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PHANTOM GIGANTIC SUPERB: DR. RICHARD MAURICE BUCKE
IN THE TRADITION OF CANADIAN LITERATURE

by

PATRICIA A. PENNIE, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
Department of English

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

March 9, 1998

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Acceptance Sheet

The undersigned recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research acceptance
of the thesis

"Phantom Gigantic Superb: Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke
in the Tradition of Canadian Literature"

Submitted by Patricia A. Pennie

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

Chair, Department of English

Carleton University
March 9, 1998

Abstract

Phantom Gigantic Superb: Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke
in the Tradition of Canadian Literature

by

Patricia A. Pennie

This thesis discusses Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke and his work. *Cosmic Consciousness* An investigation of previous historical criticism reveals a methodological approach that cannot accommodate this eclectic Canadian Revisiting the historical record situates Bucke as an important witness to, and participant in, Canadian historical events

Cosmic Consciousness was an important text for Canadian theosophists, a group whose intellectual inquiry the Anglican Church attempted to limit Tracing the influence of *Cosmic Consciousness* on Lawren Harris, Bertram Brooker and Emily Carr illustrates its importance in articulating a Canadian philosophical perspective. Furthermore, a reading of *Cosmic Consciousness* enriches our appreciation of the Confederation Poets by providing the intellectual template for some of the ideas that inform their poetry. An appreciation of Dr. Bucke and *Cosmic Consciousness* is critical to our understanding of the culture of late nineteenth-century Canada.

Acknowledgements

Although this paper does not speak in great length of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke's involvement with Walt Whitman, my title is taken from a poem of Walt Whitman's called "By Blue Ontario's Shore," out of respect for Bucke's appreciation of Whitman's poetry, as well as my own. Artem Lozynsky's book, *Richard Maurice Bucke: Letters to Walt Whitman*, was an invaluable research tool, providing an informative set of letters and notes that offer rare insight into the character of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Dr. Peter Rechnitzer, *R. M. Bucke: Journey to Cosmic Consciousness*, and the help of his wife, Lili, in locating a copy of this book when I visited London, Ontario.

The librarians at the MacOdrum Library of Carleton University were especially helpful in locating the various articles necessary to a thorough investigation of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke. I would also like to acknowledge the support of my undergraduate professors in my graduate work, their abiding confidence and encouragement sustained my effort. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the advice and direction provided by my supervisor, Prof. L. T. R. McDonald, which expanded my knowledge and understanding of the field of Canadian literature and helped to shape a more cohesive paper.

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Abbreviations

CC. *Cosmic Consciousness* by R. M. Bucke. 1901.

LWW: *Richard Maurice Bucke: Letters to Walt Whitman.*
Artem Lozynsky. ed., 1977.

UWO: University of Western Ontario

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family: my parents, in their determination to raise a family that appreciates Canadian issues and civic responsibility; my husband, for his patience and encouragement throughout the course of my studies; and my children, in the hope that they will come to appreciate the complexities of being a Canadian.

Introduction

Now the course of modern Canadian life is far less simple and homogeneous than Old English life. The Canadian poet, though he must try to express something of what the Old English poet felt, cannot afford to forget either that a highly sophisticated civilization is as much a part of Canadian life as deep snow and barren places. If we can imagine a contemporary of the Beowulf poet, with equal genius and an equally strong urge to write an archaic epic of the defeat of a monster of darkness by a hero of immense strength and endurance -- a theme which should appeal powerfully to a Canadian, yet writing for the same public as Ovid and Catullus, and forced to adapt their sophisticated witticisms and emotional refinements to his own work, we shall begin to get some idea of what the modern poet is up against.

Northrop Frye in "Conclusion to
The Literary History of Canada"
The Bush Garden

Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke, a late Victorian physician who lived in London, Ontario, speaks to us from a juncture between sophisticated civilization and barren places. It was here that Dr. Bucke developed the theory of mental evolution he explains in *Cosmic Consciousness*, a work that signifies the expansive character of Canadian culture at the end of the nineteenth century.

The first task of this essay is to dissolve the intellectual paradigms that inhibit the emergence of cultural character: that is, methodologies that conscript Canadians to a dismissively ironic point of view as it pertains to the life and work of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke. Dissolving these limiting paradigms allows for the ensuing investigation of Bucke's character and work, an investigation that finds him representative of a more

inclusive and heterogeneous cultural identity than has been previously established. The second task this paper undertakes is to reveal the importance of Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*; his treatment of the scientific and moral issues of late nineteenth-century Canada provides the intellectual and philosophical template for a more complete understanding of our literary tradition.

Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke was an alienist (a term for those who practised, in the late 1800s, what is now called psychiatry). He is an impressive character because of his passionate engagement in everything in which he was involved. From the reform of medical treatments to the promotion of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, Bucke poured a phenomenal amount of energy into all his undertakings.

Bucke receives the most critical attention from literary critics in connection to Walt Whitman. He was Whitman's biographer and one of his three literary executors. In the field of philosophy, he is considered with respect to questions of mysticism. His theory of mental evolution, as outlined in *Cosmic Consciousness*, is discussed as a rather quaint treatise on mysticism, which is most useful for consideration of its compilation of mystical experiences. Canadian historical studies situate him as a late Victorian physician whose ideas have had little lasting impact. Bucke has been reduced by historical analysis to a sycophant of Walt Whitman, a mystic and an alienist.

The similarity in the criticisms that have so defined Bucke is their attempt to relegate him and his work to the margins of importance. And yet, he continues to elicit discussion. Scholarly attention has been continuous from soon after his death, in 1902, until now. His book is still in print and one can find mention of him on the Internet. This sustained interest in, and occlusive critical approach to Bucke point to a character whose place in Canadian history, philosophy and literature has not yet been adequately established.

The dismissive criticism by the majority of Bucke's commentators emphasizes an underlying uniformity of approach. It is an approach that is repeated in historical papers, literary articles and philosophical essays. This approach defines its subject through the use of limiting categorizations that produce a narrowly defined and falsifying object of study. Such studies fossilize Dr. Bucke and his work.

Chapter I of this essay undertakes an investigation of the critical methodology that has attempted to marginalize Bucke, while at the same time, introducing the reader to this dynamic Canadian. The simultaneous processes of investigation and introduction are intended to extricate Bucke from the critical approach that has minimized his cultural significance.

The experiences of Bucke's life situate him at the cross-roads of what have become fundamental Canadian issues.

His unique position in Canadian history will be discussed in Chapter II. This position provides the Canadian reader with a witness to events of the late 1800s. Bucke's perspective on life in Canada is presented as an alternative view, one which refutes the concept of early Canadians as predominantly conservative. This contextualization of Bucke challenges the limitations of his previous historical construction.

Chapter III will discuss Bucke's major work, *Cosmic Consciousness*. His theoretical work is of literary interest because of its engagement with the difficulties of morality and meaning in a post-Darwinian world. This chapter provides an introduction to Bucke's intellectual perspective and outlines the critical aspects of the theory and argumentation in *Cosmic Consciousness*. Some note will be taken of how previous critiques of *Cosmic Consciousness* present viable difficulties with Bucke's undertaking. The chapter concludes with an appreciation of *Cosmic Consciousness* that is built upon its attempt to theorize an intersection of moral and scientific beliefs.

The influence of *Cosmic Consciousness* on Canadian arts is discussed in Chapter IV. It is shown to be a tangible influence, one that has a verifiable connection to Canadian literature. Placing *Cosmic Consciousness* within the field of Canadian culture provides a point of origin for other less well-known works, works whose inclusion scripts a more

dynamic and ambitious literary tradition than we have been given to accept.

The problem of a flawed historical practice resulting in the exclusion or marginalization of important cultural participants can be found at the root of many postcolonial explorations. Postcolonialism, as I have come to understand it, is more correctly a methodology than a theory. It is a methodology which is notable for its ability to analyze and rework long-held truths and values. Postcolonial discourse acknowledges culturally specific paradigms for its analysis of the historical significance of past events in a disciplined attempt to minimize the distortion and misrepresentation that results from the intrusion of current intellectual and ideological frameworks. It is a means by which we may recuperate from the historical record subjects whose previous dismissal has left our cultural heritage diminished. Such recuperations revitalize our studies, and work to establish a more representative historical and literary tradition. These aspects, as well as the tenacity of postcolonial studies in reshaping information under the most oppressive of circumstances, make this critical approach germane to a discussion that suggests an inadequacy in the practice of intellectual historicism.

This essay is a postcolonial undertaking in that it reworks the established historical opinion of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke and re-evaluates his major work: *Cosmic Consciousness*. It becomes apparent that his critics have

failed to allot him and his work a proper place in Canadian cultural history because of a practice that promotes imaginative closure. A detailed critique of this practice and a revision of biographical information are essential to breach the uniformity of interpretation and return the quality of multiplicity to Dr. Bucke and our rhetorical tradition.

The assessment of *Cosmic Consciousness* and its influences is most properly built upon a foundation which accepts its author as a valued participant in Canadian culture, as opposed to one whose life and work are anomalous to the Canadian experience. Rather than as sycophant, mystic and alienist, Bucke must be engaged as an important civic, intellectual and cultural representative of early Canada. In returning this multiplicity to one character in Canadian history, the richness and intellectual scope of late nineteenth-century Canadian literature is one step closer to being recuperated. Without the more eclectic tradition represented by Bucke, later developments in Canadian literature arrive without historical origins and are denied full appreciation. In an attempt to diversify traditional approaches to Canadian literature, I establish Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke as representative of the culture of Victorian Canada, and his work, *Cosmic Consciousness*, as a literary influence.

Chapter I: A Historical Caveat

You cannot imagine, dear Walt, how peaceful and dreamy the landscape is this morning -- the air is full of great, white, soft feathers that come down as tenderly upon the grass and trees as a mother's love falls upon her child. I have never witnessed any thing [sic] more exquisite.

Richard Maurice Bucke: Letters to Walt Whitman Artem Lozynsky ed.

The most serious challenge in writing on Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke is to resist the pressure of marginalization that is an uncomfortable urgency in the Canadian historical criticism of him. This criticism is full of apologetic tones and qualifying statements that seem to stand as disclaimers. James Doyle, in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, concedes that "Bucke deserves a place in Canadian literature, for the intrinsic interest of his life and career and for his conscientious, *if limited*, efforts to contribute to nineteenth-century philosophical and literary issues" (50; emphasis added). This hesitation to confer any unequivocal praise is consistent in critical and biographical studies written after the First World War. The first and most comprehensive task of this paper is to strip Bucke's legacy of this ambiguity, and to give him an unabashed place in the history of Canadian culture.

This task initially entails an inquiry into the historical practice that has marginalized Bucke. The purpose of this work is not to draw a biographical portrait of Bucke, which has already been done by a number of researchers, but to draw out those considerations that will

imbue his portrait with colour. For the details of his life, arranged in chronological order, I refer the reader to Appendix I. The following review of historical practice reveals the tendency to marginalize Bucke as symptomatic of an ironic historicism that cannot accommodate the sincere and impassioned intellectual inquiries of late nineteenth-century Canada.

A Methodological Review:

Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke is primarily regarded by his commentators as a mystic, a sycophant of Walt Whitman, and an alienist or early psychiatrist. Although these retrospectively imposed categories provide frameworks for analysis, their instability and insufficiency work against a balanced consideration of Bucke: they forestall an approach that might arrive at an estimation of his importance in articulating the intellectual and moral questions of his time.

This re-reading of Bucke aims to establish that these limiting categories, firmly affixed by historical practice, fundamentally vitiate his character and achievements. He simply does not fit into the dominant conceptions of Canada's past, and has been a casualty of the tendency to package historical events and characters into unifying views of Canada. As A. B. McKillop has argued, the underlying intention of unifying views is perhaps inspired by the hope

that such a view will promote, perhaps even deliver, a Canadian identity (*Contours* 27-29). In his essay, "So Little on the Mind," McKillop suggests that the intellectual historian's "search must, ultimately, be for coherence, not unity: it must not be undertaken at the expense of negating or ignoring the reality of discord, discontinuity, tension, and contradiction" (*Contours* 29).

Unifying views of history tend to ignore the diverse and fractured nature of Canada's history. Our origins involve the European cultures of England and France, whose relations with each other have always been difficult, to say the least. As well, the European encounter with Native cultures emphasizes the degree of cultural divergence that must be addressed in Canadian historicism. What is more, one must also take into account the later influences of Asian and European immigration, and the rise of American influence. A unifying view, i.e., one that promotes a delimiting and homogeneous perspective, cannot reflect the contradictions inherent in the intersection of these cultural influences.

In the urgency of Canadian historicism to organize paradigms of unifying national consciousness, Bucke is consistently forced to the margins of historical importance. Rather than understanding that this constant marginalization constitutes a formidable criticism of their historical practice, historians continue to reiterate Bucke's marginal position and maintain an oversimplified view of his

achievements. Canadian historicism, as it concerns Dr. Bucke, is lost in a bog of disjunction between prescriptive historical analyses and considerable historical evidence.

While historical analyses, such as Ramsey Cook's *The Regenerators*, which will be more fully discussed later in this chapter, attempt to address the "reality of discord" that McKillop agrees is necessary to ascertain, they do so without maintaining their investigation *within* the larger "search for coherence." The discord inherent in intellectual historicism is falsely constructed as external and antipathetic to coherent structures of Canadian history. Consequently, the vigilant search for coherence -- a search that would undoubtedly configure Bucke as more central and representative -- is abandoned in favour of constructing a manichean historical perspective with the realities of discord set in opposition to analyses that pursue unifying views of Canadian history.

This is precisely the mistake that McKillop cautions against when he reminds intellectual historians that "if a basic construct for the social historian is conflict, the equivalent for the intellectual historian is irony" (*Contours* 30). The relationship between intellectual history and historical event will always involve the ironic displacement between intention and result (*Contours* 30). Consequently, when historians centre on this displacement as the focus of their historical investigation, instead of incorporating it into a fuller understanding of the

historical record, they manipulate a methodological consideration into a thematic preoccupation. McKillop's warning is meant to caution intellectual historians against the very pitfall into which historians have fallen in their appraisal of Bucke.

Furthermore, McKillop makes explicit that while it is important to note the irony inherent in intellectual historicism, using irony as a methodological approach undermines historical inquiry:

The notion of 'irony,' however, is a means of understanding the discrepancy between profession and practice, *not in itself a mode of historical analysis*. It may help us understand the many ways by which men reconcile their manifest intentions with their practical actions, but *it alone will not provide the basis of systematic understanding* of the relation between ideas and social change. (*Contours* 30; emphasis added)

An ironic historical posture overshadows, and consequently distorts, our view of the past. Especially in consideration of Bucke's intellectual climate, where questions of a cosmological nature are of paramount importance, the historian must maintain a sincere and respectful approach despite any potential for ironic dismissal.

The urgency for unifying themes and the presumption of irony as the *sine qua non* of historical approach that typify the critical discussions of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke reveal a historical posture with limited epistemological patience and curiosity. Because these analyses focus on the ironic discrepancy between intention and result, rather than situating this discrepancy within a broader understanding of

historical processes, the search for coherence is derailed. Historians are no longer involved in a search for the subtle nuances that mark a pattern of coherence. They have been side-tracked by irony, both as a thematic focus and a methodological approach.

Thus, propositions such as Cook's that "the supreme irony of the regenerators [liberal English Protestants of the late 1880s who promoted social criticism and social reform] was that the new birth to which they contributed was not, as they hoped, the city of God on earth but rather the secular city" (4), are symptomatic of a failure of historical practice. Cook has conscripted Bucke, and other historical figures, to support a flawed methodology.

Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke was a late nineteenth-century thinker. He was fully engaged in the intellectual concerns of his society. Whereas the passion now is for information and ideas whose realization will bring individual self-fulfilment, in Bucke's time it was for ideas that would deliver a new cosmology. His passionate engagement with such concerns demands a contextualized inquiry that seriously addresses the intellectual issues and scientific knowledge of his time.

