

THE PRIMEVAL ELEMENT IN THE PRAIRIE NOVELS OF
FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

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This thesis concerns itself with the novels of Grove written between 1912 when he arrived on the prairie and the publication of Fruits of the Earth in 1933. I have attempted to show that Grove chose the Canadian prairie because what he wanted to write about offered itself in this environment. Grove came with a knowledge of literature, the symbolism of which he wished to express against a primeval setting. He brought together his immense characterizations and the only environment grand and primeval enough to serve as a stage for them. I believe that his knowledge of literature has emerged in the form of archetypal symbolism. In addition Grove has written with a clearly defined view of literary procedure: to be a work of art literature must strive to mirror a more or less universal human reaction to life. He saw the writer as an artist who, rather than photographing or recording real life, selected details from that life to "body forth" in a work of art what he thought of it all. Grove refers to this literary procedure as realism. Finally I wish to show that the view of life mirrored is a tragic view: of conflict and triumph mixed with defeat. Grove has blended the tragic hero of Aristotle with the problem play situation of Ibsen. His tragic heroes are men who have attempted to achieve the unattainable, but they have exulted, like Prometheus, in their defiance of the gods and in achieving as much of their dream as they did achieve. I have discussed these three aspects of Grove's writing with reference to his four published prairie novels: Fruits of the Earth, Our Daily Bread, Settlers of the Marsh, and The Yoke of Life.

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INTRODUCTION

Frederick Philip Grove arrived in Haskett, Manitoba, in the year 1912 at the age of forty-one, or forty or thirty-nine depending on whether he was born in 1871, 1872, or 1873 as indicated by Mrs. Grove on a postcard to Carleton Stanley.

Leonard was born Oct. 14, 1930. As for Phil's date of birth—as I said once before according to our marriage certificate he was born neither '72 nor '71 but 1873. That is all the help I can be on that question. But some day I'll tell you a funny story.¹

From 1912 until after the tragic death of his daughter, May, in 1927 Grove lived and wrote on the Canadian prairie. What he did for the first forty years of his life is immaterial; whether he lived as he has described his life in his autobiography, In Search of Myself, or whether his remark in a letter to Carleton Stanley² suggesting that he might delete the European section of his autobiography indicates that his first forty years might not have been as he has described them, does not change the author, the creator of Abe Spalding, Niels Lindstedt, John Elliot and Len Sterner. Whether Philip

¹Mrs. Grove, postcard to Carleton Stanley, postmarked Simcoe, June 28, 1947, Box 5 (recent acquisitions) of the Grove Collection, University of Manitoba.

²F. P. Grove, letter to Carleton Stanley dated December 11, 1945, Box 5 (recent acquisitions) of the Grove Collection, University of Manitoba.

Branden of A Search for America is Grove or a fictitious character does not matter; what does matter is that Grove chose to start his new life in western Canada. And he made that choice either consciously or unconsciously in order to fulfill his destiny, that of bringing his immense characters carved from primeval granite together with the only environment grand and primeval enough to provide those characters with a stage. For in his search for the primeval he had occasionally glimpsed it in the steppes of Russia and in the desert and on the sea, but with civilization encroaching on the primeval areas only mountains, seas, deserts and prairies remain as they were when they first emerged from chaos.

Grove has explained why he chose to remain in Canada in an unpublished lecture:

When I was a young man, an occasion had offered itself for me to cross Siberia; and I had done so; and it was that fact which had implanted in me the desire to see Canada, especially the west of Canada; for I had a suspicion that Canada was in many respects very similar to Siberia; it is.

.....
I remained in Canada because there was in me one urge more powerful than any other; the urge to express certain things; in other words to write. And what I wanted to write about, had offered itself in this country.

.....

I have already hinted that for years before coming to Canada I had been a wanderer in out-of-the-way places...I had crossed Siberia....I had spent some time on the oasis of the Sahara;...I had sailed the seven seas in windjammers....

And in all these various climes and surroundings there had remained intact one certainty: this, that it was my fate, that it was a demand impressed upon me, one day perhaps in extreme old age, to body

forth in a work of art, of literature, what I thought of it all, a work which, to put it in one brief phrase, would stand forever.³

The reference to Siberia by Grove is important because on that trip to Siberia which he describes in some detail in In Search of Myself a revelation came to him to which Desmond Pacey refers in Frederick Philip Grove:

One evening their party met a wandering band of Kirghiz herdsmen. When these men had passed and were about a quarter of a mile distant they suddenly burst into song.⁴

Pacey then included much of the original description by Grove, some of which I include here:

It was a vast melancholy utterance, cadenced within a few octaves of the bass register as if the landscape as such had assumed a voice: full of an almost inarticulate realization of man's forlorn position in the face of a hostile barrenness of nature; and yet full, also, of a stubborn if perhaps only inchoate assertion of man's dignity below his gods.

A revelation came to me. All these humans...represented mere wavelets on the stream of a seminal, germinal life which flowed through them. . . .

No doubt each single one of them felt himself to be an individual; to me lack of personal distinguishing contact made them appear as mere representatives of their race.

³F. P. Grove, Unpublished lecture, Box 22, of the Grove Collection, University of Manitoba.

⁴Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove, The Ryerson Press, 1945, p. 4.

But their song was eternal because, out of the stream and succession of the generations, somewhere, somewhen, a nameless individual had arisen to give them a voice. That voice was the important thing to me; for already I felt that one day I too was to be a voice; and I too was perfectly willing to remain nameless.⁵

That Grove chose Canada in which to be that voice and as he chose to be that voice for Canadians will bring new significance to the Canadian literary scene when more critics recognize him for what he is:

the typical, perhaps even the archetypal, Canadian....He was not just a writer who happened to be writing in Canada. He was a Canadian writer wholly absorbed by the Canadian scene and by the pioneer drama of a diverse yet single people; wholly convinced that this scene, this people could yield to the artist's vision themes and values at once unique and universal.

To follow Grove's realization of his vision as it is created for us in his prairie writings is breathtaking if one once captures the rhythm of his imagination and creativity. To those who accuse followers of Grove of reading into him things which are not there, there remain to be read Grove's own literary criticism, both published and unpublished, all of which clearly points to what he has attempted in his own writing. If ever an artist lived his life in the

⁵F. P. Grove, In Search of Myself, Macmillan, 1946, pp. 153, 154.

⁶Malcolm Ross, Introduction to Over Prairie Trails, McClelland and Stewart, 1957, p. V.

shadow of a magnificent vision that artist was Grove.

CHAPTER I

THE MIND OF FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

When he arrived in Haskett, Manitoba in 1912 the mind of Frederick Philip Grove had been fully prepared for his destiny as a writer. Whether that preparation had taken place during a formalized schooling or whether it resulted from private reading and study may never be known, unless the two mysterious sealed boxes of information at the University of Manitoba contain some information about this part of his life. How he arrived at that moment is of little consequence, but he did arrive and with a mind potentially productive of great writing that Canada has yet to fully appreciate. I intend to become involved with three aspects of that mind. First, Grove had a clear and full knowledge of literature, embracing the literature of classical Greece and Rome, the literature of Europe, and the literature of America. Second, he had clearly defined concepts of literary philosophy which would give to his writing more purpose and form than any other writer of his time in Canada. Third, he had a view of life which when traced through his writings emerges as a fully developed philosophy of life, and that view of life was tragic.

I will first discuss the effect of Grove's knowledge of literature. That he had this knowledge is undeniable; even a super-

ficial reading of his published and unpublished work is proof of this fact. In his autobiography In Search of Myself he draws attention to his reading habits at the age of fourteen:

I must say a word about my reading here. From the time when I had mastered the mechanics of the art, I had been an omnivorous reader and she (his mother) had taken me in hand herself and directed my selection of books. By the time I was fourteen I had a not inconsiderable library of my own; and it consisted very largely of complete sets. On every birthday I received, as a matter of course, at least one such set. The list was led by Scott; and Scott was followed by Byron. Then came Shakespeare-the latter, strange to say, at first in the German translation by Schlegel and Tieck, perhaps because we happened to be at Munich, but before the year was out I had an English Shakespeare as well. Schiller, Goethe, Manzoni, Leopardi, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson, Browning, Eliot, Macaulay, Carlyle followed; and with my pocket money I acquired classical authors in both Latin and Greek. ... Add to that, as I grew up, such divers fare as Montaigne, Pascal, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Hoelderlin, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Verga, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderon, Lesage, Corneille, Racine, Moliere, and countless others of lighter weight- Stevenson for instance... Mark Twain, Jules Verne- and you have a small idea of the extent of my reading. By acquiring standard histories of literature- a department in which Germany excelled - I managed somehow¹ even to organize my knowledge to a certain extent.¹

To those who find it difficult to believe that someone could acquire such a broad knowledge of literature without having access to formal education I hold up the example of another great writer, Virginia Woolf, who in accepting an honorary degree from Oxford University

¹F. P. Grove, In Search of Myself, Macmillan, 1946, pp. 91, 92.

pointed out that she had not attended school for even one day in her life. Having been the daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen and the granddaughter of Thackeray she learned more from the family libraries and conversations than she would have in decades of formal education.

Grove's knowledge of literature immediately introduces a problem: the problem of analyzing his work to estimate the influence of the various writers and schools of writers to which he had been exposed. Perhaps a more valuable and less dangerous occupation would be an analysis of some of his work with a view to identifying in his writing those archetypal symbols which, like umbilical cords, make his work an organic part of the whole of literature. Northrop Frye in The Anatomy of Criticism in his second essay "Theory of Symbols" makes the following explanation of the archetypal symbol:

The symbol in this phase is the communicable unit, to which I give the name archetype: that is, a typical or recurring image. I mean by an archetype a symbol which connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience. And as the archetype is the communicable symbol, archetypal criticism is primarily concerned with literature as social fact and as a mode of communication....

The repetition of certain common images of physical nature like the sea or the forest in a large number of poems cannot in itself be called even "coincidence" which is the name we give to a piece of design when we cannot find a use for it. But it does indicate a certain unity in the nature that poetry imitates, and in the communicating activity of which poetry forms part. Because of the

larger communicative context of education, it is possible for a story about the sea to be archetypal, to make a profound imaginative impact, on a reader who has never been out of Saskatchewan.²

Rather than using one of Frye's examples of archetypal symbolism I would prefer to look at an example which I think clearly illustrates the theory. It is Gertrude Stein's famous and misunderstood poem:

Rose is a rose is a rose.

In these seven words she spoke volumes because she intended in this repetition of an archetypal symbol to create a vision of truth or beauty in the mind of the reader which would conjure up all that the rose had ever symbolized in literature.

Gertrude Stein in this poem is attempting to express all that is meant in Chaucer's translation of The Romance of the Rose when the rose to the medieval mind symbolized the whole of beauty and love, when the mere reflection of the rose in the mirror-like pool was enough to send the medieval literary figure into ecstasy.

She also was attempting to express the symbolism of the Bible in the line:

The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose³

² Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 99.

³ The Bible, Isaiah, 35, i.

and Shakespeare's themes:

What's in a name! That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.⁴

or Gautier's:

I am the spectre of the rose
You wore but last night at the ball⁵

or Brownings:

Any nose
May ravage with impunity a rose....⁶

or Christina Rossetti's:

Hope is like a harebell trembling from its birth
Love is like a rose the joy of all the earth
Faith is like a lily lifted high and white
Love is like a lovely rose the world's delight
Harebells and sweet lilies show a throneless growth,
But the rose with all its thorns excelle them both.⁷

In her famous one-line poem Gertrude Stein is giving us one of her experiences of one of those flashes of insight which we have on occasion when we suddenly see not only superficially but horizontally and vertically the whole significance and meaning of an aspect of truth or beauty. In this flash of insight the educated share with Stein the whole tremendous influence and meaning of the rose symbolism not only in literature but also in life itself from the time of creation until now.

⁴W. Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, II, ii.

⁵T. Gautier, "The Spectre of the Rose", Stanza 1.

⁶R. Browning, "Sordello", bk. VI.

⁷C. G. Rossetti, "Hope is Like a Harebell".

In many ways Frederick Philip Grove's arrival in Haskett is like that of the legendary hero who came out of mystery in search of magnificent challenges before disappearing back into the mystery from which he had emerged. In many ways Grove's arrival in Haskett is like that of his heroes: Abe Spalding, Niels Lindstedt, John Elliott, Phil Branden all of whom came in search of a new life and in search of a dream. Grove came to Haskett in search of the primeval as the archetypal symbol of his whole view of life and creation. Having found it he stayed there until that view of life became unbearable for him with the death of his daughter May. Grove came to Haskett with knowledge of the world's literature, and the symbolism of that literature was to express itself once again here on the primeval prairie of the Canadian West.

When we come to a consideration of the second aspect of Grove's mind, his philosophy of literary purpose and form, we find that in his book of essays, It Needs to be Said, Grove has in the essay, "Realism in Literature," summed up his philosophy on this subject. Before setting out his definition of realism he first rejects what he considers to be a wrong view of realism:

There is a common acceptation of the word realism-in literature- against which I must define my attitude...In this vulgar and to my mind erroneous sense of the word, realism means frankness in the matters of sex.

.....

I advocate frankness in matters of sex: clean searching unimpassioned and unprejudiced discussions of their bearings and their importance.

Sex is real; as real as mountain tops and barren sea; as forests in a storm or fields in the first tender green of spring. Whatever exists is the legitimate subject matter of the literary artist, be he romantic or realist.⁸

Grove then makes his strongest point in this essay: the fact that realism in this mistaken sense relates to the choice of subject and that, for him, realism relates to literary procedure and not to the choice of subject.

He then turns his attention to the Naturalist School of writing as illustrated by the writings of Emile Zola. Grove says of Zola that he was a scientist.

To him the novel was not an art-form which enabled him to cast on his canvas a picture of life as he saw it; it was a "scientific experiment" in which he produced artificially facts and sequences of facts from which he claimed he could deduce laws of nature with as much certainty and necessity as a chemist deduces laws from the behaviour of liquids observed in vitro. The moment we examine these scientific pretensions of Zola's somewhat more closely, they appear singularly weak, confused, and altogether lacking in the permanent power of art.⁹

Grove concludes his attack on Zola's "pseudo-realism" by stating that if he is still read in Europe he is read for the poetic power with which he projected false conceptions into visions rather than for the accuracy of the picture of life presented

⁸F. P. Grove, It Needs to be Said, Macmillan, 1929, pp.51-53.

⁹Ibid., pp. 55, 56.

in those visions.

Grove begins his analysis of realism by using the definition he found in Annandale:

"the endeavour to reproduce nature or to describe real life just as it appears to the artist."

The very core of Grove's theory of realism in literature is that realism is not objective, for if it were, he would look at life itself instead of at a work of art. He then states that before a work of literature can be a work of realism, it must be a work of art and conform to the canon of art; in art the artist is an indispensable medium through which we see things. The camera and the gramophone, according to Grove are more reliable than the human eye and memory.

The essential point, however, is that neither interposes that interpretative stratum which, in a work of art, is furnished by the artist's soul, neither in other words, mirrors and evokes an emotional reaction. Camera and gramophone see and hear things from the outside, as it were. The artist fuses and reproduces them from out of his soul. In order for anything whatever to become a fit subject for art, it must be reborn in the soul of the artist. Thus the artist necessarily tinges the picture which he gives; if only by the fact, in the face of a vast continuity of happening, he gives his work a beginning and an end; by this mere fact he has begun to interpret emotionally what he presents. ¹⁰

Grove then describes the role of the realist writer who must always

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F. P. Grove, It Needs to be Said, Macmillan, 1929, pp. 59, 60.

concern himself with the presentation not of himself but of human life:

However the realist...having learned... that he alone is nothing; that the work of art can spring only from an intimate, almost mystical fusing of the two things which are needed- a thing presented and a soul presenting- will never step forward into the lime-light as a person. The moment he exclaims "Ecce homo! or Ecce Pulchrum!" he ceases to be a realist who speaks through things and human figures whom he marshals about on his stage; he becomes the pedant who points his moral, be it with an ever so magic wand.¹¹

Because a writer can only produce what is potentially within him he is present to the spectator, and because he can only convincingly represent a character or event which finds an echo in himself his personality affects his writing. Having made this point Grove then exclaims:

Here we lay our finger on greatness. For who, in the vast world which goes by the name Shakespeare can point to an opinion expressed or a feeling evoked and say, Here speaks the poet, not the character whom he created? And who by contrast, when he thinks of Marlowe, is not instantly aware of his personal predilections, his super-human reaches into chaos, and the failure of his hand to grasp what it reached for? Shakespeare, by that criterion, was a realist while Marlowe was a romantic. Greatness did I say? Yes, greatness; for the drama and the epic call for realism; romanticism is the method of the lyric; and in the drama and the epic therefore, lyricism can appear only within a hybrid.¹²

¹¹F. P. Grove, It Needs to be Said, Macmillan, 1929, p. 61.

¹²Ibid., p. 62.

This concludes the first fundamental tenet of Grove's theory of realism -- that in realistic art the writer will never appear in the first person; whatever he has to say will be said indirectly through action and character.

