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A STUDY OF THE CHANGING RELATION BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL
AND THE COMMUNITY IN A STREAM OF SELECTED ENGLISH
CANADIAN AUTHORS

by

Kevin Gildea

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

December 23, 1987

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acceptance of the thesis,
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AND THE COMMUNITY IN A STREAM OF SELECTED ENGLISH
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Kevin Gildea
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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This is dedicated to my mother, Anne Gildea, who is one
-- of the funniest people I know. Without her strength and
outlook, this page would not be possible.

ABSTRACT

The thesis attempts to show how the representation of the individual and the community in Canadian literature in English has changed over the last thirty years, and how that change has allowed for the emergence of a new set of values in a stream of contemporary literature which advocates and perpetuates the actions of the self-regarding individualist.

Chapter one will discuss the relation between traditional literature, represented by values supportive of the family and the social order, and the new stream which maintains values of male individualism. Chapter two will discuss in detail the ramifications of the changing relation with an emphasis on the rise of sexism and violence in the new stream. Chapter three will attempt to explain some of the reasons for such a shift in our literary values, with an emphasis on the growing importance of technology in the twentieth century, and the concomitant preoccupation in the new stream with the formalistic qualities of the literature. An attempt will be made to explain the relation between the form and content of contemporary literature, and how this relation has evolved to allow for male self-regarding individualism to persist in a stream of contemporary literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge all the persons who worked so hard with me to make this thesis possible. Thanks to Ian Cameron for his authoritative advice; to Timothy Kavanaugh who always wanted his name to appear in a book, any book. And especially thanks to Robin Mathews whose views and compassion I respect more than I can possibly express here.

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<u>CD</u>	<u>Cabbagetown Diary: A Documentary</u>
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<u>F</u>	<u>Fruits of the Earth</u>
<u>FG</u>	<u>The Favourite Game</u>
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<u>Sac</u>	<u>The Sacrifice</u>
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<u>WC</u>	<u>What the Crow Said</u>

All references to the above texts are taken from the editions found in the Works Cited section at the end of the thesis.

INTRODUCTION

Canada's literary history reveals a sincere concern for the values of institutions. Until very recently, our fiction consistently deals with and upholds--as a major concern--traditional, community-oriented values, and this concern is reflected in positive attitudes towards the church, family and the community itself. Characters who assimilate into and strengthen the community are depicted favourably as heroes, while characters who uphold and display individualistic beliefs are depicted as a threat to the community's stability. Up to the end of the Second World War the literature enjoys a common theme which favours the values of the community, and frowns upon those of individualism.

Recently, however, there has been a dramatic shift in a stream of English Canadian literature. The values of individualism, once thought to represent a threat to the Canadian identity, are becoming central. This stream treats the individualist as a positive force who challenges and/or denies community values. Individualism causes the disintegration of accepted community-oriented values and produces a picture of society as fragmented and decaying.

As individualism becomes more predominant in the literature many other problems arise. The literature, which has always been primarily male-oriented, begins to take on qualities which smack of mysogeny and sexism. As male individualism becomes more predominant in the literature,

the importance of the female becomes minimized. Rather than reflecting the attitude that women are spiritually, emotionally and physically equal to men, an attitude proposed by the feminist movements of the late 1960's and early 1970's, much contemporary literature shows the opposite. Much recent Canadian literature reduces women to little more than a sexual object, depicting her as a plaything for her male counterparts.

Women in Canadian literature, as in Canadian society, prior to the Second World War are sometimes described as stereotypical, rarely moving beyond the realm of the mother or wife, figure.¹ There can be no denying that stereotypes do exist in traditional literature. However, while women are sometimes stereotypically portrayed, their characters are memorable and developed. The reason for the stereotype can be traced to traditionally-oriented community values. — Prairie literature, for example, expresses attitudes largely dependent on the designation of gender roles, just as prairie living does. Through the designation of roles, the family works as a harmonious unit which, in turn, reflects the harmony of the community of which the family is a part. There is not only a historical, but a sociological basis for defining roles.

¹ To support this opinion one need look no further than A. J. M. Smith's abridged version of The Colonial Century, Gage publication (1973). In it, Smith gives an overview of writing in English Canada before confederation. With the exception of Susanna Moodie, no other woman is included.

Much recent Canadian fiction defines the role of women in a negative fashion. Unlike their predecessors, recent women are one-dimensional. For example, in Leonard Cohen's work their most common purpose is to serve as outlets for male sexual appetites. As is typical of a recent narrow, individualistic, patriarchal perception, women are inferior and submissive to men.² Unlike the perception in earlier literature, where women are stereotyped but share a defined place in relation to the family and community, in much recent fiction they are given no defined place.

Authors who favour individualism disregard the traditional institutions, literary and otherwise, which govern and guide their characters. As authors disregard the institutions which define the parameters for law and order, they subsequently disassociate themselves from the morality of their characters. Through the use of structural techniques such as irony and surrealism, the authors disassociate themselves from the social or moral aspects of their work. The disassociation causes the erosion of community values and gives rise to new values which perpetuate self-regarding individualism. The subsequent rise of individual values is paralleled by a rise in the level of violence in the literature

Women at the time do not, for the most part, participate in the political and social forefront, but perform traditional duties in the background of public life. That is not to say that role definition is necessarily consciously sexist, but that traditional role models do exist.

² This opinion will be discussed at length in the following thesis.

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as characters choose to deviate from concepts of law and order in an attempt to impose their individualism on others. The rise in violence is revealed in the work of Toronto author Juan Butler whose disassociation through the use of surrealism allows for a tremendous amount of violence which is rarely, if ever, justified. In short, the rise of unjustified violence in recent literature is paralleled by the rise of individualism and is perpetuated by the author's disassociation from the moral content of his work.

There are many possibilities which might explain the shift in recent literary values. One possibility might be the growing presence of technology in the twentieth century which parallels the rise of individualism. As technology brings into question the validity of religion and, therefore, God, the individual's view of the world changes.³ The individual no longer views God as an entity which he must continually define himself against. One result of the undermining of religion is the individual who is filled with self-importance as he no longer views himself in relation to traditional institutions such as the church, community, even family, but in relation to his own actions and limitations. There appears to be a relation between the rise of technology, the rise of individualism, and the changing attitudes towards literature. Although the individual feels more important

³ For a more indepth discussion of the changing role of the individual in relation to religion and technology, see George Grant's Empire and Technology, (Toronto, 1969), pp. 43-60.

than the larger community in technological society, his importance is defined by a society which is dehumanizing. His spiritual values are replaced by technical values. Technology allows the individual to place faith in inanimate matter such as machines, and indirectly creates values of greed, selfishness, and insensitivity. In terms of literature, the author views the technical aspects, or form, as more important than the spiritual aspects, or content. In fact, the importance of form over content becomes obvious in a stream of literature after the 1960's as authors such as Robert Kroetsch and Michael Ondaatje become more concerned with the forms they wish to employ, than with the moral and social content of their work.

In the early part of the twentieth century Frederick Philip Grove, in his novel Fruits of the Earth, predicts that technology might cause the demise of the family unit and the social order. His prophecy, at least partially, is fulfilled eleven years later in his novel The Master of the Mill. Significantly, in the latter half of the twentieth century some authors move away from social responsibility and concern themselves more with the actions of the self-regarding individualist. The self-regarding male individualist, in turn, advocates values which place women in an inferior position, and allow for the emergence of violence in the literature. The reasons for such changes are complex, but can be linked to the rise of technology. As authors emphasize technical aspects of the literature rather than

content, they ignore moral, traditional and historical values.

A new set of values emerges which advocates individualism and denies the importance of the community. What follows,

here, is a discussion of the erosion of traditional, community-oriented values and of the rise of individualism in a certain stream of recent Canadian literature.

CHAPTER ONE

Since its beginnings Canadian literature has, until recently, often possessed a common theme which deals with the importance and stability of the community. Since the publication of the first major novel written by a Canadian, Wacousta, in 1832, the concept of community has consistently been important. However, in recent years there has been a marked change in the attitude of many Canadian authors. Rather than seeing the community as the vital foundation of the Canadian experience, a stream of recent Canadian authors places the importance of the individual above that of the community. The individual, and more importantly the self-seeking individualist who successfully challenges and subsequently erodes community-oriented values, has become a major figure in our literature. Furthermore, as the content of the literature has changed so have its forms. As the traditional, community-oriented values of the literature are eroded its form has become fragmented, has inherited disembodied time schemes and has brought into question the credibility of the narrative voice. The implications of such a change are important not only in terms of the literature, but of society as well.

There are a number of ways to explain how the level of the community's importance has been eroded and replaced by the importance of the individual. For instance, a study of the Governor General award winners before and after 1960

reveals that the literature has, indeed, changed. Prior to 1960 award winners included such community-oriented novels as Two Solitudes, The Tin Flute, The Loved and the Lost, and The Sacrifice. All these novels have been praised for their moral and aesthetic values. However, after 1960 award winners include Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place, The Studhorse Man, The Wars, and The Collected Works of Billy the Kid, the last a book which, although classified as poetry, could be considered a novel in relation to the other later winners whose forms are just as fragmented. The former novels share both traditional forms and community-oriented content, while the latter share fragmented forms and lack an awareness or concern for social responsibility.

In order to examine the shift in importance from the community to the individual a more detailed examination is necessary. For the sake of argument, the works of Frederick Philip Grove and Adele Wiseman can be considered characteristic of the traditional novel in Canada, while those of Leonard Cohen, Juan Butler, Michael Ondaatje, and Robert Kroetsch may be considered characteristic of a recent stream of Canadian literature which views the dialectic between the community and the individual in a much different manner.

Grove's Fruits of the Earth is the story of one man's obsession to conquer and control nature through the use of technology. In the opening pages of the novel the reader is told that Abe Spalding, the protagonist, "wanted land, not landscape; all the landscape he cared for he would introduce

himself" (F, '23). Abe is twentieth century man who wishes to utilize technology in order to shape his environment. As Robin Mathews points out, the novel

is about territorial expansion and the conquest of nature. It is a domestic tragedy in which the life of a family is sacrificed to the material ambitions of the father . . . bent upon achieving material success, fame, and a dynasty. (Mathews, 66)

Abe's dilemma, like twentieth century man's dilemma, is to realize that he must learn to live within the natural world, that he must learn to live with nature in harmonious balance, at the same time as he must recognize the potential of technology to exert power in the world.

Abe succeeds in building his dynasty, marking, dividing and creating a community--named Spalding district after its founder--until he is the most powerful man in the district. But his gains provide only hollow victories. His marriage

is empty. His children are lost to him: none will remain on the farm. The community is, finally, entering confusion and chaos because of a lack of real leadership. (Mathews, 67)

Allowing himself to be blinded by material success, achieved by his use of technology, Abe eventually alienates himself from the ones he loves. Although he feels he has created some sort of dynasty, in

an historical and cultural way he had built nothing; he has created emptiness into which rushes the matter of vulgar materialism: mobility, amusement, sensational titillation. (Mathews, 67)

In this respect Abe represents twentieth century man who must leave the values of the old world behind, but must also be careful not to sacrifice all he has in the name of progress and technology.

Abe Spalding's dilemma is shared by many characters in twentieth century Canadian literature. On the one hand he encompasses the old Canadian values of the community-builder. On the other hand he is tempted by the lures of modern, technological society which allow for the possibility of mastery over the land and monetary gain. He is prophetic because, although he is granted the individual strength to endure the many hardships which go into clearing the land, he

rapidly becomes the exploiter of land, wealth, and people because of his compulsive individualism. He finally comes to see the error of his way, but not until great damage is done. (Mathews, 67)

Abe learns too late that his economic plan can only be attained at the cost of sacrificing his relation with his wife, children, and the rest of the community which he initially set out to create and sustain.

In the classical sense of the term, Abe is a tragic hero. He is both "the victim of his own psychological makeup as well as of changing socio-economic conditions" (Sutherland, 46). In fact, Abe's victimization, both internal and external, appears to be the real dilemma in the novel, and the one which Grove intends the reader to ponder most, since

Abe's plight will come to represent the Canadian dilemma in the age of technology. Grove's message appears to be that the Canadian hero

must be able to build community, to channel ambition to communal ends, and to use all the instrumentalities of modern technology without being dehumanized by them. (Mathews, 67)

According to Grove, our new heroes will have to hold on to the values of community, while incorporating and accepting the newer values of technology.

The last pages of the novel reiterate Grove's wariness at substituting the values of the past and the community for the values of the present and technology. The last time the reader witnesses Abe milking the cows he is informed:

For many years Abe had not milked by lantern light. That he did so now, carried him back through the years to a time when he had been filled with ambition: when yard and barns as they were had existed only in dreams. He had been happy then; all his wishes had been of a realizable kind; he had lived in a future which he desired; that future had come disappointingly. Youth and the ardent urge; age and poignant regret: where was the life in between? Peace and happiness? He sought them in the past. In the present were only exhaustion and weariness: weariness even unto death. . . . (F, 236)

Abe is slowly learning the painful lesson which results when man places the values of technology above those of the community and mankind. Technology may be an undeniable part of the twentieth century, but it is also something which must not take over the ambitions of men to the point where

they are willing to destroy the values of the community in order to attain their own individual goals.

That Abe will turn back to traditional values is hinted in the closing scene concerning the dance-hall gang at the old school-house. Abe has gradually withdrawn from all aspects of public duty and has totally abandoned his communitarian responsibility. The dance-hall gang, representative of the new values predicated on frivolity, decadence and immorality, has emerged partly as a result of Abe's inability to perform his public duties. Upon realizing that his withdrawal from the community has partly caused the breakdown of the social order, Abe resolves to reestablish his authoritarian position. As he enters the dance-hall "an instant hush" falls upon the room (F, 266). He proceeds to find the key to the building, demands that all the patrons "Go home" (F, 266), and finally locks the building. The symbolic last line of the novel hints at Grove's purpose, for when news of Abe's actions spreads through the district there are more than just a few members of Spalding county who breathe "the traditional sigh of relief" (F, 266). Although Abe's understanding of his social duty comes late in the novel, there can be little doubt that Grove intends to end the novel with the hope that man will hold on to the old values as he enters the new world of technology.