McKillop's essay encourages us to investigate the thought of individuals while not ignoring the complexities of social realities (*Contours* x). He argues for a structure to Canadian intellectual history that "should essentially be three-fold: first to affirm the inherent value -- what, for

short, we might call the 'integrity' of ideas; second, to discern patterns of structure; third, to search for coherence" (McKillop *Contours* 25). McKillop locates the weakness of Canadian historiography in a failure to address the first of these methodological tenets:

The general corpus of Canadian intellectual history at present may be characterized, if rather crudely, as having been so far reasonably sensitive to the diversity and coherence of patterns of ideas in Canada. It has been less successful in dealing with the 'integrity' of the ideas themselves and has virtually ignored the structural character and determinants of thought, knowledge and society. (*Contours* 29)

Such an approach to Canadian history requires that the historian attend to "problems of motive, intention and causation" (McKillop *Contours* 29). But not, as earlier specified, from an ironic position which distorts essential intellectual influences. McKillop concludes, "[t]he study of ideas in relation to both ideational and social structures would, in contrast, serve to keep the intellectual historian more directly in contact with the complexity of the historical record" (*Contours* 29). It is precisely a sense of this complexity or multiplicity of influence, that is absent in the historical construction of Bucke. For Bucke to be considered within a framework of Canadian historical and literary studies, the contextual integrity of his ideas must be respected.

This fundamental condition cannot be established in a field where there is an unwillingness to suspend judgement, i.e., an inability to maintain an approach which arrests

present convictions and opens itself to a sympathetic apprehension of past ideas in their historical context. An objective stance, the full achievement of which I believe is unobtainable, is nonetheless a prerequisite of historical inquiry. The practice of intellectual historicism demands that we relentlessly question suppositions that may prohibit or inhibit understanding.

If this paper had begun with biographical notes, we would have encountered the following information:

Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke was born in England in 1837 and came to Upper Canada in 1838. He was, by profession, a medical doctor, graduating from the University of McGill in Montreal in 1862 and completing his post graduate work in England and France. He worked as a doctor until his death in 1902. (Rechnitzer 11-12, 35-36, 231).

We can begin to contextualize Bucke in consideration of these simple and seemingly straightforward assertions.

There are many differences between nineteenth-century and twentieth-century medical practices, and, consequently, a physician of the former bears only a hermeneutic resemblance to the latter. Current conceptions of a medical practitioner can be traced to the life and work of Dr. William Osler, who graduated from McGill in 1872 (Cayne 21), eight years *after* Bucke. Sir William Osler is now credited with being the 'father of modern medicine,' but it is important to remember that "[s]cientific writing of the Victorian period was very much an art of persuasion" (McKillop *Disciplined* 105). In the rhetorical arena, Osler has so long been the declared winner of consensual thinking

that we forget there were other contestants. Our current conception of a physician is modelled on Dr. Osler's medical approach and scientific beliefs.

An investigation of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke involves the apprehension of an intellectual realm *before* it was organized into its present day configuration, before Oslerian dictates were held as undeniable truths. This entails conceiving of the practice of medicine prior to, and yet on the eve of, its current application of scientific technologies to a mechanized body. The disparity between past and current conceptions demands that the unquestioned interpretive slide in defining categorizations, such as "physician," be examined, as we can have no understanding of Bucke without it. We must resituate the research of empirical data and the intellectual analysis of history beyond the current bog of ironic disclosure. For within our conceptions resides, along side the stasis of terminology, the enduring potential for change and movement. Historical studies can give shape and identity to this potential, for they detail the continually changing context of stabilized concepts.

A disregard for the assessment of this inherent flux leaves us with a skeletal comprehension. We are not provided the contextual referents that return the fullness to historical data. By ignoring the potential variations within the concept of "physician" that existed before the Oslerian paradigm, we promote a homogeneous and limiting

apprehension of the medical field and exile physicians such as Dr. Bucke.

This delimiting approach is extended to the world of Bucke, which is not contextualized in either the accepted historical or literary traditions of Canada. The weakness of historical practice, i.e., the inability to apprehend and respect the ideas of a previous culture because of an ironic posture that situates the current historian in a luminous present, regarding a dark and distant past, has annihilated the shared territory of story upon which both disciplines are dependent.

The absence of contextualization has led to a historical construction of Bucke that is rigid. It does not consider his intellectual climate as an arena of vital ideas. It does not consider his life as the energetic outpouring it was. It does not show him to be a participant in any events or trends that are essential and central to Canadian experience; but he was. Consideration of the life and work of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke provides an entry point to the field of late Victorian Canadian ideas and imagination, the echo of which is found in Canadian art and literature.

Ramsey Cook's Bucke: A Lilliputian Documentary

The writing of this essay began, serendipitously, the day after the retirement of Ramsey Cook (Bohuslawsky D3).

for it is his sketch of Bucke that provides the textual material to analyze the process of historical construction. In noting the points of disjunction between Cook's reading of Bucke and evidence from the historical record, we find the historian to be involved in a process that fails to deliver a historical perspective respectful of the complexity of Bucke's life.

Cook's award-winning book, *The Regenerators*, argues that "the manner in which liberal Protestants responded to the socio-economic, scientific, and historical challenges of the nineteenth century resulted in Christianity becoming less rather than more relevant" (6). Cook includes Bucke in this grouping of liberal Protestants, although he was not, in any doctrinal or active manner, a Protestant. Furthermore, Cook assumes that Christianity is a doctrinal system of belief that requires no explanation or definition.

Ramsey Cook states that his "intention is to *understand rather than laugh* at the failure of nineteenth-century men and women to foresee the unintended consequences of their actions" (Cook 6; emphasis added). The inflection of his work is the first indication of a weakness of practice. Why is the choice one between laughter or understanding? This statement of Cook's intention betrays a discomfort with the concepts held by his subjects, a discomfort which he assumes will be shared by his audience. In order for the reader to accompany Cook, on his journey through late eighteenth-century intellectualism, we are asked to resist an

understandable urgency to ridicule. Cook's validation of this urgency, in his request that it be suspended to allow for his argument, works to signal, rather than refute, an underlying discomfort with his material. It is this very act of re-enforcing an anxiety with our history that results in diminishing its importance to our cultural character. Surely these Canadian Victorians are no more laughable than anyone else seen from the safe distance of the present. Cook has positioned himself as the beneficent scholar who will deign to consider a group of Canadians whose intentions, he believes, are at odds with results.

Ramsey Cook entitles his chapter on Bucke in *The Regenerators*, "Richard Maurice Bucke: Religious Heresiarch and a Utopian" (88). In opening with these specifications, he has defined Bucke before providing any information to support or refute his claim. Cook uses the descriptive terms of "heresiarch" and "utopian" whimsically. If we refer to dictionary definitions, Cook's fanciful conscription of terminology becomes obvious. In analyzing this title, we see that misconceptions of Bucke initially arise from Cook's use of broadly metaphorical language.

Bucke was neither "a leader [nor] a founder of a heresy" (Fowler 572). He led no-one. He started no movement. What is more, he was never formally accused of heresy. In the use of "heresiarch" to describe Bucke, Cook is simply being melodramatic. Neither was Bucke an "ardent, but unpractical reformer" (Fowler 1434). Bucke's life is

replete with examples of his practical nature. His position as Superintendent of the London, Ontario Asylum for the Insane, for example, required that he manage a large institution efficiently and effectively. He was a "splendid administrator, and everything ran smoothly at all times," comments a former attendant, Miss Agnes Tunnah (Baehre 313-314). "To Bucke," writes Rainer Baehre, quoting the doctor, "successful treatment [of the insane] depended on 'kindness, management, hygienic measures, such as fresh air, good food, exercise, rest, sleep, etc., regular work, amusements, properly ordered mental exercise, and other similar means calculated to restore by invigorating and regulating the healthy action of the impaired nerve centres'" (320).

Contrary to the impracticality implied in the term "utopian," Bucke was an innovator of practical solutions. In 1883 he began The Gurd Meter Company with his brother-in-law (Rechnitzer 95). This company manufactured gas and water meters. At the Asylum he instituted an open-door policy for patients who were not dangerous, promoted the use of occupational therapy, and supported the abandonment of alcohol as a method of treatment (Rechnitzer 185-6). Dr. Bucke's passion for reform is not that of the hot tempered reformer, but moves in the direction of calculated efficiencies.

Cook misconstrues Bucke's optimism for utopianism. In *Cosmic Consciousness*, Bucke states that he believes "[t]he immediate future of our race is incredibly hopeful" (4).

Bucke believed that there were three impending revolutions: a revolution involving change brought about by aerial navigation, a revolution brought about by the rise in socialism, and a revolution of a psychical nature (CC 4). Peter Rechnitzer, a medical historian, describes Bucke's views more accurately as apocalyptic (203), for Bucke believed that the consequence of the three revolutions would be "a new heaven and new earth" (CC 4). While these views seem to promote a utopian classification, it is imperative to remember McKillop's advice and recall the complexities of the world in which Bucke lived.

Bucke's introductory lecture, "On the Value of the Study of Medicine," presented before the Medical Faculty of McGill college in 1891, was covered in *The London Advertiser* with a headline that reads: "The Day Coming When the Gallows, the Whip and the Jail will be Obsolete." This prediction is a quotation from Bucke's lecture, wherein he argues that the development of a scientific approach, as defined by Auguste Comte, would diminish the fear and horror of criminals and this diminishment would be reflected in their more humane treatment (*Study* 342). Bucke correctly anticipated Canada's rejection of capital punishment.

Furthermore, as Arthnel Tomlinson points out, at the time [of Bucke's predictions concerning socialism], no socialist government existed in the world (250). In consideration of the acumen with which Bucke indicated what would become twentieth-century issues, the derision

suggested by Cook's chapter title is unwarranted. Cook begins in error.

Cook's study of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke objectively details Bucke's ancestry, his adventures in America, his formal education and his professional work as an alienist (86-93). However, when it becomes necessary to consider Bucke's intellectual life, his relationship with Walt Whitman and the mystical cast of Bucke's questioning, Cook cannot refrain from colouring his argumentation with an obvious scepticism. This scepticism is apparent in the reductive quality of Cook's analysis that ends with Bucke being included in a group of "liberal Christians who were increasingly influential in Canadian Protestantism, want[ing] to simplify religion, bring God, man, and society closer together, to humanize religious belief (102).

Contrary to Cook's conclusion, Bucke was not particularly influential in his time, especially within Canadian Protestantism; his concept of religion was more complex, not simplifying; he promoted an *existing* unity between God, man, and society; and his efforts were to provide a scientific basis for religious belief, not humanize it. In reducing Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke to a "liberal Christian," Cook has endeavoured to cement his argument at the expense of actual complexities.

The historian fails to make his biases explicit, demanding that the reader note with particular care the underlying conceptions at the root of Cook's thought. When

he comments on Bucke's youthful ambition to furnish a sound basis for poetical and other art criticism. Cook muses, "that a young doctor in Sarnia, Ontario should harbour such ambitions might at first blush seem truly astonishing" (93). Although Cook goes on to *dis*-astonish us with a list of Bucke's contemporaries who also offered "grandiose speculations," he concludes that "the only astonishing fact about Bucke was his physical place of residence" (93). This conclusion is absurd in its underlying illogic.

Ramsey Cook implies that there is some law of God or Nature which makes Sarnia, and perhaps all of Canada, the place where big ambitions cannot be had, and by extension that there is a tenable relation between place of residence and a proper sphere of thought. The reader is supposed to chuckle along, and agree with, this inane statement without reflection. Bucke returned to Sarnia because it was where his late brother, Edward, had lived and Bucke was obliged to pay off his mortgage (Rechnitzer 42-43). It was a practical financial decision.

Furthermore, to judge from his letters to Walt Whitman, as collated by Artem Lozynsky, Bucke seems to have had that quintessential Canadian relationship with the climate: a mix of exuberant awe and melancholy dismay; he does not bemoan his place of residence for a lack of inspiration. Cook's statement is potentially damaging in its presentment of an assumed geographic criteria for intellectual activity. While embarking on a discussion of specifically Canadian

events, he assumes a blanket opinion that would eradicate the potential of events.

Ramsey Cook asks his reader to accept a sophomoric opinion concerning Canada. For Richard Bucke, who spent five years adventuring through Ohio, down the Mississippi, westward to Salt Lake City, into the Sierra Nevadas, onto California and back home through the Panama canal, perhaps Ontario did not seem the "backwater" that Cook would like us to think it was (4). This concept of Ontario, devoid of the mystique of frontier, in both a geographical and intellectual sense, and absent of other mythical distinction, renders it a locale without character. Bucke is indicative of the character of Victorian Ontario; his reconception is necessary to its appreciation.

Again and again, Cook promotes misreadings of Bucke. He calls Bucke's Whitman biography "hagiography" (Cook 98) without offering his own criticism of Whitman's poetry. Such an addition might reassure us that he had considered whether Whitman was in any way deserving of Bucke's enthusiastic regard. In ascribing the term 'hagiography' to *Walt Whitman*, Cook uses satirical poetics as his mode of historical analysis. While clever, this metaphoric slide overshadows biography with hagiography in an awkward construction, for we are not getting historical assessment, but rather the satiric reporting that has grown out of ironic historicism. Cook dismisses the distinction between these two areas of study by combining them in what is merely

an insult. This dissolution of particular areas of study discredits his own field and betrays this historian's fundamentally *a*-historical methodology.

Cook goes on to muse "that there was something curious and unexplained in [the] sycophantic relationship [between Bucke and Whitman] both in the correspondence and in Bucke's writing about the poet" (98). If Cook wants to engage the reader in speculation concerning the sexuality of Bucke, why does he not discuss it overtly? Peter Rechnitzer tackles the question directly:

A great irony in Bucke's relationship with Whitman touches on this. Bucke who was certainly heterosexual, was blind to the erotic component in the total texture of his feelings toward Whitman and was equally blind to the erotic flavour of Whitman's feelings to other men such as Peter Doyle. (176)

Elsewhere Rechnitzer comments that "Bucke never surmised the possibility of homosexuality in Whitman, nor saw the blatant homoeroticism in his Calamus poems" (123).

Cook speculates that the reason Jessie Bucke, the doctor's wife, was uncomfortable with Whitman was because "perhaps she suspected, as Edmund [sic] Carpenter and other friends of Bucke and Whitman did, that the poet was homosexual" (98). Perhaps this is true; however, there is no evidence to support this speculation.

The Seaborn Collection includes this remembrance of Bucke's daughter, Ina Seaborn:

Mrs. Bucke's life was very happy. But sometimes, when Dr. Bucke announced the proposal of inviting Walt and some of his associates, the Traubels, the girls would

wonder why they found her wiping the tears from her eyes. She did not believe that the [sic] were really married although Walt had gone through a ceremony of Marriage for them. (Seaborn I 31)

And also this vignette:

Horace Traubel and his wife were married by Walt Whitman and had one child. Mrs. Traubel and baby stayed at the Buckes [sic] three months. Mr. Traubel one month. Mrs. Bucke could never warm up to them. (Seaborn I 17)

Jessie Bucke's dislike of Whitman is a mystery; however, there are many aspects of Whitman's unconventional nature that Cook may have chosen as the reason for her dislike. Cook's reading of Jessie Bucke's discomfort exemplifies the historian's insensitivity to the deep emotional feelings attendant on religious belief in late Victorian Canada. His speculations concerning Whitman's sexuality betray an inclination to conscript, rather than contextualize, historical evidence.

S. E. D. Shortt began reassessing the historical construction of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke in his essay *The myth of a Canadian Boswell: Dr. R. M. Bucke and Walt Whitman*. He describes his work as a "corrective to the prevailing literary interpretation [, a description of] the Bucke-Whitman relationship in terms of symbiosis rather than of master poet and sycophantic admirer" (Shortt *Myth* 55). His study discusses the intersection of Whitman's "perception of himself and the significance of his poetry" with Bucke's conception of the moral nature, showing the influence to be mutual (Shortt, *Myth* 61-62). It is the

energy of this dynamic which infuses Bucke's correspondence with passion.

