit," very unlike his commonplace peers. Because of this, he reacts differently; he must reconcile his singular nature with the reality that surrounds him and, in this way, arrive at maturity. It is this uncommon nature which causes difficulties since he is unable to follow easily in the footsteps of those who precede him. Their ways are not his ways; he must discover his own path. He is torn by his desire to belong to his community through conformity with it and his need to be truly himself. It is this tension that must be relieved during his life-time of self-discovery and self-gratification.

articulation and imagination, imitates their adult mannerism because he feels himself to be mature although he is still a child. After all, he is involved in the adult activity of mountain climbing:

Joseph and Chris stopped to urinate on the bridge. They used their whole hand, like a shield. David urinated into the brook, so that he could think of it going all the way out to the sea. He held his hand as they did. He was going up on the mountain. (p. 28)

The idyllic atmosphere by which the climb towards a visionary point is imbued, persists until it is broken by the unexpected sound of voices. The drowning death of Pete Delahunt and Spurge Gorman stops the ascent. David's first journey towards the insight that would have allowed him a clear perception of his place within society has been dramatically interrupted. The rainbow, the sign of promise that links the mountains but fades over the valley, is, ironically, a symbol of an unfulfilled promise or hope. David will not see the mountain camp:

A rainbow arched from mountain to mountain. It was almost faded over the valley, but bright-banded as a new hair ribbon at its roots. . . . But this day had only the shadow-cleanness of promise. (p. 35)

There exists, however, a sense of hope because the mountains will retain their mysterious quality until David is able to possess it. The rainbow is dark and true over the heights that the protagonist must

eventually scale. Promise, and therefore hope for another opportunity, is in the air.

Buckler has complicated David's story very quickly. Instead of allowing him his moment of vision that would later set life's circumstances in their proper perspective, Buckler proceeds to point out various alternatives as the object of his protagonist's life. Basically, there are two choices: the life of the active individual either within or without the community, and the way of the artist who must, to a certain extent, exist as an outsider. Spurge Gorman and Pete Delahunt represent the first type. The death of these men unites the valley people because it touches them all with its significance and proximity. Moreover, death unites these men with their community. The reactions of the neighbours emphasize the fact that Spurge and Pete belong firmly within their society:

The news ricocheted from house to house. Each listener, his own shock subsided to a kind of thought-trembling, himself became a messenger; anticipating the effect of his words in spite of himself: watching almost eagerly for the sudden wiped look on the face of a woman stirring the dinner on the stove, the instant focusing of time and place in the face of a man who glanced at the spade that went loose in his hands as if it were unreal.

Then when all the first shock had settled and the thing was at last really believed, the village seemed to fuse. Women found in other women, just to see them coming up the path to talk over this terrible thing, a glow of reconciliation. Men who had been bad friends for years sidled next each other in the groups and took up each other's remarks, warmly at the sound of their own voices.

In the evening a hiatus fell over the place. Spurge and Pete possessed everyone's mind with a curious kind of distinctiveness the living lacked—as if, by dying, they had achieved their first clear outline of identity. (p. 42)

Perhaps their death does away with whatever disunity existed in the valley because their lives had been well integrated into Entremont. These were men of brawn, men who worked physically and, therefore, supported themselves, their families, and their community. They were not burdens. They were active members. The young David is faced with the possibility of becoming an active valley man who belongs within the group. He reacts to Effie's need for support in a manner indicative of a desire to be an active participant in her life and, therefore, the life of Entremont:

Her face came through the mist of lightness, twisted like a precarious smile falling apart.

She sank down onto the meadow moss, as if she wanted to make herself small. She hid her face in her arms and sobbed.

David looked at her cheap cotton dress. Her crying seemed to endow it more with forlornness than her face. . . . He sat down on the moss beside her and put an arm around her shoulders.

And they knew then what it was like for two people to cry together. The breeze of sadness blew outward now, not inward. Even children can never cry together equally: there is a sort of selfishness in the one whose hurt is the more immediate, a sort of desperation in the one who cannot share equally the burden of that immediacy. But they were crying together.

David found his message easy to say then. He said, "Effie, someday we'll be married, won't we?"

Her lips were trembling, but she nodded

and nodded. (pp. 46-47)

His decision to marry her reflects his desire to play an active role. He joins her in her sorrow, a sign of his willingness to belong to society and partake of its life.

But David comes to recognize other possibilities and this recognition will create a dilemma within him. The physical, sexual life, other facets of the active life and one in which Chris is involved, do not seem to attract David yet. The reader is, however, prepared for the future David-Effie relationship that materializes in the second part of the book. What is important here is the fact that David is growing into an awareness of another way of life. It is, in the manner of Spurge and Pete, a participatory attitude, but it is individualistic; it does not involve the community in general. Here, then, is a second option available to David.

Although the alternative offered by the image of the sailor is not directly introduced to David, he effectively rejects it. The life of the sailor is the life of the active man who can side-step personal responsibility. He bypasses the world of maturity by pursuing one that will keep his eyes always young with wonder. He refuses to be bound to anyone. Although David is deeply hurt by the ignominy of the play scene, he does not sever himself completely from the valley. Physically, he remains within it, though intellectually beyond it. He does

not opt for escape in the manner of the sailor but strives for maturity.

Quite naturally, David is impressed by his own father's life-style. Joseph's silent but forceful and direct approach has won for him a secure home among the valley people who admire and value him. David is well aware of his father's position vis-à-vis the other men and is deeply affected by it:

. . .he'd hear the shiver of the sleighbells as the shafts were pulled out of their tugs at the horses sides, and then his father came into the house with the one magic paper bag in the pocket of his bearskin coat that you could tell held something special. Or when one of the men referred to something his father had done, in a good-natured perplexity that Joseph could never be made to see anything extraordinary in it, himself: the time he'd climb into the bull pen, without even a cudgel, to ring the cross bull's nose; or the time he'd clamped a scooped-out potato over the spurting head artery of the man who'd fallen on a ledge; or one of the times when his rare anger had had a comical effect, though no one dared laugh.

The men told these things about Joseph pridefully--as if they might be telling them about themselves.(p. 57)

It is clear that Joseph is a part of the community and that David feels very close to him. Moreover, the child identifies with his father: "'This is my father,'" he thinks at one point. Having recognized Joseph's attributes and having been attracted by them, David discovers another way of dealing with life, an unreflective

and active one, rather than his own pensive way.³

A fifth alternative is represented by Ellen, David's grandmother. She is the craftsman and the artist who reflects the world around her in her art. Her rugs combine the events of the years and present them in a new way. She is well-established within the community that she quietly reflects. Although Anna seems to be her apprentice, for it is she who often tears the rugs, it is really for David that Ellen stands as a significant figure. Ellen understands David and defends him when the others would keep him from the mountain excursion. She supports him and wants him to go on his quest so that he will realize the direction of his life. As the observer, she seems to know much and knowledge is, ultimately, part of David's goal. But, at this point, he does not make a clear choice between this contemplative life and the active lives that are possible for him.

Herb Hennessey also gives David reason to pause. Despite himself, the boy is touched by the solitary and lonely outsider, but he is not compassionate towards him. Buckler, in the office of omniscient author, enters the narrative to foreshadow the growth of common ground between the two characters:

³Bruce F. MacDonald, "Word-Shapes, Time and the Theme of Isolation in *The Mountain and the Valley*," *Studies in Canadian Literature*. 1, No. 2 (Summer, 1976), p. 198. MacDonald expresses the opinion that "David. . . is attracted by the concrete, secure world of the farmer and feels a kinship to it. . . ."

David glanced out of the window. He saw "Old Herb Hennessey" walking down the road. When Herb went into his house tonight there'd be no fire in the stove, and after supper he'd sit and read the paper and it would be just like any other night [although it was Christmas Eve].

David watched the blur of his heavy body move down the road in the almost-dark. It seemed as if no sound was coming from him anywhere, even if you were there where his feet were falling. He felt the funniest, scariest kind of pity for Herb. He felt the sweetest, safest sort of exaltation: that such a thing could be, however incredibly, but not ever for him. (He was to wonder, years later, if this now were some sort of justice for the unconscious cruelty in that thought).
(p. 65)

If David is to choose from any of the options that are present in the valley, it seems that he is closest to Herb Hennessey and that "thing [that] could be," but this is certainly not a foregone conclusion. It does not take into account the inevitability of individual variation.

In "Part One," David has two dreams, both of which first appear to be omens of failure for him. His first dream, the one which he has on the night before his interrupted excursion, certainly foreshadows, in an oblique way, the unsuccessful climb. But there is hope, since David is still young and there remains the possibility that he will surmount the peak. His dream is largely about a state of continual struggle without reward or the hope of reward, for despite their persistence "...the camp was gone. . .and [they] walked and walked, and I guess that's all, [they] didn't get

to the camp" (p. 21). David's second dream is a variation of the first. Again he makes his way along the road that leads to the mountain top, but this time the goal is not so much to complete the journey, as it is to enjoy the wonders of the walk itself. As in the previous dream, all the trees at the roadside are decorated like Christmas trees, but these hold gifts. Try as he might, David cannot reach the presents. They disappear before him and Herb Hennessey, representing spiritual death, cuts down the green tree of hope. A train whistle echoing from town mingles with the sound of the falling tree and introduces an element of the unknown into the situation since the outside world may contain the grace that will save David from continuing disappointment. Thus far the dreams seem to leave little hope for the searching boy.⁴

But (and in this lies the ambivalence that life and Buckler as novelist provide), dreams do not always have singular meanings. In this case, it is significant that David's dreams, when examined, are found to be linked to dreams of falling, an experience that plagues

⁴Another function of these dreams is to produce David's valley/mountain, city/country dilemma. It is clear that David, who lives in the valley, yearns for the experience of the mountain. In the same way, he, who lives in the country, will be fascinated by, and attracted to, the city. Numerous critics have dealt with these fundamental tensions, generally viewing them as polarities that require a definitive choice. It is my argument that David, although diverted by the glamour of the city when contrasted with the slow-moving country, is not primarily concerned with this choice. He

many successful and goal-oriented individuals. David is doubtlessly one who is attracted to positions of importance and achievement. He possesses a desire, for example, to be the greatest skater in the world. He desires excellence. But as his dreams suggest, success is not guaranteed. He walks, he reaches, he strives, but he fails and a feeling of loss fills him. Herb Hennessey's appearance fills him with more than loss. A sense of foreboding permeates David. Despite the blackness of these imaginings, David may very well succeed. His fear is commonplace but it does not necessarily suggest failure.

David's dreams are filled with fir trees which are symbols of hope. And there are other such trees in the first part of the novel that support the notion that all is not lost for David, that he may find that for which he searches. When Joseph finds the "perfect" Christmas tree, he has to instruct the twins in the tree's perfection by pointing out its merits. As soon as he does this, David recognizes the qualities of the tree, but evidently his perceptions are not

experiences both life-styles and quickly chooses the country. Greater tension resides within him with reference to his desire to ascend the mountain. But this tension is not created by the apparent polarity of the valley and the mountain. It is, rather, the result of David's lack of maturity and clear vision. Ultimately, he must move out of the valley, up the mountain, and beyond both of them. The spiritual freedom for which he, as a "maverick," searches will be accompanied by a movement that takes him beyond his everyday boundaries.

mature enough to have enabled him to reach that conclusion on his own. The Canaan tree is large, reaching to the ceiling, and literally full of hoped-for things:

The tree was there. So still. So Christmas-still. So proudly, evenly full of its own mysterious bearing that even when Martha turned up the wick of the lamp, no one rushed to touch it. For a minute no one moved. This was the tree of hope: the yellow globes of oranges hanging on the boughs, the perfectly scalloped garlands of popcorn, the white tents of handkerchiefs on the green limbs, and secretly between the branches, nearer the trunk, the mesmeric presents themselves. They knew so surely that everything they wanted would be there, they could wait. (p. 67)

Just as David could wait for the fascinating presents, so he would have to wait for his insight. His immaturity makes this necessary. In the way that the tree is a part of his home, so hope and what the future brings must be a part of his life. Compared to others in Entremont, David has much reason for hope.

When the children go to visit Charlotte and Effie, they are naturally sensitive to the different ambience in each of their houses. They are drawn to the Christmas trees. "Effie had a tree. It was a small one, but there was the same feel in her house as in theirs: of this day brought snug into the room from other days" (p. 69). Bess says that her tree was not "so very p r e t t y" and that they "couldn't lug a very big one," but it is Effie who, though defensive, penetrates to the heart of the matter: "We wanted a

small tree" (p. 70). After the recent death of her father, a great tree lending an air of exuberant festivity to the home would have been inappropriate. However, the world of Effie and Bess clearly has room for hope. Although subdued, it is indisputably present. It is different for Rachel and Charlotte. "Charlotte had no tree. When they went into Rachel's kitchen, it was as if they'd gone in out of Christmas" (p. 70). The Gorman house is without a tree; it is without hope. None of the mystery or glamour of Christmas exists. Rachel has given Charlotte her present before the holiday--a pair of shoes--because she needs them. Rachel "d i d n ' t make much fuss. . . . [She] didn't feel much like Christmas this year" (p. 71). Hope is as conspicuously absent as the tree. Now the narrative focuses on David's thoughts. He is relieved to leave Rachel's house and looks forward to his own home. "There'd be the smell of oranges in it and the cosy, personal smell of the tree. There'd be a kind of resonance lingering still of all the teakettle-singing words his mother and father had spoken to each other while they were away" (p. 71). Love and, most importantly, hope are very much alive in David's world.

The hope that David feels, although tempered by his dreams of failure, is bolstered by the skating scene. Before he and his sister leave for the meadow,

Buckler states plainly David's misgivings:

He was glad now that Chris had stayed at Charlotte's. Somehow he wouldn't want Chris to see him, if he failed. Anna was the only one he could bear to have watch him try anything in which he might fail. But he didn't fail. (p. 72)

"But he didn't fail," writes Buckler. "He tried again and again," until he finally succeeded. This is the way that David will have to approach all the difficult but desperately wanted things in his life. He will have to try again and again to climb the mountain, both figuratively and in reality, in order to obtain that which awaits him at the camp or the summit. There is hope that he will succeed in discerning his life's goal. For him, more than for Bess, Effie, Rachel, and Charlotte, there is hope, overshadowed though it may be by the two dreams. It is in the midst of this tension, of hope and insecurity, that David must live.

Having laid the foundations of David's world, Buckler proceeds to follow him through the years of his life. What is in store for David? Initially, he is faced with the immediate challenge of the Christmas play and all that it represents for him.

David's part in the play is his first substantial encounter with art. The lines occupy his mind, filling in the gaps in his days and increasing the poignancy of already full moments. "The words were something no one

else had" (p. 55). Ironically, they bring him closer to the people who do not have them: ". . . everyone who was there when the thought of them came seemed revealedly wonderful, and somehow more fiercely loved, for being so pitifully, humdrumly, outside it"(pp. 55-56).⁵ David remembers these words whenever he becomes conscious of his father's, his mother's, or his brother's inability to transcend the physical moment. He is filled with pity for their limitation. When he is with Anna or Effie, the words arouse in him a feeling of artistic kinship with these two who understand him. In the presence of strangers, the words made David feel safe and ". . . [they] were a kind of refuge when the moment was bare, stripped right down to time and place" (p. 57). During periods of deep emotion, the words can "make the moment really spill over" (p. 58). They come to him when he is alone or in states of half-consciousness and he feels "doubly translated. It would seem as if he touched the very quick of the day" (p. 58). It appears that the "quick of the day," the essence of life is what the words represent for David. They strike an artistic chord within him, a chord that searches for the essential

⁵J. M. Kertzer, "The Poet Recaptured," Canadian Literature, No. 65 (Summer, 1965), p. 81. "Thus in the words of the school play David finds a "refuge," an intensely private world, which nevertheless links him to others in a shared experience."

truths of existence. He seems to find them in these words. But the words are a part of something greater. They are a part of the play that will be of immense significance for the protagonist. Initially, David is plagued by insecurity; he feels "absolutely alone". "[H e w i s h e s] desperately that he was Chris. Whatever Chris had to do was always so simple. It was like lifting. The weight was there and the muscles were there. You just put them together" (p. 79). Once the play begins to fall into place for him, David sheds his insecurity, and feels close to his community although he knows that he is different, feeling elated by the personal fulfilment that the moment provides:

He commanded the silence now, surely, masterfully. Now they all listened as if to someone who had come home from glory in a far place--not in envy, but endowed with some of the glory themselves, because that one's knowledge of his own wonder before them had no pride in it.