Grove's Fruits of the Earth can be cited as one of the more traditional novels of Canadian literature in relation to the community, the individual, and technology. While he

comes to understand the implications of his individualistic action late in the novel, Abe does eventually comprehend the problems created when man sacrifices the values of the community for the values which perpetuate monetary gain.

Abe wishes to stand for

history and culture, for the bond that permits change to happen and personal expression to develop without human activity dissolving into chaos and anarchy. But he also wants to dominate, to conquer, to display economic mastery. (Mathews, 69)

Abe represents the older hero of Canadian literature who possesses the values of community, but he is tempted by the new. And it is the values of the new--individualistic, technological--which Grove warns against, and with which subsequent Canadian authors have to come to terms.

In 1944^e Grove published another novel which fulfills the prophecy set down in Fruits of the Earth. In The Master of the Mill Grove shows how the machine can come to dominate those who build it. Unlike Abe Spalding, the protagonists in the later novel are empire builders who own a great deal of economic and state power. In this novel Grove attempts to reveal, on a larger social scale, what happens when power and wealth are placed in the hands of two different types of individualists. On the one hand, Sam Clark is a community-builder who, although he possesses enormous wealth, intends to use his wealth for the good of the people. On the other hand, his views are opposed by his father, Rudyard, and his son, Edmund, both whom wish to use their power for strictly

personal gain. In The Master of the Mill Grove shows how man's dependence on technology can eventually cause him to be enslaved by the machines he creates.

In The Master of the Mill Grove shows how the social order can break down when power is held by a few men with great ambition. Grove attempts to parallel the break down of the social order through the narrative mode he incorporates. Grove moves away from traditional, chronological storytelling, and attempts to experiment with narrative flashbacks. Although it may be said that Grove's "narrative machinery creaks . . . and the frequent changes in time sequence and point of view are bewildering and irksome," (MM, viii) his narrative mode nevertheless points to Grove's own attempt to reflect the content of his novel through the novel's form.

The tension set up in the novel is representative of Grove's own views of social and economic power. In fact, this novel is "the only one in which Grove deals at large with the political and social scene in Canada, or with the relations between capital and labour" (MM, xiii). On the one hand, Sam Clark resembles, loosely, the humanitarian who sympathizes with the workers' situation, and honestly seeks to find solutions to alleviate the disparity present at the Langholm Flour Mill. On the other hand, Sam is in opposition to both his father and son who resemble, loosely, fascists. Edmund inherits most of his attitudes from his grandfather Rudyard, and is the character in the novel who most opposes Sam. It is the constant opposition between Edmund and Sam

which creates most of the novel's action.

When Sam Clark inherits the mill from his father, he takes on the responsibility with great ambition. His primary concern is not with the mill itself, however, but with how he "would direct the fortunes of the mill for the good of mankind" (MM, 39). Sam envisions

building a huge hall with a gymnasium, with rooms for games and reading, with a swimming-pool and a lecture hall. He would raise wages and give the men a voice in the administration. (MM, 39)

When he thinks back on all his dreams years later, he considers the only word to describe his dreams to be socialist.

Although his dreams are eventually thwarted, they reveal that power, in benevolent hands, can be used for the good of mankind.

The contrast to the benevolence of Sam is his malevolent son Edmund. Although the word is never actually used in the novel, Edmund is more fascist than anything else. He is a financier whose only purpose is to attain the most power possible for his own ends. Although he comments that he, too, has a plan which will benefit the whole of mankind, his attitudes can hardly be considered humanitarian. Edmund feels he is above the laws of man since no "great man . . . ever hesitated about breaking man's law when a greater purpose was to be served by its breach" (MM, 225). Edmund does indeed possess plans outside the laws of men. He believes that in order to implement his plan, world population will

have to decrease. When Sam asks him how this decrease will be attained, Edmund answers, perhaps "sterilize those who live on the dole" (MM, 228). His vision of a technologically efficient world encompasses two different classes; "the masters and the men; those who control the machines and those who benefit from them" (MM, 229).

The feasibility of Edmund's plan becomes wholly questionable when his views of technology are taken into account. While his father attempts to expand the mill's productivity and create more jobs for the workers, Edmund's goal is to mechanize his mill, decreasing jobs as much as possible. Edmund dreams of the day when no human hands will have to touch the wheat before it is turned into flour. His dream is realized when his mill at Arbala takes on the qualities of a "well into which all sorts of puzzling machinery has been suspended" (MM, 202) with hardly a man in sight. He foresees the day when Canada will become "a state within the State . . . A state based on social and economic realities instead of on political jiggings which have long since become meaningless. With only one master, one god: the machine" (MM, 287).

Like Abe Spalding, Edmund wishes to control and shape his environment through technology. Yet, when his dream is finally realized, his world vision is far from desirable. With the threat of losing their jobs the workers revolt, and their actions cause Edmund to take serious precautions to protect the mill. Upon hearing of the workers' revolt, Edmund

returns to the Langholm mill only to find that the entire atmosphere is like that of a police state. His home is guarded "as though it were in a state of siege" (MM, 306). Machine guns and tanks are brought in to control the men who are fighting for their livelihoods, while the mill stands in the background running, apparently under its own power, as if it were a living thing. Edmund's egotistical plan is presented by Grové as an obsession which threatens the workers and the existence of the larger social order.

In The Master of the Mill Grove writes a fulfillment of the prophecy which he initially depicts in Fruits of the Earth. Man's dependence on technology, his overwhelming faith in machines, is presented as an attitude which is not only undesirable, but threatening to the community and the larger social order. Grove explicitly demonstrates the consequences when men with social and economic power use that power for their own ends. In The Master of the Mill Grove's attitudes reveal the threat individualists pose on a larger social scale. Grove's warnings, however, go unheeded when, less than twenty years later, a stream of literature begins to place individuals on a personal scale in a hedonistic, self-regarding dimension. Individualists begin to take on importance, and subsequently threaten the social order in the same manner that Grove portrays on a larger scale.

Between the period of his writing career and the 1960's, the tension Grove sets up is repeated. But not until the

1960's does a stream in the Canadian novel shift emphasis in the dialectic between individual and community. At the same time the form of the novel also begins to undergo significant changes. As the community-oriented content of the novel is increasingly eroded, new forms emerge to accommodate it. To give an example of the changing attitudes towards art as a whole a comparison between Grove's own opinions and a popular critic of the 1960's, Northrop Frye, will serve.

According to Grove, writing on literary criticism in 1929, the novel's purpose is to reveal "the social conditions of the period which it depicts" (Grove, 123). In other words, the author has a duty to reveal the life around him, presumably to illuminate and possibly ameliorate the problems which man faces in his everyday life. Years later, in 1963, in his Massey Lecture series Frye states that art "begins with the world we construct, not with the world we see" (Frye, 6). He declares that "literature has no consistent connexion with ordinary life" (Frye, 39), and goes on to state the "world of literature is a world where there is no reality except that of the human imagination" (Frye, 40). From these two definitions a clear distinction is evident.

According to Grove, art is inextricably linked to social responsibility. According to Frye, art is a self-contained entity which transcends social responsibility. The difference between the two attitudes is clear. Earlier literature advocates values which involve the social order, while a stream of contemporary literature and criticism denies any

affiliation with the social order.

In earlier Canadian literature in English the values of community are stressed, and those values are echoed in Grove's own literary criticism. The literature, like the author, must perform certain duties if the process of writing and reading is to be one which enhances and teaches. In Fruits of the Earth Grove warns against man's increasing dependence on technology which might eventually erode his social and communitarian duties. Grove's unheeded prophecy is realized a little more than ten years later when the atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Man's dependence on technology becomes overwhelming and the result is devastating. A claim is made, and is reflected in attitudes toward art, that man is no longer responsible either for what he creates or for what already exists. By the 1960's literature and literary theories become disassociated from concepts of responsibility, especially in relation to the community, while art is thought to transcend any form of social commitment.

A great deal of literature, including the works of Mordecai Richler, Timothy Findley, Scott Symons and the later work of W. O. Mitchell and John Marlyn, shows that Canadian literature following the Second World War begins to take on qualities in which individualistic actions are heightened and social responsibility diminished. A stream of recent Canadian literature and criticism looks upon the individualist as either a positive figure or as a figure who

has a right to act in any manner he chooses. The lack of authorial judgement implies that the author no longer sees the individualist as a force threatening to the larger community. In fact, in the same year as Frye published his attitudes toward art in his Massey Lectures, one of the most individualistic, anti-community novels was also published in Canada.

In 1963 Leonard Cohen published his first novel, The Favourite Game. A major theme of the novel is that of "moral non-responsibility" (Davey, 134). In The Favourite Game individuals no longer possess a sense of duty or obligation towards the community. The characters relate to their surroundings solely in terms of immediate, personal experience, while they are oblivious to the needs of the larger community around them. They inhabit a debased, fragmented and, at times, amoral world where self-gratification is the ultimate goal. The whims of the individualist come to be more important than the stability of the community. Cohen's literary world is filled with self-seekers who totally ignore the needs of the community and of those around them.

Cohen's The Favourite Game may be said to be one of the first Post-modernist novels published in Canada. Its form is representative of the Post-modern artefact which, in literature, sets out to

dismantle the institutional autonomy of art, erase the frontiers between culture and political society and return aesthetic production to its humble, unprivileged place within social practices as a whole. (Eagleton, A131)

Grove warns against the possibility of denying social responsibility through art, while Frye accepts and advocates the position that art does not contain any relation to social responsibility, and that it transcends any commitment towards society and, therefore, the community. Frye's views are perpetuated by the Post-modernists like Cohen who fragments his style of writing, focuses attention on the individualist, and disregards the importance of the family and the larger community. New heroes, such as Cohen's protagonists, emerge in our literature, "essentially self-regarding, essentially anti-community" (Mathews, 191).

The protagonist of The Favourite Game detests any form of history or formal knowledge. Lawrence Breavman scorns "the world of detail, information, precision, all the false knowledge which cannot intrude on decay" (FG, 17). The source of Breavman's knowledge is derived solely from his own senses. Since the history of others is not directly related to his experience, he perceives 'other' as meaningless. Past knowledge is false to him simply because it does not relate to his situation. Because Breavman perceives his individualism as positive, concepts such as history and tradition take on secondary, sometimes meaningless proportions. Breavman may be said to be one of the first of what Ronald Sutherland calls the "new heroes" of Canadian literature who are "strong, self-reliant, self-trusting, confident, and highly individualistic" (Sutherland, 16). Breavman views what relates to his immediate situation seriously; he totally

disregards his relation to the larger system of things. The importance of his own individualism allows him to negate the values of tradition.

While Breavman ignores the controlling elements around him, he seeks to shape his own environment. At one point Breavman seeks to control others through the use of hypnosis. For him, the world of hypnosis becomes "the real world" (FG, 33). After perfecting his hypnotic technique, he applies it to Heather, the family maid, and while under hypnosis she becomes Breavman's slave. He drives "a needle through the lobe of her ear" (FG, 52) to make quite sure she is numb. Then, solely for the purposes of his own self-gratification, he commands her to take off her clothes and eventually forces her to masturbate him. Breavman seeks to enslave and, once successful, uses his power to satisfy his own sexual appetite. As Breavman becomes convinced of his own importance, his understanding of social responsibility diminishes.

Breavman yearns to shape and control his environment totally, and in this respect he represents post-industrial twentieth century man who also possesses a need to control his environment. As George Grant points out, twentieth century man, backed by technology, has now given "open welcome to the core of the twentieth century--the unlimited mastery of men by men" (Grant, 25). Breavman represents the new Canadian hero who "takes his own experience as the measure of value; and in a position of authority he shapes a despotism circumscribed by his own limitations" (Mathews, 192).

The myopic, immediate world of individualists like Breavman becomes a place where experience and knowledge are totally regarded in relation to the self. Like Abe Spalding, Breavman is motivated by a need to dominate and control. However, unlike Abe, Breavman has not been able to assimilate the old community values with the new values of technology. He does not possess the characteristics which might allow him to unite and balance communitarian and technological values.

Breavman's inability to accept the importance of community relates, probably, to his inability to enter personal, intimate relationships. He feels that by sharing himself with his friend Shell he will somehow compromise his own individuality. Breavman desires Shell's body for his own sexual gratification, but does not want any sort of spiritual relation. A spiritual bond with Shell would entail a certain amount of human compassion. However, Breavman chooses to isolate himself from those around him. He wishes to be "by himself . . . to get perspective" (FG, 185), and eventually resolves to leave Shell, reinforcing his inability to compromise his individuality for her love. By avoiding spiritual contact Breavman hopes to build a wall around himself and to avoid the burdens of social responsibility.

Breavman blames his inability to interact with others on his ancestry. He feels that his Jewish background has "taught him the alien experience.. He was grateful for that" (FG, 204). He is constantly looking for reasons to justify his disassociation from the community. In fact, the mere idea that "he

had ancestors" (FG, 205) revolts him. Breavman maintains that "community is an alibi for the failure of individual love" (FG, 212). For him, as for the typical individualist, values of community and history are eroded by values predicated on the self. The community becomes the scapegoat for the person unable to assimilate into society. The terms of the individualist are justified in his own mind by a refusal to accept the terms laid down by society.

Breavman's entire being revolves around immediate, personal sensations. He views his life story as a "movie filled with the bodies of his family" (FG, 5). Like many of Cohen's characters, Breavman chooses to define his existence solely in terms of his own perceptions. His eyes act as cameras which, in turn, define personal images that define his reality. His limited perception, however, is yet another example of how the self-regarding individualist perceives the world. The individualist's understanding of the world, and therefore the community, is limited and he fails to realize the larger reality around him when he depends solely upon personal photos to define his being. Reality, in turn, becomes defined by his own vision and limitations. Furthermore, the individualist develops a disregard for the community, which he deems alien or 'other'. Immediate, narrow perception perpetuates rampant individualism, and runs predominantly through Cohen's work.