Shortt specifies that the "neglect [of Bucke's role in the Bucke-Whitman relationship] may well be an inherent methodological pitfall of biography in which a focus on the principal figure necessarily neglects or misrepresents secondary characters" (*Myth* 55). While literary biographies of canonical figures may have such inherent pitfalls, the field of historical studies needs to maintain its potential for inclusion and consequent revision. Although Shortt considers the problem of misrepresentation to be generic, his remarks also point to a failure of practice.

Thus far we have seen that Cook's analysis of Bucke involves a satirical poetics that is given to broad metaphorical leaps, an underlying conception of Canada as "backwater" and the use of historical evidence from the 1800s without consideration of the social and religious convictions of those times. In Ramsey Cook's concluding statement he remarks that "[Bucke's] outlook was not entirely foreign to the spirit of the times" (102). This assertion is an immense understatement. Contrary to being "not entirely foreign," Bucke's outlook exemplifies the spirit of the times. The insufficient labels of "mystic," "sycophant" and "doctor" suppress an understanding of those times and limit accessibility to the character of Dr. Bucke.

Calling Bucke a "mystic" (Cook 86) is problematic by the very nature of the concept of mysticism. James Horne

provides a definition: "[m]ysticism is an experience which can be recognized, but has not been defined accurately; it can be divided into two or three types, or even more, according to one's opinion, and, in addition there are experiences which appear to be mystical but may not be" (*Then* 4). A definition of mysticism is as difficult to construct as the mystical experience is to describe. In 1872, Bucke had what he called an "illumination" (Rechnitzer 58). How to maintain an objective and historical approach to mystical experiences, whose validity is considered impossible to establish objectively, is best articulated by William James:

It is the rationalist critic rather who plays the denier in the controversy, and his denials have no strength, for there never can be a state of facts to which new meaning may not truthfully be added, provide the mind ascend to a more enveloping point of view. (*Varieties* 355)

Bucke's experience of illumination must be taken with respect for subjective experience, a respect which is fundamental to literary studies.

That Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke was a fervent admirer of Walt Whitman is true, but not nearly as disturbing nor as amazing as Ramsey Cook would have us believe. Bucke was aware of how he was seen by those with a less engaged attitude; he tells Walt Whitman that "if I live another twenty years (which is doubtful!) I shall not be surprised to see my highest claims for you (for making which I have been counted a lunatic) broadly and even generally allowed"

(Lozynsky *Letters to WW* 129). Bucke's admiration for Walt Whitman follows in a tradition of respect and passion for those who are able to voice the spirit of the times.

The basis of claims of a sycophantic relationship lie in such banal observations as a similarity in the style of dress and beard of Whitman and Bucke. James Horne remarks that Bucke "adopted Whitman's curious manner of dress, which included rough gray clothes, a broad-rimmed hat, shirt with no collar and full beard" (*Pioneer* 205). Although critics note their similar appearance (Berry 5, Shortt *Myth* 57), a perusal of the Seaborn photo albums, in which portraits of the Buckes and their friends are found, indicate that these fashions were popular. To those of us with any historical and cosmopolitan experience this is about as "curious" as bell bottoms in the sixties or body-piercing in the nineties. Rather than "curious," Bucke's manner of dress was comfortable and unpretentious. Providing this information as evidence of a sycophantic relationship betrays a historicism that promotes superficial readings.

This lack of respectful consideration makes it necessary to recall that Bucke's profession was that of a physician, not a metaphysician, and most definitely not a "Doctor of Mysticism" (Columbo 133) or any of the other imaginative constructions that historians have used as catchy titles. While Bucke's intellectual forays arouse much debate, there is a consensus concerning his status as a

doctor. This excerpt from the Seaborn documents shows the regard in which people held Bucke.

A little boy who lived in Sarnia went out for a ride on a river boat along with another little boy, and the boy's mother. The machinery of the boat was not protected in those days and the two boys played ball on the boat, and the ball by chance fell into the machinery. Frank thought he could pcik [sic] the ball out, and in so doing he caught his right hand in the machinery and mangled it badly.

As quickly as possible he was taken home and the family doctor advised that the hand be amputated. Some one [sic] said, "Oh, get Dr. Bucke to look at it." Doctor Bucke was practicing [sic] in Sarnia at that time. Dr. Bucke straightened out the injured parts and saved the hand. When it healed it was good as new. If Frank held up his two hands one could not tell which had been the one injured. (Seaborn I 20)

Bucke, who had all of one foot and part of the other amputated at the age of twenty (Rechnitzer 29), was a considerate physician. Walt Whitman counted him "top of the heap" of the physicians with whom he was acquainted (Shortt *Myth* 64) and that included the famed Dr. Osler.

Cook's analysis of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke promotes the dismissal of this character from the historical record by suggesting that Bucke can be summarized as a physician, sycophant and mystic. When Cook's historical process is analysed, we find that his rendition of Bucke involves the satirical components of understatement, exaggeration, intimation and derision. Cook's historical practice is too literary, and his conscription of these literary devices to historical pursuits leaves both disciplines, history and

literature, bereft of a valuable distinction. The complex character of Bucke is lost in Cook's ironic historicism.

From Analysis to Intellectual Climate: Escaping Brobdingnag

Perhaps Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke is the historian's bane; he did after all, misrepresent at least one fact in his autobiographical writing. He says that "[w]hen only a few years old I lost my mother and shortly afterwards my father. Affairs at home went badly for me. I was ill-treated and early in '53, being then sixteen years old, I made up my mind that I would live elsewhere" (Bucke *Episode* 1). This is not true; Bucke's father died in 1856, three years after he left home (Rechnitzer 17). His first biography, written in 1906 by James Coyne, does not mention the date of the death of Bucke's father in its ancestral notes (16). But later historians have been misled, scripting a variety of chronologies for the demise of Bucke's parents (Cook 89, Greenland 148, Horne *Pioneer* 198, McMullin 362, Columbo 133, Jaffe iii, Baehre 292). The reason Bucke decided to obscure this information is unknown, and it can only remain a mystery.

The circumstances leading to Bucke's decision to leave home are unknown. Consequently, there is a gap in the historical record open to speculation. Discomfort with, or a misunderstanding of, Bucke's relationship with Whitman leads to another matter for speculation. (In my view this

mystery is resolved in consideration of the quality and originality of Whitman's work and a concept of friendship: historians however, neglect the former and misconstrue the latter.) These mysteries prove too tempting to the inquiring minds of Canadian historians: Bucke's behaviour is analyzed as symptomatic of deeply rooted disturbances.

Peter Rechnitzer brings a psychological analysis to the Bucke-Whitman relationship:

Bucke's repeated references to his father's death having occurred prior to his departure [to Ohio] is, therefore, best understood as being factually erroneous but symbolically true.

During the next four years Bucke, without family support or religious faith, courageously survived severe hardship and the imminence of death by exposure to cold. He emerged with an *unsatisfied and unexpressed longing for a missing father*, a void which had to be filled. *He yearned for a prophet and a creed* which would satisfy the true believer's need for certainty. Although this longing *was not expressed, perhaps not even perceived* by Bucke during his early years in practice, in the summer of 1868, when he first read *Leaves of Grass* the moment was propitious for the eager suppliant. (232; emphasis added)

He concludes that, in Whitman, Bucke "had found the idealized father figure" (Rechnitzer 233).

Rechnitzer's interpretation is unfortunate, for his biography is otherwise the most comprehensive and clearly written account of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke. His foray into psychoanalysis is sentimental and disappointing. Once again, Bucke is subjected to a hermeneutic practice which betrays him. Rechnitzer is careful to note that a longing for a missing father was "neither expressed, nor perceived" by Bucke, but this does not deter the medical historian from

ascribing it as a root cause for Bucke's behaviour. His application of Freudian psychology reveals the weakness of this methodology. In its application to fiction it provides a structure of relations; in its application to biography it ascribes unconscious motivations that are neither provable nor unprovable. These speculations imprison the subject in a methodology that provides no recourse to arbitration. Rechnitzer's Freudian analysis supports the view of an odd relationship between Bucke and Whitman, whereas I believe Bucke simply perceived the poetic genius of Whitman's poetry well before it received wide-spread affirmation.

Again we have a historian who does not tackle the question of whether Whitman's poetry is worthy of Bucke's enthusiasm; Rechnitzer is too eager to assesses the admiration as symptomatic of an underlying disfunction. Only one of Bucke's critics is willing to concede the point of poetic quality: George Stevenson admits that "[t]hose of us who have only seen photographs of Whitman, and to whom *Leaves of Grass* is only an unusual type of blank verse with occasional high notes, may wonder at Bucke's superlatives and indiscriminating partisanship" (Stevenson 1151). This critic allows for, even though he does not participate in, a reading of Whitman's poetry that may justify Bucke's enthusiasm.

That the affective experience of a reader engaging in a text may be the effect only of the literature itself seems completely unthinkable to Rechnitzer, and is, therefore,

suspect. Bucke found Whitman's poetry delightful and exciting; its quality and value obvious and certain, notwithstanding the criticism of his contemporaries.

This urgency to ascribe psychological motivations to Bucke's interest in the poetry of Walt Whitman is replicated in assessments of his fervent interest in the scientific and religious questions of his time. What needs to be appreciated is that an impassioned engagement in intellectual issues was *of the times*. Again, A. B. McKillop's perceptive views provide the necessary perspective:

'Whatever sins of omission or commission may be fairly laid to the charge of our age and generation, indifference to the momentous problems of human life and destiny is not one of them,' wrote W. J. Rattray in 1878. 'Men are far too seriously-minded in their search after truth...to treat the solemn questions which persistently obtrude themselves for solution on every age, with levity, scorn or flippant superficiality.' The opening sentences of many articles published in Canadian literary periodicals during these decades clearly illustrate the extent to which Rattray's claim was true. 'If any one thing is more characteristic of this age than another,' Kingston's Agnes Maule Machar wrote, 'it is the restless mental activity which questions all things formerly received; a general 'shaking' and revising of opinions, which however much temporary pain and disorganization it may produce, must at least end in the result "that the things which cannot be shaken should remain". (*Contours* 61-62)

Bucke was a vital part of these revisions of thought.

Much of this intellectual activity was generated by Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*. Not only were Darwin's conclusions a challenge to orthodox

religion, but they were also a challenge to Baconian empiricism:

the benefit of Baconian empiricism was that since it was based upon a finite number of observations, limiting itself to observations of "secondary causes" operating in nature, and insisting that no conclusions be drawn beyond the evidence provided by such observations, speculations of a cosmological sort were beyond its scope. (McKillop *Disciplined* 102)

Canadian criticism of *Origins* by William Dawson and Daniel Wilson centred on Darwin's methodology: he had "put forward conclusions not supported (though not contradicted) by his evidence, substantial though that may have been" (McKillop *Disciplined* 101). Darwin's theory was speculative, not conclusive, and it introduced well researched speculation as a viable scientific method. Bucke's study, *Cosmic Consciousness*, attempts to prove a theory of consciousness by a process that was inspired by Darwin.

While the Victorian penchant for an incessant questioning of "all things formerly received" (McKillop *Contours* 62) may become tedious and its satiric potential high, it is important to establish this intellectual practice as the context for Bucke's writing. His profession of physician landed him in the middle of an ardent debate that centred on maintaining the validity of abstract and spiritual conceptions while embracing the convincing yet antagonistic findings of empirical study. The growing divergence between the two gave rise to passionate inquiries. "The fundamental concern of such discussions," Shortt remarks, "was to identify the distinguishing feature

of animate existence, to devise in other words, a philosophically and physiologically congruent definition of life itself" (*Victorian* 66).

In this attempt to satisfy both an empirical logic and a higher order of experience, Bucke was most influenced by Auguste Comte. According to Shortt, "[n]either [Bucke's] reading of Darwin nor his close association with Walt Whitman exerted a comparable influence" (*Victorian* 76). The resolution of this debate lay, in Bucke's mind, in Comte's assertion that "the highest notions of sociology, and even of morals, have necessarily their first germs in biology" (Shortt *Victorian* 74). This, then, is the intellectual context for Bucke. His generation of Victorians was committed to finding the answers to questions in which the twentieth century has mostly lost interest.

An analytic posture, such as Rechnittzer's, that diminishes this context and replaces it with Freudian interpretations is unaware of its own etiologic foundations, foundations which are uncertain, unprovable, and inimical to Bucke's intellectual context. Many other historians echo this penchant to ascribe psychological motivations for Bucke's behaviour. In James Horne's biography of Bucke, *R. M. Bucke: Pioneer Psychiatrist, Practical Mystic*, he describes Bucke's illumination as an experience of "that religious ecstasy which lies very close to madness" (201). Horne then provides psychological evidence, concluding that Bucke was suffering from "some nervous or mental trouble"

(201). Such speculation suggests that Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* was an attempt to rationalize, rather than contextualize, his experience. Contrary to the view that

[i]t is probably of crucial importance when trying to understand Bucke's motives to remember that, as an alienist, he would find it absolutely necessary to establish a rational framework in order to understand such an experience [as his illumination] and [to] differentiate it from abnormal functions of the insane mind. (Columbo *Doctor* 136)

it is of more crucial importance to remember the historical context of his explorations. Bucke was not a paranoid character, compelled to rationalize his experience in the face of a diagnosis of madness, but rather was inspired by the delight of speculative reasoning and the undeniable experience of a conceptual reality that was without scientific explanation. Rechnitzer, Horne and Columbo all subject Bucke to a form of criticism that ascribes to his motivations causation that is more revealing of their own contemporary concerns than it is sensitive to the particularities of Bucke's time.

In a rare instance of self-awareness that contrasts his earlier anxiety concerning Bucke's work, James Horne remarks:

In our day [1967], when fearless individuality and even pointless eccentricity is accorded a certain degree of tolerance, if it occurs in creative and useful individuals, the cultural mood is finally appropriate for remembering and honouring the accomplishments of Richard Maurice Bucke. (197)

In 1997, the "cultural mood" is entirely different. The tolerance of diversity is more certain and the work is not

only to remember and honour the accomplishments of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke, but also to understand his accomplishments within a Canadian context.

It is a heart-warming characteristic of Bucke that he was impervious to criticism of his interest in Walt Whitman. In other matters the esteem of his community is certain, for he was President of both the Psychology Section of the British Medical Society and the American Medico-Psychological Society (Rechnitzer 178,180), among other distinctions. Bucke has been misrepresented in Canadian historical accounts because of insufficient attention to historical context: he was an eminent and interesting Canadian who was highly regarded in his own times. In the following chapter we find Bucke involved in the political life of nineteenth-century Canada and at the cross-roads of important historical moments. Delivered from the machinations of ironic historicism, Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke may be recuperated, from a postcolonial perspective, as distinctly representative of the central concerns of late Victorian Canada.

Chapter II: Historical Presence: Awakening Hyperion

It is a perfect day here--bright, warm--the trees now full leaved and perfect--they stand on the lawns sleeping--not a breath of air to move their branches. The deep blue sky bends over them in benediction like the concave palm of God.

Richard Maurice Bucke: Letters to Walt Whitman Artem Lozynsky ed.

What Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke and his work, *Cosmic Consciousness*, can bring to discussions and readings of Canadian literature is a clearer sense of the intellectual and political climate of late nineteenth-century Canada. Much of the dismissive criticism of Bucke has arisen from an intellectual and political climate that is inhospitable to the concerns of late Victorian Canada. An understanding of Bucke's world enriches the reading of early Canadian writing with a sensitivity for the complexities of an involvement with Canadian politics and an appreciation of our foundations of scientific knowledge and technological ability.

This chapter discusses Bucke's interest in politics and the influence of politics in his life. His relationship with politics was both passive and active. The complexity of such a relationship, where one is imbrued in politics at the same time as attempting to address political issues, is at the heart of colonial and postcolonial issues, for the individual is placed *within* the existing political structure while encouraging revisions of that structure. Specific to democracies, the individual is both responsible to and

responsible for his/her form of government. Consequently the dilemma that arises between a belief in freedom and an acceptance of political obligation needs constant renegotiation.