Grove then proceeds to discuss his second major tenet of realism. To be a work of art literature must mirror a more or less universal human reaction to "what is not I."¹³ He then discusses the role of interpretation in realist literature:

Interpretation is a matter of making conscious and articulate what was, previous to the act of interpretation, unconscious and inarticulate. The artist--or the realist; for to me, personally, within at least the realm of the drama or epic, the two terms are synonymous-- must mirror in his presentation, an emotional response to the outside world and to life which is, as nearly as such things can be, a universal response or at least capable of becoming such. Or, as I have latterly come to express it, a work of literature or of any other craft is a work of art exactly to the extent to which it disengages the generally tragic reaction of the human soul to the fundamental conditions of man's life on earth.¹⁴

This second tenet of Grove's philosophy carries with it four implications. The first implication in this theory is that the response of an abnormal personality would not be capable of becoming universal. What is needed is "that cool impassioned outlook upon

¹³Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁴loc. cit.

life which might be God's."¹⁵ The second implication is that the writer in order to be a realist must never base his interpretations "on the current aberrations of the day".¹⁶ He must attempt to deal with the eternal: "our own emotional reaction to life, a reaction which is the same today as at the dawn of history."¹⁷ The third implication is that the writer must not be influenced by public opinion, and the final implication is as follows:

"that the greatness of an artist is measured more than anything else by the extent or the range of things to which he can react and by the unerring accuracy with which his own reaction mirrors the reaction of mankind. That is the reason why, supreme among realists, stand the three great names of Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe."¹⁸

The third major tenet of Grove's philosophy of realism is that realism

"will place itself and thereby the reader in the heart of things in such a way that they look on at what is happening from the inside as if they were themselves a world-consciousness which has its ramifications in all human things that appear on the stage of the work of literature. As God is a spirit, and, of that spirit, part is in us, thus the author of a book should be, and therefore should make the reader, a spirit transfusing all things and embracing them in its sympathies."¹⁹

¹⁵Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁶Loc. cit.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁸Loc. cit.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 76, 77.

Following upon this analogy of the writer as God and the reader as one of his creatures we look back to the Amundale definition to the words, "To describe real life just as it appears to the artist." Appearance is not opinion nor is it imagination or illusion. The writer must always present reality in such a way that the reader will feel that he might react as the author's creations react. Grove attacks those who draw exaggerated characters. He says that there are neither devils nor angels on the earth but only mixtures of the two. There are no villains nor are there pure heroes. There is, however, in life, conflict:

We might almost go so far as to say that life is conflict. Conflicts, in the concrete, are of such exceedingly common occurrence that, in observing life one is reminded of a sea in a storm where all large waves--great issues--are beset with smaller waves-- the minor conflicts-- the backs of which in turn are rippled by the wind--these ripples representing the quarrels and squabbles of menial minds. If life is not essentially of the stuff of conflicts, it tends at least to break up into a series of continual conflicts.²⁰

At this point Grove introduces his thesis that in every conflict both sides have a right to an impartial presentation and therefore a true realist must reveal each conflict to the reader in such a way that he can have sympathy with both sides or with both points of view. He uses as his example Shylock and Portia; one cannot watch

²⁰
Ibid., pp. 67, 68.

a good production of The Merchant of Venice without having an understanding of both the learned lawyer and the tragic Shylock. True realists develop a conflict different from the "crude opposition of angels and devils."²¹

We do not, in life, meet with heroes and villains; we are ourselves never one or the other. We are both; we are guilty and not guilty at the same time. If we were not, we should be neither the tragic comedians which we are nor of any earthly interest to anyone but minors.

Art, true art, appeals to none but mature intellects, for it deals with essential, emotional truth.

.....
 True realism always develops conflict in such a manner that we see all sides, sympathize with all sides taken separately, and yet cannot tell how that conflict can be avoided which, as it unfolds itself crushes our sensibilities. That is the tragic necessity which we find in all great works of literary art and which exalts us as it crushes us; that is the "fate" of the Greek tragedy; it is the inexorable quality of life itself. Give it and you have given an image of life; give it, and you have given art; and you have given it by the true method of all dramatic and narrative art, namely realism. All other things are inessentials of procedure.²²

Finally we come to the third aspect of Grove's mind which I intend to explore: we must look into the mind of Grove in search of that view of life which he held on his arrival on the prairie and which pervades all of his writing. If one searches long enough and carefully

²¹
Ibid., p. 66.

²²
Ibid., pp. 73 - 76.

enough he will find in the writing of Grove the philosophy of the writer himself fully expressed with relation to every aspect of the novel: setting and atmosphere, plot and conflict, characterization, theme, form and style. In It Needs to be Said in the chapter, "The Happy Ending", we find most of Grove's philosophy or view of life clearly expounded.

Grove introduces his deliberations with a threefold view of truth: concrete truth deals with science; abstract truth deals with religion and metaphysics; subjective or emotional truth concerns itself with man's attitude to the things of life and to the totality of creation; the domain of this truth is art.

Art I have elsewhere defined as that activity of the human mind and soul which awakens and directs an emotional response to what is not I. Inasmuch as it is the aim of art to express a purely human reaction to the phenomena of life, irrespective of human idiosyncrasies, it may be said to destroy individuality and to fuse the common humanity inherent in us all in a primitive response to the outside world; it may be said to interpret us to ourselves—our feelings, our reaction to life; and to make the deepest in us, that which ordinarily remains unconscious or semi-conscious articulate.

Art, then, appealing as it does, not to me as of this country or this age, but to the primeval human being in me, is of no nationality, and of no time. The quality of the emotional reaction awakened and directed by art, necessarily depends on and is tinged by, the quality of life itself as it has been from the beginning of the world. That quality being inherent in the very conditions of our existence on earth, has not changed and cannot change, no matter how much our so-called progress has changed the in-essentials. We should, therefore, expect that the emotional reaction of mankind, as mirrored in art, must have remained the same throughout the ages. It can be demonstrated, and I have else-

where tried to do so, that such is the case, not only on one of the art-forms, but in all. Here I must restrict myself to that art-form which uses language for its tool.

Look where you please: into Greece, Germany, Scandinavia, England. Choose what time you please: antiquity, the middle ages, modern centuries. What is the quality of the response mirrored in the greatest works of literature of no matter what time or clime? There can be only one answer: it is tragic.²³

To Grove the tragic quality of the response to life is universal. And in this view of life he is but a part of the great tradition of tragic literature. However there are certain unique characteristics to Grove's response. Although at times he seems to accept the view:

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods:
They kill us for their sport.²⁴

At other times he seems to reject this as he really rejects the even more cynical view that he takes later in his poem, "In Memoriam Phyllis May Grove."

But it is not so! They, as we, are blind
And cannot see where leads their unled dance
Above them, dangling, hangs the Spider Chance
And spins no meaning, balm to soul or mind.²⁵

Desmond Pacey in his book Frederick Philip Grove does seem to attribute to Grove more of these two views of life than he deserves:

²³F. P. Grove, It Needs to be Said, "The Happy Ending," Macmillan, 1929, pp. 84, 85.

²⁴F. P. Grove, "In Memoriam Phyllis May Grove," Unpublished poem, Box 15 of the Grove Collection, University of Manitoba.

²⁵
Ibid.

Basic is the perpetual conflict between man and his natural environment. Like Hardy, Grove oscillates between conceptions of a universe, controlled by forces deliberately malignant towards man and by forces which are simply ignorant of, or indifferent to, human aspirations. But that these forces override man's will and thwart his purposes he is in no doubt.²⁶

Although, as Pacey says, this view of life can be found in the novels of Grove, I feel that Pacey failed to bring in Grove's particular viewpoint with regard to the perpetual conflict.

Nor is Grove a determinist. Pacey does make this point quite clearly, although in making it he does swing too far towards a strictly Greek conception of fate in his analysis. Determinism can be defined as that view of life which maintains that every event has a cause and that for any event there is a finite set of laws such that given a finite set of conditions then the event will occur. Indeterminism, on the other hand, postulates some events which are not caused in the meaning of the determinist explanation. It is here that Grove would belong, because there always seems to be in the writing of Grove a freedom of will whose decisions are not caused.

It is at this point that Grove, in my opinion, comes closest to the Aristotelian concept of tragedy and especially to his view of the tragic hero. For Aristotle certainly implied that the tragic hero would most effectively arouse pity and fear if he were neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly evil, but a man like us, though the tragic effect would be stronger if he were rather better than most

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Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove, The Ryerson Press, 1945, p. 124.

of us. Such a man is exhibited as suffering a change in fortune from happiness to misery because of a mistaken act due to his "hamartia" - that is, his "tragic flaw" or tragic error in judgment. The tragic hero moves us to pity because the misfortune he suffers is greater than he deserves and to fear because we recognize in the plight of the hero a potential disaster for ourselves.

But combined with his relationship to Aristotle's creed of tragedy we find that Grove also has a quite distinct relationship to Ibsen. Like Ibsen he seems to see the essential conflict of life as that between an individual and a set of conditions strongly impressed from without. In the Ibsen problem play the situation of the protagonist is clearly rendered to show that it is only an instance of a general social problem. The problem is always one of conduct, and in Ibsen there is always a demand made for the reader to decide as well as for the writer to decide what the solution to the problem might be. Thus Ibsen built his problem plays around a central struggle: in The Wild Duck the struggle was between imaginative idealism and an incapacity for action; in Rosmersholm it was a struggle between new ideas and an old culture; in Little Eyolf it was a struggle between sensual and material passion; in The Doll's House it was a struggle between woman's individuality and hypocrisy in the marriage relationship. Similarly in Frederick Philip Grove's prairie novels we will find that in each there is a central struggle which represents a social problem of universal

meaning for which a solution has to be found to avoid the tragic conclusion for the Aristotelian tragic heroes of the prairie novels.

In "The Happy Ending" Grove makes the following statement:

It is the universal verdict of mankind at its highest that the feeling released in the human soul by the contemplation of life is tragic; and therefore, by inference, that human life itself is a tragic thing.²⁷

He then poses the question, "What then is tragic?" and in his answer we find Grove's particular view of the tragic response to life.

To have greatly tried and to have failed; to have greatly wished and to be denied; to have greatly longed for purity and to be sullied; to have greatly craved for life and to receive death; all that is the common lot of greatness upon earth. It would be misery indeed if there were not another factor in the equation. It would be crushing, not exalting. The tragic quality of Moses' fate - combining the terror that crushes with Aristotle's catharsis which exalts - lies in the fact that he accepted that fate of his; that he was reconciled to it; that he rested content with having borne the banner thus far; others would carry it beyond. In this acceptance or acquiescence lies true tragic greatness; it mirrors the indomitable spirit of mankind. All great endeavour, great ambition, great love, great pride, great thought disturb the placid order of the flow of events. The order is restored when failure is accepted and when it is seen and acknowledged that life proceeds by compromises only.²⁸

Grove then makes the point which brings a universality into his thought and writing: his prairie novels could, as Shake-

²⁷ F. P. Grove, It Needs to be Said, "The Happy Ending", Macmillans, 1929, p. 86.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 87.

speare does, have a vital meaning for those alive during the reign of Caesar, for those alive during the reign of the first Elizabeth and for those alive now as once again the world is rearranging itself.

It is the universal verdict of mankind—that all of us who conceive a great aim must necessarily fail and fall short of achieving it. Ask any great man who has achieved greatly whether his achievement is of his aim; he will tell you that in the innermost depth of his heart he knows he has failed.

But it is also one of the fundamental tenets of my creed that an ideal realized would be an ideal destroyed. If God revealed Himself, he would be dead. The aim, the ideal, to be of value as a guide must be unattainable. A beacon reached is a beacon put behind; a beacon never to be reached will always beckon. Achilles failed and Siegfried failed. Don Quixote failed; and so did Moliere's Alceste. Lear failed and so did Caesar. Hardy's Jude failed; and so did Meredith's Beauchamp.

It is the fate of mankind. We pile Ossa on Pelion; and for our pains we are chained to a mountain flank, like Prometheus, the bringer of light, but even in our failure we exult, because we have fought against the odds of life.²⁹

For Grove a work of art must mirror this fact of mankind: the Promethean fate.

In Box number 22 of the Grove Collection at the University of Manitoba there is a collection of addresses and articles, many of them as yet unpublished. In one of these addresses, lecture number three on The Novel, Grove again makes his point about tragedy and again uses the archetypal symbol of Prometheus in so doing.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 88, 89.

Art must hold up to life what I would call an even balance.... What is tragic is never gloomy: no truly human fight is ever hopeless; for this reason that revolt carries with it its own satisfactions. It is true that man fighting the gods, must succumb. But the mere fact that he fights, that he defies, is a triumph. It is the present generation's confession of weakness that it despairs. The world is bleeding from many wounds. But it will recover. It will raise its head from its present prostration and look fate in the face again. No greater symbol for the tragic view of life has ever been found than the overshadowing figure of Prometheus. Chained to the rocks of the Caucasus by his enemies, the gods, he yet throws defiance at the stars and spiritually conquers the gods to whom he succumbs! Now this is the way the Greeks hold that even balance: never is man with them the helpless plaything of the gods or of circumstances, which he is in Hardy's work. Man fights back against the fates; and though he may go on to defeat, his Promethean spirit conquers.³⁰

Grove then justifies the use in literature of commanding figures to portray this view of life:

The moment we enter the realm of art, we demand a higher symbolism. We want a hero or heroine to body forth some of the eternal spirit which dominates mankind as such rather than the lesser individual exponents of some fraction of the race.³¹

This then, to me, is Grove's view of life: a tragic view, but tragedy as modified by his use of the archetypal symbol of Prometheus who, though chained to a rock by the Gods, lives on to defy and to triumph. None of Grove's heroes ever achieved completely the

³⁰ F. P. Grove, "The Novel," unpublished lecture, Box 22 of the Grove Collection, University of Manitoba.

³¹ Ibid.

dream or ideal they set for themselves, but in attempting to do so they fought and defied with magnificent spirit and triumphed to a certain extent in what they did achieve.

At about the age of forty, Frederick Philip Grove came to the Canadian Prairies in search of the primeval setting for the universal conflict of man attempting to achieve the unattainable. He came with a literary background which provided him with the universal archetypal symbolism necessary to sculpture characters grand enough once again to enact this struggle against the backdrop of the prairie. He came with a clearly formulated theory of literature - a view of realism - which he has adhered to in all his work, and he came with a view of life - a tragic view - of conflict and triumph mixed with defeat which he has presented with a blending of the tragic hero of Aristotle and the problem play format of Ibsen. In the following chapters I will attempt to discuss these three aspects of the mind of Grove as they are exhibited in the four great tragic prairie novels: Settlers of the Marsh, Our Daily Bread, The Yoke of Life, and Fruits of the Earth.

CHAPTER II

FRUITS OF THE EARTH

Frederick Philip Grove has left for us a complete record of the genesis of Fruits of the Earth in his autobiography, In Search of Myself. Before turning to the forty year history of the growth of this novel I will first refer to the title itself. In In Search of Myself Grove refers to the book by the title The Chronicles of Spalding District¹ but nowhere in the three handwritten manuscripts of the book in boxes 2 and 3 of the Grove Collection does he refer to it by any title except that of Abe Spalding. I have not found in Grove's own writing the published title, Fruits of the Earth. In his introduction to the book, M. G. Parks says that Grove once told a correspondent that Fruits of the Earth "was never intended to figure as a novel. I meant it to be taken as a piece of pioneer history."² If these suggestions that Fruits of the Earth was a chronicle rather than a novel are to be taken seriously, then I find it difficult to understand why Grove chose this book to be the one whose history he has most carefully documented in order to illustrate his philosophy of the growth of a novel. I think to take what may have been chance

¹F. P. Grove, In Search of Myself, Macmillan, 1946, p. 382.

²F. P. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, N.C.L., McClelland and Stewart, 1965, Introduction by M. G. Parks, p. viii.

remarks about the value of a book by its own author and to use them out of their original context is far less convincing than the argument of the original manuscripts themselves which show signs of the most painstaking care in producing a well-planned novel.

In In Search of Myself Grove relates his first vision of Abe Spalding. In the year 1894, as a farm labourer Grove "had been employed hauling wheat . . . somewhere in the south-west of what had become the province of Saskatchewan."³ On these hauls, he relates that his mind was left free to ramble, as the country was flat and empty. He then tells of the birth of the character, Abe:

"Then one day I had an adventure. Somewhere towards the end of my outward drive, to town, I saw a man; and what is more, he was ploughing straight over the crest of a hill to the west, coming when I caught sight of him, towards my trail . . . Besides, outlined as he was against a tilted and spoked sunset in the western sky he looked like a giant....I learned that he had that afternoon arrived from Ontario, that, finding the land titles office open in town he had promptly filed on a homestead claim of a hundred and sixty acres....Having arrived an hour ago, after a two-thousand-mile train-ride, he was now ploughing his first field!

.....

The next day, and the next....I went ... over a different trail. It seemed imperative that I should never see, never hear that man again.

Already, while he was standing by the side of the trail, with me reclining on top of my load of a hundred bushels of wheat; and more especially when he had uttered the last few words, he had not seemed to me to be quite the sort of giant I had imagined when he had first topped the crest of the hill. Yet, somehow he had bodied forth for me the essence of the pioneer spirit that has settled the western plains and with which I had, through scores of concrete manifestations, become familiar during the preceding year.

³F. P. Grove, In Search of Myself, Macmillan, 1946, p. 258.

The important thing was this. His first appearance, on top of the hill, had tripped a trigger in my imagination; he had become one with many others whom I had known, and an explosion had followed in the nerve centres of my brain because I had been ready for the pains of birth. A, to me, momentous thing had happened: the figure of Abe Spalding, central to the book, which forty years later, was published under the title Fruits of the Earth, had been born in my mind, fully armed as it were, and focalizing in itself a hundred features which I had noticed elsewhere. This man, a giant in body, if not in mind and spirit, had furnished the physical features for a vision which had, so far, been incomplete because it had been abstract.

If I had seen the entirely casual occasion - that is all I can call him; he was not the prototype - of this figure again, if I had heard him speak. . . that mental vision of mine would have been profoundly disturbed. A perfectly irrelevant actuality would have been superimposed upon my conception of a man, who as I saw him, had perhaps never lived; for he lacked that infusion of myself which makes him what he has become. From a type and a symbol, he would have become an individual; he would have been drained of the truth that lived in him; he would have become a mere fact.

This birth of a figure has remained typical for all of my work.

From that day on, a new character had been present to my consciousness.

.
 I lived my life, he his. As I grew older he did...We were never one; though I felt with him we remained two; I had suffered too intensely from⁴ his nature to identify myself with him at any time.

This figure whom Grove saw in 1894 was the embodiment for him of the archetypal symbol of Prometheus which he had carried within his mind from his early knowledge of mythology. The two, the symbol of

⁴Ibid., p. 259 - p. 261.