Cohen's novels are representative of a whole stream of writing that emerged in the '1960's. Values of post-industrial

society continue to dominate the consciousness of many writers in the latter half of the twentieth century, and their views of social responsibility become more and more minimized. It is as if what Grove warned against began to come true in the mid 1960's. Traditional community values, once an important part of our literature, began to be ridiculed, eroded or simply disregarded. Human compassion and social responsibility began to be replaced by values which depict a dehumanized world where the forms of art are considered to be more important than art's content. In relation to The Favourite Game, Michael Ondaatje has noted its plot-line is

non-existent. We are not reading a formal novel but are looking at various episodes in the life of Breavman. We are not guided along a cohesive time sequence but are shown segments from scrapbooks, home movies, diaries. . . . (Ondaatje, 24)

The fragmented use of various sources to create the novel is characteristic of much of Post-modernism. However, while critics like Ondaatje point out the technical aspects of the novel, they fail to mention the lack of morality or traditional values found within it. Frye's critical views are realized: there appears no need for a social criticism of art in post-industrial society where art transcends social responsibility.

Cohen's second novel, Beautiful Losers, contains numerous examples in which the individualist is shown to be more important than the community. The novel is an egotistical

journey through a variety of experiences by the self-conscious narrator/protagonist, simply defined as "I". Allegedly based on a search for the legendary saint "Catherine Tekakwitha" (BL, 3), the narrative actually revolves around scenes of titillation and self-indulgence. On the one hand, it may be said that Cohen is attempting to define the fact that the introduction of science and technology has undermined the entire foundations of religion, leaving man without a set of myths with which to define his being. On the other hand, while the novel allegedly explores the possibility of creating new myths to define our present being, the only remedy offered is the glorification of the self which enhances Cohen's major theme that each individual should indulge in excessive experience. Beautiful Losers is more concerned with titillation and excessive sexual experience than with anything else.

As the individualist becomes the central focus in the novel, the rest of the world becomes secondary. "I" points out that he cares more about his own thumb than he does about the rest of the "whole foul universe" (BL, 67). Possessing little concern for the community, his motto in life is every "creep for himself" (BL, 67). "I" has lost faith in the larger institutions which once guided his life and, as a result, he has directed his priorities inward. He denies the credibility of history and tradition, since his personal experience is the only criterion he accepts to define reality. He legitimizes his personal set of values indirectly

through a denial of history and tradition. By denying concepts which reach farther than his own experience, he is able to justify his own disassociation from community responsibility.

The fact that "I" lacks any form of family is symbolic of his disassociation from the community and is also reflective of the single generation stories which prevail in much of Post-modern literature. "I" grew up in an "orphanage" (BL, 73), and has no children of his own. His lack of family isolates him and reinforces his independent nature. Lack of family also reinforces the lack of tradition and history found in Beautiful Losers, and in a certain stream of recent Canadian fiction which upholds the importance of the self-regarding individualist. While our more traditional literature, such as Hugh MacLennan's Barometer Rising, Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley, or Adele Wiseman's The Sacrifice, spans a number of generations and reinforces concepts of family, community and history, the contemporary works in question here almost always revolve around one generation with a very immediate, limited scope. The single generation narrative, which will be further discussed in chapter two, perpetuates the content of a major stream of contemporary novels which is concerned solely with the actions of self-regarding individualists.

Both "I" and his best friend F are representative of men without histories. For them, time is something which can only be understood in immediate, personal terms. In fact, F feels that history is nothing more than a "huge jukebox" which

plays the same sleepy tune over and over (BL, 173). Because of his wish to view the world through immediate, self-regarding perceptions, F becomes distrustful of historical value. His myopic view of the world leads F to believe that in order to understand history we must "Connect nothing" (BL, 18). Because they choose to define the world through their own visions and limitations, both "I" and F inevitably deny the validity of history which exists beyond their immediate perceptions.

Like the majority of Post-modernist writers, Cohen believes that we cannot totally disassociate reality and illusion, since the reality we have from history and tradition is partly false. In relation to Catherine Tekakwitha's death, the reader is told to "create legends out of the disposition of the stars, but let it be our glory to forget the legends and watch the night emptily" (BL, 225). The point is well taken that any distortion or misunderstanding of legends results in a false interpretation of history. But Cohen believes that all sense of history must be undermined. He believes that each individual must demythologize his past and come to a personal understanding of his present. History and community, presupposing generalizations beyond the existence of one individual, appear threatening to a consciousness which refuses to acknowledge and respect the needs of others.

Cohen considers the individualist important partly because science and technology have brought religious belief

into question. Prior to the scientific revolution, man was able to define himself in relation to the larger, ruling definitions of religion. The community was an entity which the individual defined himself in and against. Science brought religion into question, while man, in turn, began to claim greater importance for himself.⁴ The advent of technology not only undermined the importance of religion, but of the community as well.

Cohen believes that in a world where the old myths no longer explain our past, new myths must be invented to explain our personal histories. Yet the old man at the end of the novel, presumably "I", searches for new myths and "his pain [is] finding none" (BL, 246). Throughout the novel, Cohen advocates a system in which individuals assert their own identity at the expense of traditional institutions which once governed them. But the novel resolves itself with no real suggestions about what might replace those same institutions. Instead, the reader is confronted with hollow moralizing and vacant images suggestive of doom and disorder. Attitudes of decay and despair, almost non-existent in Canadian literature prior to the Second World War, continue to be predominant in Cohen's work.

The technical aspects of Beautiful Losers, like those of The Favourite Game, have been praised often. In his book Leonard Cohen Ondaatje writes, "Beautiful Losers is a gorgeous

⁴ See Grant's Empire and Technology.

novel, and is the most vivid, fascinating, and brave novel I have read" (Ondaatje, 45). Ondaatje chooses to discuss Cohen's aesthetic achievement, and totally ignores the decadent, anti-communitarian values of his art. And Ondaatje is not the only critic who chooses to ignore the lack of traditional value or morality in the works. For example, in his book Savage Fields Dennis Lee takes great pains to analyze the various strategies present in the works which explain how the story is being told, but he fails to discuss the decadent nature of the material. At times Lee analyzes incidents such as F's yearning to "fuck a saint", explaining how acts like this would allow F to "burst free of [history] by ecstasy" (Lee, 69). Lee chooses to concern himself with certain technical aspects of the novel while he totally disregards its moral implications.

A whole stream of contemporary literature shares the new values being discussed here. Many critics who work within this stream share an overwhelming concern for the form of the novel, and their concern seems, indirectly, to cause them to lack concern for values of social responsibility and morality. As critics continue to ignore more traditional values, the writers are left to create works which lack social values or moral responsibility. As our literature moved into the 1970's the movement towards social non-responsibility increased. One author in particular, Juan Butler, not only picked up on the major themes which Cohen was concerned with, he actually advanced many of the theories

being explored here. Butler picked up on the major themes of the stream of recent Canadian fiction and then moved into new realms of self-indulgent decadence never witnessed before in the literature.

In Butler's first novel, Cabbage Town Diary, A Documentary, the main protagonist, Michael Armstrong Taylor, is representative of the new Canadian hero who is totally self-regarding and oblivious to social responsibility. His lack of concern for social responsibility is revealed through his attitudes towards love and the sexual act itself. At one point he asks his lover, Terry, if she has taken any precautions against pregnancy. When she makes no reply he concludes "if a dame hasn't got enough sense to put something in her at the time, then she deserves whatever's going to come out nine months later" (CD, 15). For Michael, the sexual act does not entail any sort of spiritual union between two people. Furthermore, by granting Terry the sole responsibility of mothering the child which may be created, he also denies the concept of community. Because of his solipsistic nature, Michael is able to block out any concern for the larger realities around him.

Michael's unconsciousness warns him of his solipsistic nature, but he refuses to pay attention. He tells of a recurring dream, saying "my old man was a judge and he was smiling at me and saying 'You gotta hang, boy . . . It's best for you and it's best for society'" (CD, 135). The symbolic nature of Michael's dream can be interpreted on two levels.

First, his selfish ways are threatening to society. Secondly, his dream reveals his inability to cooperate with the humanitarian aspects which are symbolized in the familial ties represented by his father. The father figure judges his son incapable of social responsibility. Michael has not been able to fulfill his role as son and, thus, threatens the concept and stability of the community.

The epitome of Michael's selfishness and insensitivity is expressed when Terry brings home a pet budgie. When she asks if he likes it, Michael replies "What's it for, a midnight snack?" (CD, 142). One day later, when the sounds of the bird's chirping wake him, Michael promptly proceeds to "open the window . . . grab him and throw him out, followed by the perch, seed and water" (CD, 144). Although the scene contains much that could be interpreted as black humour, the point is that Michael is motivated solely by his own selfishness, and does not consider Terry's feelings in relation to the bird. In fact, his cruel actions are not enough to satisfy his insensitive nature. When Terry asks what happened to the bird, Michael replies that it flew out the window and was caught by a cat. He consoles her by stating "Don't feel bad honey. He died fast. Cats break a bird's neck. They don't like eating them while they're still alive. It gives them indigestion" (CD, 146). Michael believes the joke will "make her feel better" (CD, 146) and in no other way attempts to console her.

Michael's irresponsibility culminates at the end of the novel. Upon hearing that he has impregnated Terry, he arrogantly informs the reader, "Naturally, I threw her out" (CD, 206). According to Michael, a woman should not become pregnant because, when she does, "nobody wants [her]" anymore (CD, 206). All of Michael's solipsistic actions are reinforced when he denies the need for family and, therefore, community. He feels that he has done Terry a favour by throwing her out, since somebody had to "show her how to make it in this world" (CD, 206). He believes that when she looks back on her time spent with him, she will "thank her lucky stars" (CD, 206) she met him. Throughout the novel, and throughout all of Butler's work, the protagonist is depicted as dehumanized and bordering on solipsism.

Butler's second major work, The Garbageman, picks up on the same themes evident in Cabbagetown Diary. However, in his second novel Butler begins to experiment with surrealism. Surrealism is a revolt

against all restraints on the free functioning of the human mind. These restraints [include] the logical reason, standard morality, social and artistic conventions, and the control of artistic creation by forethought and intention. (Abrams, 168)

It is no surprise that Butler, wishing to break from the traditional themes of Canadian literature, would look to artistic forms which encourage a movement away from standard morality and standard convention. Indeed, forms are

"determined by the kind of 'content' they have to embody; they are changed, transformed, broken down and revolutionized as that content itself changes" (Eagleton, B22). In The Garbageman Butler's fragmenting content is perpetuated by the surrealistic form he employs.

Symbolically, almost the entire novel takes place within the space of less than one morning. In fact, the first three-quarters of the novel take place between dawn and seven o'clock in the morning of the same day.. In that time the reader is taken to places such as Spain and the Bois de Boulogne and is witness to murder, rape and a host of other barbarous acts. The concentration of time blends with the content of the novel and creates an atmosphere which is surrealistic both in content and form. The time scheme takes the narrator out of traditional history, and allows him to move as he pleases through an immediate, personal world in which he is free to impose his own values without regard for any of the larger realities which exist outside of his perceptions.

The insane first-person narrator of the novel lives in a world where he wishes successfully to cut himself off from the larger realities around him. His greatest aspiration is simply to be left alone. He fantasizes how he might torture those who threaten "the tranquility peace of mind inner harmony" (G, 10) he has created around him. But his overwhelming introspection creates within him a sense of paranoia. While working as an insurance underwriter, he becomes convinced

that the other workers are conspiring against him. He dreams of inflicting torture on his fellow workers that, in his mind, will somehow combat his feelings of paranoia. But although the narrator wishes to languish in his own introspection, he also yearns for social contact.

While the narrator possesses a need for human contact, his need is distorted by his sexual perversions. His imagination takes him to Luxembourg where he is found recalling his past. He states, "I used to have lots of girlfriends . . . And I was never alone" (G, 85). But one night it occurred to him that he was actually making love to another human being and from that moment he "never touched a girl since" (G, 85). On the one hand, he yearns for human contact, as can be seen in his wish to be in close proximity to strangers. On the other hand, he does not wish to form any sort of emotional bond with other human beings. The narrator can be said to be a dehumanized product of a technological society who constantly yearns for human contact solely to gain self-gratification. For him, spiritual bonds are secondary to physical pleasure. An emotional relationship, one that demands that he must give of himself, seems out of the question. He perceives the people who inhabit his world as objects which are at his disposal to use or ignore, depending on his disposition.

While in Luxembourg the narrator encounters a young Italian woman, Maria Adorno, who is studying French. At one point the narrator introduces the concept of love, and their

respective remarks reveal a stark difference between the traditional outlook of Maria and the dehumanized nature of the narrator. Maria feels that love is defined as "two people making each other so happy . . . that they feel unfulfilled if one of them isn't by the other's side" (G, 93). For Maria, individual existence is hollow and empty. When the narrator's turn comes to reveal his thoughts, however, he displays "two neatly folded sheets of writing paper" (G, 94) filled with insincere thoughts which he always carries with him. He believes if they are shown to "the right person at the right time, they never fail" (G, 94) to engross the listener. Maria acts as the narrator's sexual foil. She is spontaneous and emotional, full of traditional romanticism, while he is calculating and methodical. He dehumanizes the concept of love, and brings it down to the level of seduction which, according to him, is "an art, and like all arts it has to be disciplined" (G, 96). Maria's attitudes are tender, while the narrator's ego-centred attitudes are debased and dehumanized.