Such a dilemma is fundamentally Canadian: in order to address questions of nationhood we are bound to consider our colonial heritage and ask to what degree do we adopt imperial or colonial attitudes in our attempt to deliver a postcolonial nation. Not only did Bucke successfully negotiate this paradoxical struggle, but his discussions with American and English counterparts serve to emphasize the development of his uniquely Canadian perspective. Situated within Canada, at the fulcrum of individual political responsibility, and internationally, in a forum of English-speaking intellectuals, Bucke's experience offers us an important and original viewpoint.

In addition, this chapter briefly discusses Bucke's enthusiasm for technology. Given to the promises of scientific knowledge, his appreciation of technology is built on a respect for its theoretical underpinnings, as well as its practical application. Bucke's attitude is representative of a culture that prides itself on the discovery of Banting and Best, the Avro Arrow and the Robertson screwdriver. The intersection of science and technology must also be accorded a place in the Canadian imaginative tradition.

One must note at the outset the difficulties of researching Canadian historical materials, for this difficulty may be at the root of some of the misapprehensions concerning Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke. The R. M. Bucke Collection at the University of Western Ontario Libraries is daunting. While the catalogue organized by Mary Ann Jameson is an invaluable research tool and the Special and Regional Libraries make accessibility almost effortless, the archival demands of such a volume of material could well employ a number of librarians and researchers. Much of the material has not yet been transcribed from Bucke's own handwriting. The difficulty in organizing Bucke's work lies not only in the size of the UWO collection, but also in the fact that much of his work is in American collections because of his connection to Walt Whitman. What is more, papers which belonged to Bucke's friend, Harry Forman (of England) were later sold at Southeby's and their whereabouts is unknown. This situation may be responsible for the gaps in Canadian historical accounts. Unable to verify information, historians are compelled to qualify their statements.

In *The Faces of Reason: An essay on Philosophy and Culture in English Canada 1850-1950* by Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott, the philosophical contributions of Richard M. Bucke and William D. Lighthall are united in a chapter entitled "The Self-Transcendence of Reason and Evolutionary

Mysticism." After raising a number of similarities between the two men, the authors begin to specify their differences:

Lighthall was an outspoken Canadian nationalist, though he continued to see Canada in an essentially British tradition. *Bucke, so far as we know, had little or no interest in such questions*--though, after a period of adventure in the American west, and study in England, he settled in London, Ontario, and stayed there. Despite his close friendship with Walt Whitman and his connection with a variety of American literary figures, nothing enticed him to leave his work in Western Ontario. (Armour 362; emphasis added)

Bucke *was* interested in such questions. He brought to these concerns the same enthusiasm that he showed in all his undertakings.

Although Bucke was certainly qualified for the position of Superintendent of the Hamilton Asylum, and later, the London Asylum, his political affiliations were important in obtaining these government appointments. Rainer Baehre explains:

In 1873 the provincial government passed legislation to carry out this project ["a provincial inebriates asylum" which would be "a quasi-penal correctional institution"], and to define its object and management. Late in 1872 Bucke had written confidentially to Forman that he was being considered as this asylum's superintendent, and Bucke's "most intimate friend," the popular Timothy Pardee, who was the Provincial Secretary and in charge of all asylums, was going "to fix it." With the defeat of John A. Macdonald and his conservative government in the federal election of 1873, Liberal fortunes were consolidated both federally and provincially. And, to Bucke's advantage, the new Prime Minister was Alexander Mackenzie of Sarnia, one of Bucke's first patients. (309)

Bucke was not only implicated in Canadian politics, but also intensely interested in them.

Bucke's letters to Walt Whitman outline his political views and reveal his interest in Canadian politics. Bucke wrote Whitman faithfully, and the federal election receives full coverage in his letters. The following is a recounting of the 1891 election taken from those letters. (These excerpts from Artem Lozynsky's *The Letters of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke to Walt Whitman* include Lozynsky's corrections and parenthetical notation of Bucke's original punctuation and grammar.)

Feb. 8, 1891: The Canadian House of Commons is dissolved--General election 5th next month--whole country in tremendous excitement, for the issue is most important--viz: stay as we are getting poorer all the time in men and money or commercial (and probably finally political) union with U.S.A. and along with that (it is to be hoped) comparative prosperity. I am (of course) along with the whole liberal party for trade and even union with our neighbors. [--] It will be a most bitter fight but we are sanguine of victory.

Feb. 12, 1891: We are up to our necks in politics here, please the Lord we will break old John A Macdonald this time and get a little more freedom to move[.]

Feb. 14, 1891: Politics here are hot, hot, all hot--impossible to say at present which way the cat will jump--Each side is confident--or pretends to be!

Feb. 19, 1891: Here there is nothing but politics, the main question in the contest being: Shall we or not have closer trade relations with the U.S.? It seems a funny thing to dispute over. It is as if Michigan or New York should argue: Should we have a protection tariff against the rest of the states so as to encourage manufacture at home (in Mich or N.Y.) and in that way increase the population and prosperity of the said Mich. or N.Y.? How very singular such a debate would sound and yet it would be no different from the present one except that here we have a tariff and want to get rid of it. [--] Then (the funniest thing of all) many of our people dread closer relations with the U.S. for fear of moral contamination! --/a sort of/ "I thank thee oh God that I am not like this publican," business. [--] /or/ As the Scotsman prayed: "lord sent us a guid conceit of ourselves!"...Two more weeks will settle the fuss for this time--Elections on 5th March.

Feb. 25, 1891: The elections are making everything hum again. The excitement is worse and worse--I never witnessed any think [sic] like it. [--] We carried Hamilton (a by election) yesterday with a maj. of nearly 700. We had lost the constituency a few months ago with 78 maj. against us--looks a little as if we (the Liberals) might sweep the country on the fifth[. I]f we do[.] it will be a new departure for North America [sic] and the world[.]

Feb. 26, 1891: Country wild over elections--nomination today--polling a week today--looks as if we (liberals) might win[.]

March 1, 1891: Well--here we are still--what is left of us--election excitement rising higher and higher--have never seen the parallel of it--however thursday [sic] (5th) will...settle it--heaven be praised!

March 3, 1891: I go to Sarnia this morning. Shall return here thursday [sic]--have to vote up west and also here on thursday [sic]. Shall probably not write again until friday [sic] when the battle will be over. It is hot, hot. I have good hope that the country will speak out for expansion & freedom...I am boiling over with suppressed excitement [/] thank goodness only two more days[.]

March 6, 1891: I voted there [Sarnia] on thursday [sic] morning (5th) and at noon returned to London and voted here. The elections are over but we do not know the result with any accuracy--the government, however, is no doubt sustained (worse luck) and closer trade relations with you [U.S.A.] are indefinitely postponed.

March 8, 1891: The political racket is over but the government <are> /is/ weakened by the elections and it is doubtful if it can survive for any length of time--we shall probably have now a continuous racket and fight for months perhaps years--this will do the country no good as it will make the tariff, and consequently trade, uncertain.

March 10, 1891: It is five days since the election but the excitement has not yet subsided. The government will have a majority of about 30 but made up entirely from the outlying provinces--extreme east and extreme west. Ontario gives them little or no majority and Quebec has gone badly against them. If old John A. [Macdonald] (the Premier) was 20 years younger he might pull his party together and tide it over--but as it is I do not believe that he with his 76 years can pull through. He will keep things going for a while, of course, but when he strikes a rapid, and there are several bad ones just a little down stream of him, his boat is apt

to go to pieces. (Lozynsky *LWW* 203, 205, 206-7, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212)

In the tradition of his great-grandfather, Sir Robert Walpole (Stevenson *An Appraisal* 1127), Bucke was an ardent Liberal. He wanted free trade and even union with the United States. Although this political sentiment may strike a treasonous chord in the current reader, it was not unpopular in Bucke's time. In 1877, Goldwin Smith concluded that "Canadian nationality being a lost cause, the ultimate union of Canada with the United States now appears to be morally certain" (132).

The future of Canada was, in Bucke's mind, more logically tied to North American development than obliged in a servile way to a British past. Bucke supplied this rejoinder to an editorial in *Saturday Night*.

My Dear Mack--I have just read with some attention your remarks in SATURDAY NIGHT of the 29th instant, in *re* the Countess of Aberdeen. You seem to feel aggrieved, and you seem to expect your readers to feel so too, because Her Excellency looks (as you think) *de haut en bas* on us wretched Canadians. But suppose she does, what right have we to find fault or blame her therefor [sic]? Do we not declare in the most public manner possible, to all the world, that we have not among us such great, wise and noble men and women as are to be found (so it would appear) in great plenty among the members of the English aristocracy? Do we not declare this by procuring that individuals of that order be sent out year by year to rule over us? If we are as wise, as good, as noble, as competent to rule in political and to set example in social life as are the Earls and Countesses in question, why do we not then govern ourselves, as do other self-respecting nations smaller in population and vastly smaller in territory and natural wealth than we are?

To admit inferiority (especially where, as in this case, it does not exist) is base enough, but to admit inferiority by our continuous assent to the form of government referred to and then to complain

that the person we set above us looks down upon us (how else could he or she see us at all?) is surely not only more base still, but stupid as well. For my part I hope and trust that our governors and their consorts may adopt and maintain such an attitude towards us as may lead us to consider seriously whether we are not also men and women and as capable as any others of directing our own fate and our own lives not only in the political, but what is more important, in a personal and social sphere, and that we no more need imported wisdom and goodness to direct and inspire us than do Denmark, Switzerland, Belgium, or even England herself. We have lately seen one of our provinces and one of our cities refuse to submit to priestly dictation. The example set by Quebec and Toronto is most admirable, why cannot we carry the same spirit into all the relations of life? But as long as we continue to admit inferiority by acquiescing in the present form of government, for heaven's sake let us not call the attention of the world to our abject condition by shameful and pitiful whimpers. If we elect to lie upon the ground must we not necessarily be regarded from above by those who prefer to stand erect? (5 June 1897)

Bucke wanted Canada to be independent of Britain. This was in no way meant to deride English achievements, but rather to encourage Canadians to realize their moral, political, and cultural potential.

In *The Political Destiny of Canada*, Goldwin Smith makes a forceful argument for the "political separation of the New from the Old World" (119). Of most interest to a discussion of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke is his contention that there is a clear distinction between the political character of North Americans and Europeans (Smith 120). This distinction is defined by the abandonment of feudalism and the distinctions of the aristocracy and religious clerisy which do not and cannot hold sway in North America (Smith 120-21). Smith advocates the concept of North America as the Promised Land:

The colonization of the New World, at least that English portion of it which was destined to give birth to the ruling and moulding power, was not merely a migration, but an exodus; it was not merely a local extension of humanity, but opened a new era, the curtain rose not for the old drama with fresh actors, but for a fresh drama on a fresh scene. (*Political* 120)

Whether Smith's assertion has any lasting validity is not in question. What *has* been put in question by Bucke's commentators is whether he had political interests and of what stripe they may have been. Dr. Bucke's politics supported Goldwin Smith's view of North America, both in his eagerness for union with the United States and his perception of North America as the "fresh scene." This view, which largely accords with the cultural and economic reality of Canada, if not with our political structure, was popular in Bucke's time.

One of the most curious aspects of Bucke's life is his involvement in the trial of Louis Riel. Dr. Bucke was called as a "medical witness for the defence" (Rechnitzer 101). Given that there were two medical witnesses who declared Riel sane and two who said he was not mentally culpable, Bucke's medical opinion would have carried much weight. But Bucke did not give evidence, "apparently having arrived too late" (Rechnitzer 101).

Peter Rechnitzer notes that Bucke planned to leave for Regina on July 15, 1885 and that on July 21, 1885 the Judge granted the defence a one-week delay to prepare its case

(101). There seems to be no reason why Bucke could not have arrived in Regina in time to give testimony.

Bucke's comments on the trial are ambiguous and either he did not, as Rechnitzer suggests, "attach much importance to the case," or he had other reasons for not becoming involved (101-102). Because Bucke was a civil servant, he may have had political reasons for declining such a decisive role. His only mention of the trial, according to Rechnitzer, was commentary made to a London, Ontario reporter, the day after Riel's hanging, suggesting that "Riel's was, in a word, what phrenologists would call a criminal head and to persons long accustomed to study criminal physiognomy he stood a confessed criminal" (101). This terse remark conflicts with Bucke's view of capital punishment, as discussed in the previous chapter, which would indicate that Riel's hanging would have seriously disturbed Bucke. But Bucke "never, as far as [Rechnitzer] was able to discover, mentioned in subsequent letters to Whitman, Forman or others one of the most celebrated trials in Canadian history" (102).

Either Bucke was not interested or he preferred to remain silent. As in the case of Bucke obscuring the circumstances of his leaving home and the date of his father's death, an absence of remarks from this otherwise prolix commentator suggests that Bucke chose not to speak of the Riel trial. His silence suggests that although Bucke

was the recipient of political patronage, he was, perhaps, not completely comfortable with its attendant expectations.

The interest that kept Bucke from being completely conscripted by political and medical responsibilities was literary. His involvement with Walt Whitman is his most well-known and obvious connection with literature; however, he also visited Tennyson in 1891.

Bucke discussed political issues with Lady Tennyson. In the following passage, a conversation concerning Bucke's visit to the Tennysons was reconstructed by Horace Traubel.

Tr. [Traubel] You wrote us that you had some talk about Canadian or American affairs.

B. [Bucke] So we had--a good deal: about Canadian politics, the death of Sir John MacDonal[d], [sic] and so forth. She looked upon Sir John's death as a deplorable event. She said that Lord Tennyson had telegraphed Sir John upon the occasion of his victory at the last election, and that he had been rather surprised never to receive a reply.

Tr. Did they know Sir John personally?

B. She said nothing to indicate it, though they may have known him. But their politics were the same. I explained to Lady Tennyson that there must have been some strong reason why Sir John had not answered. He must have been in bad health at the time.

Tr. ...She was Conservative?

B. Oh yes! She showed great sympathy with Sir John's politics and party, taking it for granted that I agreed--as I kept my mouth shut. (Lozynsky *Visits* 21-22)

This discussion shows Bucke more loyal to his literary pursuits than his political affiliations; yet the comments in his previously cited response to the editorial concerning the Countess of Aberdeen, that

we are capable of directing our own fate and our own lives not only in the political sphere, but

what is more important. in a personal and social sphere. (*Countess*, emphasis added)

reminds us that Bucke held an independence in cultural engagement to be the highest expression of an independent political stance.

National politics were subordinate to Bucke's dominant concern for literature. He was delighted to meet Tennyson, feeling that "[h]ad [he] been introduced to the Tennysons by the greatest prince in Europe [rather than by a letter of introduction from Walt Whitman] they could not have received [him] more courteously, nor had [he] been a near relative could they have shown [him] greater friendliness" (Lozynsky *LWW* 247). Bucke felt more at home in the world of literature than in the morass of colonial politics.

He was also enthusiastic about technological innovation. In North America, industrial and scientific developments were integrated with the development of communities. Unlike Europe, where innovation was layered upon and into existing community structures, in Canada it was the *mechanism of* community development. Bucke was intensely caught up in the imagined potential of technology.

From his letters we can see that he was impatient with the delays that dogged his Gurd Meter Company's efforts to get gas and water meters in production (Lozynsky *LWW*). He also speculated in land and oil developments in southern Ontario (Rechnitzer 58). What is more, "Bucke, a friend of Alexander Graham Bell, was the first telephone subscriber in London, Ontario" (Greenland 148-149). That "[t]he first

public demonstration of the telephone took place in the Asylum" (Greenland 149) shows the odd conflation of technological advances and social actualities in late Victorian Ontario, for one of the most advanced achievements of a society is contrasted with one of its most demanding responsibilities.

Bucke's involvement in the politics and technological advances of the second half of the nineteenth century, as well as his literary interests, offers a panoramic view of early Canada that reveals its complexity. If a "sense of probing into the distance, of fixing the eyes on the skyline, is something that Canadian sensibility has inherited from the *voyageurs*" (Frye 222), Bucke's contribution is to define that distance, not as a fixed point, but as a perimeter of potential. Replete with political influences and scientific advances, Bucke's panoramic vision is nonetheless sustained by an abiding sensitivity for, and interest in, literature.