Prometheus and the man seen by chance, merged in what he terms an "explosion".⁵ In 1894 Abe Spalding, the Promethean figure of Fruits of the Earth was born in the mind of Grove although the novel was not published for another forty years. But during those forty years the figure gradually took on more and more features of the giant, the Titan, who suffered at the hands of the gods but lived to glory in the triumph of his victory, in so far as he had achieved it.

If one reads Fruits of the Earth for verification of this archetypal symbol of Spalding as the stricken giant, one is overwhelmed at the evidence in support of this theory.

Physically, Abe was extraordinarily tall, measuring six feet four . . . in proportion to his height broad-shouldered and deep chested.⁶

With regard to a vision of epic stature we find the following:

Well he would conquer this wilderness
he would change it; he would set his
seal upon it

He would conquer! Yet, as he looked
about, he was strangely impressed with this
treeless prairie under the afternoon sun.

.
He wanted land, not landscape; all the land-
scape he cared for he would introduce himself.

Yet, half unknown to him, there was a
dream: of a mansion such as he had seen in
Ontario. . . .a sort of seigneurial sign
manual. Dominating this prairie.⁷

⁵Ibid., p. 260.

⁶F. P. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, N.C.L., McClelland and Stewart, 1965, p. 19.

⁷Ibid., pp. 22-23.

As the story develops we see other facets of this dream in the mind of Abe Spalding; the dream of a great family of which he would be the founder, and the dream of leadership in the affairs of the community.

During a discussion between Abe and his wife, Ruth, about the purpose in all his work she refers to his sister Mary's opinion of him:

She despises me and thinks you a sort of
half-god or hero.⁸

During the great flood Abe leads the community and at one point personally rescues the school teacher, Blaine. After this feat the men were fed at the home of Nicoll who had a large family of children. Their attitude to the men is recorded in the same symbolic language:

To them this was a red-letter day: the men
were heroes and giants fighting the elements.⁹

Later we have recorded the attitude of the women in the community towards Abe:

To him they remained vague; but he was to them
a huge figure of somewhat uncertain outlines,
resembling the hero of a saga. . . . Abe remained
a hero and a saga-figure, loved by few, hated by
some, but willy-nilly admired by all.¹⁰

⁸
Ibid., p. 48.

⁹
Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁰
Ibid., p. 85.

Young Hillmer, whose mother and step-father, the Grappentins, reflect the cynical attitude towards Abe, speaks of Abe's thoughts:

Grappentin stood before the young man. . . .
 "Would you mind," he said . . . "would you mind, Mr Stepson telling me why the great lord is always alone and does not mix with the rest of us as other Christian people do?"
 Hillmer fixed a mild but steady eye on the other man.... "Because," he said at last, "he thinks greater thoughts and aims higher than all the rest of us do."¹¹

Wheeldon who succeeds in having Abe barred from voting on the school consolidation issue also reflects this view of Abe as a giant:

He realized that he had released in that imperturbable giant more than he had known to exist in his depth.¹²

There were many gigantic feats undertaken by Abe during his life in Spalding District, but I will refer to only one here which I believe belongs to this aspect of Abe's character. Having finally built the magnificent mansion of which he had dreamed for so long Abe has it completely equipped with electricity. At one point he sheepishly has to admit that his reason for a night trip to town is to see his establishment from the road. The incident is described:

¹¹Ibid., p. 88.

¹²Ibid., p. 166.

He went in the buggy; and he never looked back till he had reached town. From the Somerville Line he peered through the night at the pool of light on the horizon. It did not loom high but seemed rather to form a dent in the sky-line. That was the proudest moment of his life; and he raised an arm as though reaching for the stars.¹³

And so Prometheus had succeeded in bringing fire and light to man and it was the proudest moment of his life.

At the end of the book as Abe drives home with Ruth who has tried in her own way to punish McCrae for seducing Frances he is viewed by some of his neighbours. He is appealed to by Elliott to lead the settlers of the district out of their troubles. He is shouted at by Mrs. Grappentin:

"Ah now! Is the great lord stepping down from his shining height?"¹⁴

As he passes the Nicoll place Mrs. Nicoll mutters, "There goes the fallen hero!"¹⁵ But, though he had fallen, for a time, he once again assumes an upright stance when he goes to the schoolhouse to assert his leadership in Spalding District.

Before moving on to the second stage in the genesis of Fruits of the Earth I should draw attention to the name of its hero, Abraham David Spalding. It becomes fairly obvious during a reading of the novel that Grove, in creating the Abe image, has made frequent use of Biblical symbolism as well as symbolism derived from

¹³Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 261.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 262.

other fields of literature. I find it impossible to believe that it was by mere chance that these two Biblical names became the christian names of Abe; the Abraham figure of the Bible as the archetypal symbol of the father image fits too nicely with the dream Abe has of founding a dynasty; the David figure of the Bible as the archetypal symbol of the challenger against an overwhelming opposition fits too nicely with the gigantic challenges accepted by Abe in his struggle to achieve his dream. David, the giant killer, pitted himself against the forces of the primeval prairie and succeeded in achieving a victory over those forces, at least for a time. Whether Charlie is in any way supposed to represent an Absalom figure is not clear, but the name Ruth being given to the wife of Abe certainly does stir echoes of the Biblical Ruth amid the alien corn, for Abe's wife certainly felt that she was "out of place" on the bare prairie having been transplanted from a small Ontario town.

In his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of Fruits of the Earth M. G. Parks sums up most of the rest of the genesis of this novel.

A trip across the sodden-rain-drenched prairie in 1912 led him to conceive the episode of Abe saving his bumper crop of wheat in Chapter X; his observation of farming conditions in the spring of 1913 was later transmuted into the account of the great flood that engulfs Spalding District; the sight of a pupil being crushed under the wheels of his load of wheat suggests the death of Charlie Spalding.

The most vital of all such "explosions," as Grove calls them, was set off when, in a drive through the country near Rapid City, Manitoba, Grove noticed a magnificent homestead - a great house of red brick and two huge white barns set in a four-acre yard. When he stopped to investigate, he discovered that behind the imposing facade lay nothing but decay and ruinous neglect: two decrepit horses and one miserable cow were the only animals in the enormous barns, and in the mansion a family of poor tenants crowded into one room which they heated by ripping up the many floors of quartered oak for fuel. That same night, profoundly moved by what he had seen and applying it to the life of Abe Spalding, Grove began to write the novel. He had glimpsed the eventual fate of Abe's great farm after its forceful owner had died and his ageing widow had retreated to the town.¹⁶

Writing in In Search of Myself Grove explains in some detail how he made use of these incidents from life which led to the birth of the novel Fruits of the Earth:

From this it might seem as though the book were a patch-work compounded of episodes taken from actual life. It is not; in every case the actual happening merely released in me certain reactions which led me on. As far as I was concerned, it was rather as if, in what happened, I recognised what had already happened to Abe Spalding. Nothing of what I witnessed was used directly or in a literal sense.

.....

What I wish to underline is precisely the fact that, in Abe Spalding's career, as given in my book, there is not one episode, not one opinion arrived at by him, not one feeling released in him, which, properly speaking, had anything to do with myself, beyond the fact that I laboured to understand them. with the

¹⁶F. P. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, N.C.L., McClelland and Stewart, 1965, Introduction by M. G. Parks, p. vii.

building-up of the story I had, consciously, no more to do than I could have with the growth of a tree in my fields. I have tried to explain this in an article published in the University of Toronto Quarterly; but, as far as I know there has been nobody who had ears to hear.

It is for that reason that I feel I must insert what follows; for strangely, the very thing which set me to work at the task of writing - which was also the thing that completed Abe Spalding's story in my mind- never found its way into the book. Abe Spalding's death, and what followed after was necessary in order to round before I could write it; but for the story of the district as I had conceived it it was irrelevant; and in the finished work it is never mentioned.¹⁷

So having found the decaying monument to the dreams of Abe Spalding on the prairie of western Canada like the decaying monument to the dreams of Ozymandias on the desert, Frederick Philip Grove began his epic. On the next page in In Search of Myself Grove very clearly introduces his philosophy of realism:

And here is another point which I wish to make. So long as my life remained one of the imagination only, there always came a point at which, if the central figure of an evolving story-context was vital enough not to fade from my world, I had to write that story whether I wished it or not.

.....
 For those figures of mine will not stay down; they won't let me rest or sleep; they want to be born into death. For what my writing does for them, as far as I am concerned, whether that writing be successful or not, is not so much to give them birth as it is to give them burial. They were born long ago; they have lived their lives almost in spite of myself; and now they want to die. Though there are a few deluded people - as there should be - who assert that only after these figures have died to their creator can they begin to come to life in the minds of others.¹⁸

¹⁷F. P. Grove, In Search of Myself, Macmillan, 1946, pp. 382-384.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 386-387.

"These figures" were born a long time ago in his mind and one of those figures was a blending of the archetypal symbol of a Prometheus figure with a newly arrived farmer from Ontario in the summer of 1894.

In Fruits of the Earth Grove adheres to his stated literary philosophy concerning realism. No one can look at the gigantic figure of Abe and believe that he was created by the author merely as a vehicle for his own voice. The whole novel, written from the traditional omniscient author point of view always refrains from having the characters mouth the ideas of the author. Although most of the novel is written completely from the viewpoint of Abe Spalding, at no time does that viewpoint become a didactic exposition of a Grove theory or crusade.

In order to achieve his aim of realism Grove had to find a suitable stage for the drama of the life of Abe Spalding as he lived out the eternal struggle of a man with a dream which was impossible of realization. It is at this stage that the Canadian Prairie became a necessity to the writing of Grove. Having described the genesis of the plot and character elements in the novel, he also explains the birth of the setting for the novel in In Search of Myself:

The world was snow-white here and flat as a table top; but, to the west, the horizon was broken by the low line of hills which go under the name of the Pembina Mountains. Chance had brought me very near my dreamt-of-goal.

Everything - landscape, buildings, and even the inhabitants who, by the way, came from the German districts of Russia - reminded me in the most vivid way of the steppes.

.....

The district, south of the town of Morden, was flat as a table top. But most of the farmsteads were surrounded by windbreaks of tall cotton-woods, now bare of their brittle, triangular foliage and sticking out of the snow like huge, inverted, primitive brooms. The hamlet itself - if, consisting as it did of two stores and perhaps three or four houses, it could be called by so pretentious a name - was treeless. I had seen such places, indistinguishable in every feature, in the Russian province of Volhynia and on the steppes of Siberia. It lay in the western margin of the flood district which I have described in Fruits of the Earth.¹⁹

Years before Grove had felt that he might be called upon to be a voice when he had heard the Kirghiz herdsmen singing. He was now being that voice and he had to be that voice in as universal a way as possible. To properly voice what he considered to be the universal reaction of man to life he had to place that man in a primeval setting - for his voice was to be the voice of a primeval symbol, Prometheus, chained to a rock of the Caucasus. In such a primeval setting unspoiled by civilization he could present that universal reaction without the artificial elements of time and place obtruding unnecessarily into the drama. In such a setting a great figure could emerge as Abe emerged without being overshadowed by the complexities of settled and civilized life.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 251-253.

And so the prairie enters, not as does the heath in Hardy - a symbol of fate - but as the background for life as it has been lived since time began. In the first chapter of Fruits of the Earth Grove introduces this primeval atmosphere:

A few hundred yards from the Somerville Line, as the east-west road was called, he reached that flat and unrelieved country which, to the very horizon, seemed to be a primitive wilderness.²⁰

This view he contrasted with what he had left behind him in Ontario:

But Mary's casual remark about the cedars had reawakened in him the vision of the old farm as a place to live in: the house in its cluster of cedars, with the gnarled apple trees in the orchard behind; with the old furniture in the rooms - not very comfortable perhaps but harmonious in the half-light admitted by the scanty windows half closed with vines; mellowed into unity by being lived in through generations. Here everything was of necessity new and raw.²¹

He then continued as he surveyed his new surroundings:

He would conquer! Yet, as he looked about, he was strangely impressed with this treeless prairie under the afternoon sun. This utterly undiversified country looked flat as a table-top.

.

²⁰F. P. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, N.C.L., McClelland and Stewart, 1965, p. 21.

²¹Ibid., p. 22.

Yet this prairie seemed suddenly a peculiar country, mysteriously endowed with a power of testing temper and character. But that was exactly what he had wanted; a "clear proposition" as he had expressed it, meaning a piece of land capable of being tilled from line to line, without waste areas, without rocky stretches, without deeply-cut gullies which denied his horses a foothold. He wanted land, not landscape; all the landscape he cared for he would introduce himself.²²

After the crisis of the story has been passed we return to an emphasis of this prairie setting, on which now stood his magnificent house, his monument, that materialization of the symbol that Grove had first seen near Rapid City years before.

He would stand at a corner of his huge house and look closely at brick and mortar. It was only five years since the house had been built. Five years only! Yet already little sand grains embedded in the mortar were crumbling away; already the edges of the bricks were being rounded by a process of weathering. When he bent and looked closely at the ground, near the wall, he saw a thin layer of red dust mixed with those sand grains....The moment a work of man was finished, nature set to work to take it down again....

Even the prairie was engaged in a process which would do away with it. Abe looked at the ditches running full of a muddy flood; and his mind lost itself in the mysteries of cosmic change.

.....

North of that line - in the past it had been the same south of it - stretched the flat prairie, unique in America.....

.....

²²Ibid., pp. 23-23.

It is a landscape in which, to him who surrenders himself, the sense of one's life as a whole seems always present, birth and death being mere scansions in the flow of a somewhat debilitated stream of vitality.

.....

Abe, now that he was becoming conscious of the landscape at least, and of its significance, could at first hardly understand that he, of all men, should have chosen this district to settle in, though it suited him well enough now. But even that became clear. He had looked down at his feet; had seen nothing but the furrow; had considered the prairie only as a page to write the story of his life upon.²³

Grove chose the prairie for Abe Spalding - one of his giants- to write his story on, and Spalding has done this in Fruits of the Earth.

To those who would call the book The Chronicle of Spalding District one might put the question as to why Grove has deliberately stripped down to its primeval state the Canadian prairie of the early part of this century. Why does he omit those happenings which we know to have taken place in all the settlements of the Canadian Prairie of that time? Where are the accounts of the church services held by the student ministers who came to the prairie each summer? Where are the quilting bees held by the ladies during the long winter months? Where are the barn-raisings and the threshing bees with the traditional community suppers? Where are the square dances and the annual picnics? Where are the arguments about provincial and federal politics? These and many other facets of prairie life are

²³Ibid., pp. 134-138.

omitted because such incidents would limit too decidedly the story of Abe to one time and one place. Grove does not set out to create a picture of life on the Canadian Prairie of the early part of this century; his stated purpose is to use the Canadian Prairie with its timeless setting as a stage for the primeval struggle of Abe Spalding to once again work out man's tragic destiny. It was here on the prairie that Grove could safely place his hero, Abe Spalding, to voice the universal reaction of mankind to life, without the necessity of exposing him to a definite time and place with attendant social forces giving rise to the expression of current aberrations and public opinion. Abe moves through his life struggling to achieve his many faceted dream without having to conform to the limiting factors of a civilized setting in this century and on this continent.

Finally, in regard to the Grove view of realism, we must assess his success in achieving a situation whereby the reader experiences an understanding of all sides in the various conflicts. This aim is achieved largely through the characterization of Abe Spalding rather than in the plot development as Desmond Pacey points out in his book Frederick Philip Grove:

His portrayal is successful also because it is so objective. Grove manages to convey at once the man's strength and weakness, his capacities and limitations. We are led neither to despise him nor unreservedly to admire him. In his materialism, his pride, his narrowness, he is a type utterly different from Grove himself, and yet Grove gives him his full value. He manages to make him seem to us at times as he seems to the weaker settlers: a kind of god, a

figure to grace an ancient saga of titanic conflicts. To achieve this, and at the same time to retain for us our sense of him as a representative pioneer of the strongest sort, is a measure of Grove's success in this piece of characterization. Abe rivals John Elliott of Our Daily Bread as his finest creation.²⁴

In the quotation above I feel that the point is made by Pacey in his phrase "strength and weakness". Grove gives a fully developed characterization of Abe which leaves the reader free to allow his sympathies free expression.

However, with regard to Ruth, I feel that Pacey is somewhat harsh in his criticism of Grove:

The women are decidedly less successful creations than the men. Neither Abe's wife, nor his sister, nor his daughters are very convincing. Of the wife especially we should like to have known more than we do. Her tragedy, after all, is no less bitter than Abe's, yet our sense of it is much less intense. One wishes that even yet Grove might be persuaded to write the pioneer story from the feminine point of view.²⁵

In Grove's philosophy of the novel he has clearly expressed his feeling that one character must dominate and all others must be subordinated to that one character in order to express a universal reaction to human life. But in doing this Grove does not sacrifice

²⁴ Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove, Ryerson, 1945, p. 72.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 73.

the secondary characters. It is purely a revelation of Abe's character as the book does express Abe's point of view, that in his thinking he assumes, until it is too late to change, that Ruth's aims coincide with his. When Abe does pause in his fervent pursuit of his dream to talk to Ruth the incident is always portrayed in the most poignant of tragic lights.

At the end of the novel Ruth tries in her own way to secure revenge for the wrong done to her daughter Frances, and is forced to admit defeat and at the same time is made to realize that without Abe she feels helpless and alone. The pathos aroused by the description of the final scene cannot be missed:

He placed his hand on hers which rested on the table; and for the first time in many²⁶ years, he felt her touch on his shoulder.

Abe Spalding married Ruth to satisfy a physical desire for her; she realizes this at the end of the novel.

Only now did she understand Abe. But if he had remained faithful to her it was because other things had occupied him to the exclusion of guilty thoughts not because he had desired only her. The struggle which that insight had cost her had made her hard; but she did not blame him. She rose and went to the dresser to put her clothes on before the mirror, looking at herself with the distaste which, in the past, she had often thought she saw in Abe's face.²⁷

²⁶F. P. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, N.C.L., McClelland and Stewart, 1965, p. 264.