The narrator convinces Maria to accompany him the following day on an outing to the Bois de Boulogne. Grateful for the beautiful weather, he refers to God as his "celestial partner in crime" (G, 107), alluding to his intention to rape Maria. The nature of the rape itself will be discussed in a later chapter. What is of importance here is that the narrator's distorted obsession with his own importance leads to his distorted views of sexuality and inevitably results

in actions which inflict pain and suffering on others. The narrator's need for human contact revolves entirely around the notion of taking, rather than giving. Furthermore, the narrator's actions appear quite acceptable to the author who sees no need to condemn him in any manner. The lack of authorial judgement implies that individualistic, dehumanized actions are either natural or acceptable in a society where a new set of values has replaced the values of social responsibility.

Upon satisfying his distorted sexual desires, the narrator is faced with a major problem. He must decide what to do with his mutilated victim. To complete his sickening, pre-meditated plan, he picks up a knife and plunges it into Maria's hip, and then stands back to watch "in awe at the spectacle created" (G, 122). Totally devoid of human compassion, he watches her die without coming to "any conclusions" (G, 123). He sees no reason to justify or repent his actions and shows no regret for the pain he has inflicted on another person. At the close of the day he rises and thanks the dying Maria for an "afternoon well spent" (G, 124), then turns and walks away. The only thing he is concerned with is whether Maria is actually dead. He does not care about her life, but is only concerned with not being identified and charged.

The epitome of the narrator's individualism is depicted near the end of the novel when he is admitted to an insane asylum. His lack of social responsibility and his ego-

centredness result in a case of paranoia in which he blames others for his own actions. The narrator's mind, totally motivated by self-gratification, slowly loses touch with reality. He constructs an artificial reality wherein his individualism becomes the primary central focus. As Russell Jacoby points out, "Rampant narcissism surfaces as the final form of individualism; it at once negates the ego and perpetuates its mangled form" (Jacoby, 116). The narrator in The Garbageman is representative of the individualist in his final, totally self-regarding form.

There can be little doubt that much of our literature has dramatically changed over the last twenty-five years or so. Evidently unable to heed the prophetic warnings from traditional Canadian authors such as Frederick Philip Grove, many writers today have begun to perceive the community-threatening individualist in a positive manner. After 1960 many authors become more preoccupied with the form of the novel, as values such as morality and social responsibility become replaced with values of aestheticism and style. The shift in attitude can be seen not only in a certain stream of literature, but also in much of the criticism which deals with that literature.⁵ The result is that today the

⁵ A stream of Canadian literary criticism following the Second World War tends to uphold this claim. For instance, the criticism of Northrop Frye, Dennis Lee, Robert Kroetsch, Michael Ondaatje and others all tend to place the text outside the realm of social responsibility, defining literature as an entity which is self-contained. The text appears to incorporate its own parameters for concepts such as law,

individualist, once a threat to the community's stability, is now seen as a positive figure who is free to impose his own values on those around him. The reasons for such a shift are obviously important, and need to be looked at. However, before an historical study can be mapped out, a detailed analysis of the new wave of literature is needed to explain how the shift has affected our attitudes toward the literature as a whole.

morality and so on, and has no duty to reflect larger social concerns. Interestingly, a number of popular contemporary critics in this stream are also successful authors. Perhaps this might explain the consistency of opinion within certain contemporary critical schools.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature before 1960 tends to stress the importance of the family unit, fidelity, compassion and other qualities which maintain and strengthen community. After 1960 the new stream tends to stress values of individualism: self-indulgence, sexual perversion, and violence. The individual --and especially the individualist--moves, in the new literature, from spurned or merely tolerated person to the centre of action and, openly or covertly, the character most approved by the writer.

Comparison of an important novel in the main tradition, Adele Wiseman's The Sacrifice, with important novels in the new tradition reveals how the representation of the individual and the community has changed and how women, sex, patriarchalism and violence are all treated differently by the new stream.

Adele Wiseman's The Sacrifice, published in 1956, is an important novel in the main tradition. It is the story of an immigrant Jewish family's attempt to join the Canadian community, while attempting to maintain traditional values. The parents, Abraham and Sarah, want their son Isaac to learn the traditional Jewish ways, but they also insist he attend "the English-language course that has been organized in the district high school" (Sac, 10). They treasure traditional values, but they also realize the importance of adapting to their new environment.

One stark difference between Wiseman's novel and the new wave of literature is her depiction of women and theirs. Wiseman's women are depicted as human beings rather than as objects. Although Sarah is depicted stereotypically, she is portrayed in realistic, compassionate terms. Abraham and Sarah have equally important duties. When the family moves into a new dwelling, Sarah carries the "Blessing of bread and salt into their new home" (Sac, 46) before any other belongings can be brought in. Sarah has a defined role which gives her a sense of importance, and which is essential for the family's survival. Like the men in the novel, the women help maintain the harmony of the family unit. Isaac's future wife, Ruth, is loving and compassionate. She fills Isaac's heart with "gratitude and love" (Sac, 90); she fills the home with "talking and joking" (Sac, 90).

A story whose main characters are named Abraham and Sarah, echoing characters in the Bible, is bound to reflect some aspect of patriarchalism. The kind of patriarchy found in the novel, The Sacrifice, however, is not sexist. Abraham is stubborn at times, but he possesses love and compassion for Sarah. During a discussion on the subject of equality between the sexes, Isaac suggests that his father places "man and woman on different levels, as though the man were somehow the more important of the two, the master" (Sac, 110). Abraham defends his position. He defines the female/male relation as like a flower and the wind. They are different, yet they interact. Abraham sees the sexes working in

partnership to benefit each other. In fact, his compassion is so great that although he and his son disagree on many subjects, Abraham feels "lucky that he [has] a son like Isaac to discuss them with" (Sac, 112).

Wiseman shows the beauty surrounding healthy, positive sexual attitudes. Mrs. Plopler, Abraham's and Sarah's former landlady, says that Ruth's father died shortly before Ruth was born. When she hints that Ruth's father may have lived longer had he not been "romancing" on his death-bed, Abraham replies he would "gladly use up [his] last bit of energy to achieve such a thing" (Sac, 97): He reminds Mrs. Plopler that Abraham and Sarah of the Old Testament had a child when she was one-hundred years old. Abraham insists upon procreation as a natural and necessary act for the continuation of the human species. In fact, abuse of sex leads to the one incident in which violence occurs.

Representing qualities alien to the community experience and to healthy sexuality, Laiah is first seen "flirting and rolling her hips" (Sac, 33) at Abraham, and merely nods when someone asks if she is living part-time with two married men with families. Laiah represents all the values which contradict the community-oriented, traditional values Abraham has learned to cherish. When Laiah attempts to seduce Abraham, he is filled with so much rage that he slits her throat. Abraham is drawn to Laiah. As a result, he strikes out at her in an attempt to neutralize his own emotions. On the other hand, he believes she threatens the community, and

feels a need to destroy her. By slitting her throat Abraham violates his own fundamental values as well as the values of the community.

When Abraham is placed in the asylum, and after Isaac dies, Ruth struggles to survive. She wonders, how "much . . . a person [hās] to give to be accepted, to be taken in, and not to have it thrown up to her that she is a stranger?" (Sac, 286). She opens a successful business of her own, and provides her son Moses with the necessary guidance he needs to assimilate into the community. Moses represents the third generation in the novel and the link with the first. Upon meeting Abraham in the asylum Moses is apprehensive. Although he feels the need to be with his grandfather, he cannot block out the distorted image of Abraham which the newspapers have created. But after talking with his grandfather for awhile Moses declares "I love him. . . ." (Sac, 346). Moses' own gestures become "vaguely reminiscent of his grandfather of another time. . . ." (Sac, 346). In The Sacrifice Wiseman details qualities of compassion and other community-oriented values in a manner quite different from the new stream.

Interestingly, Wiseman publishes another novel eighteen years after The Sacrifice in which she depicts life in a much different way. In Crackpot Wiseman begins to explore changing values, but she does so in compassionate terms. Although the protagonist in the novel, Hoda, becomes a prostitute, something which traditional literature would deem unacceptable, her character is portrayed in a manner which reveals Wiseman's

own concepts of compassion and human value. While Crackpot is contemporaneous with the writings of Cohen and Butler, it exists within a world of values quite opposed to the new stream.

In Crackpot, published in 1974, the protagonist is unable to assimilate into the community. Hoda feels "unloved and misjudged" (C, 37) by the students at the English-speaking school she attends. As she ages Hoda becomes "even more separated from the other kids than before, though she [tries] not to be, and even [feels] a little afraid of her feeling of separation" (C, 94). Hoda yearns to belong, but the community seems uninterested in what she has to offer. She resorts, therefore, to the only function which will satisfy her craving for love. The sexual favours Hoda provides for the boys in her neighbourhood gives her a sense of belonging. Paradoxically, she becomes a plaything of the community since what she considers to be love is nothing more than empty sex.

Wiseman is concerned in Crackpot with the erosion of traditional values. Her concern is reflected in her portrayal of Hoda's family. Both Hoda's parents have handicaps of some sort. Hoda's mother Rahel barely earns enough money for the family to survive, while her father Danile, because of his blindness, cannot fulfill his role as provider for the family. The traditional responsibilities of the parents are reversed. The father stays home while the mother works, leaving little time for either to rear the child. Furthermore,

the marriage of Rahel and Danile is the result of a vicious, superstitious ritual performed on them in their native land. The characters in the novel strive to develop familial bonds, but their attempts are futile. The crumbling of family ties is also representative of the breakdown of the social order, a breakdown which Wiseman quite consciously portrays.

As the family loses importance so do other social values. Hoda is part of "a new generation" (C, 105). Because she cannot assimilate into the community she begins to assert her individuality, without regard for traditional social values. The innocent sexual favours which she provides early in her life prepares her for a life of prostitution. As a prostitute, she represents the individual acting in a manner which the community condemns as illegal. Therefore, when Hoda and Saraphina move into the downtown community in order to offer their services, the latter is beaten by a client until her body is "horribly bruised" (C, 137). The community's moral stability is threatened by the girls' immorality. Seraphina's beating is a symbolic warning to Hoda of the dangers involved when the individual blindly asserts his/her will within the accepted social order. Hoda's disregard for the benefit of the community causes her later condemnation and punishment.

Hoda survives in the novel, but her life is a hollow existence. She is in a state of decline and decay. She cannot "let a funeral go by without running to take part" (C, 280). The funerals are symbolic of the decaying life

Hoda leads. A part of her dies when she loses the relation she shares with her son. As a result of circumstances which cause both to be unaware that they are mother and son, Hoda finds herself in a position of offering her services to David. As she becomes aware of his identity, however, she painfully attempts to dissuade him from sex. Her reaction is like a "passion of argument, logical, earnest, desperate . . . as though she were pleading with him on her knees" (C; 248). By allowing her son to fulfill his desire, Hoda becomes stripped of the only community she has; the love of her son.

Even though Hoda does allow her son to have sexual relations with her, her reasons for doing so are motivated by a concern for compassion and human value. As she becomes aware of their relation Hoda yearns to tell him she is his mother. She wishes to be his "friend" (C, 248), but all he yearns for is sex. When she finally allows him the pleasure of her sex, she does so to build his confidence. After the act is completed Hoda holds David in her arms "tenderly", and tries "in the only way she [knows] how to make up for all the harm she [has] done" (C, 253). On the one hand, Wiseman is very much concerned with detailing the erosion of traditional values in changing society. On the other hand, while Hoda's motivations can be considered tragic, they can also be considered heroic because they support values of compassion and, therefore, community.

Novelists such as Cohen, Kroetsch and Butler create a literature in which the social order breaks down allowing for the emergence of the self-regarding male individualist as desirable person in society and a redefinition of gender roles. Males become central, women inferior, and violence normal.

Leonard Cohen's first two novels reveal many of the differences between traditional literature and the recent stream being discussed here. The Favourite Game betrays a sexist bias. Women are depicted as debased and, at times, dehumanized. They are defined in relation to sexuality, or they remain as uni-dimensional objects, rarely appearing as fully developed characters. A male sexist bias is perpetuated which proposes one set of criteria for judging women and another for men.

After Breavman's first sexual encounter with a female he demands to know how many other men the woman, Shell, has slept with. When she refuses to reply, his male vanity and insecurity cause him to conclude that she has been with "battalions" (FG, 18) of men. A few moments later Breavman is pictured kissing "her shoulders and face and . . . hurting her with his nails and teeth" (FG, 19). Cohen sets up the role of the female as subservient to the male; her primary function is to suffer while gratifying the male sexual appetite. In both novels woman is inferior.

At one point Breavman remembers a childhood sweetheart named Lisa. He wonders if "she dreamed as he did, of intrigue

and high deeds" (FG, 23) but upon reflection, for no apparent reason, he concludes that her imagination was only concerned with "the brood she was to mother, the man she was to warm" (FG, 23). Breavman's patriarchal, sexist assumptions are a product of the male-oriented world which Cohen creates. Cohen's sexist perception of reality is reflected in the childhood games in which he involves his characters. In the "Soldier and the Whore" game which Breavman and Lisa play, whores are seen as "ideal women just as soldiers [are] ideal men" (FG, 25). The "ideal" male is protector, the "ideal" female is gratifier of the male's sexual appetite.

Breavman, as noted, learns the art of hypnosis; and the pleasure he derives from it is linked to physical domination and sexual gratification. Upon hypnotizing Heather, the family maid, he drives "a needle through the lobe of her ear" (FG, 52) to make quite certain of her hypnotic state.

He becomes "dizzy with his new power" (FG, 52) because he is in full control of another human being. He commands Heather to undress, and proceeds to make her perform sexual acts.

When Heather is brought out of her hypnotic state, she notices that her "pink elastic-bottomed panties" (FG, 55) have been forced behind the couch. She casually puts them back on with hardly a word, implying that she is either used to being manipulated while under the power of others, or that she has very little self-esteem. In any case, the act itself is a debased one in which the woman performs as an automaton. Heather is not only powerless in relation to the

male, but is subservient as well. Reflecting back on the hypnotic incident years later, Breavman wonders where Heather might be. He wonders why she did not stay to introduce him into "the warm important rites" (FG, 55) of sexuality.