Northrop Frye tells us he has

long been impressed[ed] in Canadian poetry by a tone of deep terror in regard to nature. It is not a terror of the dangers or discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something these things manifest. The human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is to preserve its integrity or even sanity, yet the vast unconsciousness of nature in front of it seems an unanswerable denial of those values. (225)

Bucke's panoramic view complements the Canadian poet's sensitivity to "the vast unconsciousness of nature" with a

thorough engagement in the "human and moral values" which address this terror. In his steadfast regard for literature, he affirms the importance of the articulation of poetic sensitivity as our best hope for the understanding of, and deliverance from, both the terror of nature and the sometime horror of our own methods for dealing with nature.

When James Doyle remarks that

[p]erhaps Bucke with his peripheral and idiosyncratic relevance to Canadian literature is an incongruous choice as a representative national man of letters. But perhaps incongruity is after all one of the main features of this country's literary and intellectual traditions, in which case Richard Maurice Bucke is as likely a figure as any to represent the Canadian imaginative experience. (*Bucke* 206)

his intuition is taking him in the right direction. It is Bucke's ability to navigate the paradoxes inherent in the Canadian experience that constitute him as central to Canadian concerns. Contrary to Doyle's assertion that "Bucke himself offers little encouragement to the commentator seeking to establish his 'Canadianness'" (201). Bucke offers an impressive array of commentary, involvement and presence that clearly establish his "Canadianness."

This chapter has established Bucke as a Canadian whose interests and activities offer us an original Canadian perspective. The contextualization of Bucke indicates the complexity of early Canada and the difficulties of navigating those complexities. In Bucke we find the ability to sustain optimism and enthusiasm mixed with an

understanding of, and involvement in, heterogeneous Canadian life.

Later in this paper we will see how he influenced Canadian arts and determine what legacy he has left us. These questions are contingent upon an evaluation of his major work, *Cosmic Consciousness*, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter III: Cosmic Consciousness

Right away after Christmas I shall go to work in earnest [sic] at my "Cosmic Consciousness" piece and am in hopes of making a good thing of it.

Richard Maurice Bucke: Letters to Walt Whitman Artem Lozynsky ed.

This chapter discusses Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*. Bucke's theoretical perspective of moral evolution reflects the intellectual climate of his times, grappling as it does with the scientific and philosophical concerns of the late nineteenth century. An outline of *Cosmic Consciousness* provides the basic ideas and scope of Bucke's theory. Previous critical work specifies the many difficulties with *Cosmic Consciousness*; its theoretical underpinnings are questionable and its formal presentation is convoluted. Despite these difficulties, the value of *Cosmic Consciousness* as representative of the knowledge and beliefs of late Victorian Canada affirms its lasting interest. *Cosmic Consciousness* remains a provocative theoretical undertaking and historically important piece of literature.

In order to apprehend the basis of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*, it is first necessary to establish the thematic consistency of his writing. Bucke wrote three books: *Man's Moral Nature*, in 1878; *Walt Whitman*, in 1883; and *Cosmic Consciousness*, in 1891. Critics George Stevenson and John Robert Columbo both note that all his works concern the moral nature (1137, 134).

Bucke considered the moral nature to be "a bundle of faculties" which include, but are not limited to passions and emotions (*MMV* 13). In Bucke's tropology, there are three components to man's nature: the intellectual, the active and the moral (*MMV* 13). To Stevenson and Columbo's assertion of the moral nature as the organizing theme of Bucke's work, I add that all three of Bucke's books concern establishing the moral dimension of humanity within the realm of material existence. In order to counter the common conception of *Cosmic Consciousness* as a metaphysical discussion, it is important to understand that Bucke's theoretical work is consistent in its attempt to provide a material basis for all phenomena.

In *Man's Moral Nature*, for example, Bucke argues that the moral nature arises from the functioning of the sympathetic nervous system. In *Walt Whitman*, the moral nature finds full expression in the life and work of an individual. Finally, in *Cosmic Consciousness* its highest achievement is argued to be a faculty developed through the mental processes of human evolution.

Bucke's view that all phenomena, including the moral nature, have biological origins is congruent with August Comte's philosophical system of the successive stages of human society: "the theological, the metaphysical, and, finally, the scientific (*Shortt Victorian* 73). James Horne notes Bucke's somatic preoccupation:

When his writings are considered as a whole,

Bucke's orientation is very plain. The most obvious characteristic of his thought, seen as early as his M. D. thesis, which he wrote in his twenties, is his tendency to describe things in terms of physical reductions. Whatever the activities of the man may be, Bucke describes them by reference to their physical causes. This seems quite natural in a man who was a product of and spoke to a culture that had seen physical measurements and the understanding of physical laws accomplish so much. (*Then* 77)

In both his intellectual methodology and his philosophy Bucke ascribed to a materialist view of the world.

Bucke's own illumination indicated a material universe whose structures were completely unknown, despite the presence of undeniable evidence. Bucke's illumination, which happened in the spring of 1872, is recorded as a third person narrative in *Cosmic Consciousness*.

It was in the early spring, at the beginning of his thirty-sixth year. He and two friends had spent the evening reading Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Browning, and especially Whitman. They parted at midnight, and he had a long ride in a hansom (it was in an English city). His mind, deeply under the influence of the ideas, images and emotions called up by the reading and talk of the evening, was calm and peaceful. He was in a state of quiet, almost passive enjoyment. All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself wrapped around as it were by a flame-coloured cloud. For an instant he thought of fire, some sudden conflagration of the great city; the next, he knew that the light was within himself. Directly after there came upon him a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness, accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe. Into his brain streamed one momentary lightening-flash of the Brahmic Splendor [sic] which ever since lightened his life; upon his heart fell one drop of Brahmic Bliss, leaving thenceforward for always an aftertaste of heaven. Among other things he did not come to believe [through rhetorical persuasion], he saw and knew that the Cosmos is not dead matter but a living Presence, that the soul of man is immortal, that the universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all, that the foundation

principle of the world is what we call love and that the happiness of every one is in the long run absolutely certain. He claims that he learned more within the few seconds during which the illumination lasted than in previous months or even years of study, and that he learned much that no study could ever have taught. (9-10)

It is the uncharted territory of his own experience that Bucke attempts to order through scientific reasoning. The experience opened his mind to a new dimension of reality and began his intellectual inquiry: "[t]he supreme occurrence of that night was his real and sole initiation to the new and higher order of ideas" (Bucke CC10).

During the course of his investigation of ideas, Bucke read Darwin (Doyle 48). Darwin's theory of evolution caused a rupture in previously held conceptions of morality that would allow Bucke to formulate the basis of *Cosmic Consciousness*. The historical change from a rigid moral template of good and evil to one which emphasizes a moral process is explained by Bucke's contemporary, Goldwin Smith:

The discovery is, of course, unspeakably momentous. Among other things it seems to open to us a new view of morality, and one which, if it is verified by further investigation, can hardly fail to produce a great change in philosophy. Supposing that man has ascended from a lower animal form, there appears to be ground at least for surmising that vice, instead of being a diabolical inspiration or a mysterious element of human nature, is the remnant of the lower animal not yet eliminated; while virtue is the effort, individual and collective, by which that remnant is being gradually worked off. (*Ascent* 109-110)

Within the process of moral evolution, Bucke considered spiritual or mystical experiences, such as his illumination, to be individual arrivals at the plane of consciousness

towards which all humanity was evolving. *Cosmic Consciousness* argues that there are increasing numbers of people having such experiences and, therefore, "our descendants will sooner or later reach, as a race, the condition of cosmic consciousness" (Bucke CC 3). Bucke's inquiry began as a paper presented to the American Medico-Psychological Association in 1894 and was finally published, in book-length form, in 1901 (Greenland 152).

Bucke's thesis of mental evolution, as set out in *Cosmic Consciousness*, includes three levels of consciousness. These are simple consciousness, self-consciousness, and finally, cosmic consciousness. (The first evolutionary mechanism, that which involves the evolution of matter from an inorganic to an organic state, he leaves as a mystery, but he nonetheless believed that all life and subsequent consciousness originated from an inorganic state.) He explains that "[t]he highest excellence of simple consciousness" is found in more complex animals, and self-consciousness, which is twinned with language, is a "basic human faculty" (Bucke CC 20-21). Cosmic consciousness, a term derived from the east (Coyne 60) and signifying an affiliation with the mind of the cosmos (Stevenson 1139), is a relatively new faculty. Bucke documents its historically sporadic but steadily increasing occurrence in support of his theory (CC 81).

Cosmic consciousness, as Greenland summarizes, is a condition of moral maturity:

The experience comes usually at or about the age of 35, often in the Spring or Summer. It can be readily identified in the life history of the individual because of significant changes in the quality of work done. There is also a range of new qualities, a sense of re-birth, a joy, an enhanced moral nature and improved intellectual powers. (153)

This moral maturity is not only a matter of individual maturity, but also of heredity. The subject "must already belong (so to speak) to the top layer of the world of Self-consciousness" (Bucke CC 72).

Bucke asserts a mental process that is naturally ascending in sophistication (CC 12-18). It begins with the accumulation of percepts, which are sensory perceptions. Combinations of percepts then accumulate into generalizing receipts, which are "image[s] abstracted from many images" (Bucke CC 13). This multitude of receipts is subsequently efficiently organized by concepts, which are "*named* recept[s]" (Bucke CC 13). He applies this process to the advent of yet another level of consciousness:

We have seen that the expansion of the perceptual mind had a necessary limit; that its own continued life led it inevitably up to and into the receptual mind. That the receptual mind by its own growth was inevitably led up to and into the conceptual mind. A priori considerations make it certain that a corresponding outlet will be found for the conceptual mind. (Bucke CC 16)

Cosmic consciousness, for Bucke, is a natural extension of a mental process of accumulation and reorganization.

Bucke asserts that the evolutionary process from simple-self-consciousness to self-consciousness repeats itself in the development of every individual from infant to

maturity (CC 14). He argues this process is also mirrored in the development of specific traits of self-consciousness, for example, the ability to perceive colour. Bucke builds on the ideas of Max Muller as set out in *The Science of Thought* (1887). Muller's assertion that the ability to distinguish colour is a fairly recent capacity is cited by Bucke as support for the process whereby new capacities develop into what are later considered universal attributes (CC 33).

After explaining his own experience of and curiosity concerning cosmic consciousness, and setting forth his theory of the mental process of evolutionary consciousness, Bucke examines fourteen "instances" of cosmic consciousness as occasioned in fourteen people. Three world religions are represented in the figures of Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed. The poets that Bucke includes are Dante, Blake, Whitman and Francis Bacon -- whom Bucke held to be William Shakespeare (CC 154). The philosophers Plotinus and Jacob Boehme are listed, as are three devoted Christians: Paul, John Yepes (or Saint John of the Cross) and Bartolomé Las Casas. The sole novelist is Balzac. Edward Carpenter, the English socialist writer, is the last, and only living, entry.

The next section of *Cosmic Consciousness* details thirty-six "Additional--Some of Them Lesser, Imperfect, and Doubtful Instances" (Bucke xviii). Among these cases we find Socrates, Moses, Isaiah, Li R (or Lao Tsu), Spinoza, Wordsworth, Pushkin, Emerson, and Tennyson, as well as

thirteen anonymous cases. The arrangement of cases into a hierarchy of greater and lesser cases supports Bucke's view that "granted there is such a mental faculty as Cosmic Consciousness and that it has been brought forth, as were the others, by gradual evolution, there must exist minds on all intermediate planes between mere self-consciousness and the fullest Cosmic Consciousness so far produced" (CC 256). This region of indeterminate consciousness he calls *The Twilight*.

In the concluding section of *Cosmic Consciousness*, Bucke accounts for the under-representation of women in the cases and discusses his views on the relationship between cosmic consciousness and other psychic phenomena (365-72). He believes that these cases of enlightenment should be studied "because the contact of the mind of the student with the minds of these men has the effect of producing in the mind of the former all the expansion and growth of which it is by its congenital constitution capable" (Bucke CC 373). The variety of cases provides the reader "an opportunity of choosing the master he is to follow" (Bucke CC 374).

In closing, Bucke recapitulates the requirements for cosmic consciousness: full maturity, education (not necessarily a determining factor), a great mother, a father who is physically and spiritually superior (though not necessarily intellectually superior), a mother and father of opposite dispositions, a balance of these temperaments in the candidate, the right time of year for the onset of

cosmic consciousness, and the appropriate mental attitude (CC 376-379). He makes clear his view that arrival at a state of consciousness by artificial means delivers "an artificial and bastard cosmic consciousness" (Bucke CC 379) and reminds the reader of the intuited similarity between the writings of those who have experienced the new faculty. His final remarks tally his findings of instances of cosmic consciousness and conclude that its growing frequency indicates the advent of a new type of human being. He ends with the prophetic statement: "This new race is being born from us, and in the near future it will occupy and possess the earth" (Bucke CC 384).

Cosmic Consciousness is truly a curious work. The chapters which deal with the fourteen major cases are organized in what could easily be described as a postmodern form. They bear resemblance to Brian Fawcett's *Cambodia* in their layering of text. Derrida's *Disseminations* is also constructed in a similarly fractured form. Quotes are nested inside and beside other quotes. For example, Bucke uses quotations of text from Yepes, Whitman, Buddha, and Paul to explain the writings of Jacob Boehme (CC 189). He provides little or no bridging between these references: they develop as a lateral argument. The reader is meant to comprehend the similarity in meaning between "Plotinus held that in order to perfect knowledge the subject and the object must be united [...] that the intelligent agent and the thing understood ... must not be in separation" and the

quote to the right of it, which reads: "When to a man who understands, the Self has become all things," which Bucke quotes from the *Samhita Upanishad* (CC 121). There is no explanation for the comparison; the two stand side by side in an *inter*-interpretative strategy.

When Bucke does provide his own internal commentary, it is brief and frequently vague. When Yepes reflects that "[i]t may and does occur that many hours pass while it [the soul] is in this state of forgetfulness; all seems but a moment when it again returns to itself," Bucke remarks that "[i]t is probable that a similar experience in the same circumstance is common though not universal" (CC 147). These comments serve to remind the reader of Bucke's theory and attempt to universalize the attributes of cosmic consciousness.

James Horne is accurate in his description of Bucke's theory of cosmic consciousness as dogma (*Then* 117). Although Bucke was delivering a work that he thought was scientific, his belief in the absolute truth of his ideas prohibited a truly objective account. Confirming George Stevensons's earlier criticism, Harold Jaffe notes that "[t]he most common criticism of *Cosmic Consciousness* is that it is too subjective, that Bucke 'labors his proofs at times and modifies the facts to suit his hypothesis'" (xvii). When William James praises the book as "an addition to psychology of first rate importance" (*Letter*), he is probably most appreciative of the collation of data and the

application of the then new psychological methodology to religious experience.

Bucke's choice of the fourteen people who are described as definitive cases of cosmic consciousness does not appear to follow any logic. He lists the indicators of the Cosmic Sense. These are:

- a) The subjective light.
- b) The moral elevation.
- c) The intellectual illumination.
- d) The sense of immortality.
- e) The loss of the fear of death.
- f) The loss of the sense of sin.
- g) The suddenness, instantaneousness, of awakening.
- h) The previous character of the man-- intellectual, moral and physical.
- i) The age of [the person at] illumination.
- j) The added charm to the personality so that men and women are always (?) strongly attracted to the person.
- k) The transfiguration of the subject of the change as seen by others when the cosmic sense is actually present. (Bucke CC 79)

Yet not one of the candidates fulfils all eleven of these indicators, and Plotinus and Bacon (that is William Shakespeare) are not measured against these criteria at all, for Bucke admits he has insufficient biographical information to do so (CC 124-25, 179-80). The lack of a clear set of guidelines for inclusion has led one critic to conclude that "[t]he principle of selection is little more than caprice (Columbo 132).