²⁷Ibid., p. 252.

Hers is a universal tragedy and it is clearly revealed in Fruits of the Earth. No one can fail to have an understanding of both sides of the relationship between Abe and Ruth during those twenty-one years of married life.

We must now look at Fruits of the Earth as a work of art mirroring what Grove considers to be the universal reaction of mankind towards human life; we must look at that tragic reaction to see how closely it relates to Grove's theory concerning this universal reaction. And we must also attempt to prove that this view of life is unique in literature. According to a former professor from United College on the occasion of Grove's first address at the college he was thanked by a member of the staff who remarked that there was a relationship between Grove's writing and that of Hardy. Later Grove commented that he was not then familiar with Hardy's novels.

Whether this story is apocryphal or not, does not really matter, but I do feel that some attention should be given to the difference between the view of life held by Hardy and the view held by Grove. Hardy's view of life as expressed in his great novels seems to regard tragedy as an inevitable element in life. Hardy believed that the universe consisted of a vast flow of general being and man was just as much a part of this as everything else. A person who drifted along with the tide passively would have reasonable happiness. If we look at Return of the Native the heath symbol represents this mass of general being. People like Diggory Venn who lived in complete harmony with the heath and, therefore, the flow of life achieved happiness. People who were ambitious and had plans out of harmony with the

flow of life and who refused to be carried along by the general current were destroyed. The struggle of man against existence was not successful and there lay the tragedy - man's refusal to accept existence as it was. Eustacia Vye refused to be carried along with life on the heath and it was fatal and brought disaster. According to Hardy, idealistic, sensitive, or willful people suffer more - people like Eustacia, and Clym. Those who passively accept life, like the rustics, are happy. Therefore, there is a note of optimism in the view of life held by Hardy, but only for those people who do not struggle. Hardy, in making people realize the tragedy of life, makes use of the plot to a great extent. The tragic story unfolds against the sombre heath background where people try to work out a destiny which is futile. The passive ones may achieve happiness; the active willful ones like Clym, Wildeve, Eustacia, and Mrs. Yeobright are destroyed or beaten. To relieve this tragic view Hardy makes use of the non-strugglers who survive and introduces humour as a literary device.

It is with regard to the lightening of the tragedy that the major difference exists between Hardy and Grove. Where Hardy sees the tragedy lightened only for those who do not struggle Grove suggests that such a view of life would be "misery indeed if there were not another factor in the equation. It would be crushing not exalting."²⁸ The difference lies in the fact that the Grove hero accepts

²⁸F. P. Grove, It Needs to be Said, "The Happy Ending", Macmillan, 1929, p. 87.

his fate, that he becomes reconciled to it, and that he is able, like Prometheus to exult because he has succeeded in achieving his ideal as far as he can. This idea fits with Grove's philosophy that "it is the universal verdict of mankind that all of us who conceive a great aim must necessarily fail and fall short of achieving it."²⁹ However, he continues, "in our failure we exult, because we have fought against the odds of life."³⁰

To me there is nothing of this idea in Hardy. He does not see in Clym Yeobright, or Michael Henchard anything of this as part of the Promethean symbolism. Hardy does, of course, use the Promethean symbol in The Return of the Native but he does not use it to bring out any feeling of exultation, only that of rebelliousness:

Moreover to light a fire is the instinctive and resistant act of man when, at the winter ingress, the curfew is sounded throughout Nature. It indicates a spontaneous, Promethean rebelliousness against the fiat that this recurrent season shall bring foul times, cold darkness, misery and death. Black chaos comes, and the fettered gods of the earth say, Let there be light.³¹

Yeobright placed his hand upon her arm. "Now, don't you suppose, my inexperienced girl, that I cannot rebel, in high Promethean fashion, against the gods and fate as well as you."³²

There are, of course, many similarities between Hardy and Grove:

²⁹Ibid., p. 88.

³⁰Ibid., p. 89.

³¹Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, Macmillan, The Scholar's Library, 1965, pp. 17-18.

³²Ibid., p. 299.

Egdon Heath is not unlike the primeval prairie as a setting for an age-old drama. The tragic heroes and heroines of both writers seem to have tragic flaws which contribute to their tragic downfall. Although the end for both Hardy and Grove is tragic the views of life are not identical.

Furthermore it is my belief that Grove rather than Hardy expresses the more realistic view of the universal reaction to human life.

To have greatly tried and to have failed; to have greatly wished and to be denied; to have greatly longed for purity and to be sullied; to have greatly craved for life and to receive death; all that is the common lot of greatness on the earth.³³

But in Grove's view added to the failure is the acceptance of failure and the exulting in "having borne the banner this far."³⁴ Surely this view of life is a more universal reaction to life than that of Hardy. It applies, as Grove suggests, to Prometheus, to Moses, to Caesar, and surely it applies to Joan of Arc, to Napoleon, and to John F. Kennedy. All of these failed to achieve their ultimate ideals, and all of them were crushed by forces outside themselves, but surely all of them could have exulted in "having borne the banner this far."

³³F. P. Grove, It Needs to be Said, "The Happy Ending," Macmillan, 1929, p. 87.

³⁴Ibid., p. 87.

Fruits of the Earth which should have been called Abe Spalding does mirror the tragic quality of the universal reaction of mankind to life. Abe Spalding is a man who greatly tried and failed, who greatly wished and was denied, but he did accept his failure and certainly exulted in having carried the banner as far as he did.

In the year 1900 Abe Spalding came to Morley, Manitoba with five-thousand dollars, a few farm implements, a new bride, and a dream which gradually revealed its many facets. In the first chapter of the novel we are first introduced to some of these facets: he dreamed that in 20 years the area in which he had taken up his claim would be a prosperous settlement; he dreamed that he himself would own two square miles of that land himself; he dreamed of having on that two square miles a magnificent home:

Yet, half unbeknown to him, there was a dream: of a mansion such as he had seen in Ontario, in the remnants of a colonial estate - a mansion dominating an extensive holding of land, imposed upon that holding as a sort of seigneurial sign-manual. Dominating this prairie.³⁵

When he arrived in 1900 almost all of that area in which he settled was virgin prairie which he dreamed of conquering, for it was out of his primeval land that he intended to build his dream:

³⁵F. P. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, N.C.L., McClelland and Stewart, 1965, p. 23.

"He was here to conquer. Conquer he would!"³⁶

And he did conquer; he started to plough his land on the evening of the first day he spent on that land, and from that land, that primeval prairie, that giant of a man, Abe Spalding wrested the material wealth with which he achieved almost all of his dreams.

It is not until the fourth chapter of the novel that the fourth facet of his dream materializes in the mind of Abe; that dream was of the founding of a family to take over his holdings and carry on his work:

He began to have glimpses of the truth that his dream of economic success involved another dream: that of a family life on the great estate which he was building up.³⁷

Another dream which gradually evolves in the mind of Abe is not only of a prosperous settlement here in the midst of the virgin prairie but also of himself as the leader of that community. And in all of these dreams Abe is successful - up to a point.

Within a few years of his arrival Abe Spalding sees the first dream coming true with the arrival over a period of years of enough settlers to warrant the setting up of a school district in which he becomes chairman of the schoolboard and introduces to the newly built school the teacher of his choice, Blaine. By the year

³⁶Ibid., p. 25.

³⁷Ibid., p. 50.

1910 he saw the realization of the second facet of his dream come true with the acquiring of the Hudson Bay Company land which gave him two square miles of good farm land. In the year 1912 he realized his great ambition of harvesting twelve-hundred acres of wheat which he saved from the damaging rains which started soon after harvesting by stacking the whole crop and threshing it when clear weather returned. This crop enabled him to realize the dream of building his mansion, and he exulted when he saw the lights from that mansion lighting up the prairie:

That was the proudest moment of his life; and he raised his arm as though reaching for the stars.³⁸

In chapter nine of the novel we see Abe beginning, with his new relationship with his son, Charlie, to have hopes of the fourth facet of his dream materializing. Surely, had Charlie lived, he would have followed in his father's footsteps, or, at least, Abe could think so. And finally Abe realized the fifth and unexpressed facet of his dream, that of leading the community which he had dreamed of, when he was elected reeve of the municipality.

And so in the first half of the novel Abe Spalding moves from victory to victory; as he looked back at these victories later in life he must have experienced some exultation at having carried the banner thus far; when he acquired his two square miles he was the victor; when he established the new school he was the victor; when he

³⁸Ibid., p. 118, 119.

erected his mansion he was the victor; when he harvested his great crop of 1912 he was the victor; when he was elected reeve he was the victor; and when he sat sheltering from the rainstorm with Charlie between his knees he was the victor. But when Charlie, his son, lay crushed under the wheels of his load of wheat Abe was crushed.

Abe, feeling the ground giving way beneath him, walked blindly on to the end of the culvert, staggered through the ditch, took a few steps over the open prairie, and fell forward on his face...³⁹

The turning point of Fruits of the Earth occurs almost exactly half way through the novel, and it certainly occurs half way through the plot. The plot structure of this novel is of beautiful architectural design. All of Abe's dreams seem to be coming true, but just as he reaches the highest point of success with regard to each of the five facets of his dream the action turns against him, and gradually, in the second half of the narrative he is stripped of the victories he had won in the first half of the novel. In this way the story itself and the character of Abe are completely meshed. At the crisis of the novel the action turns against Abe Spalding and his character changes as he gradually accepts his defeats.

It is important to analyze the turning point in the action from the point of view of the tragic flaw, the tragic error in

³⁹
Ibid., p. 128.

judgement, the harmartia, which caused the mistaken act bringing about this change in fortune which gradually leads to his downfall. The tragic flaw in the character of Abe, according to Desmond Pacey, would be expressed in the following: "his exclusive preoccupation with material achievements is soul destroying,"⁴⁰ or perhaps it could be worded in another way to emphasize the fact that it was his preoccupation with his dream of the future that was that flaw:

His life lay in the future; for the sake of that future he slaved from dawn till dark. ⁴¹

He was everlastingly living in the future; that future might never come; he could not stop to look about; he must plan and calculate. Life was slipping by, un-lived. ⁴²

It is perhaps most ironic that Abe's dream of material achievement and his dream of the future should destroy him, or at least cause reversal in his rising success.

During the threshing in the fall of 1914 Abe was sending part of the grain to town and storing part of the grain in his own granaries. He had several men with teams and wagons hauling for him. Having fired one of these men he found that it would be necessary to thresh on the ground= "an undesirable proceeding in open weather. Part of the grain was sure to spoil."⁴³ And so to

⁴⁰Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove, Ryerson, 1945, p. 69.

⁴¹F. P. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, N.C.L., McClelland and Stewart, 1965, p. 60.

⁴²Ibid., p. 83.

⁴³Ibid., p. 124.

prevent that waste he decided, almost on impulse, to allow his twelve year old son to take a few loads to town. On the first trip to town Charlie was killed. This was the first of many tragedies which Abe had to accept during the falling action of the novel.

During the early chapters of the novel, in order to make this tragic turning most effective, the tragic hero should have had some warnings, some premonitions, some signs. Abe had received these warnings. In Chapter Four when he and Ruth discuss the purpose of his life he realizes that he is sacrificing something:

"There was no time, no energy left to devote to his household; and the fact that he knew he was neglecting a thing of fundamental importance made him cross and monosyllabicat the early age of thirty-six he had moments of an almost poignant realization of the futility of it all."⁴⁴

He says later to Ruth,

"I am not my own master."⁴⁵

During the summer of 1912 when Abe was undertaking the most gigantic of all his tasks, that of raising twelve hundred acres of wheat all at once with all the attendant risks and expense, he frequently thought that "unless some major disaster intervened... unheard of wealth would be garnered that fall."⁴⁶

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 54.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 98.

He proceeded to speculate along these lines:

"Unless some major disaster interfered, this crop would place him at the goal of his ambitions, but could it be that disaster was to come? He felt as though a sacrifice were needed to propitiate the fates. He caught himself casting about for something he might do to hurt himself, so as to lessen the provocation and challenge his prospect of wealth must be to whatever power had taken the place of the gods."⁴⁷

The sacrifice, when it came, was too great for Abe; it was his elder son, his favourite child, the only one of his family with whom he now had an intimate relationship. And from that turning point Abe's fortunes gradually declined as he, like his prototype, was chained more and more firmly to the rock.

The truth came most clearly to Abe one day in 1918 when he observed what was happening to his house, his monument, his "Ozymandias":

"He would stand at the corner of the huge house and look closely at brick and mortar ... crumbling away....The moment a work of man was finished nature set to work to take it down again. ..and so with everything... they were all on the way of being levelled to the soil again."⁴⁸

His dreams almost realized before the crisis, now one by one began

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 98.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 134.

to be destroyed. Charlie's death had been the first break in his dream of a family to carry on his work; Charlie's death was followed by Jim's decision to be a mechanic in town, by Marian's early marriage to a lawyer, and by Frances' being seduced by McCrae. And at the same time as his dream of the family began to fade so began the decline in his materialistic dreams of wealth. Everyone else speculated on the rise in the price of flax, and Abe steadfastly planted wheat. Perhaps the most crushing blow of all came to the stricken giant when he was defeated on the consolidated school issue when he was unable to vote because of non-payment of taxes. Having to resign his municipal positions and give up public life he saw the final crumbling of his many-faceted dream. By now even the dream of his mansion had become hollow:

"His great house was useless: the three people left in it would have had ample room in the patchwork shack. Soon he and Ruth would be alone, lost in that structure which, from behind the rustling wind-breaks, looked out over that prairie which it had been built to dominate."⁴⁹

If Abe Spalding is to illustrate Grove's tragic view of life he must accept his failure; he must show that he accepts the view that life proceeds by compromise only. I believe that this acceptance of his punishment is clearly revealed in the ending which

⁴⁹
Ibid., p. 223.

Grove has given to the book. Although Pacey would prefer an ending involving a view of Abe's farm in the same state of decay as its prototype near Rapid City, Grove has given the book an ending which is truer to his stated philosophy of tragedy.

After the death of Charlie and after each succeeding catastrophe Abe Spalding, though seemingly chained to the rock of eternal punishment, accepted his destiny and did not surrender to the gods. Stubbornly sticking to the growing of wheat throughout the speculation in flax Abe was finally justified in his stand in the year 1920 when the price of flax fell and Abe's wheat crop was successful. He had salvaged something of his dream. The same applied to his Abraham-like dream of founding a dynasty to follow him; he wished fervently for Marion to accept his decision and restore family unity:

Had she risen from that arm-chair in the corner of the room, and had she come to him to put an arm about him...he would, for the moment, have been entirely happy.⁵⁰

Just before Abe learns of the final blow that is delivered to him he has a moment of introspection which, though clearly showing his knowledge of his defeat in achieving his ideals, does not express bitterness:

"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

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 201.

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...Yet this was the last turning point in Abe's life."⁵¹

After Ruth has taken matters into her own hands concerning Frances and McCrae, and after she has come home with Abe he begins to ponder about answering the call again to lead the district from which he had become aloof. Here he clearly states his acceptance of all that has happened:

Resignation? The thing he had dreamt of for a week had been no resignation at all: he had nursed his anger and shut himself off. He had meant to do what, in his weariness, seemed fulfillment of his desires. True resignation meant accepting one's destiny; to him it meant accepting the burden of leadership; and the moment he saw that, he felt at one with the district, with his brother-in-law who had told him his story, with Ruth in her sorrow, and, strangely, with himself; for here was something to do once more: the gang would vanish into thin air. His own life had been wrong, or all this would not have happened. He had lived to himself and had had to learn that it could not be done...

There were further searchings, painfully probing; but all led to the same result. "Yes," he muttered to himself, "I'll go on...to the end...Whatever it may be."⁵²

That night Abe resumed his leadership of Spalding District by going to the schoolhouse and driving out the gang who had taken it over.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 236.

⁵²Ibid., p. 264.

In chapter One of this thesis I have indicated that there is a relationship between Grove's view of tragedy and that of Ibsen. In the Ibsen problem play the situation of the protagonist is clearly shown to be an instance of a general social problem. When we approach this aspect of Grove we come very close to his reason for choosing the prairie as the setting for his novels. M. G. Parks, in his introduction to Fruits of the Earth writes of this problem:

As an interpretation of a sociological phenomenon, the novel is often impressive. Grove creates in Abe a type of the successful pioneer - not a typical pioneer, for Abe is clearly a man of epic proportions, but rather the kind of man best suited to combat and, in a significant measure, to control the forces of nature and human society which oppose his success. To be successful, Grove decided, a pioneer had to be "dominant" and "rigid"; he had to have a "single-minded preoccupation with the specifically pioneering task." In such a man's success lies his ultimate defeat, for as Grove explains, the successful pioneer is a tragic type:

"Its whole endeavour is bent upon reshaping and doing away with the very condition in its environment which gives it its economic and historic justification; and when it has been done away with, when the environment is tamed, the task is done; and the pioneer has used up, in doing it, the span of life allotted to him. He suddenly realizes that he has been working for a purpose which has defeated its end. He cannot now, settle down to enjoy the fruit of his labour."

This is the tragedy of Abe's life that, having devoted the best part of his life to the "specifically pioneering task" and its attendant materialistic goals, he finds himself in middle age a spiritual pauper and in the eyes of the new generation a social anachronism.⁵³

I agree with most of what Parks implies to be the general social problem of which Abe is an instance. I feel that he clearly illustrates the conflict which arises as a result of the need of the pioneer, if he is to succeed in pioneering, to be preoccupied with the pioneering task. This preoccupation does lead to a living in the future and a sacrifice of whatever impedes the progress of the pioneering project. I think it is a general problem of pioneering that one of the elements most frequently sacrificed to the task at hand has to be the "luxury" of family life and family comfort. In sacrificing the pleasures of today in order to succeed, the aim of the pioneer, one destroys what one is working for.

In Fruits of the Earth Frederick Philip Grove has presented by means of a Promethean figure a realistic mirroring of the tragic quality of the universal reaction of mankind to life; in so doing he has, in my opinion, written the novel which best fulfills his dream of creating in art the drama of universal man presenting this tragic view in a primeval setting.