Heather's function, in the eyes of a male protagonist, is to provide sexual stimulation for others, to be submissive and subservient to her male counterparts.

In Beautiful Losers Cohen creates a polarization of women. On the one hand, he creates Catherine Tekakwitha, the legendary virginal saint whom "I" is obsessed with finding. On the other hand, he creates Edith who is almost always depicted in terms of sexuality. "I" recalls Edith's "small breasts and round bum" (BL, 28), but cannot seem to recall any emotional or spiritual quality about her. In fact, his only clear memory of Edith has to do with the time she was raped at the age of thirteen. While his memory of Edith fails him, his imagination soars when her sexuality is considered. I's graphic imagination recalls the fall of "urine on last year's leaves and pine needles [which] developed into a monolithic tumult in eight ears (BL, 64) as Edith is raped. "I" cannot remember Edith's emotional or spiritual qualities, but he can readily depict and accentuate the sexual abuses inflicted upon her.

Cohen presents woman as distorted, angelic virgin who is not quite human, or whore who simply satisfies the sexual whims of the men around her. In either case Cohen distorts women. When neither figure provides the male with sexual

gratification, Cohen has his male indulge in violent sexual confrontation, or turn away from women altogether, choosing masturbation or homosexuality.

By its very nature male homosexuality, symbolizing a denial of the female and, therefore, of procreation, undermines the family unit and, consequently, the values of community. As Russell Jacoby points out, the

glorification of the rights of homosexuals, control over one's own body . . . masturbation, and the rest confuse equality-within-alienation with liberation . . . The systematic destruction of human relationships [leaves] the decimated subject only with itself. (Jacoby, 113)

Cohen's primarily male-oriented fiction actualizes alienation between the sexes which does not provide his characters with a sense of salvation but with a sense of isolation and despair. Through homosexuality and alienation, males become isolated from their environment while females become minimized, debased or totally ignored.

As the role of the female becomes more passive and submissive, the act of sex becomes debased. Near the end of Beautiful Losers Edith finds that she is no longer capable of orgasm. Instead, she must depend on F's "artificial phalli . . . Vaginal Vibrators, the Rin-No-Tam and Godemiché or Dildo" (BL, 179) for sexual satisfaction. Because Edith has been so preoccupied with fulfilling "I"'s and F's sexual demands, her feelings and responses have become minimized. Human contact no longer fulfills her sexual needs, so she must depend upon artificial stimuli and F's recitals of

"unusual sex practices" (BL, 180) to satisfy them.

During the 1960's a number of other Canadian novels appear which present a view of women similar to Cohen's. At times women are virgin-like and saintly, as in the literature of Timothy Findley, while at other times they are whores, as in much of the literature of Mordecai Richler. In some literature that departs from the virgin or whore motif, women characters become disregarded as male protagonists choose homosexuality over conventional sexual roles. For instance, the literature of Scott Symons depends heavily on unconventional sex. Women become defined in terms of debased sexuality, as invariably submissive and inferior to their male counterparts.

Unlike earlier Canadian novels such as Fruits of the Earth or The Sacrifice which depict females as vital functioning units of the household, much of recent fiction depicts women as one-dimensional and inferior. As the literature moves into the 1970's some authors choose to build upon and enhance the literary attitudes proposed by Cohen. An author like Robert Kroetsch takes those attitudes and develops them even further. Because of Kroetsch's use of irony, critics argue that he is trying to ridicule the biases which perpetuate the oppression of women. Sexual relationships and naming strategies which Kroetsch develops, however, reveal a blatant, male-dominated world.

Kroetsch wishes to uninvent many of the myths which have defined our past and our present. He perceives a chaotic,

patriarchal world which he attempts to undermine. As he states,

I really think that much of the power [in the western world] resides within a matriarchal pattern, and that most men posture a great deal. We [men] invent roles that seem to focus on power, and yet they are actually hollow.⁶

Kroetsch believes that our biased histories, histories which perpetuate the values of ruling class, male ideologies, no longer provide us with the proper sense of who we are. He believes that the traditional ruling institutions have provided us with a false sense of history. By undermining the male-oriented fallacies which have created our present state, he hopes to achieve a new awareness through the use of irony.

Irony is conventionally divided into verbal irony, defined in standard manuals as "a statement in which the implicit meaning intended by the speaker differs from that which he ostensibly asserts," and structural irony, defined in the manuals as any structural device which the author employs to "sustain the duplicity of meaning" (Abrams, 80-81). Kroetsch uses structural irony. Through structural devices such as insane narrators and unconventional plots, further discussed in chapter three, Kroetsch sustains the duplicity of meaning in his texts. By presenting the text ironically,

⁶ For further discussion see my interview with Kroetsch found in the Appendix of this discourse.

the author forces the reader to question intention. The reader cannot be certain whether the author is presenting material seriously, or whether he intends a second, more subtle reading of the text. While the reader is expected to look below the surface meaning of the text, he or she may miss much of the surface action and meaning. Through Kroetsch's use of insane narrators, for instance, his work can be interpreted on a number of levels. On the one hand, the reader cannot necessarily believe the narrator fully, because of the narrator's incapacity to relate events accurately. On the other hand, Kroetsch may intentionally write his stories from an absurd male, sexist view so the reader will be forced to reevaluate his own position regarding sexism. The author is allowed to write what he pleases and then claim that he is simply being ironic. It is exactly through the claim of irony that Kroetsch's sexism goes unnoticed.

Kroetsch realizes the problem caused by perceiving the world through narrow, patriarchal eyes. But he depicts a world in which men are superior to women. Kroetsch's own strongly patriarchal upbringing may have influenced his values to the point where he cannot transcend a male-oriented structure of thought. Even though he attempts to satirize patriarchal thinking, he perceives the world from the point of view of a male who believes in masculine superiority and feminine inferiority.

Women are rarely given the characteristics of fully developed human beings in Kroetsch's first three novels. They are usually depicted as little more than gratifiers of men's sexual appetites. In But We Are Exiles Angie Boyle, the Nahanni Jane's cook, is hired by the chief because she had the "perspicacity to go to bed with him one night in Yehlowknife" (BW, 14). One of Helen Murdoch's major purposes in The Words of My Roaring is to fornicate with J. J. Backstrom. He finds his hands "touching her breasts, then touching the flat of her belly, her pretty behind" (W, 136), thus releasing him from his inner anxieties until "nothing at all [matters]; nothing" (W, 136). In both novels the role of the woman is that of provider, and, as in the third novel by Kroetsch, is characterless and/or submissive.

In The Studhorse Man Kroetsch begins to experiment with various writing techniques, as he moves away from literary realism and into forms of fiction "in which the mythic level dominates the literal" (Brown, 418). However, his attitudes toward women remain the same. One of the first women introduced, P. Cockburn, is typical of the female characters in his novels. After having once been sexually satisfied by the male protagonist, Hazard Lepage, the female sculptor cries she must make a model of him in "shining wax" (SM, 33). Later, Hazard mounts a woman named Maria in a manner that can only be associated with bestiality as the narrator informs the reader that Hazard "whinnied" (SM, 133) throughout the act.

Anna Dawe in Badlands, the sheltered, oppressed, virgin daughter of William Dawe, tells that she wanted

to lie out there on the prairie, looking up at the stars, getting fucked by a man whose name [she] did not know, whose face [she] could not remember, and would never see again. (B, 260)

Anna believes an act such as she describes will free her from traditional ruling systems of society. The character who does act in this allegedly emancipated way, however, is Anna Yellowbird, the mystical Indian who is, to use Anna Dawe's word, fucked by various members of the Dawe expedition. Anna Yellowbird acts in a manner which is supposedly emancipated in Kroetsch's eyes. Yet she is presented as a drunk and a whore. Like Cohen's, Kroetsch's women either adhere to the ruling systems which uphold certain standards of morality, or they break from the norm to be defined in debased terms. He provides no place for the woman who can have a satisfying sexual relation in a loving partnership.

In a later novel, What the Crow Said, John Skandl erects a penis-like icehouse which Tiddy Land finds so appealing that her "temptation not to love" (WC, 47) begins to weaken. Although Tiddy plays an intricate part in the novel, her reason for becoming a feeling, compassionate woman can be traced to her response to the phallic icehouse. She stares at the "glowing, tall tower, the vibrant tower" and concludes she has "never seen anything so wondrous" (WC, 47). The incident may be seen as outrageous comedy, or uplifting

satire, but it also reinforces the myths that have allowed women to become stereotyped. Kroetsch consistently places the female in awe of masculinity.

In Crow the interaction between the sexes is solely dependent upon the sexual act. In the opening pages a swarm of bees brings Tiddy's daughter Vera ecstatically to orgasm. From that moment on no "mortal man would satisfy her" (WC, 13). Vera eventually alienates herself from male company and begins breeding bees, and for the rest of the novel she chooses to deny herself the company of men. Kroetsch implies that interaction between the sexes is primarily based on sexual relations, and once Vera finds alternative sexual gratification her reason for associating with men is eliminated. Vera's sexuality is chauvinistic. She prefers physical pleasure over any form of relation.

Naming strategies in his first three novels reveal Kroetsch's preference for his male characters. They share ordinary, non-symbolic names such as Johnny Backstrom and Peter Guy. In the third novel, The Studhorse Man, Kroetsch's naming strategies are linked to his sexist views. At one point Hazard Lepage meets a woman, P. Cockburn, who is engaged to be married. She voraciously loves to have sex, as her name implies, and wishes to immortalize Hazard in wax after he has sexually satisfied her.

In Gone Indian the protagonist, Jeremy Sadness, is given a name which links him with the emotional side of life, one which the reader can empathize with. Two of the women who

share sexual relations with Jeremy, however, are named Miss Cundt and Miss Petcock. The male is named after an emotion; one of the females is named after a physical part and the other after a sexual activity. The females have no first names, no real identity.

In What the Crow Said the two most significant names are Liebhaber and Tiddy Lang. The first, Liebhaber, is a German name, and roughly translates as "love haver". The male name is linked with an emotional state. The obvious connotations of the word Tiddy link the female with the physical and the sexual. Although Kroetsch ridicules both sexes, he always refers to the female through sexual language, and refers to males by emotional or sensitive language.

Although Kroetsch believes his novels ridicule and destroy the fallacies of male-oriented modes of thought, he is actually guilty of perpetuating the same values which support myths of female inferiority. He expresses attitudes which uphold male intellectual and physical superiority. Kroetsch does not undermine patriarchal ruling systems, but instead reinforces the same myths which advocate male superiority and female subservience. Whereas Kroetsch would deny any such accusations, claiming that he is attempting to "uninvent" the ruling systems, his work is obviously permeated with male ideologies of a kind that are not neutral, but overtly sexist.

As male individualism in Canada becomes more predominant in our literature a curious development occurs in relation

to sexuality. Woman becomes defined as an object, in most cases a sexual object, ready to satisfy the whims of her male counterparts. As the gratification of the self becomes more important, sex becomes a basis for power struggles. The struggles lead to scenes of eroticism, pornography, and, ultimately, violence. For instance, in the novels of Juan Butler the individual, almost always male, imposes his own values on those he comes in contact with. Females become subservient to the male's desires and secondary to the plot. Furthermore, as the male individualist randomly imposes his power on those around him, the possibility for confrontation, and therefore violence, increases.

In The Sacrifice Abraham resorts to violence to battle immorality, to defeat any aspect which poses a threat to the stability of the community, and to strike out at a part of himself he wishes to control. In Butler's work, however, violence arises randomly for reasons which seem unjustified. Butler's male protagonists circumvent authority and, in their own minds, transcend law, morality, and all aspects of the social order. Inevitably, they seek to impose their own values on those they come in contact with, and their actions often lead to acts of violence. In Butler's work violence occurs on two levels. Either the male protagonist indulges in acts of violent sexual activity, or he uses violence in order to assert his own repressed anxieties.

Juan Butler's work is filled with examples of violence when individualists attempt to gratify their immediate,

selfish whims. Because of his use of structural irony, Butler rarely, if ever, feels the need to justify his violent portrayals. Like Kroetsch, Butler uses structural devices such as incredible narrators--narrators who are insane--and unconventional plots to relate his stories. Through the use of dreams and surrealism Butler creates, on one level, a totally absurd picture of reality. Because of the narrator's insanity the reader cannot be certain if his story has actually occurred. Therefore, Butler wishes, perhaps, that his story be read ironically, and that the presence of violence is actually meant to be read as a parody of violence. Through the use of parody and irony Butler may be hoping that the reader's reaction to the level of violence will make the reader reevaluate his own attitudes towards violence. Regardless of Butler's intention, however, the work hinges mainly on the use of violence to create its intended mood.

In Cabbagetown Diary the protagonist, Michael, a contemporary Canadian "hero" who distrusts traditional institutions, feels he must learn to "depend more upon his own resources; in other words, he must develop the legendary American virtue of self-reliance" (Sutherland, 7). Michael chooses to live in a world filled with violence. He enjoys watching American films such as "Bonnie and Clyde" which he describes as "a gas. It's about this ex-con who meets a waitress and they rob banks and grocery stores till they're shot full of holes by the fuzz" (CD, 51). Even though Michael is disappointed at the end of the film, he finds pleasure in

the "good fighting scenes" (CD, 52). He is titillated that there is "enough blood to take a bath in" (CD, 52). Although Michael's titillation may be said to be derived from his repressed need to be aggressive and violent, there appears no concrete justification for the violence he is associated with.