He thought, not proudly, but with gratitude toward them: oh, I'm glad I'm not like the others now. . . .

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

How much better this was than saying the words to himself had been! . . . He'd never do anything alone again. . . . this was David, but a David with the shine on him (they'd never suspected!) of understanding and showing them how everything was. (pp. 80-81)

Three critics of Buckler's work, D. J. Dooley, Eileen

Sarkar, and Alan Young,⁶ are conscious of the feeling of community that David experiences here. Young points out that David's "artistic consciousness has stirred and his impulse to create and share has been aroused only to be shattered by a mocking remark by one of the audience."⁷ Dooley suggests that this remark is deserved because David "oversteps the bounds by kissing Effie (which is not called for in the script)."⁸ It may be true that David has, in his moment of excessive involvement, overstepped the bounds, but the boundary is synonymous with the expectations of the community rather than the dictates of the script. Improvisation is not a sin. The real problem is one of judgement, and judgement is a companion of maturity. On the other hand, the artist must present the world in the way in which he sees it according to his honest vision. David does this when he kisses Effie since ". . .that's how it would really be" (p. 82). But he is not sufficiently secure to

⁶Of these critics the following studies are of greatest significance: D. J. Dooley, "Style and Communication in The Mountain and the Valley," Dalhousie Review, LVII, No. 4 (Winter, 1977), p. 676; Eileen Sarkar, "Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley: 'The Infinite Language of Human Relations,'" Revue de l'Universite D'Ottawa, XLIV, No. 3 (July-September, 1974), p. 355; Alan R. Young, Ernest Buckler (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 34.

⁷Young, p. 34.

⁸Dooley, p. 677.

accept criticism of his work from others. Instead, he feels rebuffed by Jud Spinney's remark and is thrown into confusion.

The dilemma that faces David is the dilemma of his entire life.⁹ What should he do? What must he do? What suits and satisfies him? The initial reactions of shame and anger drive David away from the schoolhouse and the community into a state of separation which is represented by his homeward flight and his self-imposed exile in his room. He moves away from others so that he may consider and understand his feelings and discover some sort of new direction, the newly-discovered one apparently lost or at least ruined for the moment. He rejects "...that goddam foolish ...that goddam treacherous play. . . . He despised ...the foolish treacherous part of himself that listened to books," and the "ignorant know-nothin" who had yelled at him (p. 83). David is desperate to belong to the valley but he revolts against Jud who forces him to leave the make-believe world and return home. Nevertheless, he is drawn to art. His terrible rejection of it must match in intensity his attraction. He works to neutralize it in his life, to dismiss it, and to claim the valley way as his own. Suddenly, he identifies with his father's forthrightness,

⁹Young, p. 34.

an attitude that he ~~knows~~ is admired by the community. He intends to adopt this approach. He would swear and " r i d e girls the minute he come up to them" (p. 84). He would be the most daring, the most respected, the ultimate valley man. But then he experiences a change of heart.

He would have nothing to do with these people who had snubbed him. He would snub them. He would leave:

He'd go 'way from this goddam place so fast and make so much money. . . and when he come back he'd drive down the road in a big car and pick up Bess (yes, Bess was the only one. . .) and when he passed any of them he'd nod at them as if he couldn't quite place them. He'd have to speak to them as long as he was here, but he'd never laugh with them again. He'd never have anything to say to them when he or they were in any kind of doubt or trouble, not as long as he lived. (p. 84)

Although David wants to separate himself from the valley people, he cannot see his way to a complete break. Bess, at least, is allied with him. But there is no doubt that David wants to evade all responsibility for these people. "He'd never have anything to say to them. . . ." He would not help them or accept help from them in times of turmoil. He would not tell them about themselves in terms of universal truths. He would not allow the light to shine kindly on them.

As the evening wears on and grows into night, David's anger subsides and becomes guilt. He is touched by the acts of kindness and concern that are and have been

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shown to him by his family: Chris' attempt to reach out and comfort him; his respect for his wishes even when he does not understand them; Anna's concern that reaches him even through the closed door; his father's extravagances on his behalf. Filled with remorse for having separated himself from his family, Dávid gives way to tears. The next day, he goes out in search of his lost rubber but he does not recover it. He cannot recover his place within the family or the community. It is irretrievable. When Chris finds the boot in the spring, he says nothing about it because it is irrelevant. The past may not be altered and drawing attention to it only causes pain. David may not alter the past; he must move forward.

And, yet, the boot is recovered. No doubt, it has been affected by its time in the snowdrift but it remains essentially the same. David is in a similar situation: "David's withdrawal from his community and his family at the end of "The Play" is far from definitive; it simply marks his first awareness of the possibility of being isolated [or separated] from those he loves."¹⁰ It also marks his initial confrontation with his nature and the nature of the community. He consciously begins the process of discernment that is the task of his life. His awareness of alternatives grows as does

¹⁰Sarkar, p. 356.

his understanding of the costs each one incurs. He may never learn to choose and not to count the cost since the cost, which is in this case, separation, is something he fears and cannot forget. Indeed, it informs his selection. Nevertheless, a choice must be made. The dilemma must be solved. David's first bout with his demon has left him with a bad taste in his mouth. But, [REDACTED] goes on and with it David's quest.

Chapter Two: Movement Towards Maturity

In "Part One: The Play," Buckler laid the foundations for his book. David and his surroundings were introduced and his inner predicament brought forward. His alternatives were evident and an underlying atmosphere of hope was established. The central conflict, David's quest for meaning for his life, was embarked upon. This step was attended by failure, and the reader was left in a state of suspense: what will happen to David now? Will he succeed in his quest? Stylistically, Buckler relies on images to carry his presentation. He also uses symbols since they have the power to convey what occurs beneath the surface of a character, and the character's interior life is, by Buckler's own admission, of greatest moment.

Buckler continues to probe this concern and its accompanying themes in the two parts that follow: "The Letter" and "The Valley." In "The Letter," David is often able to maintain a frame of reference which enables him to view the valley people in a positive light. Yet he is occasionally angered by some of the activities of his valley friends, and reaches out to

Toby, a boy from the city. Throughout the chapters of "Part Two," David's artistic nature is emphasized along with his attraction to things and moments of creation and freedom. The first major image, which is contained in the graveyard episode, is a case in point.

At the age of thirteen, David has completed his formal education and is cast out upon the world to learn some of the lessons that daily living provides. On the day that the family goes to the old cemetery to fix the graves, his consciousness is flooded with community history:

He saw exactly the spot on the log road where Effie's great-great-grandmother had been murdered by a drunken Indian. . . [and] the spot. . . (exactly, because he had remembered the crooked tree that day, to mark it) where he and his father had met Enoch Holland taking his daughter away. . . .

He saw the cellar of the old house where his grandparents first lived. Lord Rothesay had once spent the night with them there, on a hunting trip. . . . [One of the Rothesays] had given his grandfather a gold powderhorn that had come all the way from Austria. (p. 89)

Because David is especially sensitive and anxious to grasp and understand his world, "the stain of whatever had happened in any place always remained for him there, however long afterward he came to it" (p. 89). He strives to incorporate his ancestral and valley history into his store of personal knowledge upon which he may draw in his attempts to portray life itself.

At the cemetery, David's curiosity is awakened and satisfied by Ellen who discloses interesting facts about the dead. It is appropriate that she should tell David about these people, and in a way that satisfies him, partly because she is closer to them in age and spirit than Joseph or Martha, and partly because she is a variation of the artist who, through her rugs, symbolically hooks the past together. She is able to transcend the physical and mundane, and enter David's "magic" world of imagination supported by fact. While Ellen fills the dramatic role of spokesman, she also stands as a symbol of the artist. Her British background gives her a vantage point; her rugs are the manifestation of her artistic temperament. At any rate, Ellen provides David with the information needed to fill the gaps in his sense of community history. In so doing, she helps him build a living file. He is able to locate himself in the stream of events.¹

¹Sarkar, p. 356. "The first major incident at the graveyard shows David enriching his own present identity by relating it to the lives of those past. But, even in his eagerness to anchor himself in his community's history, David cannot appreciate his heritage as a self-contained thing within the limits of his own world. His parenthetical observation, on learning that a neighbour is a descendant of the famous Dean Swift, is '(how could there be no mark of that on Aaron Swift now, . . . to reduce the townspeople who were proud of such empty things themselves, when he hauled wood into their back yards?)' (p. 92). Aaron Swift does not need to include the feelings of the townspeople in his frame of reference. David does."

It is the story of Barney Starratt, the seventeen year old who dies because of his own negligence, that affects David most strongly and begins an important chain of thought. It seems to David that the young dead "h a d done some bright extra thing" (p. 93). They had acted without reflection and highlighted their lives by uniting "t h e shiveringly matchless words 'died' and 'young'" (p. 93). David is struck first by their failure to watch and then by his own watching: "He, the watcher, . . . could only stand there and grow still" (p. 93). The reader, if not David, realizes that he is different from the Barney Starratts; David is the watcher, the passive bystander who participates vicariously. Although David may suspect as much, he is not able to discover a way to exploit his own talent. This is the result of an incomplete awareness. He has yet to recognize consciously his latent talent.

Later, in the afternoon, when the children amuse themselves by the lake, David considers momentarily the mountain:

The mountain across the lake looked like the far-off furniture of a dream. David looked across the lake. The day seemed concentrated in this one spot. The mountain looked to him as if, with one great leap, he could touch it. (p. 94)

In a veritable "spot of time," the mountain seems very near to David. It is the same mountain that he wishes to climb and the one upon which he will attain the

vision for which he searches. It seems very close to him. With one great leap he can encounter the essential truth that would define what he cannot yet name: his own artistic nature. But the mountain is dreamlike in that it is distant and ephemeral. He cannot really touch it. He is tantalized but because of his immaturity he cannot see life as it is. Nevertheless, the mountain is still significant to him. He certainly has not lost sight of his goal.

Buckler next portrays David, in the company of his peers at the Baptizing Pool where he uses his power to pull a group together.²

He could spark any plan of theirs into a shape which they could see was much more exactly what they'd really had in mind.

Because of that, they all liked him in a special way. There was a kind of waiting to respond to him. . . . He seemed forever, by the twist of essentiality he gave to whatever they said or did, to be disclosing and illuminating a part of themselves they'd never recognized before. . . . [The boys felt] a proprietary liking: though (and yet because) they were duller than he, self-warmingly protective.

He belonged, equally, with the youngest and the oldest. (pp. 103-104)

Here, again, his artistic nature is evident. He is able to infuse the boys' activities with life and to expose them to themselves. His talent, although it

²Douglas Barbour, "David Canaan: The Failing Heart," Studies in Canadian Literature, I, No. 1 (Winter, 1976), p. 66.

is not consciously perceived, is nevertheless appreciated by his companions who value his input. They are partial to David; they want him to belong to them because he contributes to their amusement. They like him because he serves a purpose; he makes them feel secure and comfortable. They feel a "proprietary liking" that is "self-warmingly protective."

When David is fourteen, he is able, by intellectual relocation, to belong in both groups of boys. He fits into the lives of the younger and the older ones equally well. With the young, he masterminds their incessant activities and augments their enthusiasm and enjoyment of the spontaneous moment. Then he slips effortlessly into the "subtle conclave" of the older boys where he is a "full member." He is the subject and creator of bawdy jokes, the essence of their "olderness." Their teasing "wasn't like the tantalizing way they teased the other kids at all. He was inside the subtle line where encroachment by the younger kids stopped" (p. 104). David clearly partakes of, and contributes to, his boyhood community in a way that seems to satisfy his artistic sensibilities. Lying in the sun at the swimming hole, he appears to be a contented and fulfilled adolescent. His furious and antagonistic reaction to his community that surfaced at the Christmas concert seems to have been neutralized. Indeed, it seems to have undergone a complete reversal since

David moves easily in his society. He accepts their teasing, speaks to them, laughs with them, and is known to them. He is not a stranger. He finds himself able to give of himself and to belong in a meaningful way.

The sexual teasing that goes on at the pool paves the way for David to confront a particular tension that has resided within him for some time. Its origins may be detected in the bedroom scene which takes place on the night that they visited the graveyard:

When they were undressing that night, David noticed that Chris' fly was buttoned up crooked.
 "What happened, Chris?" he said, kidding, "did you get a crack at her old mus'ntouchit up to the spring?"
 "Don't you tell anyone!" Chris said.
 It was like a slap. (p. 100)

David, who had been capable of sexual intercourse for a month, feels betrayed by Chris and almost hates him. He intends to "get even" with his brother and make up for the month of "doing it" that he has lost. "He'd show them whether he was a kid or not. He'd do it so many more times than Chris, so many more times than anyone else. . ." (p. 101). For David, the problem is one of manhood. He feels that he must prove himself to be mature in the eyes of his brother and the community. It is the same difficulty that confronts him when he feels rejected by the valley people at the concert. He had dreamt then of the day he would grow up and be able

to show them that he was really tough. He feels misunderstood because it seems to him that the only part of his nature that any one sees is the part that "listened to books," the artistic and sensitive part of him that does not coincide at this point in his life with his idea of maturity. The feelings of rejection and betrayal lying latent within him operate to goad him toward an act of sexual union. When Effie comes into sight and the boys tease David about his supposed relationship with her, he feels that it is necessary for him to appear mature, to appear to have "done it." Having given them this impression, he leaves their company and pursues Effie. Past events and emotions have driven David towards this moment.³

He feels the same separateness that he has felt before the play, but he approaches Effie who is picking blueberries in the field and lures her away from her task by inviting her to see something further back from the road. She leaves her kettle in a conspicuous spot and goes with him. In a scene reminiscent of the Christmas Eve search for a tree, David tries to find a perfectly secluded spot in which to seduce Effie. Because she is innocent of his intentions, she has

³MacDonald, p. 204. MacDonald feels that "David is caught in the flow of time when he decides that he must have sexual knowledge of Effie."

difficulty understanding the purpose of this search and the inferences that David makes. When she does grasp his intention, her charitable nature allows her to comply despite her misgivings. And then, "the core of all searching met with the focus of all receptivity in a swoon of helplessness" (p. 111). In other words, David experiences fulfilment. This feeling of continuity is momentary for ". . .when he lay relaxed, he couldn't tell if everything had come inside him, or if everything had been lost" (p. 111); and then the arrival of the boys plunges David back into the turmoil of life.

David's new sexual relationship with Effie acts as an integrating force. Bucklar had David in "the thick of things" with the boys and now he is in "the thick of things" in a wider sense. He has done an adult thing, although he is definitely not an adult yet, and has begun to bridge the gap between himself and the adult population of Entremont. He has yet to be recognized in this adult role, but the opportunity is present and grows more tangible.

The events that follow the scene of sexual union highlight David's immaturity. Having loved Effie, David's attitude towards her becomes one of possession:

The experience changes David and Effie's relationship. . . . David feels a sense of responsibility for Effie, a fear that she may be hurt without his "knowing" it, or that she might get ". . .beyond the cure of being brought back inside and thoroughly apprehended" (113). David has made Effie part of his conceptual world,

not a partner in a union of bodies or souls. Their relationship becomes increasingly one of "knowing" and "apprehending" abstractly. . . .

David does not want to help Effie realize herself. He wants to possess her and enfold her so that she may help him comprehend the world. He is still the solipsistic child, not the selfless adult lover. The symbols of the skirt and the kettle support this conclusion.

The alteration in David's attitude towards Effie is evident in his behaviour:

He tried to help Effie fasten the hooks and eyes on her skirt. The inhibiting mystery of her clothes was gone now. He had a new feeling for them. He touched them now as if they were a pitifully helpless part of her, like a limb that had lost its locomotion. His very sense of possession gave an almost total clumsiness to his hands. . . . The limb of a dead fir made a triangular tear in her skirt. . . .

David thought of her kettle. It wasn't even half full of berries. He saw the tear in her skirt and the branch of blood scabbing on her leg. . . .