Bucke's discussions of Bacon's (Shakespeare's) sonnets are unrivalled in their abstruseness. He takes the subject to which the sonnets are addressed to be cosmic consciousness itself. Thus the lines "O, how thy worth with

manner may I sing./ When thou art the better part of me?"

from Sonnet XXXIX are interpreted by Bucke as follows:

The meaning of this sonnet seems unmistakable. It scarcely needs commentary. The author says that the Cosmic Sense is the best part of him (as of course it was), and being part of himself, it is scarcely mannerly in him to praise it. (CC 172)

Bucke's critical capacity is blinded by his objective -- to prove that all fourteen cases were speaking on the same subject. He likewise considers Dante's Beatrice to be the Cosmic Sense (Bucke CC 133). In the case of Blake, as Columbo notes, "[t]he imaginative vision is, of course, identified with cosmic consciousness but no attempt is made to understand Blake's lyrics or prophetic books in light of that vision" (132).

For Bucke, cosmic consciousness or the Cosmic Sense is the axis of interpretation; his explications are only an attempt to establish the co-ordinates of a particular case on his existing map of meaning. Because his system is articulated in the language and form of early psychological rhetoric, he neither delivers a text with clear argumentation and explanation, as in the case of conventional literary criticism; nor provides an alternative cosmology, as a poet might; nor organizes his work scientifically, with experimental data and conclusions. Because Bucke uses the writings of one cosmic conscious writer as proof of the validity of cosmic consciousness in another author, *Cosmic Consciousness* ignores the objective referents necessary to what we now consider a scientific

work. His argument is held together only by a thematically consistent introduction and conclusion, and by his expansive and inclusive approach. The form that Bucke found best suited to his argument has no precedent in formal literary structures. The presentation of the material in *Cosmic Consciousness* is as difficult to accept as his theory is to prove.

At the time of its publication, *Cosmic Consciousness* received little notice. His contemporary, Edward Carpenter, remarked that it "had elicited no serious recognition or response from the accredited authorities, philosophers, psychologists [Carpenter is unaware of William James' comments] and so forth; and the subject with which it deals is in such circles practically ignored -- though in comparatively unknown centres it may be warmly discussed" (Rechnitzer 227). One of these unknown centres may have been Horace Traubel's *The Conservator*, a monthly publication in which the following comments on *Cosmic Consciousness* were printed:

I have just finished reading *Cosmic Consciousness*. I consider it the most valuable book that has been produced in modern times, with the exception only of the works of the other illuminati; but perhaps even more valuable than these, because it will enable them to be understood, as they never would have been without this key. (Gerring 124)

This reception was more in line with Bucke's aspirations for the book. In his introduction he states that he "hopes, by bringing about, or at least facilitating this contact [of readers and cosmic conscious minds], to aid men and women

making the almost infinitely important step in question [mental evolution into cosmic consciousness]" (Bucke CC 4).

His hopes for *Cosmic Consciousness* are not borne out in later criticism of the book's value. James Horne remarks:

There were similar unverifiable theories of cosmic evolution in Bucke's day, although such theories are no longer taken seriously by professional philosophers, and Bucke has not made a mark in that field. (*Pioneer* 206)

Bucke situated the mystical experience as a bridge between the theory of evolution and the concerns of moral philosophy, but the field of philosophy was not revolutionized by his work. John Robert Columbo agrees that Bucke's work has made a negligible impact:

Bucke has had little influence on his contemporaries and even less on posterity. His theory was too elaborate for the layman and too inexact for the specialist... (138)

The unruly scope of *Cosmic Consciousness* has made a philosophical categorization of the work difficult.

This difficulty extends to all attempts to classify *Cosmic Consciousness*. It does not fit into the category of comparative religion, for Bucke does not consider his work an investigation into religious beliefs and experiences, but rather conceives of it as a scientific study. It cannot be taken as a historical thesis, even though it deals with what Bucke believes is a historically documented process, for its theory speculates on the future rather than on the past. *Cosmic Consciousness* does not meet the standards of a scientific paper, and although this is understandable in

light of the standards being established during his lifetime, it has been little taken into account in evaluations of his representative achievement. While it is easy to discern connections between Bucke's work and these fields of study, it is impossible to situate *Cosmic Consciousness* in any one of them.

The field of study which would seem most amenable to *Cosmic Consciousness* is mysticism. P. D. Ouspensky devotes a chapter to Bucke's work in *Tertium Organum* (Greenland 138) and R. C. Zaehner also discusses *Cosmic Consciousness* in *Concordant Discord*. A. A. Tomlinson's observation that Bucke never used the word mysticism in *Cosmic Consciousness* leads to his conclusion that

Bucke thought...that by using 'cosmic,' which means universal, he could give it a scientific connotation. Thus the scientific community might be disposed to accept his thesis. At least, the use of 'cosmic' could preclude the obfuscation attached to mystical. (243-4)

This conclusion accords with Bucke's intention to deliver what he believed was a scientific hypothesis. Given that he was a materialist, the classification of instances of cosmic consciousness as mystical experiences would obscure his intention to provide a material basis for the experience.

With all the flaws of *Cosmic Consciousness* -- its dogmatic tone, its awkward style, its forced cohesion, its unruly subject matter and its tepid reception by serious critics -- it is difficult to claim the book is a success. But it is. It has been in continuous print since 1901 and,

although critics are reticent to praise it, they continue to cite *Cosmic Consciousness*.

The reasons for the disparity between what is said of *Cosmic Consciousness* and its popularity is primarily the result of a paradox at the root of Bucke's theory. His theory of moral evolution addresses anxieties which are necessarily excluded from the theory of evolution but it subscribes to that theory as the basis of its proposal. What the theory of evolution ignores, i.e., questions of meaning and purpose, the concept of free-will and our sense of morality, Bucke gathers into a theory that is meant to complement Darwin's theory of evolution. Bucke tries to map subjective and metaphysical realities on a scientific plane: it is an effort that is at odds with the premises of scientific reasoning. Consequently, the difficulty with *Cosmic Consciousness* is that it emphasizes both its own failure to adhere to scientific foundations and the limitations of the previously discovered theory it relies on for credibility. It is a theory based on a sincere regard for science, but also one which arises from an insufficiency of science to answer fundamental human questions.

The paradox that lies at the root of Bucke's thinking is a wide-spread phenomenon. While we may accept the tenets of evolution, they do not, in themselves, satisfy our need for meaning. The popularity of Bucke's book is the result of the continuous, albeit irrational, search for meaning. Darwin's theory of evolution gave us a new account of where

we came from: *Cosmic Consciousness* is an attempt to detail where we are going.

Cosmic Consciousness is also successful because it gathers together some of the most influential and accomplished writing in history. It provides a mosaic of literary approaches to what Bucke considers the Truth. These approaches are religious, philosophical and poetic, and are a comprehensive survey of some of the most profound literary undertakings. *Cosmic Consciousness* is a reader for meaning.

It challenges the certainties of what we accept to be scientific thinking with its own certainty of a higher order of consciousness and its acceptance of a material basis of consciousness. While I agree that it presents a formal challenge, *Cosmic Consciousness* nonetheless succeeds in emphasizing the demand that scientific reasoning situate the human characteristic of consciousness, and its attendant subjective qualities, *within* the realm of physical existence. Certainly Bucke would be pleased to hear that

In April [1994] more than 300 investigators gathered at the University of Arizona Health Sciences Center in Tucson for a meeting entitled 'Toward a Scientific Basis for Consciousness'. (Horgan 88-89)

The issue that Bucke raised has not been dismissed or forgotten. James Horne rightly notes that "[t]he integration of the mystical experience into the physical process of evolution was Bucke's original contribution" (*Then* 118). It is an integration that stands to remind

conventional scientific reasoning of questions that yet remain unanswered.

Cosmic Consciousness also emphasizes the relationship between language and meaning, both in its acknowledgement of the limitations of language (77-78) and with respect for the most ardent attempts to deliver meaning. Bucke held that language was "twinning" with self-consciousness, that they are two sides of the same thing, and so language, as well as self-consciousness, is necessarily limited (CC 27). In this respect he anticipates and dismisses much current literary theory. Where current theory searches language for the secrets to language, Bucke accepted a limitation on language and looked elsewhere, to the workings of the body, to explain the relationship between language and meaning. In his first book, *Man's Moral Nature*, Bucke locates the moral nature (that which feels) in the Great Sympathetic Nervous System (47) and reasons that the difficulty inherent in expression is a consequence of this system being "dumb" (69), for it has no connections to the vocal cords (68). As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the consistency in Bucke's work lies in the fact that he argues a physical basis for his ideas.

Cosmic Consciousness is situated at a key moment in Canadian intellectual history: it articulates, as does no other single text, the contradictions, tensions and moral vision of a society in transition from a theological to a scientific conception of life. It gathers together concepts

that are simultaneously invigorated and neglected by the theory of evolution and presents them as necessary components of any comprehensive theory of existence. *Cosmic Consciousness* affirms the moral value and significance of subjective experience, even as it enacts a respect for the objective scientific discourse of material causes.

Chapter IV: Influences

The soul shrinks in sorrow
And expands in joy
Breathing itself
To a God-like capacity
Contrasts Lawren Harris

Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke influenced Canadian literature by introducing Walt Whitman's work to a Canadian audience, but more importantly through his work, *Cosmic Consciousness*. *Cosmic Consciousness* provides support for a contemporary approach to the questions that plague and inspire the artist and writer. Its presentation of subjective experience within a scientific model also prohibits the exclusion and exile of artistic endeavours from a community dominated by scientific concerns.

His influence is difficult to trace because of a general agreement in Canadian literary studies to occlude late Victorian and early twentieth-century writers whose work betrays lofty, impassioned sentiments. These sentiments need to be contextualized for the student of Canadian literature.

Only George Stevenson, of all Bucke's biographers and critics, displays an awareness of the bias which inhibits an appreciation of Bucke. He remarks that "[p]erhaps if [Bucke] had lived to the years of the Great War and to the present state [1937] of international relations, he might have been less certain of his [optimistic] conclusions" (1149). (This comment addresses the conclusions of *Man's*

Moral Nature, the optimistic tone of which is similar to that of *Cosmic Consciousness*.) The inattention of Bucke's later critics to the cultural differences between Victorian Canada and twentieth-century Canada results in a failure to recognize and account for the disparity between Bucke's optimism and the cynicism and scepticism that has arisen from twentieth-century experiences. Literary works, which echo Bucke's optimism, have been rejected precisely because of this tone, a tone that has been incorrectly interpreted as naive.

In addition, our understanding of early Canadian canonical literature may also benefit from an appreciation of Bucke. The work of Bliss Carman, G. D. Roberts, Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott is enriched by an understanding of the complexity of ideas that configure their intellectual climate. *Cosmic Consciousness* is an important text in apprehending our intellectual tradition.

The concerted effort to quash the Theosophical movement in Canada by the Anglican Conference also affected Bucke. It was by the members of the Theosophical movement that he was most respected, and in whose work his influence can be definitively traced. These members include the painters and poets of the Group of Seven. Establishing Bucke's influence therefore begins with a review of the Church's response to universalizing views of spirituality.

There was criticism of Bucke's theory of mental evolution from a Christian perspective as early as 1894.

Reverend M. P. Talling, discussing Bucke's theory of mental evolution in the *Toronto Globe*, finds fault with the details of Bucke's version of the life of Saint Paul.

Paul's conversion is taken as the "birth" or "onset of the new faculty," but Dr. Bucke's account thereof is different from the Scriptural record...There are two mistakes here. [Bucke's] account would lead one to think that the apostle was caught up to the third heaven at the time of his Damascus experience, whereas three years intervened between his conversion and his "vision."

While the article focuses on flaws in Bucke's supporting evidence, Talling's introductory remarks show a marked discomfort with the concept of cosmic consciousness.

Dr. Bucke's theory, as recently reported in the *Globe*, is startling, not so much because of the new faculty he claims to have discovered, for "cosmic consciousness" is almost identical with the "sixth sense," which, it is claimed by students of "occult" sciences, will soon reveal to us the spirit world, but because of the remarkable evidence he cites as proof that a discovery has been made.

Reverend Talling's comparison of cosmic consciousness to occult sciences indicates a misapprehension of the concept of cosmic consciousness and suggests a mysteriousness that is in conflict with Bucke's efforts to detail an evolutionary phenomenon. The article concludes with a reaffirmation of Christian doctrine:

Regarding "moral elevation," we feel that in the case of religious founders that it is not a surprising characteristic. Nor are cases of this kind rare. We admire Shakespear [sic], and of poets, elect him prince, but it would not occur to us to quote him as a striking example of "exalted moral elevation"; nor do we think that Mohammed is a shining example. We agree with the doctor when he says, "A new race is being born from us," but we advocate that all men may become members of this new

kingdom, that they can enter it by the means Paul preached, and which Jesus called the new birth, but that is the "old, old story." (Talling)

The criticisms in Reverend Talling's review -- the accusation of faulty data, the discomfort with what is conceived as occult beliefs and the assertion of Christian dogma -- are the same criticisms that are used to reproach Theosophy, a decade later, in the *Report from the Lambeth Conference*.

The Lambeth Conference, a conference of Anglican bishops, was organized to develop church policy and discuss current issues. In 1908 the Conference struggled to come to terms with modern thought:

We notice therefore with anxiety a tendency, not unnaturally produced by the concentration of attention on progress and development, to give the doctrine of man's sinful state a less prominent place than is given to it in Holy Scripture. (Lambeth 345)

This tendency is clearly seen in *Cosmic Consciousness*, when Bucke prophetically asserts that in the future "[s]in will no longer exist nor will salvation be desired" (5). The 1908 report goes on to conclude that

An important class of those who exemplify the recoil against materialism...are certain writers who insist upon the existence of an ultimate spiritual power in the universe, and on the possibility of communion between this infinite spirit and ourselves. With the general trend of such teaching we are naturally in harmony; but when developed in detail we often find to our regret that Infinite Spirit means nothing more than the sum-total of cosmic forces. Such a conception, however interesting on other grounds, contains nothing that makes for moral or spiritual progress, cosmic force being equally and impartially responsible for good and evil, truth and falsehood, life and death. But such a system of spiritual pantheism, as it may be called, however defective in itself, at any rate

suggests a truth which we desire to emphasize--namely, the reality of spiritual experience as a vital element in the Christian religion. (346)

In 1908, the Anglican Church viewed the increasing interest in cosmic and spiritual forces as one which could still be brought within the boundaries of Christian teaching.

By 1920 this view had changed to a more forceful assertion of the errors in modern spiritual concepts. A committee was struck to deal with the issues of Spiritualism, Christian Science and Theosophy (Lambeth 46j). They found Theosophy and Christian doctrine "irreconcilable" on the grounds of a divergence in understanding of "the Person of Christ" (Lambeth 127). "Theosophy in denying the uniqueness of the Person of Christ," said the committee, "denies the universality of the Christian religion" (Lambeth 128). Furthermore, the committee found the Christ of theosophical research to be in "flagrant contradiction to the gospels" (Lambeth 128). The committee recommended that Christians "bear constantly in mind St. John's warning... 'Believe not in every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God'" (Lambeth 129-30). In its discussion of Spiritualism, the committee advised that "there is a real need now and in the immediate future to use the opportunities provided abundantly by the Press as well as in other ways to make clear and definite statements of what Christianity holds and hands on about the life of the world beyond and our relation to it during our life here" (Lambeth 120).

The findings of all the committees at the Conference were organized into an Encyclical Letter. This letter was provided as material for the "public services of the Church" (Lambeth 9) and in it Theosophy is decreed external to the Church and stated to involve "serious error" (9.15).

Eighteen Canadian bishops attended the Lambeth Conference of 1920 (Lambeth 4). One of these was the Bishop of Huron, the Right Reverend D. Williams. In the September 26, 1921 edition of the *St. Thomas Times-Journal*, Bishop William's recent sermon is favourably reviewed. He appeals "for a close alignment to the true teachings of Jesus Christ" (*Bishop*). The Bishop takes Theosophy as an example of false doctrine.