On one occasion Michael finds himself involved in a violent confrontation. After leaving a bar he and Terry go to a party. Michael leaves the room where the party is taking place to go to the bathroom, and when he returns he notices one of the guests bothering his lover Terry. Michael promptly gives the man a "chop in the windpipe and [boots] him in the shins" (CD, 109). As if this is not enough punishment, Michael then proceeds to "jump in the air and land heels first" (CD, 109) on the other's groin. Michael is a chauvinist who treats his female companion as a piece of his own territory. He does not act out of compassion for Terry, but out of his own insecure nature which is momentarily threatened. Before he even realizes why the man is talking to his lover, he allows his violent nature to become the dominating force of his personality.

Similarities between Butler's work and the work of Cohen and Kroetsch abound. Butler uses surrealism to give his work a violent quality which has rarely been equalled in recent Canadian fiction. His use of surrealism causes a variety of images to appear randomly, as his thoughts are presented without conscious filtration. Butler appears to allow himself

to become disassociated from the text since he supposedly partakes in an unconscious effort to write down spontaneous, random thought. His disassociation from the text--conscious or unconscious--through his use of irony and surrealism, causes a disassociation from any moral problems which the text might present. Whether he deems violence as acceptable, or is parodying it so the reader will reevaluate his own position regarding violent acts, through irony and surrealism Butler creates a fiction which is extremely violent, and which displays a lack of any form of authorial judgement.

Butler's second novel, The Garbageman, opens in an aura of violence. Upon waking, the narrator considers caving in his cat's "skull with one sharp blow" (G, 5). He pictures the cat's tongue slipping "out from between his upper fangs" (G, 5), but concludes that he should not actually perform the act since he will eventually "have to clean [the mess] up" (G, 6). Instead, he gives the cat a saucer of milk. But when the cat purrs for more, the narrator considers taking a "well-honed knife with a needle-like point" (G, 6) and plunging it "violently" into the cat's "exposed neck" (G, 6). The narrator's fantasies in the opening pages set up the tone for the rest of the novel. As the narrator seeks to gratify immediate whims, his actions lead him to inflict violence on others.

The narrator's fantasies take him to a variety of places where he can express his repressed yearning for violence.

While lying in his bed he dreams of travelling to Barcelona

where he learns the "American Sixth Fleet has landed" (G, 44). He envisions the thousands of sailors who will be "on shore leave tonight, their pockets stuffed with dollars and their faces flushed with desire" (G, 45). With the night still ahead of him, the narrator premeditatively decides he will "rip off" (G, 50) a number of sailors in the evening. He says "I'm going to make a lot of money tonight. I can feel it" (G, 50). The presence of visitors in the town means extra money for the self-regarding narrator. He has little concern for others. The only reason he seeks human contact is so he can benefit from the misfortune he inflicts on those around him.

Upon entering a Spanish bar, the narrator begins a conversation with one of the American sailors who has invaded Barcelona for the evening. As the two get to know each other, the narrator decides that this is the marine he is going to take advantage of once the marine becomes too drunk to defend himself. He considers the marine "a challenge" (G, 64), and concludes that when he finishes with this one he will "try to get at least one more" (G, 65) before the night is over. He feels that this is going to be his "lucky night" (G, 65), alluding to the fact that he may victimize a number of unsuspecting marines. As the half-drunken marine leans on the narrator, using his "shoulder as an arm-rest" (G, 65), the narrator concludes that he will "be paying for it later" (G, 65).

In order to "terminate" (G, 69) what he has been "proposing to do all night long" (G, 69) the narrator leads the marine away from the crowded streets of Barcelona to a desolate part of town. The marine concludes "there's no Flamenco club here. There's nothing here" (G, 73). The marine attempts to pull out his gun to protect himself, and the narrator quickly reveals a bottle and shatters it "against [the marine's] forehead" (G, 73). With the force of the blow, the marine staggers backward while "blood shoots out, pours over his eyes, A geyser of blood" (G, 74 sic). The narrator proceeds to hack until the marine's shirt is saturated with blood. Blood pours from his face and hands like a "river" (G, 74), causing him to lose his sense of balance. As the marine's murder continues the author appears to become engulfed in his own self-indulgence and titillation.

A sudden shift in the narrative transforms the dark alley into a "sunny, crowd-encircled plaza de toros" (G, 75) where the narrator sees himself as the picador, and the marine becomes the bull. The murder becomes a bull-fight in which the outcome is not nearly as important as the formal events which create it. The narrator coaxes his "black beauty" (G, 75), toying with him in his agonized condition. The narrator envisions the "roar of thousands of excited voices crashing against [his] ears" (G, 75). He continues to see the marine as a bull, as he follows the particular, meticulous outline that the matador must follow in order to kill his animal opponent in the most spectacular style.

• Like the legendary bulls of old, the marine is not willing to give up the hopeless fight easily. He lunges blindly at the narrator in an attempt to save himself, and as he does so the narrator proceeds to "kick him in the face . . . as he writhes in agony amidst the human filth" (G, 76). When the marine gets up again, the narrator exclaims,

It's unexplainable . . . Some bulls never know when they've been defeated . . . In Roman times, he would have received the thumbs-up signal when it came time for the crowd to decide his fate. But these aren't Roman times and this isn't a bullring. (G, 76-77)

The scene is just one of many in Butler's work in which interaction between men ultimately leads to violent confrontation. When the narrator leaves Spain for France the reader is witness to the violence which occurs in Butler's work between men and women.

While in France, under the pseudonym of Francois, the narrator encounters "a plump girl in her late teens" (G, 88) named Maria. He attempts to seduce the "trusting" (G, 89) young woman and eventually befriends her like a "virus" (G, 100) which attacks her immune system. Francois convinces her to accompany him to the Bois de Boulogne. He pretends to be interested in their conversation, but is actually thinking of her as a stupid "fat cow" with soft "cushion breasts, pillow buttocks" (G, 110). For Francois, Maria represents a sexual object which he intends to control. He looks upon her as inferior, and waits for an opportunity to

manipulate her into a position of subservience.

Upon successfully luring Maria into a secluded meadow, Francois anticipates the fulfilment of his distorted sexual intentions. Opening his carrying bag, which he told her was filled with "a blanket to sit on and a transistor radio" (G, 108), he takes out various items used for physical bondage, including a "long woolen scarf . . . a length of thin nylon cord" and a "double-edged pointed Italian switchblade" (G, 115). As the narrator binds Maria with the cord and scarf she becomes a plaything which he will eventually malign and physically abuse.

The narrator "viciously" begins to "bite" and "pinch" her breasts (G, 119). He continues to bite harder while his "teeth perforate deeper" (G, 119). The language used to describe the scene becomes increasingly intense and graphic as he rakes his "jagged fingernails across her tender flesh" (G, 120). When she crashes to the ground in exhaustion, he still hangs on, "teeth still firmly secured in hard, wrinkled nipples" (G, 120) so viciously that he eventually bites off her left nipple. His actions cause the narrator to ejaculate, and as he does so he beats his fists "against her breasts, her face" (G, 120) and completes the obscene act by vomiting "profusely over her upper body and face" (G, 120). The morbid nature of the scene speaks for itself. As the narrator attempts to satisfy his immediate, sexual urges his need for another becomes merely an outlet for his own repressed sexual energies.

Butler's first two novels depend upon violence as an apparent justification for the actions of the self-regarding individualist, and as a means of placing women in positions of subservience and debasement. By concentrating on surrealist techniques, Butler disassociates himself from any form of authorial judgement. Although he may realize that his audience will hate the violence present and, possibly, reevaluate their own attitudes towards it, the violence is, nevertheless, presented on a scale that seems unjustified. Even if his intention is to create fictions which appear decadent on the surface, but are meant to be interpreted ironically, he actually creates fictions which are sexist and violent.

Cohen, Kroetsch and Butler rely on the use of irony. In fact, the entire presentation of their work, one might argue, hinges solely on the realization that irony exists on every plane of their writing. They are writing a sort of "tongue in cheek" story in which the reader is expected to see through the surface and pierce the underlying meaning of the fiction. To say they are sexist, or that their writing perpetuates or advocates violence might be entirely missing the point. The purpose of their work, supposedly, is to bring sexism and violence to the attention of the reader only so the reader can see that those are the aspects which the authors are attempting to undermine.

In literary realism irony can be used to portray or ridicule, among other things, conventional attitudes.

Conventional attitudes are upheld or ridiculed in order to convey criticism about some aspect of society. The irony is usually obvious to the audience since conventional moral attitudes are more clearly defined than modern ones. The movement from realism to surrealism, however, causes authors to use irony in a different manner. Through the presentation of random, unconscious thought, many images and ideas are presented to the reader usually without authorial judgement. Because moral attitudes are not as clearly defined in modern society as in traditional society, the ironic intent is not easy to comprehend. Nevertheless, even if Cohen's and Kroetsch's representation of women and sex is meant to be ironic, and even if Butler's representation of the individual and the community in relation to violence is meant to be ironic, the fact remains that their work portrays women as submissive and one-dimensional and perceives violence as normal.

As Canadian literature moves into the 1970's the major attitudes of an important stream of writers become more defined. The new stream grants the individualist more and more importance, while it denies more traditional values of the family and community. For example, the literature of writers like Wiseman reveals attitudes toward women and sex in a positive manner, while it portrays acts of violence in justifiable terms. The new stream of literature reveals attitudes which place women in subservient positions and allow for a self-indulgent portrayal of sex. While the

authors of the new stream might argue that their work is meant to be read ironically, the literature is permeated with excessive sexism and violence. What remains to be looked at are some possible reasons for this shift, and, indeed, why such a shift has been allowed.

CHAPTER THREE

After the Second World War, and most notably around 1960, as has been said already, a stream of contemporary literature begins to concern itself with a whole new set of values. Cohen and Butler reveal values that ignore community experience and perpetuate values of the individual, values deemed most threatening to traditional literature. Much literature since 1960 favours the self-regarding individualist who threatens the stability of the community, who seeks to assert his own values, and who is allowed to act in a manner which transcends any sort of authorial judgement.

One important aspect to consider in relation to the changing values is a changing attitude towards order and tradition. In the works of Grove and Wiseman order and tradition are important, not only in the authors' attitudes towards society, but also in the way they present their material. Content and forms express the importance of tradition. The thematically 'traditional' Canadian novel is traditional in form. As the values in the literature change, especially around 1960, so do the forms which present the values, as the works of Robert Kroetsch reveal. Kroetsch's attitudes are revealed through his rejection of established values and established forms.

Terry Eagleton points out that forms "are historically determined by the kind of 'content' they have to embody; they are changed, transformed, broken down and revolutionized as

that content itself changes" (Eagleton, B22). In the works of Robert Kroetsch the author attempts to undermine the traditional aspects of community and social responsibility which are so prevalent in earlier Canadian literature. Indeed, he does not employ traditional, linear forms. Rather, he presents a fragmented, disjointed form in which order is almost non-existent. Recent criticism admits a relation between form and content, usually, but it fails to "assert in the end the primacy of content in determining form" (Eagleton, B23). Only by realizing the primacy of content over form can the reader, and the critic, begin to understand the dialectic between the forms and the values they express.

Kroetsch attempts to manipulate his narrative forms, styles of representation and other structural devices in order to convey the centrality of individual experience, while denying or ignoring order and tradition. He believes traditional forms hold back our most ambitious writers, and that the author must "do violence to form" (Kroetsch, 57). Kroetsch's use of content, therefore, is largely dictated by the way he manipulates his forms. For instance, in The Studhorse Man Demeter is said to be an "insane narrator" (Surette, 10) who prefers "an ordered world, even if [he] must order it through a posture of madness" (SM, 61). He is incapable of rendering history in any credible manner. Kroetsch's intention is to bring into question the entire validity of concepts such as history and tradition. As Kroetsch himself states, the "continuity asserted by history

is beyond, lies beyond, the truth of fiction" (Kroetsch, 60). Kroetsch's sentiment is upheld by Hazard Lepage, the protagonist in the novel who "[denies] the past" (SM, 10), who feels that the past is something that is not wholly comprehensible to him. Any rendering of history, of course, cannot be entirely correct. But to deny any hope of rendering history in some sort of universal manner must result in the perpetuation of a host of individual histories that share no coherent base and deny any type of tradition or form of order.

Kroetsch uses a variety of techniques to undermine traditional values. Throughout The Studhorse Man traditional institutions are demeaned. Hazard impersonates a variety of characters, from a Northwest Mounted Police constable to a clergyman. In both cases the institutions with which Hazard identifies represent the community-builders of our traditional past, the institutions which created a sense of order and tradition for the Canadian people. The institutions are minimized and ridiculed through their mere association with Hazard. Traditional institutions are brought into question, while the individual is left to "reconstruct" (SM, 41) personal histories on his own.

By advocating the position that history cannot be communicated accurately, Kroetsch creates a world in which personal interpretation takes precedence over community experience. Content presents characters embodying self-regarding individualism; form creates a fundamental structure in which self-regarding individualism predominates as a world

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view. In Kroetsch's Gone Indian the entire concept of the validity of traditional story-telling is undermined through the use of fragmented forms. In The Studhorse Man, the author depends upon the incapacity of his narrator to relay his content; in Gone Indian the actual narrative apparatus brings into question the validity of his story and, consequently, the validity of any story which does not affect the individual personally.

In Gone Indian the narrator, Mark Madham, attempts to recreate the history of Jeremy Sadness. Because of Jeremy's inability to "get things down on paper" (GI, 1), Mark must rely on a number of recorded tapes which Jeremy occasionally sends back to him, and which, in a confusing manner, serve to retell his adventures. As in The Studhorse Man, the possibility of portraying historical events accurately is brought into question. The tapes stand for a part of the interpretive process which goes on between any story-teller and his audience. Mark cannot depend upon the tapes to provide the entire story of Jeremy Sadness and so Kroetsch provides a formal device, the tapes, as a structural way of calling into question history as we think of it. The tapes must be read into and worked from as any historical documents must. But Mark makes clear that the process is intrinsically flawed.