Then one of. . . [the boys] spotted Effie's kettle. . . . they thought it would be a good joke to hide [it]. . . . [David] felt about her kettle now as he'd felt about her skirt; as he felt about everything that belonged to her. Somehow he seemed to have exposed it in a pitifully vulnerable light. He seemed to have a responsibility now for everything her hands ever touched. (pp. 111-113)

David wants to protect and possess Effie because he

⁴ MacDonald, p. 200.

sees her as pitiful and vulnerable. But the protection that accompanies possessiveness is of a smothering sort. Suddenly, David wants to take over Effie's life because he thinks that he is now responsible for her. Ultimately, he is unable to accomplish this: "[He] had never had a girl cry because of him before. He was helpless" (p. 113). He could not even comfort her. Like the skirt that "looked intact" when the threads were aligned, Effie appears fine when she is actually deeply distraught. David casts about in an effort to help her but is only able to offer an empty promise: "I won't tell, Effie. . . ." (p. 113). What constitutes David's gift to Effie for her unselfishness is a double-edged falsehood since he has already inferred as much to the boys and will infer it again to Toby.⁵ The pair go in search of the kettle and David, suddenly conscious of what he thinks is Effie's poverty, is again moved by the desire to make a gift to her:

What could he bring her, he thought? What was the perfect thing she had always wanted? They searched and searched for the kettle. They couldn't find it anywhere. (p. 113)

Buckler has made his point. All that Effie has ever possessed is a very commonplace ambition symbolized by her desire to retrieve her kettle. But David's

⁵Barbour, p. 70.

"responsibility," which is actually possessiveness, inhibits her wishes. David's inability to locate the kettle is indicative of two things: his immaturity that prevents the giving of himself to Effie, as well as a fundamental inability to understand her needs. He is left to question and search because he lacks true and penetrating insight. He is, as yet, unable to overcome his ego so that he is free to see clearly.

His reaction to the group of boys who harrass Effie and himself is further proof of David's failure to cope with circumstances in a mature manner. He is terribly angry with them and wants to kill them all; he wants to shock them with his coldness and distance; he wants to be "merciless and unreachable as a stranger" (p. 112). Yet, he softens towards them when he recognizes that, had they caught up with Effie and himself, they would have been at a loss: "They'd just have felt foolish. He knew they hadn't really seen anything. He almost forgave them" (p. 112). Nevertheless, when they hide Effie's kettle, David's anger returns because he resents this violation of private property. He wants to whip them, to slash them mercilessly; he wants to be a stranger again. This is significant since David is making a choice. He decides not to be one of the boys. He rejects his peers because they have injured Effie, for whom he thinks himself responsible. He has not rejected

all of valley society, though, for he has elected to be close to Effie. He is not alone. His reaction to the boys is similar in intensity and in its cause as was his earlier reaction to the incident in the play. It stems from personal difficulty. David refuses to recognize his individuality and pay the price for it. He wants to give free rein to his artistic sensibility and he wants to be a man; but, he has yet to learn to be proud of himself and to count these qualities as achievements. Peer pressure confuses him. Unable to clarify his position in his own mind, he is frustrated and turns against the people who he thinks are hurting him. The natural result of this is an attempt to dissociate himself from the community by refusing to serve it. He may want to assist a select few, as his search for the kettle may symbolize, but he fails. His attitude is inadequate. He is ill-equipped to be of assistance.

Further evidence of David's ambivalence exists in the letter scenes. When he first sees Anna, he sees her as a stranger. She is outside of his latest experience which includes Effie. As soon as he hears of the letter, his perspective changes. Effie becomes distant because Anna displaces her. "He didn't know why, but the complex magic a letter held for him erased the simple magic of what he'd done with Effie almost utterly" (p. 114). David may not realize it, but he is in a situation where

the things of the mind are of greater importance than the things of the flesh. He is given to reflection more than action.

D. O. Spettigue indicates that this letter marks David's first communication with the outside world.⁶ Suddenly, a new realm of experience comes into being in his mind. He is fascinated by the city, especially after having failed to establish a comfortable and stable place for himself within his rural society: "David read it over and over. It baffled him. He could find almost no message in it—where then did he get the feeling that this was some kind of turning point in his life?" (p. 115). Devoid of insight at this point, David does not recognize that the medium is the message. Communication with someone outside the valley is a turning point. His perspective must change because of it. In his response, though, David "shied away from mentioning the visit" since that would have opened up a new world that he is still not prepared to face. At this point in the narrative, Buckler presents two symbols that reflect David's state of mind. They are the house and Ellen.

Ellen is the more interesting of the two because Buckler uses her more subtly:

⁶D. O. Spettigue, "The Way it Was," in Ernest Buckler, ed. Gregory M. Cook (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 103.

Ellen awakened, late in the night, at the sound of the rain. She put out a hand to touch her husband. "Richard," she said. He wasn't there. For the first time in her life her mind wouldn't obey her. She couldn't make it focus, to tell her what had happened or where she was (p. 117)

Ellen is kin to David in a psychological sense. It is she, after all, who understands David's intense desire to go up the mountain. Now she mirrors his state of mind. They are both confused; Ellen, about "what had happened or where she was," and David, about his relationship to the valley. Neither of them is able to focus on the important facts and plumb their significance. Ellen seems to be dislocated by time and atmosphere--the lateness of the night and the falling rain; David, by the conflicting emotions that assail him. At any rate, Ellen, in this scene, is symbolic of David's uneasiness.

The second symbol, that of the house, is introduced at the end of "The Letter" and realized at the beginning of "Part Three: The Valley." This house, the biggest in Entremont, is extravagant by valley standards. "Nothing in it was skimmed" (p. 120). All the people share in the admiration of it without feelings of jealousy. The women share in this new thing with Martha and the men admire the workmanship. There is a community feeling about the accomplishment. As an image, the house that would outlast Joseph represents family continuity and a place of belonging within

Entremont. The Canaan house is a home. It is a comfortable and safe spot in the world. David chooses the attic room that places him above and beyond the others but allows him to stay within reach. This position gratifies something deep within him, but it is something of which he is essentially unaware. He enjoys being involved yet keeps himself slightly apart. Evidently, he wishes to be a part of the home and, by extension, the valley, but he chooses the farthest point from these things that allows him to remain within the group. Only Ellen is not engaged by the "excitement of novelty."

Her mind is entranced by the things of the past and the things that do not change. Most significantly, she continues hooking her rugs and linking the past with the present in a creative way. Both Claude Bissell⁷ and Alan Young feel that her rugs accomplish this, and Young describes the rugs as works of art.⁸ Ellen's mind wanders in the past and provides the reader with background material and insight. Ellen is not participatory but observant like the David who chooses the room in the attic. Most significant among her reminiscences and conclusions is the one that finds in David's face "the look of some one of the others" (p. 122). She is assaulted by the impression that "...David

⁷Claude Bissell, "A Study of Human Relations," in Ernest Buckler, ed, Gregory M. Cook (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 35.

⁸Young, p. 31.

seemed to have no face of his own" (p. 123). Although Ellen reacts against loving one child more than another, she hopes that her face is reflected occasionally in David's. Perhaps she suspects that David will be able to keep her alive within himself. The imagery of this chapter seems to indicate that Ellen is correct. David possesses negative capability but is not conscious of it: "You had no way of seeing your own face in the moments when it might be like another's" (p. 122). Buckler, before portraying the house and Ellen, describes the physical surroundings at some length:

[The day] claimed, by its drawing stillness, that you know it perfectly and so possess it; as you could not. It beckoned you, by its very undemanding, to touch what was unreach-able. It asked you, because it had no heart or tongue, to feel you knew not what and to find words for what was inexpressible. . . .

This was the October day in Entremont when, at dusk, the spilling yellow light, imperfectly known and so unpossessed, retreated into the bones of the trees.
(p. 119)

If David seems "to have no face of his own," if he often reflects others, then he is the one who is able to know and possess the world. The "you" who does not do this, is the "you" who proves to be commonplace and does not possess the ability to be another. It is the "you" who live with vehemence and have no time to understand and, thereby, to enter into a state other than your own. David is not the "you," but because he cannot see himself clearly,

he does not yet comprehend his separateness.

Part of his difficulty in understanding his separateness stems from his continued involvement in the lives of those around him, especially his family's. In "Part Three," the sixteen year old David goes with his siblings into the mountains where Chris succeeds in shooting a deer. Of course, all three of them are ecstatic and camaraderie prevails. "They were completely fused by this thing they had done together" (p. 131). Just before they leave to go and dress the deer, Martha destroys the solidarity by revealing to the children that Anna will be going to live in town shortly. David reacts most violently to this disturbing news: "'What did that goddam thing have to come today for? . . .'" (p. 131). Rebuked by his mother, David runs into the dining room in a state of agitation. He is unable to articulate, even to Anna, the cause of his frustration. But his refusal to go and help with the deer belies his emotional condition. "There was nothing to the deer now but the raw blood-smell, the coarse-hair feeling, the sick-sweetish spilling of the steaming intestines when the knife slipped. . . ." (pp. 131-132). The unity and fellowship that the killing of the deer represented are gone. They have been shattered. All that is left of the deer is the meaningless, physical, and repulsive fact.

The loss of a family member is a traumatic

experience for David who is jealous of his family circle. The loss of Anna is doubly painful because she is his twin, the only one of whose understanding he could be sure and in whose sight he could bear to fail. His reaction is natural, although somewhat out of proportion, but this is attributable to his highly sensitive nature. Of course, the next significant event in his life must be the return of Anna. She returns in the company of Toby Richmond, David's penpal from the city. Despite the force of David's negative reaction that leaves him speechless for the first time in his life, Buckler does not follow up the boy's reaction when Anna returns. The author's only comment is that things will never be the same again. Attention is focused on David with regard to the appearance of Toby.

David does not want to appear simple or countrified before Toby. He puts on clothes that operate as symbols that reveal his attitude, namely a sport shirt, new white sneakers, and a new cap, the crown of which he pulls jauntily sideways. When he sees one of the boys, Steve, he straightens his cap and eagerly offers explanations for his strange dress. It upsets him that he feels a compunction to have to defend himself and that he feels foolish. The clothes seem to be a sign of betrayal to him because they are exactly that. He does not want to be identified with the other valley

boys. He wants to meet Anna and Toby alone so that he can greet them in their way. With Steve present, the sophisticated words feel false. David feels uneasy with them and reverts to the language of the valley; he says "Hi" and "Ain't it hot!" Yet the lingo of the valley does not completely satisfy him and he avoids smirking with Steve over Toby's use of the word "bag." This sense of dissociation persists during the walk home. David is upset that Toby and Anna seem to have an understanding that excludes him, but he is comforted when he realizes that they look to him for confirmation of their emotions. David is struck by "the look of experience" in Toby's clothes, especially his hat. Nevertheless, David is able to identify with his new friend; he is able to picture himself in Toby's clothes. Once Toby's tentativeness and shyness are evident, David begins to feel a slight wave of confidence although he continues to try to impress the city boy by highlighting Ellen's background. Just as an understanding is achieved in David's mind with regard to clothes (if not in terms of language since Toby remains unimpressed by David's language studies and his use of extraordinary terminology), so, common ground is also found for conversation.⁹ Oddly enough, it is the same ground that exists between David and the valley boys--girls;

⁹Dooley, p. 677.

but the level of expression is more subtle between the new friends.

At home, complications arise for David that come to a head during the evening when the three boys go to the outhouse. David is embarrassed by what he considers to be his family's lack of social grace. When David sends Toby into the outhouse, where the latter obviously feels more comfortable, Chris snickers unsympathetically:

"He must be scairt he'll git cold in it," Chris said, when Toby had closed the door. He came close to David, assuming common ground with him in smirking at a stranger's unorthodoxy. It was a convention in the country that men never used an outhouse. They went behind it, and urinated against the wall; or used the shovel in the barn. But David felt suddenly defensive for Toby. It might have been Chris who was the stranger. (p. 139)

David's defensiveness may be interpreted in two ways, both of which depend on the meaning of the last sentence. If Buckler intends that Chris does not belong with David and Toby, then David is rejecting his brother's way of life or, at least, allowing himself to doubt its correctness. But should that sentence be interpreted to mean that in David's mind Chris and Toby could change places so that Chris would become the ignorant stranger in an alien land, then David's defense of Toby could be seen as compassionate and open. It is compassionate because it considers the uneasiness of

a fellow human being and attemptsto assuage it. It is open because it respects individuality in action. Despite such ambiguity, David's quick and sarcastic response betrays his insecurity. He is not sure which way is the best way--the way of the valley or the way of the city that Toby represents. David's quest for a way of life that will satisfy him must continue.

The new world that Toby describes to his friend once they are in bed makes David see that his own world is not the only one. The option of a city life with all of its newness and adventure entices him. His already susceptible mind transports him into the possible future. He finds himself identifying with the things Toby says and with Toby himself:

David lay awake, thinking: I have a friend. What he'd been missing all his life had been a reflection of himself anywhere. Now he had discovered it at last.

But why, when the house was quiet with the sound the silence makes to the only one awake, why did he think of the others--his mother and father and Chris? (pp. 142-143)

Even as he is involved in another life, David cannot forget his heritage. He feels remorse for having turned away from his family. He cannot choose one way of life over the other. He remains ambivalent. At the Baptizing Pool, he sides again with Toby, this time against the boys. "David rejects the identity

that the other boys had given him, refuses to find any reflection of himself in them."¹⁰ He uses his inventive mind against his peers by supporting Toby and matching what appears to the others to be his fancy language.¹¹ David deliberately leaves Chris out of his walk up the mountain because this is the one place he wants to take his friend alone. When Toby shows a lack of interest, indeed, scorn, for the mountain, David decides to turn around since he realizes that the experience would be meaningless to Toby. Although it seems that David has deferred to Toby, in reality, he has not. He makes Toby suffer for his lack of interest. Then he shames Effie in an effort to impress Toby. The attempt falls flat. David will never be able to outdistance his friend who has not had to prove himself in such a manner.

Buckler uses Toby's watch as a symbol of the new world that David discovers through his friend. Once David puts it on, it transports him beyond his physical limits "like a magic talisman." Toby lends David his watch; but the things of the city are given totally. After the boys have shared their respective experiences, David asks whether or not Toby has wound the watch. Toby has dropped off to sleep and does not respond.

¹⁰Sarkar, p. 357.

¹¹Sarkar, p. 357.

David does not dare to wind it himself. It is foreign to him and he is afraid to break it. He is also afraid to make it work for him. All of this suggests David's attitude towards the things of the city. He is entranced by them but, at the same time, fears them. He wants to have a watch but is afraid to break it. He can neither touch the watch, nor the world that Toby heralds. For him, both are enveloped in a wonderful and mysterious aura.

Toby's visit leaves lasting scars on David. Doubtlessly, the other boys are offended by his having betrayed them and this further separates him from the valley people. Effie, the only one who would forgive him anything, even that of which she was unaware, seems to be his only secure link with his immediate milieu. Her death, the result in David's mind of his having imposed the act of sex upon her in a damp field, places another mark upon him. All his links with the valley seem to have been negatively affected by his own actions. He has alienated most of his family, his friends, and his sexual partner. The lines of communication are still open between himself, his sister, and Toby, but these people are distant; they are a part of the theoretically liberating city. Naturally, he is attracted to them but he has to go back to the things and the places that are really his. His companion now is guilt.

Unknown to David, Effie's death is not his fault. Her leukemia manifested itself externally as a bad cold, which misled him. At one point, he seeks absolution but Bess' presence interferes. After the funeral, he tries desperately to pretend that things have been different—that he has not shamed her and that she has not died. But he recognizes reality: "There was nowhere in the world he could run where it wouldn't be true. Effie was dead. He couldn't tell her anything. He hadn't even caught her cold" (p. 149). With the passage of time, David accepts Effie's death. Despite his efforts to keep her alive in his mind and to keep himself connected with her, at least spiritually, he finally sees the day when he lets her rest. Her death is a symbol of David's leave-taking of childhood, his partial estrangement from the valley, and his inclination towards a different world. From his necessary silence about his rendez-vous with Effie and another with Bess, David learns that by keeping things within himself he may know and own them. It is not always necessary to discuss events in order to understand them. He leaves behind much but not all of his childishness. His perspective has been altered by life and by death:

The guilt soon passed from voice to echo. But it was the first thing he could tell no one. It taught him that secrecy about anything (even a hateful thing like this) made it a possession of curious inviolability and tempted him to collect more. The essence of childhood is that the past is

never thought of as something that might have been different. He was never, even for a moment, all child again.(p. 152)

This then, is the event that startles him and forces him to see the world anew. But despite the growth of his perceptions, he has yet to resolve the city/country and involvement/separation dilemmas. His new power to desire that circumstances be changed will affect him insofar as it will intensify his restlessness. Free of school, David moves out into the valley and through Toby, into the city. Because of his growing discontent, he considers these things as does one who searches for a comfortable corner in which to relax and to be completely oneself. Jud Spinney's derisiveness has wounded David and that wound has been deepened by his loss of full identification with his valley friends, and his loss of Anna and Effie who have supported and gratified him. By the end of the valley section or first half of the novel, Buckler has brought David into a position from which he must continue his quest because his dissatisfaction persists. But Buckler does not toss David into the world of adults without some saving device. He has given him partial maturity.