It is the old speculations of the East dressed up in modern form. It is utterly contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ, for all movements of that kind deny the divinity of Christ, and without believing in Christ's divinity there can be no true Christianity. The whole structure of Theosophy is cradled in fraud, falsehood and immorality. (*Bishop*)

The conclusions of the Lambeth Conference had found their way into the pews and, by way of the press, the living-rooms of Ontario.

The charges against Theosophy were rebutted by R. H. Cronyn, President of the London, Ontario Theosophical Society. In the *Canadian Theosophist*, Cronyn takes issue with Bishop William's accusations of the danger of Theosophy.

Since the day is admittedly past when man, like an infant, allowed himself to be fed intellectually by

some exterior imposed authority. we can see that these two [Christian Science and Theosophy] are dangerous only to irrational and dogmatic Christianity. (18)

The Canadian intellectual community had become too sophisticated to accept the epistemological limitations imposed by the Anglican Church.

Lawren Harris was a "member of the Toronto Theosophical Society and published several articles in the Canadian Theosophist" (Lauder 309). He was also an admirer of Walt Whitman (Lauder 309). While Harris is best known for his painting, he also wrote "poetry, essays, reviews, and criticisms" (Lauder 312-313). His writing was influenced by the magnanimous tenor and expansive vision of Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*.

In his essay *Two Radicals: Richard Maurice Bucke and Lawren Harris*, Brian Lauder correctly intuites a connection between the two men. This connection is seen in the similarity of the basic premises of their thought. They share a "concept of intuition, the evolution of the soul toward a spiritual peak; the mystical illumination or revelation; and the existence of an underlying spiritual power in the universe, providing harmony and order" (Lauder 317). Unfortunately, Lauder's conclusion is flawed. He states that "[h]owever similar these two descriptions appear in their responses to illumination, immortality, and eternity, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that Bucke directly influenced Lawren Harris" (Lauder 308). On the contrary, Lawren Harris wrote a review of *Cosmic*

Consciousness in the *Canadian Bookman*, entitled "The Greatest Book by a Canadian and Another." (The other book Harris reviews is Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum*.)

In this review Harris states that "he knows of no book by a Canadian written with such nobility of thought, illumined by so lofty a vision, nor one so rich in human kindness" (Greatest 38). His review continues to laud Bucke's work for its presentation of "a study illumined by the light of a radiant understanding, with no least trace of sentimentality, no prepossession in favor of any doctrine, any creed, nor any belief--no concern whatsoever with the bickerings of men" (38). He contextualizes Bucke's work for the audience of 1924:

Think of this book written in the Ontario of forty years ago and written with such a glorious, sweeping gesture. Consider what life in this province was then, the people submerged in severest orthodoxy, divided and blinded and sustained by sectarian views, comfortably warped by provincialism and remote from all cultural centres. Such occurrences convince one that vision is paramount in life--that there is a rhythm of majesty swinging around this globe and illuminating all great souls. (38)

Harris's unabashed reverence for Bucke's *Cosmic*

Consciousness shows the book to have been influential in providing him with an example of expansive and optimistic thinking.

Brian Lauder notes the literary reflections of Bucke's work in Lawren Harris's book of poetry, *Contrasts* (313). He finds evidence of "light-infused illumination" in the poem "Darkness and Light," a mystical ecstasy that has the same

criteria as cosmic consciousness in "No Music" and a similar attitude towards death in the poem "Death" (Lauder 313). In Harris's poetry, Bucke's ideas are developed into poetic themes.

Bertram Brooker, another Canadian artist and writer, was also influenced by Bucke. His introduction to *The Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-29* discusses the difficulties of the emerging Canadian culture in terms especially germane to this essay:

Artists everywhere have cut off the past, impatient with its superstitions, its dogmas, its antiquarianisms. And having no faith, no ideals, no hopes or even wishes (all these are *sentimental*), they cut off the future also. Like sick people in hospital, doomed to die, they deliberately prevent themselves from thinking of the great sunlit spaces outside and the expanding futures of individuals luckier than themselves. Concerned only with the immediate sicknesses and eccentricities of the age they live in, they cannot see the colossal proportions of the race and its life, like a giant tree going down into the deep past and branching up into infinity. (16)

The analogy of a tree branching upwards is used by Bucke to explain the evolutionary process of consciousness (CC 23-25). Brooker's "Introduction" also draws on the poetry of Whitman to illustrate his view that an apprehension of "the oneness of life" is a necessary condition of the artist (17).

In Ann Davis's *The Logic of Ecstasy*, the influence of Bucke on Bertram Brooker is definitively established. Drawing on Brooker's lecture notes she observes that "Brooker was a great admirer of Bucke, and frequently

referred to *Cosmic Consciousness*" (Davis 69). In 1937, Bertram Brooker was the first winner of the Governor General's prize for *Think of the Earth* (Ripley xi).

In *Sounds Assembling*, a collection of Brooker's poetry and essays published posthumously by Birk Sproxton, the poem "I Have Uttered Arches," reflects an engagement with the cosmic concerns that inspired Bucke.

i have uttered arches
wide and white
into the infinite
and over them my soul marches
elatedly tall

with all my lives behind me
i stride upward
to the undermost fringe of heaven

here my last arch ends
where strengths cross
where i must wrestle
with the pouring fierceness of god
and overcome
and become as he is
knowing good and evil

i have not known evil enough
or down unscathed through hell
this broken arc would swing
and mount again in rearward space
circling me forever

i have not known good enough
unless with evil it seems twinned
and curves onward
into unitude (Sproxton 28)

Bucke's proposition that the "universe is a vast, grandiose, terrible, multi-form yet uniform evolution" (CC 7) provides thematic support for Brooker's poem. *Sounds Assembling* also includes a review of *God: An Introduction to the Science of Metabiology* by John Middleton Murray, in which Brooker notes

a similar attempt by Bucke to "strip the [mystical] experience and its aftermath of supernatural connotations" (Sproxton 64). Brooker appreciated the implications of *Cosmic Consciousness*, as well as sharing Bucke's insistence that the experience not be marginalized to an occult-like interest.

Bucke's influence on the Canadian writer, Emily Carr, can be traced through her connections with Lawren Harris and Fred Housser, author of the first book on the Group of Seven. Housser was a theosophist, and "drew extensively from Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* in "Walt Whitman and North American Idealism," a paper delivered to the Toronto Theosophical society" (Davis 49). It was through Housser that Emily Carr was introduced to the poetry of Walt Whitman (Davis 52), whose work inspired her writing (Blanchard 208). In consideration of Bucke's involvement with Whitman, and Housser's familiarity with *Cosmic Consciousness*, Carr's awareness of Bucke's ideas is likely. She also asked Housser and Harris to comment on her writing, and it was Harris who, in a letter of March, 1931, encouraged "a book on her experiences among the natives" (Blanchard 236). This suggestion grew into Carr's *Klee Wyck*, published in 1941 (Blanchard 275) and winner of the Governor General's Award for Literature in 1942 (Ripley xi).

When Stanley McMullin, in his essay "Walt Whitman's Influence in Canada," concludes that "Whitman did make an early impact on Canadian society, but it was not a literary

influence" (367). he does not take into account Emily Carr's work. McMullin notes that "Whitman was taken up [by Albert Durrant Watson, John Wilson Bengough, F. R. Scott, Irving Layton, E. J. Pratt, Charles G. D. Roberts, and Wilfred Campbell] because of his prophetic vision of a new democracy, because of his mysticism, or because of his view of nature" (367), suggesting that Whitman's influence was thematic rather than stylistic.

Yet, Whitman's influence on the style of Albert Durrant Watson can be seen in Watson's poem "Love and The Universe," whose first person assertions and choice of phrasing mimic Whitman's lusty and direct style:

I dreamed that I was God, the great All-Seeing;
 The ceaseless urge was mine
 That fires the throbbing, blood-red heart of Being,
 The Alchemist divine.
 I saw and knew that lesser good is evil,
 The evil lesser good;
 That love can change the basest hell-upheaval
 To sweetest brotherhood.

I heard the tramp of onward-marching nations,
 I saw their mirth and tears;
 I felt the passions of the generations
 That thundered down the years;
 I clashed as foe with foeman, fire-hearted,
 I heard the canon boom,
 And in the deep abyss of years departed,
 I found a nameless tomb... (1)

McMullin's reticence to ascribe literary influence to Walt Whitman indicates the need for a further evaluation of the issues influencing the Canadian literary tradition -- an evaluation that would include an appreciation of Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*.

McMullin argues for the presence of "an undercurrent of radicalism in Canadian society" (367), which he feels has been neglected due to generalizations concerning Canadian society (361). These generalizations are the result of the previously discussed practice of ironic historicism that fails to situate discordant trends within the Canadian tradition. While I certainly agree with his thesis, McMullin's affirmation of a sycophantic relationship between Bucke and Whitman, in that he describes Bucke as one of the originators of the first "Whitman cult" (362), reveals the ubiquitous presence of inhibiting generalizations. In light of the discordant philosophical, theological and intellectual issues of late nineteenth-century Canada, Whitman's influence on Canadian poets needs to be understood as part of a more complex relation of influences.

I suspect that the central problem with Whitman as a Canadian literary influence is that his poetry is too overwhelmingly involved in singing the poetic anthem of America. Its thematic preoccupation concerns the place of America in all its teeming abundance of energy and potential. For the Canadian poet, living and addressing a place held together by a "Confederation [that] was not so much a solution as the posing of a problem (Bissell 238), Whitman's focus on America overshadows the newly established nation of Canada. Whitman's poetry is at all times a presence for many late nineteenth-century Canadian poets, without ever piercing to the heart of the Canadian poet's

particular experience. Its focus on America presents an insurmountable thematic difficulty. Whereas Whitman's influence is consequently problematic, Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* sits within the Canadian discourse on the intellectual and moral concerns of late nineteenth-century Canada and presents the textual referent that can successfully negotiate the thematic difficulties between Whitman and the Canadian poet.

The literary work of Lawren Harris, Bertram Brooker and Emily Carr was influenced by Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*. Most noted for their painting, their contribution to Canadian literature is often minimalized. It is, however, important to include these writers. Northrop Frye notes, in the case of Lawren Harris, that "What he says forms the context of the paintings, and the paintings form the context of what he says" (208). The art forms of painting and writing are not mutually exclusive, but complement each other as distinct approaches to creative expression. Not only is the writing of these artists of sufficient quality and interest to merit this inclusion, but also the privileged place they hold in Canadian culture suggests that they communicate a sensitivity specific to our culture.

Northrop Frye mentions *Cosmic Consciousness* in his discussion of this sensitivity as part of the rhetorical tradition of Canada in the "Conclusion to a *Literary History of Canada*."

World views that avoided the dialectic, of a

theosophical or transcendentalist cast, became popular among Canadian poets of that time, Roberts and Carmen particularly, and later among painters, as the reminiscences of the Group of Seven make clear. Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*, though not mentioned by any of our authors so far as I remember, is an influential Canadian book in this area. (228)

Frye is commenting on a "mystique of Canadianism," which he felt involved an intellectual tendency towards "spectral arguments, generalizations that escape the feeling of possible refutation only by being vast enough to contain it, or vaporous enough to elude it" (228).

Although Frye shows his usual witty precision when defining our rhetorical tradition, a precision that seems to adopt the usual derisive stance towards elements of this intellectual tradition, his respect for Lawren Harris is clear in the "Introduction" he wrote for Bess Harris and R. G. P. Colgrove's *Lawren Harris*:

One thing that will strike the reader of this book at once is the painter's social concern, a concern which actually increases as he goes further into abstract techniques. The first and most important of his "bridges" is the bridge between the artist and his society. He is a missionary as well as an explorer: not a missionary who wants to destroy all faith that differs from his own, but a missionary who wants to make his own faith real to others. Just as a new country cannot become a civilization without explorers and pioneers going out into the loneliness of a deserted land, so no social imagination can develop except through those who have followed their own vision beyond its inevitable loneliness to its final resting place in the tradition of art. (212)

Frye's comments themselves echo an imprint of vast proportions, speaking as he does in grandiose, romantic and expansive terms, and provide a definition of artistic

undertaking that can be seen to substantially summarize the passion of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke.

Northrop Frye's inclusion of Bucke in the rhetorical tradition of a "mystique of Canadianism" celebrated by writers and artists of a "theosophical and transcendentalist cast" supports my hypothesis that *Cosmic Consciousness* may also be important in relation to the existing canon of Canadian literature. Bucke's work enriches our readings of Canadian cultural history in that it articulates the various intellectual questions at play in the field of nineteenth-century Canadian literature.

In Bliss Carmen's essay, "The Purpose of Poetry," he argues that while art is primarily concerned with beauty, it is "closely related to science on one side and religion on the other" (30). He mentions Darwin's theory of evolution as an example of the "literature of knowledge," as well as the work of Euclid and Newton (Carmen 31). Carmen develops a concept of poetry that notes the importance of addressing the scientific philosophies of his era within aesthetic discussions of literature. Like Bucke, Carmen is willing to accept scientific paradigms at the same time as exploring the aesthetic concerns excluded from scientific discussions.

Carmen claims that literature is "dedicated to the service of truth and goodness" (47). For Carmen, this means that poetry has a moral purpose, that it is understood in terms that draw on the discourse of *Cosmic Consciousness*. Carmen affirms poetry's moral purpose within a framework of

religious feeling that is based on emotional experiences rather than in doctrinal systems of belief:

The attempt which literature makes to deepen our feeling about a subject is the spiritual purpose of art. And this spiritual or moral influence is always present in all literature, in some degree or condition, whether apparent or not. Art has its religious value, not because it deals directly with religious themes, but because it displays our *moral nature* and influences our emotions. (49-50; emphasis added)

An appreciation of Bucke's work informs Carmen's discussion by enriching it with a sense of the complexity of the "moral nature" as it was conceived in the late 1800s. The concept of a moral nature has evolved from what was earlier considered the soul: it now includes and consequently supports a more scientific view of the world.

There is a parallel between Carmen's assertion that "Imagination is our lamp upon the difficult path of progress" (*Poetry* 46) and Bucke's theory of moral evolution. *Cosmic Consciousness* argues a progressive direction for humanity that is contingent upon a higher order of consciousness, just as Carmen has defined a "path of progress" lit by the imagination. Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* broadens our understanding of the philosophical and religious ideas that inform Bliss Carmen's work.

Likewise, a reading of Archibald Lampman's "The Clearer Self" is illuminated by Bucke's work. Sentiments which may appear vague and generalizing can be understood as a poetic treatment of late nineteenth-century religious feeling

within a context of scientific discovery. "The Clearer Self" advances feelings which celebrate an evolutionary spirituality conscious of its individual participation in a movement towards cosmic consciousness:

Before me grew the human soul,
And after I am dead and gone,
Through grades of effort and control
The marvellous work shall still go on.

Each mortal in his little span,
Hath only lived, if he have shown,
What greatness there can be in man
Above the measured and the known.

How through the ancient layers of night,
In gradual victory secure,
Grows ever with increasing light
The Energy serene and pure:

The Soul that from a monstrous past,
From age to age, from hour to hour,
Feels upward to some height at last
Of unimagined grace and power.

Grant me to know, to seek, to find,
In some small measure though it be,
Emerging from the waste and blind,
The clearer self, the grander me! (Lampman 75)

Lampman's poem is fully informed by the intellectual preoccupations that are articulated in Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*.

The idea of human progress through a process of evolutionary development is evident from the first line of the poem when he writes, "The human soul before me *grew*" (Lampman 75; emphasis added). This idea reaches its fullest expression in the lines "How through the ancient layers of night,/ In gradual victory secure,/ Grows ever with increasing light/ The Energy serene and pure" (75). Bucke's

concept of cosmic consciousness can be equated with Lampman's concept of "the Energy serene and pure." The poem speaks of seeking a proximity with cosmic consciousness; it expresses a yearning towards illumination, a conscious participation in cosmic evolution.