The implications of Kroetsch's method of story-telling are more complex than has been pointed out in criticism. While much criticism concerns itself with the variety of formal representations authors employ—the ways in which the

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stories are being told--it fails to point out the social and moral ramifications of such concerns.⁷ While critics argue over formal techniques, they permit the content of the literature to lose its importance and take on secondary status. In Gone Indian, for instance, critical insistence upon the importance of reception theory--the realization on the reader's part that he must work as an active participant in the interpretive process of the story-telling act--focuses on form, ignoring the decadent content of the novel.⁸ Jeremy's infidelity, his sexist attitudes towards women, for instance, go unnoticed or ignored by much contemporary criticism. The new values appear unconcerned with concepts of morality or social responsibility. In fact, as has already been noted in chapter two, traditional values have given way to a new set of values which advocate self-indulgence in sex and violence. In short, the rise of individualism seems to relate directly to an overwhelming concern of authors with form as primary matter in fiction.

In Badlands, also by Kroetsch, the narrator, Anna Dawe, recreates her father's historical exploration of the Alberta Badlands through the use of his "hoards of field notes" (B, 2).

⁷ See Open Letter (Summer-Fall, 1984) issue dedicated to various authors writing on the works of Kroetsch.

⁸ For a discussion of Kroetsch's theories of reception theory see Barbara Godard's article "Other Fictions: Robert Kroetsch's Criticism," Open Letter (Summer-Fall, 1984), pp. 5-21).

Narrative becomes almost self-reflexive; Kroetsch seems to be writing a fiction about how fiction is written. Anna attempts to unravel the many field notes provided for her by her father; she must also make sense of--and eventually write down--events as her father saw them, while she must also rely on her own ability to relate her father's story to the reader. The self-reflexive narrative places an even greater emphasis on form than in Kroetsch's first two novels discussed here. William Dawe's adventure is not Kroetsch's primary concern; the interpretation of Dawe's adventure by his daughter is.

As in Kroetsch's first two novel's discussed here, Badlands questions historical value. William Dawe, leader of the Dawe expedition, is a man "Without a history" (B, 138). Another man on the expedition feels there is "no past" (B, 235). The content of Badlands is supported by the various forms which create it. Anna Dawe's reconstruction of her father's story may or may not be accurate. Anna's credibility as an objective story-teller becomes questionable when she adds personal biases to the story she is attempting to relate.

Because of Kroetsch's overriding concern with the form of the novel, his work may be thought of as a series of processes rather than products. He is one of the writers who views the form of the novel as a primary concern, the subject as secondary. Kroetsch's work presents a set of attitudes which denies concepts of tradition while it asserts the primary importance of individualism. As Kroetsch becomes

more preoccupied with the forms he employs, furthermore, so do the critics who view his work.

Twentieth century technological advances change the way all men perceive the world and each other. More than just coincidentally, perhaps, the rise of individualism parallels the rise of technology. As technology and individualism persist, social responsibility seems to diminish--at least in the Canadian depictions of life under scrutiny here.

Robert Kroetsch's work may well relate to technological values and the current overwhelming concern with form over content of the novel.

Indeed, Herbert Marcuse, in his book One-dimensional Man, writes that "the historical achievement of science and technology has rendered possible the translation of values into technical tasks--the materialization of values" (Marcuse, 231-232). Marcuse asserts, in short, that changes in technology relate to changes in society which, in turn, have a connection with changes in literature. As the importance of literature's content becomes replaced by the importance of technical, formalistic aspects, a concept such as morality becomes secondary to what is perceived as daring literary technique. A primary concern with form in the novel is exactly what Frederick Philip Grove warns against as technology becomes more predominant in the twentieth century. What is at stake is "the redefinition of values in technical terms, as elements in the technological process" (Marcuse, 232). The technical aspects of the literature are, indeed, becoming

more important than the traditional values of the community in a stream of recent Canadian literature.

If there is any doubt whether technology has figured in the changing literary values of contemporary Canadian literature, the work of Michael Ondaatje might serve as a test case. Like Kroetsch, Ondaatje disassociates himself from any sort of authorial judgement or social responsibility. However, in Ondaatje's work the reader becomes even more aware of the author's preoccupation with form because Ondaatje employs a wide variety of narrative techniques. Through his use of photographs, interviews, short stories and poetry, Ondaatje creates a kaleidoscopic effect. The novel is presented through fragmented forms rather than through linear development of prose. His preoccupation with forms may explain why Ondaatje becomes disassociated from his work. In other words, his involvement in the technical aspects of work may make him insensitive to his subject matter. His obsession with form might also explain the overwhelming amount of violence in his works.

In his first two works including prose Ondaatje reveals a preoccupation with the actions of self-regarding individualists and with form. Both novels are fragmented and disjointed, representative of their respective content: two individualists wish to break from accepted forms and traditions.

In The Collected Works of Billy the Kid the author is concerned with technique. On the first page Ondaatje comments that the blank page is a photograph of Billy. Ondaatje

relates the sexual act to technology when Billy and Paulita Maxwell physically encounter "pivoting like machines in final speed" (BK, 16). Billy seems threatened throughout the novel by technology. He recalls "the clean speed of machines/ that make machines" (BK, 41), but realizes he is alien to mechanical experience. He is an anachronism attempting to survive in an alien and threatening world, his affinity for nature juxtaposed with Patrick Garrett's technological, almost automaton-like qualities.

Ondaatje's The Collected Works of Billy the Kid is a difficult book to categorize. Although Ondaatje received the 1970 Governor General's award for the book in the category of poetry, it can hardly be considered as strictly poetry. For example, there are a number of prose passages which consist of more ~~than~~ two or three pages. Also, there are invented interviews incorporated into the text to further Ondaatje's intended mood. The difficulty in categorizing the book serves to reinforce the theories being discussed in this discourse. The fragmentation of traditional literary forms wrenches the text from traditional definitions. Furthermore, the fragmentation of form is paralleled by the fragmentation of social values. In Billy the Kid Ondaatje creates a text which breaks from all traditional literary definitions.

The dichotomy in the novel between Billy and Garrett is reflective of the dichotomy between the forces of nature and the forces of technology. When Billy secludes himself from

the outside world he inhabits a world where the animals accept him as one of their own. He sleeps in a barn for a week and is accepted by the other animals "as, a larger breed" (BK, 17). In contrast, Pat Garrett attempts to control nature. Garrett owns a collection of "stuffed birds" (BK, 88) which he proudly displays on his verandah. Billy assimilates; Garrett chooses to order and control nature. He must track down and eventually capture Billy, symbolizing a metaphor of the rise of technology which has slowly eroded or controlled the forces of nature.

Garrett takes extra precautions to ensure Billy does not escape once he is captured. For five days Billy is forced to ride with his legs "handcuffed with 24 [inch] chains under the horse" and his hands "bound to the bridle" (BK, 76). He is able to withstand the awkward position for a while, but on the fifth day the sun metaphorically turns into "a pair of hands" and begins to "pull out the hairs" (BK, 76) on his head. Symbolically, nature itself turns on Billy as it, too, becomes a threatening force. The sun "unfolds [his] head drawing back each layer of skin and letting it flap" (BK, 76) over his ears. Technology, represented by Garrett, dominates, and then perverts, nature.

Although Ondaatje obviously wishes to explore the possibilities when nature becomes engulfed by technology, he cannot escape the values which are present in technological process. While he attempts to explore the erosion of natural forces, he is preoccupied with form that mirrors a fragmented

and decayed world. His use of morally neutral violence suggests it is a natural and acceptable aspect of society. On the one hand, his inclusion of violence in the novel might reveal some of the problems inherent in post-industrial society. On the other hand, his lack of authorial judgement permits examples of violence to appear wholly unjustified.

At one stage Billy recounts a story he once heard of a man who goes insane while breeding dogs. The man, Livingstone, decides to breed "a race of mad dogs" (BK, 60). He breeds and inbreeds into every conceivable combination "until their bones grew arched and tangled, ears longer than their feet, [while] their tempers became either slothful or venomous and their jaws were black rather than red" (BK, 60). When asked how the breeding is coming along, he vaguely replies it is "like breeding roses" (BK, 61), and that he first wishes to complete the project before disclosing too much. According to Livingstone, people would then be surprised and "would get the total effect" (BK, 61). The graphic nature of the story is obvious, but has not been pointed to for its extremely violent tone.

Billy tells how Livingstone continued breeding

the worst with the worst, those heaps of bone and hair and sexual organs and bulging eyes and mind were chaotic half, out of hunger out of liquor out of their minds being pressed out of shape by new freakish bones that grew into their skulls. (BK, 61)

His morbid breeding is not discovered until one night he decides to enter the pen and the dogs viciously attack him.

When his body is found, there is "almost nothing left of him" (BK, 62). Even his watch has been eaten by one of the dogs. The only other remains are "the bones of course, and his left wrist--the hand that held the whip when he was inside the pen--was left untouched in the middle of the area" (BK, 62).

Like the other writers being explored here, Ondaatje believes history is an illusive concept. He believes that legends of characters such as Billy the Kid have come to be distorted over time. By retelling Billy's story, Ondaatje hopes, possibly, to "uninvent" some of the myths. Through his use of photographs and interviews, Ondaatje hopes to create a more human history for Billy. However, although Ondaatje is correct to feel that any universal rendering of history may not be totally accurate, he only serves to undermine the entire concept of history and tradition by creating individual histories of the kind he undertakes in The Collected Works of Billy the Kid.

Ondaatje continues his journey through the fragmented world of the individualist in his second prose work Coming Through Slaughter. Like Billy, Coming Through Slaughter is created out of a fragmented form which reflects the decaying world Ondaatje attempts to explore. He attempts to demythologize the history of Buddy Bolden, legendary jazz musician from New Orleans. The story revolves around one detective's attempt to locate Buddy who has disappeared from New Orleans for over two years. The detective/narrator, Webb, can be

seen as a "fact-finder" (McGregor, 305), as one who takes the fragments of Buddy's story and attempts to create some sort of sense from them. However, as McGregor points out,

his methods and morality are undermined by suggestions of . . . incompetence (the physical impossibility of his entry into Bolden's mind makes us question the validity of the subjective material).
(McGregor, 305)

Ondaatje brings into question the validity of the interpretive process through the use of an incompetent narrator.

The incompetent narrative voice is only one example of Ondaatje's method of undermining the entire story-telling method. Webb's inability to track down Buddy, his obsession with irrelevant detail, leaves the reader to question his competence as an accurate story-teller. In Coming Through Slaughter Ondaatje employs many other formalistic devices which question aspects of conventional order and tradition. For instance, Buddy's love of jazz reflects his (and Ondaatje's) wish to break from conventional forms since jazz is created out of a lack of structured forms. Images are presented in a fragmented, spontaneous manner. Robert Kroetsch writes that

Ondaatje heightens the sense of violation by beginning a new section of the 'story' at the top of the lefthand page. By spacing his paragraphs. By inserting asterisks. The bookness of book is used, to violate the consolation of narrative.
(Kroetsch, 61)

Ondaatje creates forms which wrench the novel from its

traditional conventions. The violation of form, in turn, sets up the mood for the novel's violent content.

In Coming Through Slaughter Ondaatje heightens individual experience. Ondaatje portrays Buddy's world as an intense place reflective of the spontaneous music with which Buddy identifies. The world is also a violent place where the feelings and emotions of the characters involved are all intense. In fact, one of the most violent scenes in all of Canadian literature occurs in Buddy's barbershop. While arguing with his friend Tom Pickett, Buddy initiates a fight, which turns into an extremely violent confrontation. After Tom has suggested that he has had sexual relations with Buddy's wife Nora, Buddy "slices off" one of Tom's nipples and inflicts numerous small cuts on Tom's face with a straight-blade razor (CTS, 73). What makes

the slicing off of the nipple a violent act is not simply the act itself. But more: Ondaatje refuses to give the scene a traditional beginning, middle and end. His refusal of form releases the experience of violence . . . The violent act is not contained, manipulated, accounted for. (Kroetsch, 62)

Violence is not only conveyed on a literal level through the novel's content, but on a symbolic level through the novel's untraditional form.

On another level Ondaatje uses language to further his violent tone. In Buddy's last public appearance he walks down the main street of New Orleans throwing "notes off the walls of people" (CTS, 130). As he gets lost in the playing

of his own music, a woman suddenly appears and begins to "play off" him with her body (CTS, 129). Buddy says that is what he "wanted, always" (CTS, 130), to lose himself in the music he plays. He continues to play "Half dead", to take "aim" (CTS, 130) at the woman dancing in front of him. The experience turns into a contest in Buddy's mind to see which of them can last the longest. As the contest unfolds the language used to describe it becomes increasingly violent.

As the two continue to compete Buddy explains "all the desire in me is cramp and hard" (CTS, 131). He throws notes from his cornet in an attempt to "spear her . . . like a javelin through the brain" (CTS, 131). As he lets his "last long squawk . . . cough and climb" in his throat (CTS, 131), so does all the blood in his body. He is unable to stop "the air the red force coming up can't remove it from [his] mouth (CTS, 131 sic). Buddy continues to play "through the blood to the girl red hitting the blind spot" (CTS, 131) until he eventually faints from exhaustion. Buddy's intense style of playing reflects the intense tone of the novel. His intense, violent energies are reflected through the disjointed fashion in which his story is told.

Ondaatje wishes to "get beyond order, at least in so far as that implies pattern artificially imposed" (McGregor, 292). For him, patterns and order are signs of limitations. He strives for immediate response to sensation which can only be felt through individual experience. As has been

noted elsewhere, "Bolden's music is an act of process, not product; set in 1907 it seems essentially post-modern" (Scobie, 8). The phrase "essentially post-modern" in this case stands for the fragmentation and the disintegration of order and, therefore, tradition. Essentially post-modern, as used here, means essentially anti-community: the personal and the immediate are of more importance than the needs of the group. Bolden's experience is the individualist's experience, a focus Ondaatje is obsessed with.