CHAPTER III

OUR DAILY BREAD

When an artist is motivated to present what he considers to be a universal reaction to human life, he must be allowed complete freedom in the choice of the medium of his expression and within that medium complete freedom of choice of materials. One of the principles any artist must follow in this choice is that of selectivity.

Grove has chosen to present his vision of the tragic view of life by means of a combination of archetypal symbolic representations of primitive man against a primeval background with his own techniques of realism. He is far from unique in each of these choices, but he may be unique in his combination of them.

One modern novelist who closely parallels his choices is Hemingway. In his deceptively simple novel The Old Man and The Sea Hemingway chooses to present a tragic view of life - somewhat lightened by the conclusion of the novel- against the primeval background of the sea with a primitive figure, Santiago, who incorporates the archetypal symbolism of the Christ figure, the Saint figure, and the eternal fisherman image. This old man acts out again what for Hemingway is the essential in life, the contest involving the danger of death, strength, skill and luck.

In order to present this eternal struggle, Hemingway, like Grove, had to select his materials very carefully. In achieving this he has attracted such criticism as the following:

The lives and speech of some of his characters have offended readers who think that in them there is an emphasis on the primitive in man. It is the writer's privilege, however to choose his subjects and Hemingway's treatment of character is for him a matter of principle.¹

When writing a novel a writer should create living people; people not characters. A character is a caricature....people in a novel not skillfully constructed characters, must be projected from the writer's assimilated experience, from his knowledge, from his head, from his heart and from all there is of him. If he ever has luck as well as seriousness and gets them out entire they will have more than one dimension and they will last a long time.²

In addition to his emphasis on the choice of the primitive in his characterization there is also an emphasis on the choice of the primeval in setting:

In all the stories the sense of place, as Hemingway calls it is important.... Hemingway treats certain regions with particular affection, the mountains and the drift of the Gulf Stream, for example.³

¹Hemingway, The Old Man and The Sea, Saunders, 1964, Study Guide by Mary A. Campbell, p. 137.

²Hemingway, "Death in the Afternoon."

³Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea, Saunders, 1964, Study Guide by Mary A. Campbell, p. 139.

On this timeless stream the old man spends
most of his waking hours.⁴

The final link between Hemingway and Grove which I wish to mention is the similarity in the use of symbolism. As Miss Campbell mentions in talking of Santiago's desire to catch the great fish:

Perhaps there is a suggestion here of what the Greeks call hubris, presumptuous man violating the great mysteries of nature, as Prometheus did when he snatched fire from the heavens and was punished by the Gods.⁵

Grove, like Hemingway, chooses a primeval setting; the Canadian Prairie is the background for Grove's hero of Our Daily Bread. John Elliot combines in his personality the characteristics which make him another gigantic character looming over the rest of the people in his family and community. This "Lear of the prairies" is, like Shakespeare's Lear, a victim of filial ingratitude who has to live out the eternal conflict between parents and children as referred to on the title page of the book:

And his sons walked not in his ways.

1 Samuel, Ch. 8, v. 3.

John Elliot, like Abe Spalding, left his home and pioneered further west; he left the Red River Valley in Southern Manitoba on the

⁴Ibid., p. 145.

⁵Ibid., p. 147.

death of his father.

John Elliot senior, a thinker, had lived a life of introspection, dreams and ideas. He and his young wife had gone to what was then the Territory of Assiniboia to settle in country which was like the land of sunset, bare, naked, prairie hills, sun-baked, rain-washed, devoid of all the comforts of even slightly older civilizations, devoid, at the time, even of the consolation of human neighbourhood....It stood the largest and most commodious dwelling of the whole district outside of the towns, holding eight rooms....

John Elliot was a dreamer; but his dreams had a way of coming true. Far more important to him than his dreams of economic prosperity had been his one great dream of family life.

In Our Daily Bread we begin where Fruits of the Earth finished; we do not follow the early career of John Elliot as a pioneer as we did with Abe Spalding but rather we see the last half of a life and not the first half except by means of a few flashbacks. We see him after half his dream has been realized:

Through all his activities, then, a single purpose had run: the purpose of honourably raising his family, a large family at that. His favourite story from the Bible had been that of Abraham and his house; often he had repeated to himself the lines, "In blessing I will bless thee; and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

⁶F. P. Grove, Our Daily Bread, Macmillan, 1928, pp. 5-6.

Never had he, in these lines, seen or sought for evidence of verbal revelation; purely theological thought had been unknown to him. He had taken them simply as an expression of the marvel of fruitful propagation.

That single purpose had coordinated all things for him, had justified them, had seemed to transform his whole life with all its ramifications into a single, organic whole with a clear and unmistakable meaning. In that purpose he and his wife had been one; and so they had been fruitful and had multiplied. It was the children's duty to conform, to become like them; and, therefore, to obey them in all things, so as to multiply the seed themselves one day; so as not to let the strand thus created perish. To live honourably, to till the land, and to hand on life from generation to generation : that was man's duty; that, to him, in spite of all doubts had meant and still meant serving God. Doubt had existed only as to details: it had never gnawed at the root of the fundamentals.⁷

Here in the figure of John Elliot, then, we find a combination of the Lear symbol of the filial ingratitude theme and the Abraham father symbol. Abe Spalding had combined the Promethean symbol with the Abraham symbol; in many ways there is a parallel between the two men, although they represent two different halves of a lifetime.

John Elliot's greatest dream was of family life; his earlier dream of material prosperity had been realized; the later dream was shattered. The novel presents the situation to us in the eternal conflict between parents and children - a favourite

⁷Ibid., p. 189.

problem of Grove. On the individual level we are given a tragedy in the life of John Elliot as crushing as the tragedy of his prototype Lear; on the social level we are presented with an Ibsen-like problem play- the dramatization of the sociological problem arising from the conflicts between parents and their children.

The working out of these two levels of interpretation is one which obviously obsessed Grove, for it occurs to a certain extent in Fruits of the Earth, Master of the Mill, and Two Generations to refer only to the published novels.

As Our Daily Bread evolved at the time of publication we begin with John Elliot aged 55 and his wife Martha aged 49. It would appear from the original manuscript of the novel in Box 1 of the Grove papers that he had intended starting it differently. On page 1 of the manuscript there is a chronological table on which he has worked out the ages of the parents and children starting with 1896 when John was 45 and Martha 39 and working up to 1921 when John was 70 and Martha deceased. Chapter One in the original manuscript is entitled "The Household Unfolds Itself" and begins with Gladys and Henrietta living in town. Grove obviously wished to avoid as much of the earlier career of Elliot as possible and had difficulty establishing a suitable starting point for his presentation of the drama of this Lear of the prairies. The story then began thirty-two years after the arrival of the Elliots at what eventually became to be known as Sedgeby, Saskatchewan.

Now in 1906 he has ten living children ranging in age from

Gladys, the eldest, at thirty to the youngest, Arthur, at thirteen.

As these had grown up- Gladys, the first born, was thirty now- his old dream, that of raising a large family honourably, had been replaced, slowly and imperceptibly, by a new one: that of seeing his children settled about him as the children of the patriarchs of Israel were settled about their fathers. A beginning had been made ten years ago: Mary the third-oldest girl had been married to Fred Sately a Manitoba teacher who, however, had shortly after abandoned his profession in order to move west and to go into trade; he was now living in Sedgeby, the small town which, with the coming of the railroad, had sprung up four miles north of the farms.⁸

In a flashback to thirty years earlier Grove describes Elliot's dream at that time:

To him, John Elliot, his children, still unborn, had seemed to be a re-birth, a re-creation of himself. In them, his ideas and ideals would be multiplied; they would convert that of his dreams into reality which he himself might fall short of realizing to the full. They would be a means of multiplying his own personality.⁹

Then later in the same flashback Elliot realizes his wife's dream:

She expected her children, still unborn, to be replicas of herself, to accomplish what she had aimed at.¹⁰

⁸Ibid., p. 7.

⁹Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 10.

Finally he comes to a third realization:

"A strange new knowledge had come to him. As they grew up these children were less and less a continuation of himself; less and less even of a blending of the parent natures. In each of them a third thing had appeared, their individual being, with inclinations and desires which seemed to be without a derivation from himself or his wife; and the strangest thing about it was that these new individual natures differed in each single one of his children. Whence were they? This was the most puzzling thing of all: a thing to which he always reverted. Already at times, he began to see failure ahead on what his own pensive and contemplative soul had conceived to be the peculiar life work and task of his very existence."¹¹

He then thinks of his own youth:

Up to the time of his father's death he had known no will of his own. He had had dreams it is true, but he had subordinated them to the wishes of his own parents and the welfare of the parental homestead in Manitoba. And even his own dream of a farm of his own, a wife, and many children- had been no more than a continuation of the practice of his parents. With them it had been an instinct followed blindly; with him it had become a conscious vision. He had always felt himself to be continuous with his ancestors.¹²

In this section of the novel we are introduced to the basic form of the conflict between parents and children. His

¹¹Ibid., p. 11-12.

¹²Ibid., p. 12.

children were not going "to walk in his ways"; they were going to leave the homestead and not remain around him as he had envisioned them doing in his patriarchal dream. He was not going to be allowed to live as an Abraham but instead as a Lear. This then is also a universal problem; children have minds of their own; they will leave the family and go out on their own. This basic problem leads to other complex situations and conflicts.

At this point I would like to comment on the suggestions which have been made concerning the relationship between the book, Our Daily Bread and the Mennonite family from which Grove's wife came, the Wiens family, originally from Lowe Farm, Manitoba, and later of Rush Lake, Saskatchewan. One suggestion of this is in an article by Victor Peters:

Grove's most successful novel is Our Daily Bread which is partly based on his wife's family, the Wienses.¹³

The same point is made in a paper on Grove written for Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas:

Since the family of the Elliots is supposed to be patterned somewhat after that of Grove's wife: the Wienses, a mennonite family...¹⁴

¹³Victor Peters, "Frederick Philip Grove", The Manitoba School Journal, October, 1946, p. 7.

¹⁴Albert G. Braun, "Frederick Philip Grove and Catherine Wiens: Cosmopolitan Author and Mennonite Schoolmarm", A Research Paper presented to the Department of Bible, Bethel College, North Newton Kansas, 1957, p. 21.

As mentioned before in this study, it is firmly held by local authorities that the John Elliot family is patterned after Mrs. Grove's family, the Wienses. Miss Catherine Wiens came of this Mennonite family which began its pioneer existence near Lowe Farm and then moved to Rush Lake, Saskatchewan, just as John Elliot's immediate predecessors moved from the Red River Valley to the Assiniboia area of the wheat province.¹⁵

A letter from Victor Peters is then used to further substantiate this view in the same paper:

Unfortunately Grove Anglicized the names of his Mennonite characters. I recently visited a small Mennonite town, Lowe Farm, and found that characters of Our Daily Bread were familiar to a number of the residents.¹⁶

I feel that the above suggestions may or may not be justified. Certainly I suppose that one could make a reasonably good case for supporting the theory that Cathleen and Woodrow Ormond were modeled on the characters of Catherine and Frederick Philip Grove, but when the case had been proven it would neither add to, nor detract from, the interpretation of the novel as a whole. To try to suggest that John Elliot is one of the Wiens family is the same as saying that Abe Spalding was the newly arrived farmer from Ontario that Grove first saw in 1894. To try to present the novel as a Mennonite Novel as Mr. Braun does is ridiculous; there is no mention in the book of

¹⁵Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 26.

religious services nor, for that matter, are there really any major references to religion. Our Daily Bread is as true to Grove's philosophy of realism as is Fruits of the Earth. For the same reasons, then, as in the later novel Grove does not present all facets of prairie life; there are no references to church services, to barn raisings, to politics, or to social gatherings. The novel is presented in order to have as universal an application as possible. Grove does not intrude to speak through characters or events, nor does he tie his characters down to the affairs and opinions of a specific time or place in Western Canada in the early part of this century. If as is suggested, Martha is a typical Mennonite mother and wife, then she is also a typical Presbyterian mother and wife in the Red River area or a typical Catholic mother and wife in pioneer Quebec.

As a matter of fact it is difficult to distill the symbolism implied in the characters of John and Martha Elliot. John is obviously a descendent of King Lear; Martha is obviously descended from the patron saint of good housekeeping, Ste. Martha.

John Elliot, unlike Abe Spalding, is presented to us late in life because the plight of our Lear concerns the end of life after some success in achieving dreams. However, the problem faced by Elliot is more than the conflict between generations; his mind is filled with conflict; he exemplifies to a great extent Grove's analysis of conflict in It Needs To Be Said:

Life swarms with conflict. We might almost go so far as to say that life is conflict. Conflicts, in the concrete, are of such exceedingly common occurrence that, in observing life, one is reminded of a sea in a storm where all large waves - great issues - are beset with smaller waves - the minor conflicts - the backs of which in turn are rippled by the wind - these ripples representing the quarrels and squabbles of menial minds. If life is not essentially of the stuff of conflicts it tends at least to break up into a series of continual conflicts.¹⁷

"The great issue" in Our Daily Bread is the Lear problem:

For Lear is unreasonable; he is in his dotage; and in that lies the tragedy: the old eternal tragedy which consists in the fact that unfortunately youth and old age are juxtaposed in life: that they look at the same thing and see different aspects of it.¹⁸

Every father is a King Lear. The eternal conflict between parents and children results always in some sort of tragedy.¹⁹

In developing the external conflict Grove applies his philosophy of realism; he attempts to present the conflict in such a way that we can have an understanding of both sides. This is made obvious in the presentation of his visit to the Ormonds in Winnipeg and also in his visit to his other children later in the novel. We obviously sympathize with John Elliot in his frustrated loneliness but we cannot help sympathizing with his children as well.

¹⁷F. P. Grove, It Needs to be Said, Macmillan, 1929, p. 67.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 125.

One of the internal conflicts of John Elliot is that between his atheistic and determinist view of life and a view of life involving a religious faith. On the one hand we see his determinist philosophy as expressed in the symbolism of photography:

Photography was becoming a fashionable pastime. One day he had seen Cathleen develop prints. She immersed an apparently blank sheet of paper in a solution contained in a tray. A few irregular patches appeared on its surface. These patches gradually arranged themselves into a picture, each one assuming a definite purposeful significance.

Thus his children appeared to him. The developing solution was life itself. They had been mere blanks, more alike in the lack of distinguishing features than differentiated by the small deviations in texture. Like those first patches on photographic prints certain peculiarities had asserted themselves in each of them, mysterious in their significance... development went on; and suddenly character and fate became readable as the features connected themselves to each other.

...Only that appeared which was already invisibly traced in its layers. There was something uncanny about it. We can but become what we are....

We are introduced to his religious view of life, if it can be called that, in his conversation with old Mr. Harvey:

"What is death? Can you tell me?"

"Well," John Elliot mused. "We cease to be, I suppose."

"Nonsense!" old Mr. Harvey bristled. "How can we cease to be, tell me that! How can I cease to be I?"

"I don't know. Perhaps there's a future life. Perhaps not." For John Elliot had relapsed into doubt.

"There must be. Don't you think so? Say yes, Elliot!"

"Yes..."

"Ah!" the old man exclaimed, pushing him away with his elbow, "You just said that! You don't believe it yourself!"

"I don't know. I don't know. I have my doubts. I've always had my doubts. It wouldn't do to tell the youngsters."

"Why not?" the other asked. "Tell me that. Why not?"

"It helps to keep them in order," John Elliot said.

"Reward and punishment."

John Elliot cleared his throat. "I'll tell you," he said, "If you want to believe there is a way."

"Eh?" the other man urged. "Tell me. Quick. Tell me."

"Get a few young people together in your own house and let them sing hymns."

"Go on! How should that help?"

"I don't know. It worked with me."²¹

An external conflict which is developed in the novel in addition to the other conflicts is that between the views of John Elliot and those held by some of the next generation concerning the earning of one's living. John Elliot, like Abe Spalding, believed that man should earn his daily bread by working on the soil. The opposite view was held by the Vanbruiks in Fruits of the Earth and by the Ormonds in Our Daily Bread.

With reference to the above conflict and also with reference to Elliot's visit to the Ormonds in Winnipeg I feel that Elliot's reaction to the Ormond household with its luxury and affluence is, in reality, Grove's reaction to the affluence and luxury of those with whom he came in contact in Winnipeg - the comparative wealth and luxury,

²¹Ibid., pp. 160-162.

that is, in relation to his own poverty and privation. The description of the Ormond house and the servants would seem to be somewhat out of keeping with the household of a university professor even in those times with the princely salary of thirty-six hundred dollars. I suspect that Grove in these descriptive passages is expressing his romantic view of the life of the rich which he was able to experience only in his dream world and in his writing; he constantly relived the past to forget the failure of the dream of the future. Whether he relived the actual past or only a romanticized view of the past we do not know. But in the passages describing his visit to his daughter, Cathleen, in Winnipeg the reality seems to vanish:

A tall distinguished-looking lady, clad in furs,
swept down upon him.
.....

If there is anything else you need, press this
button.
.....

"One of the maids."

"One of them?" he asked sarcastically. "How many
have you?"

"Three."²²

The conflict is brought out as John Elliot stands in the library of the Ormond house:

"Now and then he stood at the window and looked out into the whirling snow and at the grey sky which was visible only through the tracery of the leafless, black boughs of the enormous elm trees which stood in front of the house. These trees

²²Ibid., p. 164.

were bending and straightening, their tops being lashed by a furious wind. But in that huge and massively built house nothing betrayed - not even a whistling and moaning note - that a blizzard was stalking over the open prairies.

Repeatedly the old man shook his head. With his mind's eye he saw the dug-outs, the sod-cabins of recent settlers in the Saskatchewan hills; and for the first time in his life he thought of poverty with affection.²³

Later that evening at dinner the other side of the conflict is voiced by Cathleen:

"We can't all be farmers, father."

"Can't we?" he asked and subsided. As a matter of fact this doctrine was opposed to all his instincts....