Chapter Three: Arresting Restlessness

In Parts Four and Five of The Mountain and the Valley, David, aware of the options available to him of the mountain, the valley, and the city, decides to live in the valley. He arrives at this decision after considerable turmoil and proceeds to live by it although he is often frustrated when he cannot satisfy the expectations of other people. Ultimately, failing to conform, he fails to live as others live; this failure is symbolized by his fall. Nevertheless, he chooses to remain in the valley where he begins to learn a new way of experiencing his surroundings. The world of art, particularly of letters, opens up before him and provides a release from the tensions of the everyday. This is, of course, reminiscent of the child David who found refuge in the words of the play. Like that earlier child, the present David still has difficulty reflecting his thoughts in his work. Having been hurt in the past, and feeling vulnerable, he rebels against his own nature and guards against the outbursts of his own temperament. Such a reaction brings him more pain and suffering because he represses his emotions. This, combined with the example of

Martha's and Joseph's experience, indicates that failure to articulate is associated with death. David must mature into life. He must accept responsibility for his art and be willing, bravely, to make it public. Thus, this goal becomes the goal of his life. He moves closer to his objective in these two parts because he resolves certain secondary conflicts, and is able to concentrate more intensely on the one central problem.

Of the secondary issues that affect his quest for his life's work, the most important is the one which involves his physical environment. In the valley, he becomes agitated spiritually over his "bucolic surroundings" and feels drawn to the city.¹ However, the first significant symbol in "Part Four: The Rock," foreshadows the choice in favour of his home. This symbol is Ellen's rag rug.

Ellen's rug has a plain landscape pattern, and incorporates the basic colours of the country:

Ellen's mat had a landscape pattern.
Each year, in her mats, the house reabsorbed
its own residue of discarded clothing. She
sorted out her colours.
Brown for the earth. . . .
Pink for the sky. . . .
Dark green, for the stalk. . . . Lighter
green, for the leaf. . . .
Blue for the flower. . . .(p. 154)

¹Stuart Keate, "Good Earth, Good People," in Ernest Buckler, ed. Gregory M. Cook (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 29.

Because the colours are not unusual, appreciation of the rug centres around its pattern. Buckler draws our attention to the rural quality of the rug. But like the rug, the events which follow are significant only when they are studied and meanings below the surface become evident. The rug is a woven record of Joseph's "boughten" sweater, Martha's silk scarf, Christopher's and then David's suit, and Anna's dress. It is also a record of the events with which these clothes have been associated. The images in the narrative that Buckler next incorporates are barren in themselves, but rich when recognized in the context of David's thoughts and emotions. The rug that must be scrutinized closely prepares the reader to examine the events that follow. The rural nature of the rug anticipates the city/country dilemma and subtly foreshadows David's choice.

David's active mind records his surroundings in two ways. He is conscious of the rock, the oxen, and the log as physical entities, but he evaluates, as well, their symbolic potential in relation to his experience. A close examination of these three phenomena along with David's and Joseph's thoughts and reactions, which are informed by their differing points of reference, make clear the reasons for David's abrupt decision to leave the valley.

For Joseph, a man content to live in the valley

and devoted to the assurance of the well-being of his family, the removal of the rock is a triumph. He and his descendants are proud of their accomplishment before the valley community that cherishes the same values that he holds for hard physical labour and achievement:

My land fits me loose and easy, like my old clothes. That rock there is one my father rolled out, and my son's sons will look at these rocks I am rolling out today. Someone of my own name will always live in my house. . . .

The big boulder was left to the last. Joseph's father had ploughed around it, . . . all his life. Joseph thought this team could haul it away. The other men had always told him no team on earth could budge it, but he had thought, secretly: Some damp day the drag will slip good, if we can manage to load it, I'll show them what my boys can do. He'd thought, secretly, of showing them this rock someday on the stone wall. He'd thought of hearing them exclaim, "Well, I'll be goddammed!" (pp. 157; 159)

His points of reference and his purpose are clear. He is comfortable with the land and content to live in the valley. Physical labour fills his days and gives him a sense of achievement. The opinions and, by inference, the admiration of his peers bear upon his thoughts and move him to perform deeds in keeping with the community's and his table of values. The removal of the rock would be an exceptional chore for the day and one of which he would be appropriately proud. When the rock is finally unloaded, Joseph

remembers his bright imaginings of this successful moment, but sighs regretfully because David, who does not even turn, does not share his enthusiasm. Because David does not participate in "this crowning moment of their connivance and victory" (p. 162), Joseph is left with the bare, unromantic facts of the moment: "He could see the stripes of raised-up hair where the lash had struck the oxen's backs. . . ." (p. 162).

David's lack of interest in the achievement is the result of his dissatisfaction. The country that he knows provides him with what he perceives to be a meaningless and arid life because it stresses only the physical. But his natural desire to be fully a part of his community is thwarted. These people never ask him to work for them. They do not see him as a man in the physical sense but they respect his intellectual ability and ask him to help them with their correspondence.² This does not satisfy David who continues to rebel against the 'part of him that listens to books.' He resents that part of himself because he feels that it shows weakness. Yet, his spirit is not one with his father's. His interests

²By bringing David their correspondence, the people of Entremont allow him to know and participate in the most intimate facets of their lives. Were David to accept this role freely, and appreciate it fully, he would find himself participating in, and contributing to, his community's affairs in a much deeper manner than any purely physical pursuit would allow. Unfortunately, he does not possess this insight yet.

are not simply those of the valley. He is frustrated as well by the "somnolent" country that does not feed his mind. Despite his artificial desire to share the life of the valley, he continues to be drawn to the intellectual world, and he is convinced that this world is to be found in the city and not on his father's farm or in the brutish transformation of the setting. He cannot share in his father's victory over the rock because he does not recognize it as a victory. "To him the rock suggests inertia, a life of exhausting routine advancing at 'the pace of an ox' into a future which is a tedious repetition of the present."³

This conclusion brings the discussion to David's identification with his father's oxen. David's pliant mind casts about itself searching for something in which he may be identified and, in this manner, comprehend exactly his situation. He sees the rock which, by great industry, may be moved from one point to another but remains steadfastly the same; and he sees the oxen which are akin to him because they are alive and able to move in a meaningless and restricted sense.

Just as the reader moves beyond the landscape pattern of Ellen's rug and is led to contemplate its significance, so David moves beyond the actual fact of the team of oxen with which he works:

³Kertzer, p. 79.

David followed, behind the cart. He had to curb his stride to keep pace with the oxen. They rolled their docile bodies from side to side, depositing their hoofs with great cautiousness on the ground. The pace of an ox, he thought! He looked at them with hatred almost. For a minute it seemed as if the oxen were responsible for the draftless, unfocused resentment in him.

He would grow old here, he thought, like his father. That's what it would be like: the pace of an ox. Lifting their feet with such horrible patience. No revolt in them against the gall of the yoke straps, even when Joseph braced his knee against their noses and yanked the straps tighter still. They held their heads down, drawing the heavy rocks. Their eyes saw only the ground. He built up the picture and the dismay of himself being old here. It gave him the same self-biting pleasure he'd felt when he let the muddy water stiffen on his face. (p. 158)

Here is David able to curb his physical stride, but not his mind's momentum, to keep pace with the oxen whose pace is also that of the valley. He despises the animals in a moment of misdirected, "unfocused resentment." He does not understand who or what is to blame, if anything, for his position because he is ambiguous in defining his goal even for himself. He wants to be asked to work in the same capacity as his brother Chris, but he dislikes the life that the country demands. The idea of growing old in the valley as his father has done, without revolt, brings dismay to David's heart. At the same time, it gratifies him because he feels that such a life would prove him to be a man.

But the revolt taking place within him continues to brew despite this momentary gratification. The oxen and the unchanging, uneventful country are rejected; he hopes that the city that he has never seen will have "movement, and something to feed your mind all the time," so that it will never stagnate. His frustration grows and with it his conviction that the city will satisfy him. Although he wants to leave, he remains ox-like and plods onward. His fatigue will fuel his frustration and he will make the leap of courage necessary to sever himself from the safety of the valley. His father's short-sightedness with regard to the beech log lengths is the spark that causes him to explode and find the strength to make a choice between the country, the valley, and the city.

The dead weight of the beech log is a formidable challenge to David's physical endurance and his will to control his inner turmoil. The cycle of the farm day is debilitating to him and the effort demanded by this particular task drains his body. Buckler's description of the scene is reminiscent of the crucifixion of Christ:

The log was like a menacing concentration of all the weight in the world. He turned his face sidewise, to hide its uncontrollable twitching. He knew it was the colour of slush. It got so he was suspended somewhere by his arms. The weight of his body was intolerable, but he was unable to touch ground with his feet. It got so his whole

body was full of ashes. It got so his will trembled as uncontrollably as his arms. (p. 164)

For David, there is no valid reason for self-sacrifice, and he explodes in exasperation. At the same time, there is no overtly evident reason for his anger. He curses his father who then strikes him. David feels alienated from his father and the valley people and resolves to leave. He believes that he will be made whole if he goes to the city because he will not have to stifle or repress his mind. At this point, he suppresses some of his emotions, setting aside certain longstanding ones, most notably his love for his family and his home. He dismisses his inclination to remain and live a difficult life, and resolves to leave.

On the road, he meets a city couple and quickly discovers that although he is able to converse with them, he must do so on their terms. "They were communicating with him. They were all talking together as if they were all alike. He talked to them their way" (p. 169). These people and their car represent his contact with the world of the city. Despite their kindness to him and interest in him, David finds himself looking over his shoulder. When asked his destination he responds: Newbridge. He really intends to go to Halifax but his will has already faltered. \

Determination rather than anger forces him on although his heart turns homeward. Guilt disturbs him. He is touched by memories of his family and ". . . as he talks to the strangers, his heart does not leap with newly envisioned possibilities but is afflicted by 'a bright chording soreness.'"⁴ With the excuse of having forgotten something (an interesting excuse since he has indeed "forgotten" something, namely himself, and it might very well take him quite a while to recover his identity), David leaves the couple. In a state of indecision, "he looked. . . up and down the road. Then he turned and began to walk toward home" (p. 171). He feels as he had felt when, as a child, he had done his lesson perfectly and then had spilt ink on it. He is torn, on the one hand, by the love of home and the desire to realize himself in the valley, and on the other hand, by his dreams of the freedom and promise of the unknown city. Finally, the suffering within him must be released, and he begins to cry: "He began to sob. He sobbed because he could neither leave nor stay. He sobbed because he was neither one thing nor the other" (p. 171). His decision to stay has been made although the city continues to lure him. He cries because he cannot live in both worlds and because he does not know how to live successfully in

⁴Dooley, p. 678.

the valley. His quest is far from over.

"He can neither go nor stay—but he does stay. The incident is decisive."⁵ It is supported and confirmed, moreover, by his actions once he returns home. He changes his clothes and goes out immediately to the "chipyard" where he begins to chop wood. The first block does not split when struck initially and provides Joseph with an opportunity to offer advice. This advice is, no doubt, unnecessary since David surely knows how to split the harder blocks of wood. Joseph offers it as a gesture of his regret over the earlier incident and the happiness he feels that his son has returned. David's good-natured acceptance indicates his own regret and his willingness to continue in his old role. When he cleaves the block, he feels a "crying-warm surge of release." He has released the tensions within him and experienced the moment for itself. He has put aside his dark thoughts and finds himself both worthy of, and able to, accomplish the task at hand. All the day's tension finds relief in the decision to remain in the valley. The ambivalence is gone. A decision, right or wrong it does not matter, has been made and David need only live by it now. At the supper table, David and Joseph have a "steady current between them" but they manage to

⁵Dooley, p. 678.

avoid direct contact. Buckler uses the image of two magnetic fields that attract but must not make contact with each other lest their innate order be ruined. While David and Joseph are different, they are able to coexist. David shares, albeit slightly, in the prestige of "landing" the big rock. But he does share. He has decided to stay in the valley and pursue a vocation as a farmer. Not content to be merely another member of this community, David strives to excel in its customs:

To take a drink offered, to launch the rawest remark of all, to be the first to grasp the wild heifer by the horn, to bear a sudden blow or sudden pain incuriously and without pose. . . whatever the less imaginative did hesitantly, with a wink or cramped by thought: these were the things he did naturally, with no cramp of imagination at all (p. 177).

On his way to bed that night, David is stopped by Ellen who secretly gives him a keepsake. It is a tiny locket which contains a picture of a sailor's face. The eyes in that face follow the beholder. David, ignorant of Ellen's story of the sailor she once harboured in the barn, is perplexed by the identity of the individual and the meaning of Ellen's gift. He puts the locket away but continues to puzzle over it. It seems to him that he has seen the face before. Then he recognizes the likeness between himself and the photograph. The eyes, the thing he noticed most

about the photo, were the same eyes he possessed and he knew suddenly that Ellen somehow sensed what had happened during the day. She supposes that, like the sailor, David is and would be "the restless adventuring spirit, . . . the questing, moving male."⁶ David feels that his grandmother understands what he feels. Her gift is a way of sympathising with him while respecting his pride:

. . . she too knew what it was like when the moonlight was on the fields when the hay was first cut and you stepped outside and it was lovely, but like a mocking. . . like everything was somewhere else.

He went to sleep at once, though. He was eighteen. (p. 172)

Although David has returned home, he is still tantalized by far off places. He is able to go to sleep at once because he is determined to live his choice. He has not forgotten the possibility of the city; he has put it aside and obtained sufficient peace so that he may sleep. Shortly thereafter, he gives the locket to Anna for its traditional value. In so doing, he tries to put away from himself the restlessness that is within him. He tries to muster all his energy in support of his decision.

One might suspect that such dramatic events

⁶Spettigue, pp. 101-103.

would hasten David into maturity but this does not seem to be the case. At nineteen, he has moments when he feels "as old as anyone;" at the same time, he is certain that he "would always be young:"

Yet the conduit to childhood wasn't entirely sealed over. A child's visionary enthusiasms still surprised you at times, trapped you into delight without judgement. David's heart leapt the moment Joseph spoke that morning. (p. 173)

His father's intention of going to the top of the mountain for a keel-piece for a vessel being built in Annapolis sparks in David, who has yet to attain that height, an excited and youthful bouyancy. His eagerness is felt by his family and a picnic spirit is infused into the day. David's intense excitement is childlike as is his outburst when the car first arrives. He is unwilling to share this occasion or his family with any outsiders. When he realizes that it is Toby and Anna who have arrived, his enthusiasm receives a new boost. They are family members and their company should enrich his enjoyment. David's persistent youthfulness clouds his vision, so that he is unable to view the world objectively and, depending upon that knowledge, to make a firm decision about the direction of his life. He has made a decision which he supports at all costs. He even hurts Toby and Anna because of it, and reacts negatively to them because to act otherwise would

leave room for re-evaluation.

For David, Toby is a measuring stick. When David finds himself unequal to his friend, he becomes defensive and unresponsive. At every important juncture during the day's visit, David, although sympathetic to Toby, does not support him. Neither does he undermine him. He maintains an aloof position. This is clear in David's short responses. When the discussion turns to taking the car up the mountain, David reinforces the sensible opinion of his family: "It's no use, Toby. . ." (p. 176). Later, when Toby encourages David to quit school and get a job, David replies in a tolerant tone that infers his disregard for Toby's opinion. When the car becomes stuck in the mud and Toby obviously wants David to share his amazement, David refuses to side with him in a confidential and exclusive manner: "'She's in quite deep,' David said. His tone was one of pure statement" (p. 179). Toby tries time and time again to penetrate David's aloofness by presenting himself in a friendly light. For his part, David persistently rebuffs his friend. He does not feel equal to Toby and recoils into a position from which he is able to reject Toby's qualities in himself. He does not see the similarity between himself and Toby that Anna sees. (The similarity is, no doubt, the restless, changing blue eyes.) In fact, he comes to

view himself as better than his friend. When Toby moves to hook the chain to the car's bumper, David warns him that he will sink into the mud over his shoes. He then takes the chain himself: "His clothes gave him a sudden superiority then. Toby's seemed futile and finicky" (p. 181). Clearly, David tries to remain aloof and superior.