In both Coming Through Slaughter and Billy the Kid Ondaatje creates an aura of violence not only through content, but also through the forms he employs. In both works Ondaatje plays upon the reader's expectations. The reader expects Billy to be portrayed in extremely violent terms and he expects Buddy's musical disposition to be reflected poetically. The poetry found in Billy surprises the reader, the violent events in Coming Through Slaughter shock the reader. Ondaatje's representation of both characters violates the reader's expectations. By violating expectations, Ondaatje portrays the two in an equally disturbing, albeit different manner.

The achievement of Coming Through Slaughter, like that of Billy the Kid, has been noted as a "transcending of cultural and racial and historical barriers into a state of nearly total identification, on both the author's and reader's part, with the subject" (MacSkimming, 93). By transcending historical barriers the author is able to disassociate himself

from tradition, morality, from all aspects of social life which are not directly related, in immediate terms, with the individualist.

One of the problems with much of recent Canadian fiction is it sets up its own rules, game theories and so on with which the reader must familiarize himself or herself if he or she is to appreciate the work fully. There are inherent contradictions found within this new stream of literature. Stemming from the Modernist tradition, which "draws its own language protectively around it to become a mysteriously autotelic object" (Eagleton, A141), much contemporary literature seeks to

dissolve its own boundaries and become coextensive with ordinary commodified life itself, whose ceaseless exchanges and mutations in any case recognize no formal frontiers which are not constantly transgressed. (Eagleton, A141)

What emerges is a stream of literature mainly concerned about itself, but almost totally unconcerned with the moral, social and historical aspects of the life which it attempts to depict. The basis for the recent stream of writing can be traced to the rise of individualism and to the subsequent overriding concern for the technical, formal aspects of the novel. As the literature continues to be primarily concerned with the individual or "I" figure, with the inner motivations of the self, authors and critics become preoccupied with the form of the works, rather than with the relation of form and content to the larger society with which the literature,

directly or indirectly, attempts to communicate.

As writers replace moral and social values with values that reflect the novel's fragmented form, many factors begin to surface in the literature. First, the individualist becomes free to assert his own attitudes as primary. Secondly, values which represent the technological process allow authors to disassociate themselves from any sort of social responsibility or authorial judgement. Values which perpetuate self-regarding individualism produce a literature which is immoral, self-indulgent and fragmented. Furthermore, the break down of the social order is reflected in the breakdown of traditional forms.

CONCLUSION

The history of Canadian literature can be divided roughly into two parts. Prior to the Second World War traditional literature is concerned with values which uphold and maintain the importance of the community and oppose values of the self-regarding individualist. Community-oriented values are represented by attitudes which support the importance of traditional institutions such as the family unit and the social order. However, after the Second World War literary attitudes begin to change. One author who writes prophetically and comments on the change is Frederick Philip Grove.

In Grove's Fruits of the Earth the author warns against man's dependence on technology, a dependence which might eventually erode all his traditional values. The protagonist, Abe Spalding, ends up losing the love of his family and eventually alienates himself from the rest of the community because of his obsession with technological mastery. Abe is an individualist who places his own needs above the needs of the community. As a result he is alienated from the things he cherishes most.

During the twentieth century literature begins to take on a new set of values which represents the values Grove warns against. After the Second World War a new stream of literature emerges in Canada which supports the attitudes of self-regarding individualism. Stemming from a literary history which has always been primarily male-centered, the

new form of individualism takes on qualities which are not only male-centred, but promote misogyny and sexism. Furthermore, as the self-regarding individualist is free to impose his own values on those around him, he inevitably creates the possibility for acts of violence, since he views social concepts of law and order as aspects of society which he can circumvent. In short, the rise of sexist individualism allows for the emergence of a literature which places women in a subservient position to men, while it maintains a level of violence previously unwitnessed.

The reasons for such a change in our literary values are numerous and complex. However, some possibilities do seem more likely than others. In much of his writing Grove warns that technology could threaten traditional values. In The Master of the Mill he prophesizes technological values replacing the community values deemed important in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. And Grove's prophecy does indeed come, at least partially, true. During Grove's writing career formalist theory emerges. Formalist theory prizes various technical aspects of writing, while it considers content secondary. Concern with technical aspects of writing causes a stream of Canadian authors to become preoccupied with the forms they employ.

As authors continue to experiment with various literary forms another phenomenon occurs. Through the use of formalistic devices, such as surrealism and irony, authors disassociate themselves from the moral aspects of their work.

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Their overwhelming concern for the technical aspects of work, something which Grove warns against, causes them to neglect moral content. The individualist in fiction becomes free to impose at will his values on those he encounters. Concepts such as tradition, order and history become alien, and, therefore, irrelevant to individualist experience. In short, the breakdown of traditional values--the family unit and responsibility to the larger social order--indirectly caused by the emergence of technology, allows for the emergence of a new set of values in a stream of recent literature which maintains and upholds the values of the self-regarding individualist.

One final comment regarding technology's effect on the individual and literature will serve to close this discourse. In The Master of the Mill Grove portrays his vision of the future. The mill controls the actions of the characters who own it, and represents much of what is inherently evil in technology. At the end of the novel Grove presents "a vision of earth, stripped of mankind, whirling through the solar system spewing flour out into space from a fully automated industrial system" (Mathews, 6). The vision can be thought of as a conclusion to Grove's initial warnings in Fruits of the Earth. As man allows technology to become the impetus of all his actions, he becomes incapable of possessing the qualities needed to create a compassionate society. Instead, he begins to inherit self-regarding attitudes and ignores concepts of morality and social responsibility. Grove's

prophecy comes ~~true~~ after 1960 when authors begin to view moral content as secondary to technical form. The authors' overwhelming concern with form allows for the erosion of community-oriented values and for the emergence of new values which promote male-individualism, misogyny and violence, the result of which could be far more reaching than we presently realize.

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APPENDIX

This interview took place December 23, 1984 in Winnipeg, Manitoba at the home of Robert Kroetsch.

Gildea: How would you describe the movement of Post-Modernism in Canada today?

Kroetsch: Well, I think that the first thing about Post-Modernism is its abandoning the idea of the total unity, getting away from unity. You're working with a sense of discreteness and fragment, and there is less compulsion to try and make a single unified story where contradictions exist.

Gildea: And so is that what we have in Badlands? Not only Anna Dawe's interpretation of the field notes, but the field notes themselves?

Kroetsch: Sure.

Gildea: Is that, then, the same as what Ondaatje's trying to do with Billy the Kid? We have the fact and the legend but we never really know the "true" story.

Kroetsch: Yes. I would take Billy the Kid as a prime example for what I think of as Post-Modern. There is no privileged version anymore. You look at the various versions and evaluate them for what they are. You don't say there is some ultimate meaning because it's simply unknowable. We will

never know about Billy.

Gildea: If we don't have any concept of unity, is that why we see not only the individual starting to ask about the relativity of things around him, but we also see the systems falling?

Kroetsch: Yeah. There's a kind of distrust towards the systems because, in order to get to that unity, you're having to lie a bit. So systems lose their privileged status. We might look at the various systems around us simply as "takes" on the world. And so this notion of intertextuality. You let all of them be quoted in the work in a sense. I might write a novel that makes reference to scientific theories, to religious theories, to myth theories, theories of perception, because they are all, finally, fragments. We don't believe that there is a coherence.

Gildea: Getting back to the idea of systems, Ronald Sutherland wrote an essay in The New Hero claiming that the typical American protagonist tends to question the governing systems whereas the typical Canadian protagonist tends to wonder, "why can't I get along with the system? What is wrong with me?" Is it inevitable that once the systems have governed us long enough, we begin to start questioning? Is that inevitable in any culture?

Kroetsch: Yes, except that many of the systems we question

- are already spent in a certain way, and there are new systems coming along that we haven't yet imagined. I'm sure the computer age, for instance, is going to offer us systems we haven't yet imagined. And we're still busy dealing with older systems, though I don't think that's necessarily wrong. You see, you never finish. One thing about Post-Modernism is that you never believe the task is over. There are no conclusions; we live in a world of middles all the time.
- Gildea: Well, for instance, the predominance of the church in some areas, and of the community's influence on the whole, do not lead us to question those same systems. And so this, to me, is what distinguishes the Canadian view from an American one in terms of systems. Although now it seems that Canadian writers such as yourself and Ondaatje, are more concerned with the individual, rather than the system; the system has become secondary.
- Kroetsch: Well, one of the things that has freed us in a curious way is that we have one system that defines the self, and that system has collapsed, and we have come into a much looser notion of self which gives us tolerance for our own contradictions. That enables us to free ourselves from this reliance on systems. In fact, I think the American is still more tempted toward a more

coherent notion of self than the Canadian is. The Canadian is quite willing to go along with a loose notion of self. Maybe, in a curious way, it is this notion of self that has allowed us to survive.

Gildea: I wonder, then, about the influences Hugh MacLennan might have had on you at McGill because, it seems that any character who cannot get along with the systems in his novels (MacLennan's) is psychologically maladjusted to the environment.

Kroetsch: I would see MacLennan as being rife for a kind of Derridean reading where, on the surface, he looks as if he has a longing for systems; there is a great longing for historical order in MacLennan. But, I think that within the text you find contradictions. There is a terrible force working against those systems represented by the maladjusted person you're talking about. But, it's almost as if MacLennan's conscious mind is on the side of the systems and it is within himself that the disruption occurs. For me, I'm quite willing to go to the model of the fool or the trickster right away and say that's where we're at. And the tricksters are, by definition, upsetting the systems.

Gildea: So is the trickster figure then, rather than being something outside of us, something manifested

within? For instance, is the trickster figure a character in one of your novels, or does he influence characters in the novel?

Kroetsch: Well, that's a good point. I think in a certain way it's both. Within the individual we have a tricksterish element. But even a system has to build within itself a trickster impulse. Otherwise, it would fossilize very quickly. And so, one of the interesting questions in a literary tradition where we have a longing for a literary canon, a literary tradition in Canada, at what point do we honour the trickster figure who upsets it. That's very problematic because a lot of Canadian writing looks as if it pays a tribute to authority and to systems.

Gildea: Would you consider Sheila Watson's The Double Hook to be different in regard to the trickster figure?

Kroetsch: Yes. I mean she just came along and named it. One of the tricky things about our trickster figures is that we don't name them. It is almost hidden. Whereas Watson just came flat out and announced it. The boy killing his mother at the beginning of the novel is an outrageous upsetting of the system.

Gildea: You comment quite a bit on the idea of power, and the ironies of patriarchal thinking. Could you

expand a bit on that?

Kroetsch: I'm very tempted by a patriarchal reading of the world, simply because I grew up as a Catholic and German. But I really think that much of the power resides within a matriarchal pattern, and that most men posture a great deal. We invent roles that seem to focus on power, and yet they are actually hollow.

Gildea: Why then, in Badlands, does it take us 300 pages of patriarchal incompetence, before we finally realize this matriarchal concept?

Kroetsch: Well, first of all the male story is a narrative story, so it tends to absorb the other story; it's an "and then and then" story, while the women's story is of a different nature, more static, gets hidden by that. The women's role, it seems to me, is a more meditative one in a certain sense, and men are afraid to take that real risk of meditation because meditation is recognition in many ways. So recognition seen in a narrative is a rare occurrence.

Gildea: And so in Gone Indian we find the use of the tapes and in Badlands the use of the field notes and so on.

Kroetsch: Yeah. I think that the impulse to assert a comprehensible order is male in a certain way, and that women live in a world where discontinuity is more

understandable and acceptable. It's no accident that so many major writers in Canada are women.

Gildea: Why then, at the end of What the Crow Said, does Tiddy Lang need to hear the voice of the crow?

I can understand why, in relation to your views of men and women, the men need to hear it; but why Tiddy?

Kroetsch: For one thing, we yearn for that kind of carnivalesque type of upsetting, where we have a moment of truth. The system fractures occasionally, and we see little insights. I was very tempted to have the crow make eloquent philosophical speeches. . .

Gildea: . . . yes, that's what I was expecting . . .

Kroetsch: But you see that would be wrong finally, wouldn't it? Because we are expecting it, and that would simply incorporate it right back into the same system he was upsetting. The longing on my part to really let the crow, male or female, talk was the one thing I had to restrain within myself; almost like I wanted to engage in system making.

Gildea: And so, before we even open the text we're set up in many ways?

Kroetsch: Well we are. We are all set up in the whole goddamned world. We're set up to expect, whether it's God or political leaders, or whatever, we are set up to expect the assertions of these

systems. And what I like about the crow is, finally he says "asshole".

Gildea: Granted, then, that Post-Modernism is here, it seems to me that to follow its path is to move more and more towards annihilation. How do you perceive the movement, and what do you see happening in the future?

Kroetsch: The end of the world is just another system, that is the final system, I don't believe in the end of the world. We might have atomic bombs, but I believe the spiders will crawl out of the cracks and begin to have philosophical thoughts. It's a willingness to live with that fragment and to live ~~with~~ occasion.

Gildea: So would Post-Modernism then really be dealing with the relativity of truth with a small "t"?

Kroetsch: Yes. That's where we move from capital "T" Truth to small "t" truth, or truths I suppose. And what excites me is that we all have to go on telling these stories. We are all story-tellers, and I think that is what redeems both ourselves and what we call art. So I get outrageously ~~excited~~ about this that I have to tell all those stories over again. And so, I think I'm a wild optimist in that sense. I don't see this stance of mine as nihilistic at all. The danger of that other system is the danger called literature,

where professors like to think it's complete:

"now it's complete, and I can analyze it" . . .

To me it is indescribable, because I can only respond by telling another story. I read criticism, finally, as story telling, you just change discourse. I mean, you sit down and write about me, and I love the idea on a story level, completely independent of my ego, the thought that you are going to sit down and, in a sense, retell my stories. That, to me is such a beautiful story telling act that it redeems itself. To me, that is post-modern.

END

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