"I suppose not," he added. Then working himself into anger again, for he had to react to his environment, "But I'd like to see a child of mine choosing a man's work at least."

"The spirit of the times is commercial," Woodrow said. "Commercial!" John Elliot exploded. "That means, don't make a thing. Shave a little piece off it while you are handling it! The spirit of the times! The spirit of nonsense!"

Woodrow nodded his head. "Yes. The spirit of the times is to hunt the most pleasure while dodging hard work."²⁴

After his sudden departure from his daughter's home John Elliot later analyzes his actions:

Why had he been so deeply antagonised by what he had seen in the city?

Because, within his own seed, he had seen a departure from that great purpose. Because his own

²³Ibid., pp. 172, 173.

²⁴Ibid., p. 177.

child and her chosen husband saw the end of their lives - if they saw any at all- in what he considered to be inessentials. What were politics, what were the acquisition of wealth, the striving after luxuries - what were even so called science and civilisation in comparison with that greater, nobler end: the handing on of life and the living of that life in the "service of God"?

Empires rose and fell : kings and high priests strove with each other; wars were fought : ripples on the sea of life. Underneath, deep down, that life itself went on as it had gone on in Abraham's time: the land was tilled to grow our daily bread. And this life, the life of the vast majority of men on earth, was the essential life of all mankind. The city with its multifarious activities was nothing but a bubble on that sea.

He was proud of belonging to the hidden ground-mass of the race which carried on essential tasks, no matter under what form of government, no matter under what conditions of climate and soil: he had lived and multiplied; he had grown, created, not acquired his and his children's daily bread: he had served God.

Death? Grass grew and was trodden down. Man was born, lived and had to die, living on in his children and in the example which he had set. Between birth and death, in that short spell of life, there was in addition, the blessing and good gift of human companionship, side by side on an endless road. Why was he alone? He had been deserted! His own children had deserted him.

Whence his anger with Cathleen? . . .
To his eye it appeared that she, Cathleen, was like a field in eternal fallow. In her all his children seemed to blend: and all were sterile. . . .

He had failed in the achievement of the second dream of his life. Half the purpose of his whole existence was gone. His children were scattered over two provinces of this country; they had freed themselves of the paternal rule: they were rebels in the house of their father: their aims were not what his aims had been. Their lives were evil; their lives were chaos; and through their lives, his own was chaos.²⁵

Desmond Pacey in his book, Frederick Philip Grove, has taken a chapter to assess Our Daily Bread; he states that this book is "perhaps

²⁵Ibid., pp. 190, 191.

the most completely satisfying of all his books."²⁶ He seems to base this decision on some of the following elements:

It has in addition, a greater degree of **formal** coherence than any of his other novels, with the possible exception of Two Generations.²⁷

The style is firmer; the characterization more penetrating.²⁸

So the novel ends, with a beautiful sense of completion.²⁹

Far be it from me to disagree with Pacey's evaluation of the book, but I do feel that he bases his decision on the wrong elements of the novel. I feel that Pacey tends to place too great an emphasis on conclusions; he seems to feel that to be successful a conclusion must have a great finality about it; he would have criticized Ibsen for leaving problems unsolved in his problem plays, and he would have praised Shaw for seeming to present solutions to all his thesis drama. Pacey wanted Fruits of the Earth to conclude with the death of Abe Spalding; he feels that the conclusion as it stands is wrong; he probably would criticize the Promethean myth on the same grounds. To have taken Fruits of the Earth to Pacey's suggested conclusion would have destroyed the magnificent thematic development of the novel. He makes the same criticism of The Yoke of Life - that is, of the conclusion, which can be interpreted quite differently from Pacey's view of it.

²⁶Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove, Ryerson, 1945, p. 48.

²⁷Ibid., p. 48.

²⁸Ibid., p. 48.

²⁹Ibid., p. 53.

I also disagree with his suggestion about the formal coherence of Our Daily Bread; I find the architectural pattern of Fruits of the Earth far more satisfying than that of Our Daily Bread. I think that Our Daily Bread being an earlier novel does not reflect the clarity of vision and the harmony of vision and structure that Grove achieved in the last of his prairie novels, Fruits of the Earth.

Starting as it does half way through the life of the hero Our Daily Bread does not lend itself to the combination of structure and characterization that were exemplified in Fruits of the Earth, in which book the chronological account of the career of Abe coincided with the details of the plot development. At the turning point of that novel both the plot and the character of Abe had reached a crisis. In Our Daily Bread to a certain extent the crisis has been reached when the book opens; however, I suppose that one could argue that there are some incidents about mid-way through the book that could be taken as turning points in the career of John Elliot. I feel that perhaps we are to interpret the death of Martha as the definite turning point in the novel, although at a much later stage in the novel the decision by John Elliot to leave the Ormond's house in Winnipeg might also be used as a definite crisis in the life of the hero and therefore perhaps in the structure of the novel itself.

If we consider the novel to be unified about the central theme of the inability of John Elliot to realize his second dream,

that of having his children settled around him in a patriarchal empire, then I feel that the turning point would occur at whatever moment John Elliot realizes that his dream has started to crumble. This may have occurred on the death of Martha or at several later places in the novel.

By the time he was sixty-five, John Elliot was well aware that there was little possibility of his dream being realized.

A series of attacks on his dream came from two causes: the drought of 1914 and the outbreak of war in the same year. From these two causes a series of five years of disasters came to shatter Elliot's dream of reuniting his family about him. The Bramleys crumbled under a mountain of debt and left the district to live in Faulknor, the area to which Norman had recently moved. Arthur enlisted in the army and eventually was killed. Norman married without telling his father. The Harveys followed the Bramleys to Faulknor. The Statelays had moved to British Columbia where Fred worked as a labourer. John junior moved to Manitoba.

During these happenings John Elliot became a miser; he spent less and less on material needs and continued to work and make money which he saved. Along with this development as a miser John Elliot began to dream again:

Concurrently with this development, his inner life began to be dominated by a secret and powerful longing, especially after John had left....

The longing which became poignant-so poignant that it affected him like acute home-sickness - was indefinite at first. But slowly it took shape in the form of a desire to see once more a happy household as his own had been a quarter of a century ago.

.
 But insensibly, as this great longing grew upon him, the feeling which had tormented him during the last twelve years departed: the feeling that his life had reverted to chaos. Once more there seemed to be some purpose in life, some aim. That aim was to assemble his children about him one day, to see them together again; to feel once more that this was his family, his seed to multiply as the stars in heaven. ²⁸

However this new dream is, of course, completely unrealistic. John Elliot has failed in his ambition of being an Abraham, and has taken on the characteristics of a Lear. He is in his dotage and makes the eternal mistake, of having the illusion that his children will live according to his choice for them and not according to their own decisions for themselves. He is condemned to the eternal tragedy of the Lears of this world; he has lived to provide for his family and with the hope of being surrounded by his family only to see that family break up and move away from the homestead. Instead of accepting this situation and making the best of things, John Elliot attempts to achieve his dream stubbornly and with great damage to himself.

²⁸F. P. Grove, Our Daily Bread, Macmillan, 1928, pp. 243-44.

He becomes in the last part of the book a pathetically tragic figure; this stage in the development of the character of John Elliot begins with his letter to Woodrow:

At last, on the following Sunday, the longing simply to be with them - whether they did as he wanted them to do or not - became so great, so over-powering that he found a pad of letter paper, cleared a corner of his table- it was littered again as it had been before Cathleen came - and sat down to write to Woodrow.²⁹

In this letter he asks Woodrow to return from Faulknor to take him to be with the members of his family who are settled there, five of his remaining nine children. When Woodrow reads the contents of this letter to John Elliot's five children at Faulknor the unanimous vote is against his coming to visit them. They reject the old man; they do not wish him to come back into their lives.

As Woodrow and Cathleen pass near John Elliot's farm Woodrow makes the significant remark, "Lear of the prairie!" And from this time on that is what John Elliot is; in almost every detail of his life he follows the pattern of his prototype.

Book Three of Our Daily Bread entitled "In Exile" dramatizes the Lear tragedy against the starkness of the Canadian prairie. As Lear moved back and forth in desperation between the homes of Goneril and Regan so John Elliot desperately tries to find consolation by moving in with his children. First he visits Mary in British

²⁹Ibid., p. 253.

Columbia; then he rents his land at Sedgeby; then he aimlessly goes to Faulknor. At Faulknor he visits in succession with Isabel, Gladys and Norman, but with none of them does he find the consolation that he seeks; everywhere he sees evidence of the disintegration of his ideals for his family. They are all living on debt-ridden property; they all seem to be shiftless; they all seem to lack the vision that he had:

About him, the universe seemed to reel. But
he stood and walked bent on his cane. He stood
in a world which was falling to ruins.³⁰

He then went to Manitoba to visit his son John; the experience there is just as disillusioning as his visits with his other children:

Between him and the life of his children a
sudden distance seemed to have intervened;
he looked at their doings as he might have
looked at far-away hills veiled in purple
hazes.³¹

He then goes to visit Henrietta at Fisher Landing. While there her husband Pete Harrington dies. This death scene alone with the other two death scenes in the novel, those of Martha and of John Elliot himself, bring to the fore another problem which has troubled the mind of John Elliot throughout his later life, and I think troubled Frederick Philip Grove throughout much of his life, but especially following the death of his daughter, May.

It is the mystery of the life after death, or if not life after death, the mystery of what does happen to one's soul after death. As the old man sits by the deathbed of Pete Harrington John Elliot thinks about this mystery which has troubled him:

³⁰Ibid., p. 292.

³¹Ibid., p. 315.

The man was leaving this world and had already half entered another. He was standing on the threshold of whatever follows.... John Elliot's thought saw with extraordinary distinctness that this man was preceding him as another might precede him into a dark and mysterious room never entered before. A strange curiosity to spy upon him took hold of the white-bearded man. . . . In a flash, too, his thought seemed to take a bird's eye view of his life that was past of his anger and anguish at his lack of success. And in the same flash of thought he seemed to strip himself of all these things as if they did not really matter. What solely mattered was this: to be ready for the next world, to be prepared!

.
 On the other side of that door, whether as persons or not, were his wife and his own father and mother; and their parents; and all those ancestors of his whose blood he had in his veins, and whose blood he had, on varying proportions, transmitted to his children. And there, too, was what would perhaps explain the unexplained and inexplicable mysteries of this seemingly senseless life into which we drift like birds of passage passing over some strange land.³²

After the funeral of Pete Harrington whom John Elliot had admired perhaps more than any of his own children, the Ormonds take the old man with them to Winnipeg. While there he carries out the distribution of his property in true Lear fashion, having the property distributed while he is still alive. Having done this Elliot realized that there is nothing left for him in this life!

He was an old, infirm man of no earthly use. He was in the way. And yet he could not be left alone. . . . Afraid? No. There was a door,

³²Ibid., pp. 342, 343.

black and mysterious. What was behind?
 A forking of the paths. Which path would
 be his? Had he done what he must do? Was
 there anything left to be done? No, nothing.
 It did not matter how he died. What mattered
 was how he had lived. How had he lived?

With one thing in view: to multiply the
 seed of his life. That he had done. He had
 raised his children. Not it is true entirely as
 he would have liked to do: they had slipped away
 from his control
 His work was done. There was nothing left but
 to die. Death would be welcome.³³

John Elliot knows that he has failed in attempting to achieve his
 ideals; however, he accepts his tragedy with resignation; he had
 done his best and though he has been defeated he has not been
 crushed. He has achieved a certain success; "he has succeeded in
 carrying the banner thus far."

To completely fit the Grove view of tragedy John Elliot
 should have a flaw in his character which leads him to the mistake
 which sets the machinery of tragedy in motion. John Elliot's tragic
 flaw can be described as having too selfish a vision or dream;

John Elliot dreams of living in the patriarchal
 manner with his children comfortably established
 on farms around him.³⁴

When this dream is destroyed John Elliot has no other dream on which
 to rely; he has removed his only purpose in life and work. Ironically

³³Ibid., pp. 357, 358.

³⁴Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove, Ryerson, 1942, p.124.

had he been more like Abe Spalding whose dream had many facets John Elliot might have been able to achieve some degree of satisfaction in the later part of his life. When Abe Spalding returned to the schoolhouse at the end of Fruits of the Earth the suggestion is made that this may be the way Abe will finish his life: in restoring the district to its original standards of prosperity and morality. Once Elliot's dream is destroyed he has no secondary dreams to work for.

Having been taken by the Ormonds to Faulknor, John Elliot after having realized his position finally escapes from his children's supervision to return to Sedgeby.

At any rate he had given his children all that he had. And now he was useless, utterly useless. Nothing remained to be done in this life.³⁵

He regards Sedgeby as home; he wants to return there to die. Like the original Lear he takes to the countryside in this last pathetic journey as he attempts to escape from his children. In his wanderings he comes over the prairie until at one point he sees the Lear symbol:

He saw the sod-hut and the straggling low buildings of a pioneer homestead.³⁶

³⁵F. P. Grove, Our Daily Bread, Macmillan, 1928, p. 377.

³⁶Ibid., p. 382.

The sod-hut has always been part of his subconscious vision of the prairie; he had seen it earlier as he looked through the windows of the library in Cathleen's house many years before.

Finally he reaches Sedgeby and manages to enter his house and fall on his bed. There he dies later surrounded by all the living members of his family. In death he has succeeded in bringing them home:

When all those of his children who were in the house had assembled they looked mutely down on his cold stern face; and in most of them a feeling rose to the surface that with him the last link had been broken which so far had held the many divergent forces at work within the family together as in a sheaf.³⁷

When his family return to the homestead to watch their father die, they are confronted with the same Ozymandias symbol that had inspired Grove to begin the writing of Fruits of the Earth. The once prosperous-looking farmhouse is well on its way to the decay which colours much of Grove's work. No sooner does man finish his work than signs of decay set in. The house at Sedgeby is well on its way to its return to the soil when Elliot dies:

They were horrified when they saw the house. The windows were broken without any exceptionBlack spots on the prairie about the house, covered with charcoal, were evidence of the fact that camp-fires had been lit there the room in which their father lay was open to the winds; and everything in it was coated with dust and chaff.³⁸

³⁷Ibid., p. 390.

³⁸Ibid., p. 389.

In Our Daily Bread Frederick Philip Grove has revealed another vision of the mirroring of the tragic quality of the universal reaction of mankind to life. He has once again placed against the primeval setting of the Canadian prairie a tragic Titan compounded of many characteristics which this old man, John Elliot has developed while living in the mind of Grove. Now that he is dead for according to Grove that is what happens when his creations are committed to paper, we can observe him and watch the many facets of that old man appear, including the combination in one man of the archetypal symbolism of both Abraham and Lear.

CHAPTER IV

SETTLERS OF THE MARSH

Frederick Philip Grove's first novel to be published was Settlers of the Marsh. In 1925 when it was published its reception was anything but favourable from the public of the Canadian West where, among other things, it was banned from the shelves of the Winnipeg Public Library. However, there were favourable reviews of the book by several reputable literary journals at the time, and I find it somewhat difficult to understand why this novel has not proven to be a very popular book among the reading public.

By piecing together material from two sources one can learn about the genesis of this fascinating work of fiction; the two sources are the references included in In Search of Myself and the manuscripts of Settlers of the Marsh in the Grove Collection at the University of Manitoba.

In his autobiography, In Search of Myself, Grove refers to the fact that he was working on Settlers of the Marsh during the period in 1917 when he was teaching at Gladstone and his wife was teaching at Falmouth.

Settlers of the Marsh became an obsession; though I planned it at the time as it was written later on, as a trilogy with the title Pioneers.¹

Grove again refers to this book when, in 1919, he was teaching at Eden and his wife was attending Normal School in Winnipeg. McClelland and Stewart had accepted Over Prairie Trails for publication and to quote Grove:

There followed a few months of amazing fertility. . . .

Simultaneously I resketched and largely rewrote, during that spring, four other books: the little volume which was to appear in 1923 under the title The Turn of the Year though, so far the title essay remained unwritten: the book which I called adolescence and which in 1930, appeared under the title The Yoke of Life; Our Daily Bread; and that terrible, three-volume novel which I called Pioneers and of which a garbled extract was to appear in 1925, under the title of one of its parts, Settlers of the Marsh.²

Following this, in about the year 1920, Hamsun's Growth of the Soil appeared. Grove writes of this:

Perhaps no other book has had a more decisive influence on the formulation of my theories. For the moment its effect on me was so great that I shelved my own book, Pioneers, unfinished. It seemed to me that Hamsun had done what I had attempted. It is characteristic of my whole attitude towards what I came to define myself as art, that I considered it entirely unnecessary to finish a book the subject of which had been successfully dealt with by another. This book is not in-

¹F. P. Grove, In Search of Myself, Macmillan, 1946, p. 320.

²Ibid., pp. 351, 352.

validated by the fact that I resumed the book at a later stage. I came to the conclusion that my aim had, after all, been fundamentally different from Hamsun's. In Hamsun's book I came to see a thing I abhorred, namely, romanticism; which means essentially a view of life in which circumstance is conquered by endeavour only if endeavour is aided by the deus ex machina.³

In the fall of 1922 when both Grove and his wife were teaching at Eden Settlers in the Marsh was still in its three volume form:

By this time I had changed my mind about Hamsun's Growth of the Soil; It no longer appeared to me one of the eternal books; nor did its ultimate aim any longer seem to be the same as mine.

Consequently, Settlers of the Marsh was once more taking possession of me. It was in that year, in the summer of 1923, subsequent to our first year at Rapid City, that I finished my work on it, apart from the ruthless cutting-down it received two years later.

Since a measure of detail may throw some light on the story I have to tell, the story of a conflict between material and spiritual things, I will add a brief account of how I came to take that book up again.

We had, in our car, gone to a small, unfrequented, but marvellously fine-sanded beach on Lake Winnipeg, south of the town of Matlock, there to spend the holidays. . . .