David is not sufficiently mature to accept the differences and similarities between himself and Toby. Instead, he competes with him and strives to excel where Toby does not. David feels more manly than Toby in the physical sense as is demonstrated by the chain scene. He also feels superior to him when they go to the shop for a drink. Toby drinks with a swagger while David drinks as though he is accustomed to it. The other source of this tension is connected with what Toby has always meant for David. It was, after all, Toby who introduced David to the city and nearly enticed him into another way of life. But this is also the way of life that David has recently rejected. Because David reacts intensely, he must reject forcefully everything that he decides to set aside. Similarly, he is also intolerant because he is insecure.

His final action in "The Rock" is, on the surface, decisively in support of his choice to live in the valley. Rather than return home by car, David accompanies

his father and the oxen. He lives his life at "the pace of an ox" despite the opportunity to enjoy a faster tempo in life and a greater variety in experience. He aligns and identifies himself with Joseph who is representative of the valley man David would like to be. Yet, haunted by indecision his heart cannot be completely with his family and the oxen. He experiences a "surge" to be with Anna and Toby, and to share their lives. He yearns to wipe away the "deliberate offishness" that he has cultivated during the day. When Joseph suggests that they will try to go up the mountain again tomorrow, David has no enthusiastic response. The keel and the mountain have paled before the idea of an active, adventuring life.

David is uneasy with his feelings, but determination combined with the silent support and approval that he receives from his family assist him in remaining true to his present position. He strives to put away from himself all invitations and temptations to move in the opposite direction. He even loses sight of his great goal--to scale the peak of the mountain. He has come back to the dilemma that he faced after the ignominy of the play when he vacillated between the desire to imitate his father or to leave his home. Unable to leave, ". . . David makes if anything a tougher decision: he elects to live in the

Valley"⁷ and prove himself a man in the physical sense. But he is at this point childlike in his emotions. No amount of physical strength or endurance will impress the valley people and gain for him the respect he desires unless the process is accompanied by emotional maturity. His failure is predictable and imminent.

⁷Alan R. Young, "The Pastoral Vision of Ernest Buckler in The Mountain and the Valley," Dalhousie Review, LIII, No. 2 (Summer, 1973), p. 222.

Chapter Four: Fall into Grace

David's mind, at this point in his development, is obsessed with the need to prove himself a man by valley standards. He recognizes the difference between himself and the other people surrounding him, but continues to try to prove what is obviously not true. During the killing of the pig, Chris' remark which reveals David's secret aversion to seeing anything killed especially incenses David. He refuses to admit in his mind even the possibility that he might be upset by the realities of farm life. He does not want to be thought of as a "soft" person. Enraged by Chris' implication, David exerts himself to a greater extent than is necessary in the slaughtering. Failing to accept his limitation that climbing makes him dizzy, he falls from the beam. He cannot satisfy the unspoken regulations of valley life, and he will not accept the position that his society has created for him. Although David enjoys the "spectator sense," he wants to belong as others do. The people of the valley, by assigning him this place and by bringing him their letters and papers, recognize and make use of his innate talent, thus allowing him to participate

in a constructive sense. Unfortunately, Jud Spinney's earlier remark has hurt David badly. He is afraid to be hurt again. He strives therefore to forge another way of life for himself, but he fails because this new way is assumed rather than being a natural one.

That David is aware of his childish attitude is evident at the beginning of "Part Five." The group mills about the barn waiting for the water for the scalding barrel to boil. Occasionally, David has to run up to the house to check the water. Joseph becomes restless and, after some time has passed since the water was last checked, sends David to check it again:

"Dave, take another look at that water," Joseph said.

He started to run, then stopped and walked. He always started to run when he was asked to look for something, and then stopped. The running made him feel like a child being sent on an errand.(p. 186)

Although David realizes his position, he is not bothered terribly by it yet. When Chris makes a remark that is clearly condescending, but is made in an affectionate way, David's anger is aroused because he feels his manhood being questioned directly:

Just as he turned, he heard Chris whisper to Steve, "Dave don't like to

see anything killed."

It might have been Chris's hand across his face. It wouldn't have inflamed him so if Chris had said it in derision. It was that indulgence they always used. Their exposing a whim of his he'd thought secret left him as shameful for the whim's transparency as for the whim itself. Making a goddam fool of him. As if it was killing the goddam pig he minded. He'd have struck Chris right in the face, but it was the kind of anger that striking anyone wouldn't help.

"Shut your damn. . ."

He never knew if Chris heard his shout or not. Just then the gun barked and everything happened at once. The moment erupted into other shouts and movements. The swirl of his anger mixed everything up. (p. 189)

Of course, David does mind killing the pig. He does not like the waiting that is a necessary part of it. He is ashamed of this whim and angered because he thinks he has been made to look like a fool. Immediately, he tries to vent his anger by shouting at Chris, but his exclamation is interrupted by the shot and the hurried activity which follows. David is not purged of his anger. He has yet to expose it and calm himself. He is caught up by the moment and expresses his anger in his abrupt movements.

He leaps like a madman to the pig's hind legs and grasps them at the dirtiest spot. "It was a gesture of derision at a daintiness in the others who even in their haste grasped a clean spot if possible." Having been shot in the brain, the pig goes into convulsions putting David in a dangerous

position since the thrashing hind feet could cut him seriously. Chris warns David away but David holds on until the animal's throat has been cut. His amazing actions are, of course, his way of demonstrating to the others that he is not weak in any way.

But his performance is insufficient to express the totality of his anger. He drags the pig toward the barn without benefit of rope and hook. When he tears his hand on a nail, he refuses to have it "looked at." He tries to maintain meaningful activity rather than assume the role of a passive spectator by placing the gam stick. Doing it improperly, he is doubly angered by this mistake. When Joseph's rope gets caught on a spike in the rafters, David volunteers to walk a beam and release it. David knows that his brother is aware of his dizziness when climbing, but he goes up, as much to do a job as to prove to Chris that he is able to do anything anyone else can do. He frees the rope and is about to begin the return journey along the beam when "... with exactly the feeling he had often had in a dream of falling, he fell" (p. 193). Despite his intensive effort to exhibit physical prowess, it is clear that he is not adept in this manner. His efforts end in disaster.¹ His feeling, exactly like

¹Marilyn Chapman, "The Progress of David's Imagination," Studies in Canadian Literature, III, No. 2 (Summer, 1978), 188.

his feeling in a dream of falling, reflects a fear of failure that is justified. He has set his heart on a goal that is beyond him, and has fallen short of it.

But all is not lost. The fall forces David into a period of convalescence during which physical activity is eliminated and he is able to turn to a world of the mind for which he is more aptly suited.² In her article "The Progress of David's Imagination," Marilyn Chapman describes David's intellectual reactions to the art in which he allows himself privately to become involved:

After his quarrel with his father and Chris and his subsequent fall from the beam in the barn, David is forced to spend several weeks in bed; and it is during this time that he returns, for the first time in five years, to the world that words create. Glancing through some of the books that Dr. Engles leaves for him, he is amazed to discover how closely the written word can capture the precise quality of certain human experiences: "And then his eyes fell on one sentence: 'He turned back to the empty house and his heart bent forward against a wind.' He caught his breath. That's exactly the way he'd felt when anyone had gone away" (p. 195). Fascinated by this discovery, David begins to experiment with words himself in an unconscious attempt to come to terms with the events that preceded his quarrel with Chris: He wrote quickly. "Roger was angry with his brother." He hesitated. When he did, a listening seemed to spring up in everything around. It stiffened him. But he forced himself to go on. "He didn't want to climb the ladder, but

²Dooley, p. 678.

something made him. His brother's face looked" He thought: sad! . . . sober? . . . hurt? . . . struck. Yes, sure. "His brother's face looked struck." (p. 196)

Having taken the first step, David feels the "cleansing cathartic" (p. 196) of getting something that had been devouring him outside and down onto the printed page. He is not creating an imaginative world for its own sake now but creating one that will help him to comprehend his relationship to other people in the external world. Able to understand now how Chris felt ("struck") when he started to climb the ladder, David is on the verge of discovering his own culpability and turning the fall into a felix culpa. But his thoughts are interrupted.³

Rachel Gorman who "radiates a kind of general disapproval to which David is very sensitive"⁴ enters the Canaan home and shatters its peace by disclosing Chris' relationship with Charlotte and seeking restitution. David feels very close to Chris because of his story and becomes angry. "Oh, you stinkin old bitch!" (p. 198) he screams at Rachel. Then his anger re-focuses onto Chris whose life, in contrast to his own, is one of action; one that affects others tangibly. David is jealous of Chris and withholds the "annulment of [the] soreness between them" that he had been ready to bestow upon his brother for the latter's remark in the barn. "Instead of using his imagination to get inside of Chris' head and to understand how his

³Chapman, pp. 188-189.

⁴Chapman, p. 189.

brother feels, David uses it to justify his own resentment."⁵

After the incident with Rachel, David goes back to his bed and reviews what he has written: the lines appear fixed to him because they do not encompass his new emotions; they present only one segment of their lives. This apparent failure frustrates David and he obliterates the words completely. "And then, like the gradual stealth of a train's rumble in the distance so that you can't tell exactly which moment you hear it first, he felt the pain [of his headache] returning" (p. 199). Having failed to surmount his anger so that he might at least understand one facet of his brother, David slips back into his pain. The relief that he felt from articulating, capturing, and comprehending a situation has been undermined by his anger. His childish inability to control himself and recognize his limited achievement has resulted in a relapse that is both physical and spiritual. He has experienced the value of self-expression and now he must live with his pain, which is the result of suppression.

The notion that articulation brings relief from tension and a sense of identity with his subject, while suppression brings pain, suffering, and division is

⁵Chapman, p. 190.

confirmed throughout the remainder of "Part Five."

Chris, who has been characterized as less articulate than his brother, is trapped in Rachel's house. His efforts to establish unanimity in the house are thwarted by his mother-in-law who pretends to maintain peace by keeping silent. For Joseph, a failure in communication between himself and his wife leads to disaster. Anna and Toby are the exception. Toby withholds nothing and the relationship prospers, but Anna, cut off by time and space from her family, is not completely content within herself. For his part, David seeks to describe things exactly and, therefore, to possess them, but he finds this difficult and is glad to have his thoughts interrupted.

During the trip to town to sell the extra pig, David's mind is again occupied, as it was before Rachel's appearance, with the effort to state things the way they are. Everything around him seems to beg for comprehension despite his wish to suspend thought:

His headache was bad this morning. It was like a weather in his brain, dark and humid. He suspended thought.

But as they drove along, the pain lost out to the clamour of firstness in the air, as the sound of a train going the other way thins out until you can't be sure which minute you hear it last. A sense of earned lassitude followed. Then came the rush of communicativeness from everything he looked at, as if in congratulation. Then this new need to possess these things by describing them exactly in his mind. (The water trickled in the ruts like? . . . like? . . . anxiety. It was his, now.)

And then the whole multiplicity of them clamoured to be known exactly, and so possessed. The never-quite-exactness of the twinning of thing and word for it was so tantalizing he was glad when his grandmother spoke. It was like a hand on his shoulder bringing him back from an unmanageable dream.

"Don't forget the meat," Ellen said.
(p. 201)

David again enjoys the virtues of articulation in his own life, but he finds it almost too difficult, and is glad to be recalled to the actuality of the living moment. His reaction to successful recognition of his world suggests his immaturity because he rejoices in being able to possess things. "It was his, now." He possesses his understanding for himself. He does not share it, nor has he any intention of sharing it. Ellen is surely the most appreciative audience that he could hope for, yet he offers her none of his experience. He is on his way to becoming an artist but is still distant from achieving that end. His efforts are, therefore, "an unmanageable dream" rather than a delight.

Chris also exerts himself in order to be freed from emotional enthrallment. When he speaks to David and Ellen, he tries persistently to reveal to them Charlotte's miscarriage, but he is interrupted. Finally, he delivers himself of his news and his face begins to break up because of the emotional strain. This may appear to be a negative result of articulation,

but it is actually a positive one since Chris, in telling of the situation, learns to accept it. His desire to mourn is a natural reaction and a positive one because it frees him from possible delusion. Unfortunately, he is not always able to communicate with those around him. This is especially true as it involves Charlotte and Rachel.

Chris, despite Rachel's low regard for him, tries to include her in his discussion with Charlotte over the oilcloth. Rachel, with a pretense of nonchalance, avoids a direct response. She also avoids direct communication and discourages Charlotte from rebuking Chris over the problem of his tracking muddy water into the house: "'Don't. . . ' Rachel whispered to her. 'Don't. . . ' She looked up in a mime of supplication: Bear anything. . . bear anything. . . just so there's peace. . . '" (p. 205). This is, of course, ridiculous. Any peace that might have resulted from a frank exchange has been replaced by tension especially for Chris who resorts to swearing. He tries to relieve the difficulty by swearing, but Charlotte inhibits him and he resorts to physical action:

Chris started outdoors, but Rachel was in his path. He moved like someone dizzy. He turned to the cellar door and stumbled down the steps.

He circled around and around the cellar. He looked ludicrously into the potato bin and the vegetable bins. He aligned a stick of wood on the pile. Then he reached down

into the apple barrel. The apple was wilted and half rotten, but he bit into it and chewed it the same propulsive ludicrous way. (p. 206)

Despite his tendency, characteristically, to be inarticulate, Chris must express his emotions and be relieved of them. Robbed of the opportunity by his new family, he is driven to his only other outlet. Yet, his feelings remain, effectively, unexpressed, and Buckler leaves Chris in a state of intense uneasiness.

A similar situation arises in the lives of Joseph and Martha. For a while, they butcher the pig in peaceful co-operation. Martha tells Joseph where to cut and Joseph does it better than she could have done. Afterwards, they set aside pieces to be given away. Joseph inquires as to whether or not a piece has yet been chosen for Bess, and Martha, who has heard gossip implying that Joseph has had a relationship with Bess, becomes upset and slips into silence. This speechlessness on her part has occurred before, notably during the potato harvesting in "Part Three," and it has always left Joseph baffled. He loses his temper this time and rushes out of the house to the shop. After a while, he finds an excuse to address Martha again but her deliberate silence affronts him. He cannot understand her reaction or conceive of a way of bridging the gap. In his mind, he strives to understand the problem. His thoughts turn to all

the times that such a situation has arisen. He thinks about going to cut the keel as he had intended to do that morning. He knows Martha would like to accompany him and begins to worry about the calamities that might strike should he go alone. Suddenly, he is angered because he feels that he is "harbouring. . . womanish softness." He decides to disregard Martha's desire, and goes to cut the keel by himself:

He'd go back alone and cut the keel. Maybe she wanted to go, maybe she didn't. He didn't give a damn. He'd just go. He didn't have to tell any damned woman everywhere he went. He didn't have to ask any damn woman everything he did. If he was late for dinner, he didn't care. Yes, he'd take the oxen too, and snig it out to the road after he'd cut it. He didn't care if it was five o'clock in the afternoon before he got home.

And she'd speak first, by God, if he had to keep quiet the rest of his life. (p. 218)

Uncomforted by the reassurance that comes from collective approval, Joseph climbs the mountain and begins chopping the keel-piece. His mind is restless and preoccupied. He does not pay attention to his work. The tree falls on him and he is killed. "It is no accident in this novel that Joseph dies on the day he and Martha are so bitterly un-reconciled."⁶ This lack of reconciliation has prepared the way for Joseph's death.

⁶Barbour, pp. 72-73.

As for Martha, in this situation, her silence results in the creation of tension within her that demands purging. It comes in the form of a minor heart attack. She is able to speak again but is not sufficiently persistent to show Joseph that the difficulty has been resolved. Her failure to articulate results not only in the pain of her seizure but also in the sense (once she discovers that Joseph is dead) that he has forsaken her. He has left her physically and spiritually since he dies, as far as she knows, un-reconciled with her. Martha dies soon afterward, apparently of a heart attack brought on by her lack of interest in life after her husband's death. Her silence, then, contributes to two deaths.

While failure to articulate leads to tragic consequences, success in communication leads to happiness. Anna and Toby communicate well because Toby is not able to dissemble and Anna, David's twin, responds favourably to honesty.