A similar theme is apparent in G. D. Roberts's "Origins," which clearly addresses a concept of human origin that has veered away from the Biblical tale of creation. Roberts seeks to establish our beginnings in light of a theory of evolution and an awareness of hereditary factors that would include an enduring presence of cosmic consciousness.

Out of the dreams that heap
 The hollow hand of sleep--
 Out of the dark sublime,
 From the averted Face
 Beyond the bournes of space,
 Into the sudden sun
 We journey, one by one.
 Out of the hidden shade
 Wherein desire is made--
 Out of the pregnant stir
 Where life and death confer--
 The dark and mystic heat
 Where soul and matter meet--
 The enigmatic Will--
 We start, and then are still.

Inexorably decreed
 By ancestral deed,
 The puppets of our sires,
 We work out blind desires,
 And for our sons ordain,
 The blessing or the bane.
 In ignorance we stand
 With fate on either hand,
 And question stars and earth
 Of life death and birth.
 With wonder in our eyes
 We scan the kindred skies,
 While through the common grass

Our atoms mix and pass.
 We feel the sap go free
 When spring comes to the tree;
 And in our blood is stirred
 What warms the brooding bird.
 The vital fire we breathe
 That bud and blade bequeath,
 And strength of native clay
 In our veins has sway.

But in the urge intense
 And fellowship of sense.
 Suddenly comes a word
 In other ages heard.
 On a great wind our souls
 Are borne to unknown goals.
 And past bournes of spaces
 To the unaverted Face. (11-12)

Roberts' poem may be more fully appreciated if situated in the context of Bucke's explanation of an existing plane of cosmic consciousness that accords with a scientific view of the world.

When Roberts suggests "soul and matter meet," (11) he affirms the positivist philosophy at the heart of all of Bucke's work. "Origins" is underscored by Whitman's celebration of a human potency that is aligned with the potency of nature. Roberts agrees with Whitman when he writes, "The vital fire we breathe./ That bud and blade bequeath./ And strength of native clay/ In our full veins has sway" (11). He also uses Whitmanesque phrases, such as, "the urge intense" (12). However, these feelings are expanded to a plane of consciousness that shows more affinity with Bucke's theory than Whitman's America.

We are reminded of Bucke's proposition that throughout history there have been several reported cases of cosmic consciousness by the lines, "But in the urge intense/ And

the fellowship of sense./ Suddenly comes a word/ In other ages heard" (12). The "unaverted Face" (12) that Roberts positions as the destiny of humanity suggests a consciousness beyond self-consciousness. A knowledge of Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* reveals the intellectual foundations of Roberts' poem in a way no other Canadian text can approximate.

Duncan Campbell Scott's "The Height of Land" similarly benefits from an awareness of Bucke's assertion of a plane of morality beyond self-consciousness, considering, as it does, a heightened subjective experience that may be our destiny. Scott's poem confirms several of Bucke's arguments concerning the characteristics of the moral nature and the conditions of illumination:

But here is peace, and again
That Something comes by flashes
Deeper than peace -- a spell
Golden and inappellable
That gives the inarticulate part
Of our strange being one moment of release
That seems more native than the touch of time. (108)

Preceded by calm, the poet experiences "Something" that appears very similar to the Brahmic Bliss experienced by Bucke. It is an experience in which Scott has only a brief sensation of time -- a flash-- and yet this feeling of time is panchronic. He describes it as "Golden and inappellable," suggesting both the subjective light and instantaneous occurrence recorded by Bucke. Moreover, Scott would appear to agree that the aspect of our being most involved in this experience is dumb or "inarticulate" (108).

Similarly, the poem re-iterates Bucke's idea of a level of morality that is beyond the dichotomy of good and evil. Scott expresses this as the rainbow that grows out of both the sunshine and the storm:

A Something to be guided by ideals--
 That in themselves are simple and serene--
 Of noble deed to foster noble thought,
 And noble thought to image noble deed,
 Till deed and thought shall interpenetrate,
 Making life lovelier, till we come to doubt
 Whether the perfect beauty that escapes
 Is beauty of deed or thought or some high thing
 Mingled of both, a greater boon than either:
 Thus we have seen in the retreating tempest
 The victor-sunlight merge with ruined rain,
 And from the rain and sunlight spring the rainbow.
 (108-9)

The poem's feeling of progression towards this level of morality reflects Bucke's concept of an evolutionary movement towards cosmic consciousness. This is further explored when Scott asks of the future's poet, "shall the vision/ of noble deed and noble thought immingled/ Seem as uncouth to him as the pictograph/ Scratched on the cave side by the cave-dweller/ To us of the Christ-time?" (110).

In "The Height of Land," Scott questions whether his cosmic experience is the "zenith of our wisdom" or presages a future level of existence. Bucke would certainly confirm the latter, and also, perhaps, include Duncan Campbell Scott in his cases of Twilight experiences of cosmic consciousness. Read with reference to *Cosmic Consciousness*, the questions and experiences of Scott's poem are seen to partake in a contemporary moral discourse with specific and verifiable parameters.

Bucke's work, incorporating, as it does, several distinct historical approaches to a universal truth, returns to our readings of late nineteenth-century Canadian poetry a sense of the intellectual and religious issues influencing this poetry. This culturally specific matrix provides a historical dimension that invigorates our appreciation of the poetry. The Confederation poets, in light of Bucke's work, are situated in an intense discourse concerning a new paradigm of human existence that incorporates scientific knowledge together with religious sentiments. In this discourse, immortal longings become part of a cosmic perspective that has moved away from traditional Christian doctrine towards an evolutionary conception of human life. Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* is an intellectual and philosophical template by which the poets' explorations are revealed to be engaged in a renegotiation of subjective experience to include the knowledge of scientific discoveries.

Cosmic Consciousness is an important text for apprehending the fullness of the intellectual and moral considerations that are expressed in the poetry of late nineteenth-century Canadian literature. Bucke's influence on early twentieth-century writers -- Lawren Harris, Bertram Brooker and Emily Carr -- indicate his importance to our literary heritage and the development of a uniquely Canadian perspective. Although the central ideas of these theosophical thinkers were discouraged by the Anglican

church, the intellectual and moral scope they embraced led to a body of creative work that has come to represent a uniquely Canadian perspective. This perspective yearns to express the tremendous lurking potential of this vastness of silence and solitude.

The scope and subject of Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* were central to the development of this perspective. *Cosmic Consciousness* is an original attempt to wrestle from a vastness of knowledge its moral meaning. Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke's work provides an intellectual template for more inclusive artistic and literary conceptions of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Canada.

Conclusion

This investigation of Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke's place in the tradition of Canadian literature began with the need to establish a historical caveat. The need for such a suspension arose from the pervasive attitude of ironic dismissal towards Bucke on the part of many historians. This attitude is consistently dismissive, despite the volume of evidence from the historical record that suggests Bucke's life and work are of considerable cultural significance. His ensuing marginalization indicates that, in the case of Dr. Bucke, the methodology of intellectual historicism is fundamentally at odds with the intellectual climate of late nineteenth-century culture, and consequently unable to deliver a contextualized evaluation of Bucke's accomplishments. In the absence of contextual analyses, an assessment of Bucke's contribution to our cultural tradition is forestalled: the result of this flawed historical practice is the cultural limbo to which Bucke and his importance to our literary tradition have been exiled.

The initial task of this essay was consequently to extricate Bucke from historical misreadings. To this end, the work of A. B. McKillop provided the necessary critique of intellectual historicism. McKillop reminds intellectual historians that a methodological use of irony is an inherent pitfall of their discipline. Although he notes that there is often an ironic component to the study of intellectual

history. McKillop is unambiguously forthright in his cautions against using irony, or an ironic stance, as an analytic posture.

In particular, Ramsey Cook's analysis of Bucke betrays this tendency to consider the doctor from a point of view that is overtly aware of, and uncomfortable with, the ironic potential of the subject matter. Cook's analysis consequently situates Bucke within the confines of retrospectively imposed categorizations. However, these categorizations ignore the consistently changing nature of those categories, i.e., their history, as well as their insufficiency in capturing the essence of either Bucke or his intellectual climate.

In addition to the inadequacy of an ironic historical analysis, psychological commentary by both Peter Rechnitzer and James Horne further distances us from a contextual understanding of Bucke. Their speculations reduce Bucke's adventurous life and passionately engaged intellectual inquiries to the banality of psychologically motivated actions.

Neither of these approaches provides an adequate reading of Dr. Bucke within the context of the intellectual, philosophical and moral climate of late nineteenth-century Canada. Bucke was fully participant in, and a respected member of, the life of Victorian Canada. He effectively managed the London Asylum for the Insane for over twenty years as well as promoting the technological innovations of

the Gurd Meter Company. These activities were, nonetheless, tangential to his dominant interest, which was in literature. The variety and degree of these involvements configure Bucke as representative of late nineteenth-century Canadian culture and an important historical witness.

Cosmic Consciousness, Bucke's major work, presents a theory of moral evolution based on Comte's positivist philosophy and Darwin's theory of evolution. While previous criticisms of *Cosmic Consciousness* emphasize its difficulties, they fail to appreciate the value of Bucke's undertaking. Despite formal and thematic inconsistencies, *Cosmic Consciousness* stands as an original work, in that it addresses philosophical and spiritual issues within a scientific framework. In the context of an increasingly dominant scientific cosmological paradigm, Bucke's work is important in capturing the displaced concepts of morality and subjective experience.

Cosmic Consciousness had a profound influence on Lawren Harris, a Canadian Theosophist, painter and poet. Its influence can also be traced to the work of Emily Carr and Bertram Brooker. In articulating a radical departure from Christian doctrine -- a departure that was ardently opposed by the Anglican Church -- Bucke's work epitomizes the renegotiation of spiritual and philosophical questions in an increasingly secular and scientific world. This expansive undertaking also provides a necessary complement to the work of the Confederation Poets; it reveals the intellectual

scope of their questioning and invigorates their writing with an appreciation of the various cosmological paradigms at play in their poems.

This essay has established Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke as an important Canadian historical and literary figure, whose diversity of interests and level of commitment are worthy of an unabashed, unqualified admission to the Canadian literary tradition. *Cosmic Consciousness* merits interest not only in its own right, for tackling fundamental questions of morality and meaning -- questions that were increasingly abandoned in the search for scientific knowledge -- but also for its influence on, and enrichment of, Canadian literature. Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke is representative of our heterogeneous cultural character: his optimistic and expansive perspective reflects the spirit and intellectual climate of late nineteenth-century Canada as well as establishing an early example of transcendent thinking within our cultural tradition.

In appreciation of his work and influence, and with respect for his literary judgement, I leave my last words and thoughts to Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke's friend, the poet Walt Whitman.

What whispers are these O lands, running ahead of
you, passing under the seas?
Are all nations communing? is there going to be but
one heart to the globe?
Is humanity forming en-masse? for lo, tyrants
tremble, crowns grow dim,
The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a
general divine war.
No one knows what will happen next, such portents

fill the days and nights;
Years prophetic! the space ahead as I walk, as
I vainly try to pierce it, is full of phantoms,
Unborn deeds, things soon to be, project their
shapes around me,
This incredible rush and heat, this strange ecstatic
fever of dreams O years!
Your dreams O years, how they penetrate through me!
 (I know not whether I sleep or wake;)
The perform'd American and Europe grow dim, retiring
in shadow behind me,
The unperforme'd, more gigantic than ever, advance,
advance upon me. (Whitman 209)

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Appendix I

A Chronology of Events in the Life of Richard Maurice Bucke from *Richard Maurice Bucke: A Journey to Cosmic Consciousness* by Peter A. Rechnitzer.

- 1837 Richard Maurice Bucke born in Methwold, Norfolk, England (11).
- 1838 His parents emigrate to Upper Canada, most likely inspired by financial needs and the works of Captain Frederick Marryat (12).
- 1845 Bucke's mother dies (13).
- 1853 Bucke leaves home (16).
- 1854 Bucke leaves for Louisiana, after gardening in Columbus and working on the railroad and farms around Cincinnati, Ohio (19).
- 1855 Works on steamboats on the Mississippi (20).
- 1856 Heads west on wagon train (21). Arrives at Salt Lake City and continues on to California (20). Attacked by Indians (21). Begins mining in the Gold Canyon (24). Grosh brothers discover first silver in Nevada, near the later Comstock lode (23). Bucke's father dies (17).
- 1857 Bucke writes home for money to return to London, request is denied (24). He meets Allen and Hosea Grosh. After Hosea dies, teams up with Allen to cross the Sierra Nevadas into California (25). They lose the trail due to snow, and suffer frostbite and starvation. Allen Grosh dies December 15. Half of Bucke's left foot, and all of his right foot and ankle amputated (25-29).
- 1858 Fellow miners provide Bucke with money to travel to San Francisco. Mr. Alpheus Bull pays his fare from San Francisco to New York (30). Enters McGill University in October (33).
- 1862 Wins Governor General's Award for thesis: *The Correlation of Physical and Vital Forces* (35). Sails to England in July (36).
- 1863 Bucke studies in England and France with the financial assistance of his uncle, Joseph Andrews (36).

- 1864 Returns to Sarnia, sets up practice (43). Called to San Francisco for assistance in lawsuit concerning ownership of the Comstock Load (44).
- 1865 Returns to Sarnia in May, marries Jessie Gurd in September. Establishes medical practice (51).
- 1866 First child, a daughter, born. She dies ten months later (52).
- 1868 Maurice Andrew, first son, born (195).
- 1869 Obtains a copy of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (52-53).
- 1870 Overworked by demands of medical practice (57). Second daughter, Clare, born (195).
- 1871 Two trips to England, for health and visits to Harry Forman (58). Speculation in land and oil investments (58).
- 1872 Visits England (58). Has illumination described in *Cosmic Consciousness* (58).
- 1873 Second son, William, born (195).
- 1874 Partnership practice with Dr. A. S. Fraser (60).
- 1875 Superintendent of the Hamilton Asylum for the Insane (61). Third son, Pardee, born (195).
- 1876 As Superintendent of Hamilton Asylum proposes improvements (62).
- 1877 Superintendent of the London Asylum for the Insane (64). Meets Walt Whitman in Camden, New Jersey (65). Third daughter, Ina, born (195).
- 1878 Publishes *Man's Moral Nature* (71).
- 1879 Fourth son, Harold, born (195).
- 1880 Bucke is visited by Walt Whitman (77).
- 1881 Works at organizing the medical faculty for the new medical school at the University of Western Ontario (83). Fifth son and last child, Robert, born (195).
- 1882 Inaugurates medical school at the University of Western Ontario (83). Election to the English Literature Section of the Royal Society of Canada (86).

- 1883 Publishes *Walt Whitman* (87). Begins involvement with the Gurd Meter Company (95).
- 1884 Bucke asks Osler to visit Walt Whitman (97).
- 1885 Called as medical witness for the defence at the trial of Louis Riel (101).
- 1886 Family illnesses and a visit to England (102).
- 1887 Continues Whitman research, meter business, as well as duties at the Asylum (103).
- 1888 Becomes Whitman's literary executor (103).
- 1889 Promotes Walt Whitman's poetry (109-116).
- 1890 Meets Colonel Robert Ingersoll (118).
- 1891 First meter assembled (125). Meets Johnson and Wallace in England (127). Visits Tennyson (128-29).
- 1892 Attends funeral of Walt Whitman (145). Supports mining speculation of son Maurice (154-55).
- 1893 The last family Christmas (157).
- 1894 Address to the American Medico-Psychological Association of a paper entitled *Cosmic Consciousness* (157-8).
- 1895 Bucke is called as expert testimony for the defence in the Shortis murder trial (163).
- 1896 Support of son's mining career continues, meter work continues, Walt Whitman Fellowship involvement continues (173).
- 1897 Appointed President of the Psychology Section of the British Medical Association (178). Publishes articles on the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy (175).
- 1898 Delivers paper *Surgery among the Insane in Canada* in his Presidential address to the American Medico-Psychological Society (180).
- 1899 Son Maurice dies (183).
- 1900 Continues work on Shakespeare-Bacon controversy (230).
- 1901 Publishes *Cosmic Consciousness* (231).
- 1902 Dies, February 19 (231).

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