One day, while going about my tasks, in the most leisurely way, my mind began to revolve about that book, Pioneers; at first in a detached, almost ironic way, as if it barely concerned me any longer; as if, indeed, it belonged among the other follies of my youth. I had been at work on the book since 1917, during the fall and winter of the long drives over prairie trails; and in 1920, in that marvellously

³Ibid., p. 35.

fruitful spring, I had worked it out. As of its own accord, that spring, its "pattern", as I call it, had emerged. But even then one scene had defied me - the scene between Clara and Niels which, in the later published version, occupies pages 231 to 244. I had seen clearly what these two people had to say to each other when, at last, they stood face to face on the rock-bottom of their human nature; but somehow I had failed to see just how they would say it. It may be simpler if I say that I had been afraid of tackling the scene. . . I thought of how it had worked itself out, slowly inevitably; for the central figure, Niels Lindstedt, reached far back into the past, to a summer day when in some little lake in Nebraska or South Dakota I had had a swim with a young Swede who, for some reason or other, confided to me that, up to the day of his recent marriage, he had not known of the essential difference between male and female. In 1920 I had fitted the whole story together, settling it into the panorama of the Manitoba bush settlement between Glenella and Anaranth, or between Gladstone and Falmouth....

And suddenly here at the beach. . . I don't know what manner of imp it was that, after a week or so, jumped at my throat and threatened to throttle me unless I set to work, then and there, without further delay and excuse, and wrote that missing, central, pivotal scene.⁴

He later tells of how the book came to be published. In the fall of 1924 he had been invited to give his first lecture to an audience of men of letters. He decided to read from unpublished work and one item which he read was the scene from Settlers of the Marsh which he had written at the beach. Grove gives the following account of what happened:

⁴Ibid., pp. 371, 373.

The audience was small; but it so happened that Lorne Pierce, the editor of Ryerson Press of Toronto, was present. Like myself he is deaf; but he must have understood enough to be curious. After the reading, he asked me for the manuscript of Settlers. . . . Briefly the outcome was that, in the summer of 1925, George Doran printed the book in New York; and the Ryerson Press handled it in Canada.

Its publication became a public scandal⁵

Evidence regarding this book in the Grove Collection at the University of Manitoba is slightly confusing. Dr. Doris Saunders, in speaking to the Biographical Society of Canada, noted the following facts:

Of Grove's most sensational novel—eventually to be called Settlers of the Marsh — we have two typescripts. A part of the first version is missing, but the final draft is intact.

I believe that all three parts of the novel as originally planned are now in the collection.

According to the notation on Box 9 of the collection, the book was to have originally been a three-book series entitled Latter Day Pioneers.

In that box there are typescripts of the first two books of the three-book series: Settlers of the Marsh, the first book, was written between 1917 and 1923 and covers the period up to Niels'

⁵Dr. Doris Saunders, Papers of the Biographical Society of Canada, "The Grove Collection in the University of Manitoba: A Tentative Evaluation", address to the members of the Society at the annual meeting held in Winnipeg on June 25, 1963, p. 11.

marriage. The second book is entitled The White Range-Line House and covers the story up to the time immediately after the murder. The third book is missing from this box but there is in the box a typescript of the book as published entitled The White Range-Line House with a sub-title "A Story of Marsh and Bush" which is an 80,000 word version of the proposed trilogy. Mrs. Grove has pencilled in the title Settlers of the Marsh on this typescript. This version is dated 1917-1924.

In my search for the manuscripts of the three original novels I did find the handwritten manuscript of the third part of the novel but I have not found a typescript of it. It was written in five Manitoba Department of Education Entrance Examination booklets. This manuscript covers the period in the story from the time of the murder to the end of the book. It included the details of the trial. I found this manuscript in an envelope in Box 1 (new acquisitions). The envelope is labelled Equal Opportunities 1, 11, 111, 1V- this is the original manuscript of The Yoke of Life. The manuscript of the third part of the novel does contain a chapter title "Ellen Again" which is the last chapter title of the book as published.

On Box 9 of the University of Manitoba Grove Collection is pencilled the following notation:

"R. Stubbs says we lack the third novel of Latter Day Pioneers which was written. He also says the published Settlers of the Marsh was a selection from all 3 vols."⁶

⁶Box 9, The Grove Collection, University of Manitoba.

On the box labelled #1 (new acquisitions) there appears the following notation:

"Enclosed found by Mrs. Wiens (a sister-in-law of Mrs. Grove)."

In this box there is the original manuscript of Grove's The Yoke of Life then entitled Equal Opportunities, and also another typescript of the first book of the trilogy, Settlers of the Marsh, and another typescript of the second book of the trilogy, The White Range-Line House. (duplicates of those in Box 9.) In Box 2 (recent acquisitions) also found by Mrs. Wiens are what I believe to be the original manuscripts of Settlers of the Marsh or part of it. There is also a manuscript entitled Youth which later became The Weatherhead Fortunes. The other two manuscripts are fascinating; one is called The White Range Line House and the other is called Pioneers. I believe that these are both earlier versions of the typescript of Book One of the trilogy and that Pioneers which carries the story right up to the murder of Niels' wife Clara may be the original version of the book.

I suspect that Grove although he had intended writing a trilogy from the first, included more in the first volume than he had intended and that this first volume later became volumes one and two of the trilogy.

⁷Box #1 (new acquisitions), The Grove Collection, University of Manitoba.

I base this on the fact that on the first few pages of the manuscript entitled Pioneers are notes in pencil by Grove relating to the plan for the book. Under a title Pioneers he has listed three other titles: The Settlement, The White Range-Line House, and Male and Female. In addition he has listed characters under four groupings: English, Scandinavian, German, and Slav. Many of these characters do not appear in Settlers of the Marsh as published although Niels is listed as the hero. What was most interesting to me were the labels attached to each character indicating that all the characters were intended to be universal type characters. For example, opposite one of the Slavs is the following notation:

the careful planner but the usual sacrifice
of the wife to the success of the fields.⁸

It would appear that Grove had a gigantic plan for the writing of a trilogy which he never was able to carry out completely.

However in these manuscripts there does lie a fascinating story of the genesis of a novel which someone should try to piece together in order to throw light on the writing techniques of this man who has been almost ignored by modern literary criticism.

In Settlers of the Marsh as published we have, then, a distillation of three volumes of a trilogy entitled Pioneers or Latter Day Pioneers; this novel was reviewed by Arthur L. Phelps on December 7,

⁸F. P. Grove, Pioneers, unpublished manuscript, handwritten notes on the first few pages of the manuscript, Box 2 (recent acquisitions) of the Grove Collection, University of Manitoba.

1925 in the Manitoba Free Press:

One is tempted to the statement that no pen at work in Canada suggests the capacity, not primarily to tell a story, but to interpret the actuality of western prairie life in the making as does the pen of Frederick Philip Grove; no one is creating it as Grove is creating it, the kind of literature to which one goes in order to get the sense of life, of men and women alive, body and soul, of truth under foot and eye.⁹

In a letter to Samuel W. Fallis of the Ryerson Press Watson

Kirconnell writes:

I hardly know what to admire most - the sheer artistic power of the book or the startling force of the moral tragedy with its generic achievement of the Aristotelian "katharsis" of the spirit.¹⁰

In the review by Arthur L. Phelps there is a reference to the original plan for the trilogy:

This last published book and first novel, Settlers of the Marsh, was originally planned as a work of 900,000 words in three volumes. As actually written it contained about 400,000 words. It was cut to 85,000 words to meet the publisher's demand in connection with a first novel.¹¹

In speaking of the novel itself as published Phelps writes:

⁹Arthur L. Phelps, "Settlers of the Marsh," a review in the Manitoba Free Press, December 7, 1925.

¹⁰Watson Kirconnell, Letter to Samuel W. Fallis, Ryerson Press, 1925, Box 24, Grove Collection, University of Manitoba.

¹¹Arthur L. Phelps, "Settlers of the Marsh," a review in the Manitoba Free Press, December 7th, 1925.

two tremendous scenes in the book and a multitude of . . . little pictures of all sorts; there is detailed subtle characterization and the presentation of many folk who appear physically alive to us.¹²

This quotation brings me to the outstanding feature of Settlers of the Marsh, its realism. As Dr. Saunders points out in her address to the Biographical Society:

In the beginning of the first version (in Box 9) we find two quotations omitted entirely from the printed text which show that from the start Grove was intending to write a realistic novel. The first is from La Bruyere's Les Caracteres: describing

" . . . certain wild animals males and females, . . . they have something like an articulate voice, and when they lift themselves on their feet, they show a human face; and as a matter of fact they are humans. . . .

The second quotation is from Grove's own book Over Prairie Trails, ending,

The wilderness uses human material up.¹³

It is my opinion that Grove decided to omit these quotations from the final version of Settlers of the Marsh because they were no longer exactly in accord with his philosophy of realism. It was during this period in his life that Grove was formulating his literary theories, and in the first published novel, I do not think we find Grove as a writer with fully matured attitudes. It was not

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Dr. Doris Saunders, Papers of the Biographical Society of Canada. The Grove Collection in the University of Manitoba: A Tentative Evaluation", 1963, p. 12.

until the final prairie novel Fruits of the Earth that Grove was able to bring into being all aspects of his literary theory. However during the years 1917 to 1924 when this book was being written I think that he did come to major decisions about the meaning of realism and that the omitting of the quotations was dictated by his belief that realism related to literary procedure and not to the choice of subject. The quotations might have tied him too closely to the Zola-type realism of which Grove was so critical.

In Settlers of the Marsh there are at least two threads of thematic development, but one is far more important to the vision of truth presented to us in this book than is the other. The less important theme is the one which obsessed Grove in much of his writing: that of the sacrifice of everything to the desire for victory in the struggle with the environment. Although this theme underlies the problem of Ellen it does not colour the story as it does in other Grove books. Niels thinks about this aspect of life early in the book:

Of his material success he had no doubt. Was he not slowly and surely making headway right now? While he was hibernating as it were?

In this country, life and success did not, as they had always seemed to do in Sweden, demand some mysterious powers inherent in the individual. It was merely a question of persevering and hewing straight to the line. Life was simplified.¹⁴

¹⁴F. P. Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, the Ryerson Press, 1925, pp. 60, 61.

The book is not the story of a struggle with the environment in search of material success as were the later stories of Abe Spalding and John Elliot; this book is the chronicle of a much more subtle struggle or conflict with attendant minor conflicts emanating from the major thematic development.

The major theme in this realistic volume is one which concerns sex, and this of course, would seem to place the book in the naturalist tradition, but Grove's treatment of the theme removes it from that tradition completely. He is never obsessed with the sexual aspect of the problem; he rather stresses the psychological effects of the sexual problems and the effects on the lives of those involved. It is with regard to the basic theme of the book that we find all the threads of Grove traditions being bound together. The archetypal symbolism which in the later novels is developed in a much more concrete and graphic way is introduced here; the literary philosophy of realism is at work; the story mirrors a universal reaction on the part of mankind to a tragic view of life; the tragedy results from a flaw in the tragic hero, and the central problem is an individual representation of a problem of society—one which Ibsen could well have dealt with on the stage; even the Grove view of the tragic hero having to exhibit a Promethean acceptance of his fate is adhered to. And, in addition, we find, as perhaps in no other Grove novel, the use of the Canadian

prairie as the dramatic background of a primeval setting for another of the tragic dramas of mankind. It is in this book, as in no other novel by Grove, that one experiences the atmosphere and reality of the pioneer Canadian West.

The core of the theme of Settlers of the Marsh concerns an almost universal problem, the lack of understanding of the role of sexual love in married life. Grove refers to the young Swede who until his marriage had not known of the basic difference between man and woman. This ignorance is symbolic of the ignorance not of anything so basic on the part of Niels but of his ignorance of the difference between sexual desire and sexual love. Niels obviously loved Ellen and desired Clara. The three characters, as a matter of fact, seem to be archetypal symbols of the eternal triangle.

Ellen symbolizes with her blond hair and fresh beauty all that is spiritual and pure in love; Clara Vogel symbolizes with her coal-black eyes and pallid face all that is physical and sensual in sex. Niels with his innocence and natural desires is caught between these two women. Had he been less innocent or more understanding of his natural desires, he could have prevented the tragedy.

Having pointed out the archetypal symbolism inherent in these three major characters I wish to emphasize that this situation in no way detracts from the realism of the novel. Grove does not make the mistake of having all white and all black characters. Throughout the story the reader is placed in the position of being able to have

some understanding of the plight of each of the three protagonists.

The crisis of the novel occurs when, after Niels' proposal to Ellen she explains to him in detail why she can never marry him, nor for that matter, anyone. No one can listen to her dramatic story without feeling sympathy for her fears and prejudices. The details are given of the numerous miscarriages brought on by overwork in the fields on the part of her mother, the details of the forced labour of her mother at the command of her loud-praying and sexually hungry father. Perhaps one of the most pathetic passages in Canadian Literature occurs when Ellen tells of the final incident concerning her mother and father which has obsessed her ever since:

But the worst is to come. The thing that makes marriage for me an impossibility; that makes the very thought of it a disgust which fills me with nausea.

I know, Niels, if I tell it, it will ever after stand between us. I hope it will change your feelings towards me into those of a brother. I feel sure that no man can still be the lover of a woman who has spoken to him so plainly about such things. . . .

One night when I had gone to bed in that room there I could not sleep. I was so worried that I was almost sick myself.

Mother came in and dragged herself to the bed. It took her half an hour to undress; she lay down with a moan.

My father followed her. I acted as if I were asleep; not in order to pry on my parents; but to save mother worry about me. My father got ready to go to bed himself. As a last thing before blowing the lamp he bent over me to see whether I was asleep. Then he knelt by his bed and prayed, loud and fervently and long.

Suddenly I heard mother's voice, mixed with groans. Oh John, don't.

I will not repeat the things my father said. An abyss opened as I lay there. The vile jesting jocular urgency of it; the words he used to that skeleton and ghost of a woman . . . In order to save mother, I was tempted to betray that I had heard. Shame held me back . . .

Once she said still defending herself, you know John it means a child again. You know how often I have been a murderess already, John, Please! Please!

God has been good to us, he replied; he took them. . . .

And the struggle began again to end with the defeat of the woman That night I vowed to myself : no man, whether I liked him or loathed him was ever to have power over me!¹⁵

And with this tragic background and misunderstanding Ellen turns Niels away at this, the dramatic turning point of the story. It is somewhat of a paradox that Grove, who at later times in his novels had difficulty with dialogue, could in the dramatic scenes of this novel create drama and realism of the most convincing kind with uninterrupted dialogue.

At this moment no one among the readers could fail to understand Ellen's point of view; no one could miss the realism of the situation as it existed in the Canadian West during the pioneer period; no one can fail to see the tragic flaw in Ellen's nature which made her equate love and devotion with sexual lust, pain and horror. No one can fail to see that the fair-haired Ellen symbolizes the innocent and pure in the eternal triangle.

It was this dramatic conversation between Ellen and Niels that caused many of the charges of obscenity against the book. Desmond Pacey writes of this in Frederick Philip Grove:

This tremendous scene of revelation is one of Grove's greatest successes. If it was against this scene that the charge of obscenity was levelled, a more ironic misinterpretation of its meaning could not be imagined. Its effect upon

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 168, 169.

any but the most impercipient reader is the very reverse of an aphrodisiac. The scene is handled with a high degree of delicacy and restraint; there is not a trace of the smirk or the salacious leer. Nor is there anything in the episode or the manner of its telling to strain our power of belief. We are persuaded not only that the harrowing experiences which Ellen recounts are real, but that, given her temperament and circumstances, she would have the courage and candour to tell them.¹⁶

The second protagonist, Clara, also is the centre of a dramatic scene, which is also realistic; there is nothing in this scene either "to strain our power of belief." Niels has noticed that Clara is making preparations for another trip; he confronts her with this:

She felt the approach of a catastrophic development. The smile faded from her lips, the dream died in her eyes From behind the mask the woman peered out, helpless, at bay, mortally frightened

"You married me. You don't want me any longer. But I am not to belong to anyone else. I am to be your property. . . . What did you marry me for anyway?"

"That you know as well as I."

"No," she said curiously, "I don't. I know why you married me. . . the reason is clear enough. You married me because you were such an innocent, such a milk-sop that you could not bear the thought of having gone to bed with a woman who was not your wife. You had not the force to resist when I wanted you- yes I wanted you, for a night or an hour . . . and you had to legalize the thing behind-hand. That's why you married me. You wouldn't have needed to bother. I had had what I wanted. I did not ask for anything beyond At the time I thought you were really in love with me, you really wanted me, you really wanted me! . . . Do you know what you did when you married me? You prostituted me if you know what that means. That's what you did. After having made a convenience of me. When you married me you committed a crime!"

.
"You proposed marriage to me. You will remember that I hesitated; that I did not at once consent. All kinds of thoughts went through my head. I came to the conclusion that like the floorwalker you really loved me. That you

would reconquer me from day to day as he had done. I was tired of being a bird of passage As I said I thought you were a man. You would steady and hold me I told you I could never be a farming woman. You insisted. It never occurred to me you might be weak enough to want marriage on moral grounds. I gave in"¹⁷

If one accepts the possibility of a Clara existing in the pioneer environment then one can readily accept the reality of this scene; Clara would speak as she has spoken and she would have said the things that she said, for Clara, in her own way, is not completely guilty, and Grove has taken pains according to his code of realism to present her to us in such a way that we can have an understanding of her situation. Clara became trapped in a web not of her own weaving. She had a tragic flaw which contributed to her downfall and that flaw she well understood : her desire was insatiable. But other factors contributed to her tragic death. Had Ellen accepted Niels or had Niels decided to send Clara away as she wished, then Clara's tragic death and his tragedy could have been avoided.

The third protagonist in this novel participates in a scene which places him in a position where we cannot but sympathize with his predicament. He is confronted by the Dahlbeck woman who tries to seduce him. When he resists she attacks him verbally:

¹⁷Frederick Philip Grove, Settlers of the Marsh, The Ryerson Press, 1925, pp. 233-239.