Anna and Toby go to a party where Toby is snubbed by a woman. He responds, not by pretending to be content, but by showing his unhappiness. Anna, who seems to be slightly more sophisticated, has felt twinges of jealousy because Toby obviously enjoys the companionship of someone else. But she is touched by Toby's candid admission of discontent and agrees to humour his desire to leave the party. They walk along

the streets and Toby steers her into a jewellery store. They understand that they are engaged and that they love each other, and Toby buys Anna a ring. She is, of course, more deeply touched. The couple is portrayed as content people who interact freely and well because they do not allow barriers of misunderstanding to exist. They know each other so well that they are able to communicate with a minimum of words but they do communicate and to a positive end.

Yet Anna has lost touch, because of time and distance, with her family. She finds that their gift of tenderloin that should have been a communication of love does not affect her as she knew it should. She is reduced to tears because she regrets having lost her appreciation of her family's gift. She could only appreciate it if she still viewed it as something special which she does not do. Moreover, she feels guilty for having moved into another realm:

She felt like crying as for a kind of guilt: that she had an evening dress, but didn't think of it as a "good" dress now; that she said "the show," instead of "the moving pictures;" that the sight of strangers no longer sealed her into the family unit, as it used to do when they'd be having an ice cream in the restaurant in town. Tenderloin used to be so special a treat for them that it made the night they had it for supper almost like Christmas. She felt like crying, because, when she tasted a slice of it now, it didn't taste much different from the pork she could order any day here. (p. 211)

For Anna, understanding is no longer explicit between

herself and her family. She must consciously strive for it, but it continues to elude her, leaving her unhappy.

David must learn to want to articulate his insights aloud so that they may serve a purpose beyond self-gratification. The odds seem to be against him since Chris, Joseph, and Martha have failed. But these people constitute the less articulate side of the family. Anna, David's twin, achieves some success. Her partial failure is due to circumstances--those of time and space--over which she has little control. Anna has always been closest to David; she was the one he did not mind seeing him fail and she was also the one in whom he could seek refuge if his imaginary world ever failed him. Like David, she carried those "heavy" words of the play around with her and spoke them before the community. Like the Christmas tree of years past, Anna's achievement of communion with Toby signifies that the possibility for such communion exists for David. If David is willing to share his knowledge by expressing it publicly, he will be able to share in the life of his community in a meaningful way. His service to it will bring fulfilment and satisfaction to him.

But this day seems far away since David has regressed. At the age of eleven, he did go before his community and address himself to it. He was not strong enough to accept criticism and he turned away

from his natural vocation. After the fall, David is able to articulate again, but only for himself. He does not want Rachel, or anyone else, really, reading the lines in his scribbler. On the way to town, he does not share his thoughts with Ellen. His achievement is in returning to his proper vocation, but he has lost years of practice. He has lost years in which he might have developed sufficient courage to accept criticism and to support his point of view regardless of the opposition. Nevertheless, he is again in the way of a life-style suited to him.

Upon his cheek, David bears the scar from his fall. It is "only the external manifestation of something that had already happened within David."⁷ This mark signifies the suffering he has endured. It is also the mark that sets him apart from the others. The valley has tried to allot David his place within its society as an observer and man of letters. He fought against this but was unsuccessful. He bears the mark of his difference and of his suffering. He is forced to leave behind his efforts to prove his physical prowess and he is left to continue on his original quest for belonging within the community. Considering the number of lost years and the violence with which he opposes that side of him that "listens

⁷Sarkar, p. 358.

to books," David has made a good if unconscious "new beginning" in a course to which he is better suited.⁸ By the end of "The Scar," David is properly aligned with Ellen whose spirit is kindred to his own. She has nothing to do with the pig slaughtering but busies herself with a minor art form, namely rug-hooking. David feels closer to her. She seems to share with him life as he knows it: "He had, for a moment, a feeling as if he and his grandmother were the only things animate in the whole world" (p. 223). Again, Buckler uses Ellen as a symbol of the artist. Here he links that artist with David and links life with both of them. Self-expression is associated with life. Confidence in his expression and a knowledge of what he ought to say are the ends of David's quest and his quest continues.

⁸R.E. Watters, "The Mountain and the Valley," in Ernest Buckler, ed. Gregory M. Cook (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 45. Watters feels that David "began to discover what he is, about the time he is recovering from a bad fall. . . ." But David is rediscovering this. He understood once before when he took part in the concert: "I'm glad I'm not like the others now. . . . Oh, it was perfect now. He was creating something out of nothing. . . . How much better this was than saying the words to himself had been! . . . He'd never do anything alone again." (pp. 80-81)

Chapter Five: Restlessness Revived

Q In the next phase of the novel, Buckler portrays David five years after his father's death. David is left on the family farm with Ellen. His life has become the life of a farmer although farming "comes most unnatural to him." Buckler fills in the five-year gap by a series of flashbacks in which the highlights of David's activities and their significance are recounted. These events create the general impression of the protagonist as a lonely man who understands that he stands apart from his community by his own unresponsiveness to it. During Ellen's yearly visit with a friend in Annapolis, Toby and Anna come to the farm for Toby's leave. The couple is linked to child imagery and David, in turn, is linked to them. He is associated with Toby especially through the sailor hat images. It is clear that David is still very much the child. Despite his loneliness, he enjoys a sense of fellowship with Toby and, in this state of relative ease, contentment, and confidence, he is again moved to express himself through letters. His story is written for himself. He tries to understand his own relationship

with Toby, but the "condition for universality" with which he was born is not given adequate rein. He writes for himself and not for anyone else. His egocentric creativity results in his failure to satisfy himself completely or to produce a work of which he may be truly proud. Because he is recluse, he cannot offer his art to anyone. He seems ashamed of it. The sense of fellowship that is necessary for the fulness of his art is symbolically defeated by Toby's failure to respond to him as he waves from the front field at the passing train. David is thrust into a moment of recognition. Unfortunately, this insight frustrates him. Although his life seems vacant, he struggles on as did his father before him.

David's understanding of his situation is assisted by his introspective nature which occasionally allows him to be spiritually affected by outside experiences. He is indifferent to others and turns away his neighbours by his passive manner. In so doing, he lapses into a state of separation. Certain events of a symbolic cast of the last few years make this clear to him.

His quest for self-comprehension and its result, the recognition of his personal vocation, has continued clearly, while Ellen's reminiscences have served to reveal his failure to achieve his goal:

If it hadn't been for me, she thought. . .

OF / DE

if it hadn't been for his health. . . would he have gone away? He can learn to do anything. Even farming, which comes most unnatural to him, he can now do well. If he'd gone someplace where he might have found the thing that was meant for him. . . .
(p. 226)

Despite the fact that David has not had his moment of revelation yet, he has come to certain conclusions; he has experienced fleeting and visionary moments that have been self-revealing. A boy and girl walking along the road; his participation in a dance; the accident in the village; and his memory of Herb Hennessey are the significant situations that have arisen in the past and have led him into a period of contemplation of his own condition.

In terms of the routine of valley life, David has withdrawn from society. Although his neighbours come to visit him and he sits and apparently enjoys their conversation, he feels very far removed from them, and is not at all satisfied by what he sees as their empty conversation. He is never overtly inhospitable, but, at the same time, he never returns their visits. Eventually, he becomes recluse. He visits no one and is visited by no one. This situation does not upset him until one day Steve, passing along the road, teases him about his fastidiousness over his wood pile and David is led to see himself, momentarily, as others see him --as a true solitary. He begins to recognize his personal poverty and his loneliness,

and he begins to desire to be integrated into the life of the valley. His unhappy situation and intense desire to belong are further evidenced by his reaction to the young boy and girl whom he sees walking along the road:

On day a young boy and a young girl dawdled up the road. He'd seen this couple clowning together countless times before, and felt nothing. But now the work he was at parched in his hand. The very vacuousness of their antics (isolable as they were of everything else in the world) seemed like the only real thing there was. He stood there like the uninvited child.

He'd had no part of girls for a long time. They might only glance at the scar on his face, but he'd be conscious of it all the time. And Bess had married again. He was so convinced that sometime he'd have all the girls he wanted that he hadn't felt any loss. But now the girls of "sometime" seemed like a trick. He felt an awful reorientation. He had a desperate urge to leap back through the years, physically. . .to make it himself in that boy's place. (p. 230)

David is clearly conscious that he is alone and regrets his situation. He would like to find himself in the close company of another human being, but he is aware that the possibilities for such closeness have become non-existent.

Nevertheless, David strives against reality to create a feeling of identity between himself and his community. He goes to the dance in the schoolhouse and tries, by making himself noticeable, to attract the young girls. They dance with him and enjoy his company but feel more comfortable with their peers

in the quieter moments of the evening. Upset by this experience that places him outside a certain group, David is plagued by the pain which develops in his head. He leaves the dance early, and worries over the fact that he is no longer the centre of attention in community activities. The next day, he escapes into his imagination but his headache persists and intensifies, giving mute evidence to his mood of discontent and uneasiness.

Worst of all of these incidents is the accident in town in which a car hits his wagon, damaging it and ruining the produce that he has been transporting. David is naturally dismayed and very upset by the reaction of Ben Fancy, someone from home who he thought would understand him completely. But Ben Fancy does not feel close to David and does not provide him with the warm support that he requires. Instead, he remains aloof while offering advice which is obvious. David is struck by this reaction because he feels that it reveals to him the result of his own tendency to remain apart from the community. He is struck by his solitariness and thinks of his distant family. They are the only people to whom he has truly related and he cries out in his mind for the return of their presence in his life. As the episode closes, David contemplates the prospect of a letter to Anna inviting her to the farm for a

visit.

But before the episode ends, the exterior action in which he is engaged (that of harvesting the cabbages since it is Hallowe'en and pranksters might damage the crop), is completed. In response to Ellen's concern about pranksters, David says, "They never bother us." His own statement reminds him of his youthful dismissal of Herb Hennessey, and David is upset by the momentary glimpse he obtains of his own existence:

Suddenly he had a picture of Old Herb Hennessey. He heard himself, as a child, saying, "Aw, let's not bother Old Herb. . . he's no fun." They'd always called him Old Herb. Not because he was really old, but because he lived to himself.

For a second he felt a sudden panic. It reminded him of once the day had seemed to grow late while he was working, though his watch said only three o'clock. . . . He saw with a start, that it had been stopped.
(p. 233)

David becomes panic stricken because he sees himself as one alone and left behind by his world. But Buckler intervenes at this point to highlight David's youth, a state that saves him from despair because it provides him with the possibility of an alternate life. David recognizes his own separateness but does not feel trapped by his past. He still feels able to move forward despite this state of aloofness.

In some ways, Anna is David's forerunner since she precedes him to Halifax and up the mountain where

she encounters the "peak" of her own life's experience and has the realization that she will never see Toby again. David is revealed as childlike in "Part Six" through his association with Anna and Toby. They are enveloped in child imagery that, by association, is extended to David. The separate and childlike David tends to identify with Toby and experiences an exclusive fellowship with him. Out of the "good" feeling that this relationship generates, David tries to write a story. But because he is self-centred and childlike, he is unable to share his art which remains locked within him and serves no large purpose. He fails to achieve a true communion with those around him because he does not recognize that while another person may have experienced something for him, he, David, must reciprocate something for the other person. The train's passing confirms David in his sense of separation, but he struggles on in the belief that the struggle is significant and that he may yet mature into his vocation.

When Buckler turns to the Anna-David parallel, it becomes possible to see Anna's activities foreshadowing David's. Anna has preceded David to the city, but David's reaction to his one visit there suggests his lack of interest to exist in such an environment. He has gone to Halifax to give Anna in marriage to Toby, and he is careful not to comment about his personal

reaction to the city. Try as she might, Ellen could not draw him out about his visit. If he has been attracted by the city, it has been insufficient to prompt him to move there. In this case, Anna's choice to remain in the city is not shared by David, probably because, unlike Anna, David has never really left the valley and is, unknowingly, too firmly placed in it. Moreover, David defines himself in terms of the valley. By turning away from Halifax, he reinforces his earlier decision to remain in Entremont. In its turn, Anna's walk up the mountain is intended to foreshadow David's experience. It is of equal significance to both of them because it is mutually revealing in nature.

Both Anna and Toby are depicted as children. The evening of the day on which Toby comes home to his wife with the great French doll, the couple sit together in a simple fashion:

They sat there with something like the conspiratorial amusement of children between them—almost as if there were a joke about being grown-up and acting that way, seriously, that the other grown-ups didn't know about at all. (p. 237)

After their disagreement, Anna is left alone and begins to cry:

She let [the tears] come, as they would, for a few minutes. Then she dried her eyes. She sat staring at her feet, as a child does

who arrests his crying in one great effort when someone comes into the room. She had that look on her face of the child; which, if there is anyone who loves him there to see it, gives to the toes of the shoes he stares at, or to any other part of his clothing that is anywhere worn, the most assaulting forlornness there is. (p. 235)

And at the moment of reunion, Toby assumes a child's free and open expression:

She smiled at him then, really smiled. The sort of smile that passes between two people in a railway coach when something happens which only they two, of all the others, see to have been funny in exactly the way it was. The unwithholding look came back into his face instantly. (p. 243)

Toby and David have already been firmly linked as spiritual counterparts by Buckler, especially in the part entitled "The Vallèy."¹ Ellen's gift of the locket with the picture of the restless sailor links that rover to David as do her current reminiscences in which her grandson reminds her of "that boy in the hayloft." Furthermore, Toby has become a sailor and when Ellen sees him again, "she [keeps] saying Toby [reminds] her of someone," although she cannot remember who it is. The similarity between the two

¹Throughout The Mountain and the Valley, Toby remains an alter-ego for David with slight shifts. Early in the novel, Toby is, for David, the "reflection of himself" that he has always missed. Twenty years later, Toby still performs this mirror-like function as Buckler shows him to hold childlike qualities, particularly, in common with David.

is also supported by their resemblance when Toby wears a sailor's hat. Anna notices, as well, that the two of them—Toby and David—look alike, and, although he feels slightly foolish, David, in a private moment before retiring, tries on the hat and concludes that the resemblance does in fact exist:

David lingered downstairs after Toby and Anna had gone to bed.

He waited until he heard their door close. Then he tiptoed into the hall. He took down Toby's hat. He put it on his head and looked in the mirror. Then he tilted the hat to one side and assumed a gay careless smile. He thought of the free way Toby had, and of the far places. The hat doesn't look funny on me, he thought. We do look alike. It could be me. . . . (p. 253)

If the two are alike, then David must also be seen as childlike. This idea is supported by David's and Toby's interaction in the field when they go hunting and leave Anna behind:

"Fair place to bring a girl, eh?"

A grin came bold out of lurking, into David's eyes. He nodded. "Yeh. Wouldn't do her a helluva lot of good to yell for mother back here, would it?"

They both laughed then.

It was the way two boys laugh who have both been uncomfortable in someone's parlour, though neither's fidget is realized by the other until they are outside and one of them grimaces back at the house and exhales a prodigiously drawn-out fart. The awkwardness disappeared as suddenly as that. When two men have laughed together as they did over a joke about women they are never strangers again. (p. 255)

Buckler's comparison of the two with two youngsters leads to the conclusion that the reader is expected to see David and Toby as boyish and childlike. The reference to men laughing together does not detract from this interpretation, since they are physically and sexually adults but remain emotionally youthful. David's quest is partially a quest dependent upon emotional maturity and it is clearly one that has yet to be successfully concluded.

The reappearance of Toby in David's life serves not only to emphasize the nature of the letter, but it also provides David with an opportunity to experience that special fellowship. Besides sharing a mutual interest in the opposite sex, David finds that he is able to share time and events with Toby because Toby is able to free him from the encumbrance of constant introspection by involving him in his own active and physical situations.

It is, for example, Toby who notices that they are out of beer. He approaches David with the suggestion that they replenish their supply by an impromptu trip to town. But David feels compelled to complete his task of topping turnips and hesitates to break off. He suggests that Toby go alone, but Toby counters with an offer to help with the turnips so that both of them can get away. David is touched by the feeling of communion and co-operation that is

behind Toby's offer, and is reminded of similar events in childhood:

It made him think of times when you were a child and there was somewhere to go, but you had work; then another child pitched in and helped you so you could both go, and the simplest remarks you made to each other had a ring of exciting conspiracy. The pain was like a far-off tune again. (p. 258)

It is significant that David's headache, which operates as a barometer of his state of contentment, has abated. The friends rush to ready themselves while exchanging excited remarks. Afterwards, David's meditative mind strives to determine what, in particular, made that event more special than any other. He realizes that it has to do with an end to his introspection. "David realizes that he has joined Toby in simply accepting the moment and not thinking about things."² Such an experience, he feels, must be the experience of "all the people who had friends," all the people who live in spiritual communion with others.

Having known such communion in his own life, David feels his spirits rise within him. He feels able to do something that he wants to do and must do. He feels "manifold, furnished," able to portray life in art, and he attempts this when Anna and Toby go to Annapolis for a day to visit Ellen.

²Dooley, p. 679.

David, in his story, tries to exorcise his jealousy of Toby, the man of action. At one point, he suspects that he may live peacefully with Toby and be justified in his life-style, if he accepts the idea that someone else "can have for you the things you might have had for yourself" (p. 263). But David has no opportunity to explore his idea because Toby and Anna return and his train of thought is interrupted. Caught off guard, David tries to put his sheets of paper away quickly but he drops one. Toby retrieves it and begins reading it much to its author's dismay. David grabs at it; he is ashamed and defensive and destroys the work by thrusting it into the flames of the stove:

This is the most poignant example of David's inability to dissociate himself from the standards of his community, to place a high enough value on the written word that he is willing to risk embarrassment for it. The play ruined³ everything; he still fears being laughed at.

By acting in this manner, he shows himself to be subjective, selfish, and immature. He wants to have Toby's experiences but he is unwilling to reciprocate by giving Toby the result of his artistic self. As Laurence Ricou points out, David ". . . shows again that he has not grown up: he is no more mature

³Dooley, p. 680.

about his imagination and its products than he was when he kissed Effie during the school play."⁴

David has not progressed in terms of emotional maturity and is, therefore, ill-equipped to be the artist at this moment in his life. Not even the subsequent return of confidence in his own work is able to free him.

His earlier feeling of fellowship and well-being is denied, in particular, by the scene in which Toby, aboard the train, and obviously involved in another world, passes David who is standing in the field and does not acknowledge him. A feeling of frustration returns to David since he understands himself to be separate and knows himself to be unhappy. He has not been able to give anything of himself to others, particularly in the form of his art. He feels that he does not share fully in the lives of those around him, especially Toby's. With the passing of the train, David's mind is flooded by thought: "All the thinking came back in a rush" (p. 274). He is frustrated because he has not found a way to participate in the life around him. "It was always someone else that things happened to, that was the panic of it. . ." (p. 274). And he achieves a moment of insight, the significance of which he does not fully comprehend:

⁴Ricou, p. 693.

This was the toppling moment of clarity which comes once to everyone, when he sees the face of his whole life in every detail. He saw then that the unquestioned premise all his calculations had been built on was false. He realized for the first time that his feet must go on in their present path, because all the crossroad junctions had been left irretrievably far behind. Anything your own hands had built, he had always thought, your own hands could destroy. You could build a wall about yourself, for safety's sake, but whenever you chose you could level it. That wasn't true, he saw now. After a while you could beat against the wall all you liked, but it was indestructible. The cast of loneliness became pitted in your flesh. It was as plain for others to see and shy away from as the slouch of a convict.

I will always be a stranger to everybody, he thought--the others know that I don't know what any of their things is like. My own life brimmed and emptied so soon, and I could never fill it again. (pp. 274-275)

Although David realizes that he must continue along his present path, he is blinded by the frustration engendered by deferred success and reward. He thinks that his path will lead to pain and loneliness because that is all that he has experienced thus far. He allows himself to be overcome by despair, convinced that he will always remain separate as he is presently; he will never be able to change because his way is predetermined. The longer he thinks, the more dissatisfied he becomes, but a "wild longing" possesses him nevertheless. "He had to be inside. . . ." His despair turns into a desire to belong despite his dark thoughts. In his childhood dreams, David saw two roads, one of which he walked alone. He sees himself again on a single

path, but he senses that he will reach its end. He thinks he knows what the end will be but, in the next part, the reader will see him coming full circle so that he is walking again along the mountain road. This time, though, he will reach the top of the mountain and the end of that road. He will confront the goal of his life's quest. Standing alone in the field, however, he has no knowledge of the reward that awaits him were he to persist in his struggle.

In his ambivalence, frustration and despair dominate and spur him into violent physical action. He rushes along a row of parsnips, slashing at them and releasing the tension he feels. But once his emotion is spent, he tries to restore the partially mutilated vegetables and plans to put sod around them in the cellar to ward off spoilage. The future has re-entered his consciousness and his positive attitude toward the parsnips indicates a renewed interest in the possibilities of tomorrow. In the last scene of this part, David is presented in a pose reminiscent of his father:

The pail of skim milk was almost more than his left arm could support on the way to the barn, but he didn't shift it to the right or set it down, halfway, and rest. Something, unplastic, unbent, unshuffling in him, still drove straight ahead. His father, Joseph, would keep chopping as long as he could see, though his axe was dull and his feet were cold and the rest of the crew had given in to the blizzard hours ago. (p. 279)

For the moment, it is important to David to persist in living. He must carry on for the sake of that forging forward even though he has no clear notion of what he is about. He is confused and cannot see promise. He stays interested in the things of the moment because that is all that is secure. The pail of milk is representative of his daily struggle which is also his quest.

In "Part Six: The Train," David's inner life, his artistic life, had become urgent again after five years of relative calm. This life had been tried and had been found inadequate, but the trying of it has re-awakened a restlessness within him that will force him to search for a satisfactory response to his need to comprehend himself. His dissatisfaction has come to a head and he is greatly agitated. He must actively pursue the vision for which his soul longs. It is no longer possible for him to search passively. He must initiate the process of self-understanding, and he proceeds to do this in the epilogue.

Chapter Six: Arrival,
Maturity, and Assuaged Restlessness

At the beginning of The Mountain and the Valley, Buckler described David's unsuccessful effort to reach the mountain top. At the end, he relates the successful climb and its rewards. "Prologue--The Rug"--"Epilogue--The Mountain" takes David along the single path that he must follow, and investigates the realizations that he experiences which have been the goal towards which he has always moved. This final day in his life is one filled with intense strain and spirituality. It culminates ultimately in the discovery of his vocation. This knowledge, sufficient to satisfy him, is obtained in a "moment of clarity." In that moment, David finally matures and feels himself to be complete and content. He dies in peace because the message of the oracle for which he has persistently searched has been understood. The quest ends in triumph. David finds himself. This is clearly evidenced by the pictorial devices that Buckler employs.

David stands by the kitchen window watching the highway, a symbol of movement and arrival. He is quiet but unsettled. His mood is not one of defeat

or despair or apathy, but the mood that possesses a person after these others have passed. His will remains unbroken but he is dissatisfied. Like the deer that "tries to dislodge, by the flick of tongue to flank, the bullet wound that hurts and puzzles him," the life-scarred David is restless and confused. Even his exact identity, whether that of child or adult is uncertain despite Ellen's repetitive use of the word child to address him. David is bothered by this usage because he does not feel comfortable in the role in which it places him. Buckler's objective description of David's face captures the ambivalence of the character's situation:

At first glance his face looked young. The tentative, blue-eyed look of a boy's face still shadowed it. A touch of sun still lingered in the quick blond hair. The eyes and mouth were sober, but a trigger-readiness to grin lurked in them. At a second glance his face seemed old. The flesh was firm over the broad bones (so much broader than the slender body seemed to call for; but it had the cast of a bad night's sleep. The longer you looked, the less you could be sure whether the face was young or old. (p. 14)

David is, apparently, neither a child nor an adult although he is thirty years old. Frustrated by his worrisome grandmother's repeated questions, David dons his cap and jacket and goes out. Ellen warns him not to fall and this time he will not fall nor will he fail to achieve his goal.

As David begins to travel along the road, he meets Steve. Steve is in good spirits for he is living the type of life that suits and satisfies him. He is at ease with the world around him:

He had lived as many years as David, but time itself was a thing he would never hear or see. There was inside and outside for him too, but he would never look at the eye of his own watching. He saw the trees and the fields. Yet in a way he didn't see them at all. A tree was a tree, a thing for the axe. A field was a field. You hauled across it when it was frozen, ploughed it when it was soft. That's all there was to it. . . . David's mind deliberately suspended its own nature. It assumed the cast of Steve's. He could synchronize his behaviour with any of theirs now. He could put their thoughts into words; and hearing them spoken, they'd be as pleased as if they'd been able to find the words themselves. (p. 283)

If Herb Hennessey stands as an image of the separate man, Steve represents the contented and integrated individual. He has moulded for himself a way of life that puts him at ease because it obtains for him the feed-back which he desires. But David has yet to attain such a level of existence. He is still the questor who must consciously discover a state which would leave him comfortable vis-à-vis himself and others. When the two men meet, David accommodates himself to Steve and becomes his voice, thereby delighting the latter. But David does this unconsciously. Soon he will learn to value this special quality. He will see that articulating for others

is something that he does well and it is also something that enables him to relate comfortably to those around him.

Leaving Steve, David continues his journey and stops at the bridge. In childhood, his first excursion up the mountain had been aborted at this point. This time, David passes the bridge that lies between the valley and the mountain. As he leaves the bridge behind him, he also leaves the valley but he does not renounce it. The mountain does not stand in opposition to the valley; the two are linked by the bridge. With the passing of this landmark, David begins to enter into a period of free thought that leads him to feel guilty over his lack of appreciation of his grandmother and his surroundings. He takes a long, deep breath and, feeling inspired, he proceeds to climb the mountain.

In his solitude, David is impressed by the perfection of nature. His mind is freed so that he is able to apprehend the unity of his surroundings:

He could think of anything now. Everything seemed to be an aspect of something else. There seemed to be a thread of similarity running through the whole world. A shape could be like a sound; a feeling like a shape; a smell the shadow of a touch. . . . His senses seemed to run together. (p. 287)

In the midst of this kind of continuity, David remains slightly apart. At this point, Buckler returns to the

theme of maturity and points out, through the images that David recalls, that David has not found the way to manhood yet:

And now he was halfway up the mountain, where the leafless hardwood began. Past the branch road where he and Chris had built the lean-to and believed that made them feel like men for the first time; past the branch road where he had done the thing with Effie that he'd thought was the miraculous short cut to manhood, but hadn't really changed anything; past the highest point of the brook that had held all their images of some time or other as they knelt to drink, and now fell downward behind him. (p. 288)

David must mature into his vocation and into his community. Clearly, he has been searching and continues to search for maturity and a sense of belonging. His next step occurs when he is visited with a "translational moment" that clears some, but not all, of his confusion.

This first transformation gives David a vision of the past. It is an experience that is both intimate and immediate. "It is not a memory of that time: . . . you are there for the first time. . . . It is like a flash of immortality: nothing behind you is sealed, you can live it again. You can begin again. . ." (p. 289). What David vigorously relives are the moments of his life in which he was involved with those around him. For example, he feels again all the excitement and promise of the morning of his

first mountain excursion. That day would contribute to the wonder of all the days after it "because they walked together" and David has felt a sense of closeness with his family. David wants to be a fiddler so that he can recover the excitement of a dance that "gathered them up into a swimming peace." He wants to be the greatest mathematician because he wants to have "everything inside his mind. . .gathered up in one great shiver of unity" again. For similar reasons he wants to be a dancer and a sailor. Always, David's aspirations are dependent upon the successful involvement of others. He wants to join the others and bring them all closer together. Despite the intensity of David's thoughts and desires, the moment passes before he is able to discover the calling that is his own. He has considered many possibilities, but he has not settled on one that would suit him. His thoughts mean a great deal because he is carefully considering the options open to him. But he is only half way up the mountain; and he must succeed in climbing the mountain if he is to complete his quest.

During the rest of the climb, David's mind remains alert and is assaulted by the myriad of impressions that clamour for expression.¹ He has

¹Ernest Buckler, Letter to Dudley Ho Cloud, 15 May 1951, in Alan R. Young, "The Genesis of Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley*," Journal of Canadian Fiction, No. 16 (1976), pp. 94-95.

an intense desire to know his environment by blending into it and becoming one with each of its components:

The voices became suddenly infinite. Each one fanned at the touch of thought into another infinite divisibility.

They sounded and rushed in his head until it seemed as if he must go out into these things. He must be a tree and a stone and a shadow and a crystal of snow and a thread of moss and the veining of a leaf. He must be exactly as each of them was, everywhere and in all times; or the guilt, the exquisite parching for the taste of completion, would never be allayed at all. (p. 292)

Next, David is struck by the faces of the people he loves. But it is Toby's face that gives him pause because the demand it places on him is suddenly different from what it has been in the past:

. . .yes, and Toby's face (why was the challenge just to listen to it exactly, so much sharper than the old challenge to make his own like it?). . . . (p. 294)

Conscious as he is of each facet of his environment, of all the faces around him, and of the streaming thoughts that multiply every second, David is filled with panic. He feels guilty for never having named or expressed his world that cries out to him in a voice which strikes to his heart. D. O. Spettigue sheds light on this predicament of the protagonist:

He is frustrated by sheer quantity of impression. The challenge his environment offers him is to create the

intelligible order of literature from what might be called an "unintelligible landscape." He tries to acknowledge each component individually and of course is overwhelmed.²

In a state of agitation, David screams "Stop. . . Stop. . . Stop. . . STOP. . . ." When he raises his head, he sees that he is, for the first time in his life, at the top of the mountain. From this vantage point, he looks down at the valley which is far away but clear in every detail. He has achieved a position of perspective and is ready to experience the second transformation that will give him the insight he has always desired.

Without warning, this moment of transformation lights upon David and fills him with knowledge and conviction:

He stood there, looking down over the mountain and the valley, and it was as if the sun-shadow. . . had swept across the road.

I will tell it, he thought rushingly: that is the answer.

I know how it is with everything. I will put it down and they will see that I know. (p. 298)

Suddenly, David understands that articulation of the truths that he has apprehended during his lifetime and the ascent of the mountain will quiet the panic and the pangs of guilt that have plagued him. He

²Spettigue, pp. 104-105.

remembers the warmth of fellowship which he has experienced as a boy when he had found the exact words to represent the feelings of his village over the daily mail service. He had felt "fluid" with the men. David has recognized his talent and allotted it its proper place as a unifying force.

His earlier confusion is allayed because the world no longer seems to swim dizzily around him. "He saw at last how you could become the thing you told" (p. 298). He also perceives that it is not necessary to describe everything individually; the expression of a "single core of meaning," a universal truth, would suffice:³ "A single beam of light is enough to light all the shadows, by turning it from one to another" (p. 299). His confusion and frustration are replaced by a period of calm: "The sun-shadow passed swiftly through his mind. The translation was utter. It lasted and spread in him like the swimming exaltation of wine" (p. 299). The images of sun-shadow and wine that Buckler uses to convey David's emotional and spiritual state are well-chosen ones. The sun-shadow is a comforting image because it promises light in its wake. Sunshine accompanies it and is soothing and quieting. In this relaxed state, David's mood is compared with "the swimming

³D. G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 25. Jones defines "the single core of meaning" as "a complete cultural identity, a central myth or fundamental conception of the world."

exaltation of wine." The image recalls the communion scene in David's war story. David is not only relaxed; he also feels united to his society.

Naturally, his thoughts are generous and communal at this point. He has made peace with himself by knowing and accepting himself, and since this acceptance depends on his participation in the valley community, his mind reaches out benevolently to it. He wants to make amends for his brusqueness towards Ellen over his clothes; he wants to invite Chris back into his heart and forgive him; he wants to feel close to Anna again. In his mind he moves out of his family circle and experiences a feeling of integration with his valley community:

Everyone seemed suddenly radiate with a neglected warmth, which waited only for his overture, to be released and glow.

I'll go over and help Steve unload his wood, he thought. He's as good a fellow as I know, Steve is. . . I'll make the light shine kindly on him in the book. On all of them. I will tell them just as they are, but people will see that there is more to them than the side that shows. (pp. 299-300)

He is intent on using his newly discovered talent for the good of the community. He wants to give "an absolving voice" to all the pain that his family has known and, in this way, to unite them with himself anew.

David has now achieved maturity. This is apparent

not only in the fact that he has fully understood his situation and accepted himself, but also in his sense of generosity. He is no longer the child who would write solely to purge or to come to terms with his own predicament. He is now willing to contribute to valley life by speaking for it and to accept responsibility for what he produces. This point is supported by his imaginings of the events after the completion of his proposed work. He is not concerned with those whose close-mindedness will force them to reject his writing. Instead, he thinks of Anna who will celebrate with him because she is spiritually closest to him, and will best appreciate his accomplishment, and of the others who will see that he knows "how it is with everything." David perceives himself as sharing his achievement with his friends and growing closer to them through this sharing. "[His] climb is not in negation of his experience in the Valley but serves to unify that experience within the single, all-embracing and god-like vision of the artist he has finally become."⁴ He cannot commune fully with his peers unless he achieves maturity and vision. He has achieved both of these and, along with them, a wholeness of character.

R. E. Watters seconds this interpretation. He says:

⁴Alan R. Young, Ernest Buckler, p. 36.

It is not until the very end of the book that David finally discovers what his relationship to his family and fellow men ought to be. As he races up the wintry mountainside despite a strained heart, passing the scenes of pleasurable and painful incidents from his yesterdays, he wins through to a revelation that he need not live a lonely life, frustrating to himself and worthless to others—he need not be isolated from his fellows because of his unique interests or gifts. But, instead, he can find a means of communion and fellowship with them. The mountain is not without use to the valley—indeed, without the one, the other would not be what it is. David can be a means of expression for his people, a voice giving utterance to what they cannot utter for themselves—and can do so not for his own ego's gratification, but in order to release in them qualities they themselves do not know they possess.

David's hoped-for function is, of course, essentially that of the master artist—the poet, dramatist, musician—the novelist of national character, the novelist of universal humanity.

Since 1954, which was the year of Watter's essay, other critics, notably Margaret Atwood, Clara Thomas, and Alan Young, have considered David's situation. They have moved beyond the recognition that David had found his proper position and métier, and have considered this event to be the triumph of his life. Margaret Atwood has expressed her point of view in Survival:

The vision David Canaan has at the end of The Mountain and the Valley is not of God

⁵R. E. Watters, "The Mountain and the Valley," p. 46.

and the Angels, nor even of nightclubs in New York. It is a vision of Entremont, the Valley, and the people in it, in all their complexity and limitation. David cannot actualize this vision (though Buckler does); but it is the realization that this, all along, was what he ought to have been writing about that is for him the revelation.⁶

Clara Thomas suggests that David is complete at the moment of the second translation when he concludes that he understands the world and will write about what he knows. In her words, "David's quest has finished triumphantly. . . ." ⁷ Alan Young also supports this positive interpretation:

David's inner destiny is complete; his search for self over. His death, startling as it may seem in the pattern of pastoral, is not in any sense representative of failure Instead it represents the paradoxical triumph of "ripeness is all."⁸

Despite these strong views, both Margaret Atwood and Alan Young are ambivalent in their interpretations of the end of the book.⁹

This ambivalence carries the discussion into a

⁶Margaret Atwood, Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), p. 193.

⁷Clara Thomas, "New England Romanticism and Canadian Fiction," Journal of Canadian Fiction, II, No. 4 (Fall, 1973), 85.

⁸Alan R. Young, "The Pastoral Vision of Ernest Buckler," p. 225.

⁹See Margaret Atwood, p. 34; and Alan R. Young, Ernest Buckler, p. 36.

consideration of criticism that has tended to see David's end in a negative light. Generally, this interpretation is based on the assumption that the protagonist's death prevents him from putting into action his newly acquired knowledge, thereby denying David the successful promise of a calling. Ian Atkinson concludes that for David "the creative desire remains physically unfulfilled and the result is isolation, loneliness and, for[him], sacrifice. David goes to the grave with his hopes and expectations materially unfulfilled."¹⁰ Warren Tallman feels that David fades into nothingness after having fought valiantly, but, having achieved little:

The emptiness, the silence and the snow into which he sinks down at the end of the novel figure forth the constant nothingness against which his bright intensities had beat, thinking it the high shores of this actual world. His life would be pathetic if it were not heroic.¹¹

Bruce MacDonald perpetuates a negative interpretation by concluding wrongly, i t seems , that David remains self-centred and isolated, and therefore dies in defeat.¹²

¹⁰Ian Atkinson, "Imagery and Symbolism," in Ernest Buckler, ed. Gregory M. Cook (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 132.

¹¹Warren Tallman, "Wolf in the Snow," in Ernest Buckler, ed. Gregory M. Cook (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 62.

¹²Bruce MacDonald, p. 208.

A fourth critic, Douglas Barbour¹³ concurs essentially with Ernest Buckler's interpretation of David's fate. In a letter to Dudley H. Cloud, Buckler has this to say:

It was to be the crowning point of the whole dramatic irony (and, of course, the most overt piece of symbolism in the book), that he should finally exhaust himself climbing the mountain, and, beset by the ultimate clamour of impressions created by his physical condition and his whole history of divided sensitivities, come, at the moment of his death (prepared for, not only by long accounts of the result of his fall, but by the medical officer's advice to him at the time of his enlistment examination; and, more immediately, by the excitement, the panic, the climbing), achieve one final transport of self-deception: that he would be the greatest writer in the whole world.¹⁴

Buckler wrote the letter a year before finishing his novel. If his interpretation is to be given significant weight, it must be supported by the primary source. It has already been shown that David achieves peace and community with the realization that he is able to write about his own experiences. In the past, David's self-deceptions always came to the forefront. He was always assaulted and hurt by them. In this

¹³Douglas Barbour, p. 75.

¹⁴Ernest Buckler, Letter to Dudley H. Cloud, 15 May 1951, in Alan R. Young, "The Genesis of Ernest Buckler," pp. 94-95.

case, he is not made unhappy by his idea. On the contrary, he is at ease and dies serenely. He does not fight his death because he knows that his life is over. The work of his life--the quest for self-knowledge--has been successfully completed. He has no reason for disquiet. Therefore, Buckler's interpretation, offered as it was before the completion of the novel, stands refuted by the text.

Indeed, all of the negative criticism may be countered by a close scrutiny of the pictorial and literary devices that Buckler employs in the scene after David's death. Ellen's rug with its scarlet and white rags, her reference to her grandson as "child," the snow, the log, and the partridge are intended to be revealing of David's ultimate situation.

Of course, the rug has, by this time, established itself as a symbol of considerable importance, representing memories of significant familial occasions. After David's death--one of those significant moments in Canaan history--Ellen finishes hooking the rug. Its pattern is one of concentric circles, reminiscent of wheels within wheels, and suggestive of the complexity of David's situation and his end that is the result of all his previous experiences. The last two colours that Ellen employs are especially revelatory. Scarlet, the colour of blood, implies that David has

died of heart failure. Significantly, the rag comes from the cloak he had worn for his part in the school play. This makes Ellen's placement of it more meaningful. It intimates that that situation has been dealt with and resolved so that it may rest as part of the history of the family. David has overcome the frustration of that experience through his acceptance of himself on the mountain top. White, the colour of infinity, while associated with the white snow, also points to David's death. Black would have served the same purpose but would have lent a negative connotation to the scene. White suggests that the event is positive. Thus, it may be perceived as something good for the protagonist. Also important is the fact that this white scrap is of lace. Lace is able to make otherwise ordinary clothing into something special. In this case, the end of David's life is rendered special. This factor, combined with the colouring, indicates that his existence could not have been a failure. It must have ended triumphantly.

More support for this position is provided by Ellen's symbolic address of David as "child" and her question concerning his whereabouts. "'Where is that child?' she said. 'You never know where that child is'" (p. 301). Ellen is unable to locate David, the child, because David, the child, no longer exists. He has become a man in the first place and, in the second

place, he has paradoxically come home to himself and his community. The life of involvement in which he was initially portrayed is the life that he has metaphorically returned to in spite of his death. Any effort to contact the child David will fail because that child has been eternally surpassed. To achieve maturity is to achieve self-comprehension and complete the quest upon which he had set out.

Snow is the next important image in the narrative. It has already been noted that Warren Tallman feels that the snow at the end of the novel is indicative of David's movement into nothingness, and Elizabeth Waterston says that The Mountain and the Valley "ends on the mountain, but in a pain-filled scene of solitude and snow."¹⁵ The implication is that the snow reflects a negative ending for David; but a close examination of Buckler's account leads to another conclusion.

Here is Buckler's description:

The snow began falling all at once, but without hurry. Gathering dreamily and thick, high up; thickening until the sun was gone, and then drifting slowly downward, each of the great flakes moving soundlessly in all directions, even upward again sometimes as if in memory of a breeze, and then, finally, levelling off and finding the road or a tree or some part of the valley to lie on. Near at hand they fell lingeringly and separate, like tiny white feathers from a broken

¹⁵Elizabeth Waterston, Survey: A Short History of Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 110.

wing; but farther off they made a grey cohesive curtain in the air itself; and far far off downward, over the spruces and the valley, they made a solid sheet like the greyness of twilight, that thickened denser still until the valley was completely gone.

At first they lay detached, each of them as nothing on the trees and the road; and then they began to aggregate soundlessly, but like a sound gathering, until the spruces had warm white epaulettes, and beneath the great maples the ground was all white, and on the trackless road there were no tracks but now a white track could be made.

Snowflakes fell on David's face and caught in his eyelashes and melted. . . . They clung to the wool of his jacket and the wool of his mittens without melting.

And then they clung, without melting, to his eyelashes and his hair. And then they did not melt on his eyelids or on his cheeks or in the corners of his mouth or anywhere on his face at all. And then they grew smoothly and exactly over him and over the fallen log that lay beside him until the two outlines were as one. (p. 301)

This is soft, gentle, unhurried, dreamy snow that gathers together and becomes one immense blanket. It is not a cold scene of solitude. On the contrary, the flakes aggregate quietly; they beautify the surroundings by giving the spruces white epaulettes, and cover the tracks of the road. Most importantly, the snow covers David where he lies near the fallen log and makes the two outlines one. David is joined to the natural world. He becomes part of it and this is one of the things he has striven for during his ascent. In this scene where the protagonist, who has known all he desires to know, becomes what he has

wanted to become, the snow stands as a warm, peaceful, unifying image.

It covers the tracks on the road. This reminds the reader of David's earlier realization that he must continue along his one track. In the fallen snow, a white track could now be made and the image of the partridge intimates that David's spirit has left both the mountain and the valley and has flown "down, between the trees, down, swooping, directly, intensely, exactly down over the far side of the mountain" (p. 302). The falling snow makes a solid sheet that inhibits a view of the valley and gently indicates that David has moved beyond it. He has taken his mountain top vision of his home, the valley, and moved beyond both places into the next valley. His spirit does not return to Entremont. The partridge flies over the far side of the mountain. It flies into another valley, into a promised land.

Even David's name supports this notion. The biblical David is a great representative and defender of his people. Canaan is the land promised to Abraham for his people. As the visionary, David represents his people. His desire to present them in a good light is a way of defending them. The spiritual movement over the far side of the mountain may be seen as equivalent to a movement into a promised land. David and his story parallel Moses who on the top of

the mountain Pisgah had a vision of the promised land.¹⁶ Like David, Moses never physically arrives at the home he so wished to see. Both figures die after their visions, but their visions are richly adequate just as it was sufficient for Simeon who, after having seen the Christ child, the promised one, was able to say:

Now, Master, you can let your servant go
in peace,
just as you promised;
because my eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared for all the nations
to see,
a light to enlighten the pagans
and the glory of your people Israel.¹⁷

For such people, the vision provides all the comfort that they require. This is why David's death is a triumph. He has achieved what he most desired. He is complete. The train that thunders through the valley is now inconsequential because it can no longer leave David behind. David has moved beyond the valley. He has transcended it.

Ernest Buckler's imagery refutes his own interpretation of David's final situation. The partridge, the child references, the rug and its components, and especially the soft snow contribute to a feeling of elation. David's quest is complete.

¹⁶Chapman, p. 198.

¹⁷Luke 2: 29-32. The Jerusalem Bible. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966.

He has become one with his environment and has escaped separation. He has obtained the self-knowledge he has hoped for and he dies after having triumphed over his own immaturity and blindness. The last day of his life, the culmination of all that has come before in his existence, is the greatest day of his life because he frees himself from ignorance and spiritually enters a new land. Since he is a thinker, a learner, rather than a doer, his restlessness is assuaged.

Conclusion

Ernest Buckler has written the chronicle of a man who has faced his own confusion and managed to surmount it. David Canaan's life can be read as the life of an adventurer on a voyage of discovery. From the early moment of clear insight during the school play, the protagonist is deflected in his search by events outside of himself. Indeed, David's life consists of interruptions which constitute the internal rhythm of his existence. Each one of these interruptions is a milestone for David; and each one of them is carefully and clearly depicted. The author renders the essence of those selected and significant events by means of appropriate graphic detail.

In the first half of the novel, the youthful David is presented as one who searches for fulfilment but is quickly faced with difficulties. Buckler parallels David's failure to ascend the mountain with his failure to respond appropriately and maturely in the play incident. In both cases, David becomes disappointed and distraught. This trend continues in the two succeeding chapters in which the protagonist experiments with the physically-oriented roles of which he has become aware early in his life. He is attracted by

the mysterious city, the secrecy of sexuality, and the comfort of familial support, but not one of these factors provides him with a satisfying way of life. Effie's death shocks David and leaves him feeling lost and alienated. But this death does not deter him from his efforts to establish himself within the valley community as a man of practical concerns.

In the second half of the novel, David persists but again fails to establish himself as a typical resident of Entremont. He strives against his own will because he is frustrated by the slow-paced life and the mindless struggles that accompany it. The episode of the rock and the oxen deeply impress him because they suggest all that he despises. Nevertheless, he chooses to remain in the valley, rather than move to the city and confront the difficulties that await him. During the pig slaughtering, he attempts foolishly to abide by valley customs but fails. His fall in the barn necessitates a period of convalescence which provides him with an opportunity to return to the world of the mind and literature. This return also occurs in the train chapter. In both cases, David does not give himself wholeheartedly to the intellectual realm that seems, objectively speaking, to be more suited to him. He is immature, as the imagery indicates, and blind to his heart-felt desires. Consequently, he is a confused and angry young man. He reaches maturity during the last day of his life, to come out of the cloud of

darkness in which he has dwelt, to achieve the much sought after insight into his own life, and to die contentedly at the top of the hitherto unscaled peak. The novel remains true to its cyclic structure in that David returns to the initial moment of promise on the mountain.

The pattern of failure in The Mountain and the Valley is matched by a pattern of interruption. The last scenes are notably devoid of both failure and interruption. The solitary protagonist is allowed to experience these moments without the interference of exterior forces although his earlier experiences of import were associated with dislocation. For example: Jud Spinney's remark interrupts the play; the arrival of the letter breaks the emotional connection between David and Effie; the arrival of Rachel Gorman, and Toby and Anna, during David's story-writing interrupts his creative process; Anna's initial departure detracts from familial unity; Toby's absent-minded leave-taking upsets David's equilibrium; Steve's presence on the mountain in the last episode could have interfered with David's ascent if the latter had not been single-mindedly devoted to it. In the final scene, the pattern breaks and with its interruption comes David's successful understanding of himself and his existence.

Throughout the novel, David is confused (and enlightened) by the alternatives everywhere present

and symbolically portrayed in the characters who surround him. Spurge and Pete, Chris, the sailor and Toby, Ellen, and Joseph, along with the types of lives they represent are impressed upon David's consciousness at an early age. He experiments with all of their lifestyles but returns most often to an imitation of his father's way. He struggles to fulfill the unspoken requirements of the valley, but always fails. At one point, after Toby leaves, David carries a pail of milk to the house without resting despite its excessive weight because he wants to do as his father—who chopped even after dark and worked even in wet clothes in winter time—had done. There is a very strong subconscious desire in David to fill his father's shoes, but it is an unrealistic desire that distracts him from achieving an understanding of his own nature. Fortunately, David eventually breaks free from this restraint and the restrictions imposed by the ways of the valley. He also manages to surmount and surpass the mountain in whose shadow he has lived his entire life.

Although Buckler has incorporated numerous images and symbols into his novel, the central characters may be of greater significance. They appear early in the work and continue to function throughout the narrative. They are most directly associated with the theme of self-knowledge and always contribute to a comprehension of David's activities. Buckler ~~works~~ them carefully into

the story and, in a way, exploits them. To a certain degree, they may be viewed as the ribs of the plot structure since they sustain it and a study of them brings to mind each significant event in David's life. Buckler has succeeded in weaving these characters unobtrusively into the novel as its most revelatory symbols. Associated with them are less significant images that also reveal, in more limited ways, the depths of the meaning of events. A work that is primarily concerned with thought and feeling rather than action can be expected to benefit from a literary approach that employs images and symbols. David's life and motivations are consistently clarified by them. This is Buckler's expressed intention, and he is to be commended for the successful use of his material.¹

¹Ernest Buckler, "My First Novel," in Ernest Buckler, ed. Gregory M. Cook (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 23.

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