"You hypocrite" she hissed, "are you better than other people? I know you, you devil! You can't play the innocent with me! No man can! You least of all! You married the district whore . . ."

.
But Niels did not hear. He had stopped. His knees shook under him. Lightning had struck him; and the flash had illumined the past as a flash of real lightning illumines a forest trail for him who travels in the dark making every detail spring out of the night at once.

What, in the fraction of a second, he saw like a panorama, with hundreds of details, all simultaneously, was this: the hesitation of the woman when he had first mentioned marriage to her; Bobby's silence when he had opened the gate for her and him; the atmosphere of a hollow void which had surrounded them when they had come to the marsh to live . . .

All that and much more Niels saw and heard in that illuminating flash.

For a moment he felt that he must pitch forward and faint. Instinctively his trembling hand reached for the machine to steady his swaying body . . .

The woman saw it and stopped in her rush of words. Her eyes became wide. She realized what she had done: she had swung an axe into a great towering tree; and that tree had crashed down at a single blow.¹⁸

In this moment of realization of what had happened to him Niels has the sympathy and understanding of all readers.

Grove has been true to his philosophy of realism. He has never in this book allowed himself to intrude either directly or obviously through his characters. The characters and events have

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 275-277.

been skillfully worked out to express a universal reaction to life. And, of course, that reaction to life is largely a tragic one.

Niels Lindstedt, the hero of Settlers of the Marsh, is in many ways a typical Grove hero; he comes from another place, Sweden, and sets out to carve from the primeval Canadian West a home for himself. Like Abe Spalding and John Elliot that home had to be carved from virgin territory as part of the eternal struggle between man and his environment, with man struggling to conquer, and nature eventually bringing about the decay of his achievements.

In the first few pages when Niels and his friend Nelson are on their way to the Amundson's to dig a well for them, we feel the first indications of the force of the natural environment which Grove chose for this rugged novel:

But whenever one of them spoke the wind snatched his word from his lips and threw it aloft.

A merciless force was slowly numbing them by ceaseless pounding. A vision of some small room, hot with the glow and flicker of an open fire, took possession of Niels.¹⁹

And in this quotation we have introduced another typical characteristic of a Grove hero: that of his dream. In this case the dream is not like that of Spalding or Elliot; there is far less of the materialistic in Niels' dream than in their dreams. He dreamed less of wealth,

¹⁹Ibid., p. 14.

property and power and more of family happiness than they did, and so, ironically, he is easily successful in material things and very unsuccessful in matters of family and happiness.

In the early introductory part of the novel Niels comes into contact with the two women who will so deeply influence his life, first with Ellen and secondly with Clara. On the way home after meeting Clara at the Lunds his dream begins to take on more definite shape:

Suddenly as they were entering the bush, where the moonlight filtered down through the meshes of leafless boughs overhead, a vision took hold of Niels: of himself and a woman, sitting of a mid-winter night by the light of the lamp and in front of a fire, with the pitter-patter of children's feet sounding down from above: the eternal vision that has moved the world and that was to direct his fate. He tried to see the face of the woman; but it entirely evaded him.²⁰

Very early during the novel Niels realizes that in Canada he will be able to realize his dream of owning his own home, a dream he could not have achieved in Sweden. His mind is therefore occupied more with the realization of the dream of happiness. Shortly after a second encounter with the widow, Clara Vogel, he thinks about this:

Woman had never figured as a concrete thing in Niels' thought of his future in this new country. True he had seen in his visions

²⁰ibid., pp. 46, 47.

a wife and children but the wife had been a symbol merely. Now that he was in the country of his dreams and gaining a foothold, it seemed as if individual women were bent on replacing the vague, schematic figures he had had in his mind. He found this intrusion strangely disquieting.²¹

Shortly after this Niels comes upon the place in which he would like to homestead and, of course, the choice is of as primeval an environment as one could find, for Niels is an archetypal symbol of the universal man and he must be matched against a rugged background.

He crossed the bridge over Grassy Creek. On the bare Marsh, the snow was lashed into waves and crests like a boiling sea. There was no road left. He angled across the open land. It took him two hours to make the mile to a huge poplar bluff which rose like an island or a promontory jutting out from the east into the waste of snow. . . . And before long it somehow was clear to him that this was his future home.²²

And what more suitable place for Niels' future home than a stark promontory on which he could be chained to struggle after the gods had lashed him to a Clara who would torture him as terribly as the eagle ever tortured Prometheus?

Gradually during the winter of working alone in the woods his dream became more concrete:

²¹Ibid., p. 52.

²²Ibid., pp. 57, 58.

The picture which he saw, of himself and a woman in a cosy room . . . while the winter winds stalked and howled outside . . . took more and more definite form. . .

There could be no doubt any longer: the woman in the picture was Ellen, the girl. He longed for her sight: he longed to speak to her: to show to reveal his innermost being to her.²³

And contrasted to this dream were the thoughts he had about the other woman, Mrs. Vogel:

But whenever he had been dreaming of her and his thought then reverted to Ellen, he felt guilty; he felt defiled as if he had given in to sin. Her appeal was to something in him which was lower, which was not worthy of the man who had seen Ellen. . . . Though he could not have told what that something in him which was lower really meant.²⁴

Niels' tragic flaw is his inability because of his innocence to distinguish between love and sexual desire. He somehow felt that the two did not belong together and so Niels exemplifies that psychological problem which is symbolic of a major social problem existing in any pioneer or remote community where because of lack of contact with society one can fail to adjust one's emotions and sexual urges without suffering the guilt which seemed to obsess Niels. This problem could well have been the subject of an Ibsen drama. It is a beautiful blending of the Aristotelian flaw with the Ibsen problem tragedy. In this development of the plot the complications arise more and more

²³Ibid., p. 61.

²⁴Ibid., p. 64.

from innocence and a misunderstanding of the role of sex in love. This tragic development is emphasized constantly by the smooth flowing minor plot concerning Nelson and Olga who without inhibitions of any kind quietly give in to their emotions and desires and live a happy, almost complacent life alongside the turbulence of Niels, Clara and Ellen.

Niels finally saved twelve hundred dollars and filed his claim - his share of the primeval Canadian West:

The southern part of his claim was covered with comparatively small growth; for one of the marshfires that broke out every now and then had encroached upon it, some fifteen years ago, consuming everything that would burn. For no apparent reason - perhaps in consequence of a change of wind- the fire had stopped short of that tall, majestic bluff which now stood dominant, lording it over this whole corner of the Marsh.

To the east, there was much willow; though even there, on a rising piece of ground, ten acres or so of primeval forest remained like an island.

West and north of his claim there was sand.²⁵

It was no accident that Grove chose this part of the Canadian West for Niels; it was no accident that on his territory there would be found the symbols of all the primeval areas in the world: the bluff or mountain symbol, primeval forest, the sand of the desert, and the water of the marsh as ocean. All the archetypal symbols

²⁵Ibid., p. 66.

of the primeval are there to match the primeval characteristics or the primitive characteristics to be found in Niels, Ellen and Clara.

And his dream of Ellen became an obsession. In this way the development of plot in Settlers of the Marsh becomes more organically developed than that in some of the other Grove novels. The interlocking stories of Niels, Clara and Ellen are all tied together by his single dream of marriage and happiness. In Fruits of the Earth the many faceted dream made plot development more difficult.

To truly develop the Aristotelian tragic flaw the hero should have some warning of his catastrophe. Niels received warning of his at the marriage of Nelson and Olga; Niels goes over and sits by Mrs. Vogel:

"He felt as if he were being entrapped: he felt what was almost a foreboding of disaster. Never in his life had he felt like that; and the memory of this feeling was to come back to him many years later, when his terrible destiny had overtaken him. Had he obeyed a hardly articulate impulse, he would have at once have got up again and gone out. ²⁶

After this encounter with Clara he is disturbed:

26

Ibid., pp. 70, 71.

He had been an onlooker so far. But tonight something had happened which he did not understand: he was a leaf borne along in the wind, a prey to things beyond his control, a fragment swept away by torrents.

That made him cling to the landscape as something abiding, something to steady him....

He longed to be with his mother, to feel her gnarled, calloused fingers rumpling his hair, and to hear her crooning voice droning some old tune . . .

It was very clear now that the torrent which swept him away, the wind that bore him, whither it listed, came from his innermost self. If, for what had happened to him, anybody was to blame at all, it was he

As if to confirm it, there arose in him the vision again of that room. . . . He was crouching on a low stool in front of the woman's seat; and he was leaning his head on her and when he looked up into her face, that face bore the features and the smile of the woman who had spoken to him that very night.²⁷

And although Grove seems to refuse to admit that he could have gone this far in the direction of the Naturalists, this passage I have quoted could not be more firmly based on a determinist philosophy than it is. And in addition to this direct statement of determinism there is the additional evidence that in Settlers of the Marsh there is really no reference to religion except to the old testament version of Ellen's father. Grove, at this time in his career, I believe, was passing through a stage in which he was at least close to being an atheist. In actual fact in his stripping down of the Canadian

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 78, 79.

West for his novels, one of the facets of life stripped off very early in each novel is that of any religious life. In Southern Manitoba, the home of Abe Spalding; in Saskatchewan, the home of John Elliot; and now in the Marsh district of Manitoba there seems never to have been even a summer mission student, let alone an organized church.

In Settlers of the Marsh as in Fruits of the Earth, despite the fact that the book as published is a distillation, or perhaps because of this fact, the plot structure is architecturally beautiful. In Settlers of the Marsh the story of the hero, Niels, and the plot of the book move together up to the turning point and then down to the dénouement, without there ever being any difficulty in keeping the development of character and the development of story together. Through the rising action of the story Niels' dream gradually becomes more and more concrete and the possibility of the dream being realized seems to become more and more certain. As we approach the crisis Niels actually finishes the White Range-Line House, which is necessary to the realizing of his dream. After the death of her father Ellen and Niels become friendly. Niels is slowly gathering together enough material wealth to support his dream. And though the Clara theme is sounded in the background, and though the determinist theme is also sounded ominously Niels seems to be moving happily towards the consummation of his vision.

On one occasion by accident he meets Mrs. Vogel as she comes

from the train and he takes her to her home:

They left the town.

He felt as if he were thrown back into chaos . . .

He had thought that he had fought all this down years ago. His conquest had been a specious one. He had conquered by the aid of a fickle ally: circumstance. . . .Something was still stirred in him by this woman, something low, disgraceful . . .

In spite of his twenty-nine years he was not experienced enough to know that this something would have been stirred in him by any woman. . . . And this was an artful woman: artful enough not to speak . . .

.
He glanced at the woman. She was sound asleep. Somehow her artificiality was half stripped away; she looked like a relic of ancient temptations
28
. . . .

And finally the moment of crisis arrives; on a Sunday Niels and Ellen go walking in the woods; a storm arises, which they watch first from the top of a hay stack and then from a hollowed-out shelter at its base - as did Abe and Charley Spalding in Fruits of the Earth. Feeling safe and secure within this hollowed-out section the two characters become closer than they have ever been in their lives before. And so with the primeval elements of the storm raging without and the primitive desires and emotions and frustrations raging within their breasts, Niels and Ellen approach the proposal and the rejection:

²⁸
Ibid., pp. 133-135.

"The air is breathless: even the slight wafting flow from the east has ceased. Nature lies prostrate in expectation of the scourge that is coming, coming. The wall of cloud has differentiated; there are two, three waves of almost black; in front, a circling festoon of loose, white, flocculent manes, seething, whirling . . . A winking of light runs through the first wave of black. A distant rumbling heralds the storm . . ." ²⁹

The threefold development of the crisis is interspersed with symbolic and foreboding incidents. Just as the storm with its black and white symbolism and its closeness to being a pathetic fallacy preceded the first rejection so the death of Sigurdson foreshadows the explanation by Ellen.

As Niels thinks about the death of Sigurdson his thoughts again turn to an intuitive understanding of determinism:

"Why did it have to be today? When life was hard to bear as it was. . . What was life anyway? A dumb shifting of forces. Grass grew and was trodden down; and it knew not why. He himself - this very afternoon there had been in him the joy of grass growing, twigs budding, blossoms opening to the air of spring. The grass had been stepped on; the twig had been broken; the blossoms nipped by frost. . .

He, Niels, a workman in God's garden?
Who was God anyway?

.
The highest we can aspire to in this life is that we feel we leave a gap behind in the lives of others when we go. ³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., p. 146.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 152-153.

This poetic burst of thought, almost a soliloquy, once again uses the archetypal symbol of the cycle of grass which Grove used so effectively in Fruits of the Earth.

The second development of the three stage crisis concerns Ellen's pathetic revelation of her vow; between this stage of the crisis and the third stage, the marriage, Niels carries on a conversation with Hahn which exudes dramatic irony as Hahn, in talking of prostitutes begins to say

"There's one in your. . ." ³¹

When Niels yields to Clara's seductiveness the noose has been already fixed about his neck. And in good Greek fashion the tragedy has been determined; we know that the added complications will inevitably lead to a crushing of the hero. But Niels, a Grove hero, does emerge with the Promethean acceptance of his fate and a certain exultation because of succeeding in the struggle. Although he has to pass through the dreadful psychological deterioration of his wife and her goading of him into his final act of murder; although he has to spend over six years in prison; Niels emerges from prison able to shake his fist at the gods and to return to his land and eventually to happiness with Ellen. He suffers through a period of purgation leading to salvation.

Settlers of the Marsh as published ends with a note of hope, a feeling that the vision will be realized:

³¹Ibid., p. 178.

As they do, a vision arises between them, shared by both.³²

In the manuscript version of the same chapter the chapter ends with a repetition of the vision:

They are sitting together in a small room, at winter time, the winter of life: with the wind howling and stalking outside: the wind of the world. In the stove nearby a fire is roaring, radiating its genial warmth. A lamp is shedding its homely light from above over head and shoulders. And as they look at each other with quiet smile, they are listening to the pitter patter of little feet sounding down from above, where the children are romping for a few minutes before they bolt into their beds.³³

In this manuscript version of the concluding part of the novel there is an Epilogue which is not included in the published version of Settlers of the Marsh. This epilogue seems to indicate that Grove actually did plan to write another book about the married life of Niels and Ellen. This may have been the book he intended to develop from that third title Male and Female in the first pages of the manuscript entitled Pioneers. In any case the epilogue emphasized the Promethean view of Niels. Not only does he accept his fate and rise from the promontory to shake his fist at the Gods but he manages to rebuild a life which does realize completely the vision which he has pursued.

³²Ibid., p. 341.

³³F. P. Grove, Untitled manuscript, original version of the final part of Settlers of the Marsh, 5 examination booklets, Box 1 (new acquisitions) Grove Collection, University of Manitoba.

Only a word or two needs to be added.
The war came and went . . . it was a wave
that rose, passed and fell. . . . Niels and
Ellen lived together as man and wife for over
forty years. They had three children. But
their married life forms the topic of a differ-
ent story. It was full of grief and sorrow,
full of care and tribulation, but also full of
joy and (a word which I cannot decipher)
To the end of their life they lived in the
White Range Line House which apart from
minor alterations stands today³⁴

³⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE YOKE OF LIFE

The Yoke of Life, Grove's third prairie novel to be published, appeared in 1930. Although, according to his records, Grove began to write this novel in 1913 it was, certainly for the most part, written in 1920 following the acceptance of Over Prairie Trails.

Although the novel was published under the title, The Yoke of Life, Grove obviously disliked the title intensely:

Len Sterner or Adolescence, for which a publisher invented the preposterous title, The Yoke of Life.¹

The book that I called Adolescence.²

Adolescence, which under the horrible and misleading publisher's title The Yoke of Life was not to appear till 1930.³

The manuscript for The Yoke of Life is at present in Box 1 of (recent acquisitions) the Grove Collection, and is part of the valuable find by Mrs. Wiens which she turned over to the University of Manitoba in April 1964. In this manuscript at no time, of course, does the title, The Yoke of Life, appear nor, surprisingly enough does the title, Adolescence, appear. The title throughout the manu-

¹F. P. Grove, In Search of Myself, Macmillan, 1946, p. 320.

²Ibid., p. 352.

³Ibid., p. 396.

script is given as Equal Opportunities. It is interesting to compare the manuscript with the book as published; not only is this the Grove manuscript with the fewest alterations in it, but it is also the manuscript with the fewest differences between it and the published book. There are, of course, some changes, but in comparison with the rest of the prairie novels of Grove I would say that The Yoke of Life is the one which, as published, comes most directly from the pen of Frederick Philip Grove as he first conceived the book.

Some of the most significant changes made in the novel concern the names of the characters. In the manuscript there is a folded piece of paper on which Grove has listed the various characters, obviously while thinking about their names. Kolm, the stepfather, was originally Hahn and appears as such for the first part of the manuscript. Len Sterner, in the list, was at one time Bert and also Ted. Lydia was called Dora, Dolly, and Liddy. It is my belief that Len, for Leonard, symbolizes the potential of the student, and is related to Leonardo da Vinci, who certainly could be represented as the archetypal symbol of the man of learning and culture. I suspect that Grove finally chose Len and Lydia beginning with the same letter and therefore, perhaps suggesting a natural connection between the characters. Lydia, I think, is derived not from the Lydia of the Bible but from Lydian - Lydian mode, one of the four principal modes of ancient Greek music, a minor scale appropriate to soft pathos. Of course, one of the dictionary meanings for Lydian is

also voluptuous, which could also be part of the symbolism involved in the use of this ancient name by Grove. There are also on the sheet of paper some interesting quotations. One of them relates to Lydia:

"Women not the end of life but its means to man
The opposite - Lydia." ⁴

Another interesting quotation on the sheet is as follows:

"The account we've got to settle between us concerns
us two alone.
We've got to go into the wilderness to do it."⁵

This quotation appears with a few alterations as the conclusion of chapter three of Part IV of the published novel:

"The account which we two have to settle
concerns us alone. We must have the
wilderness to do it in."⁶

One of the most interesting facets of Grove's prairie novels is the image of the teacher which he has projected into prairie life. In both Fruits of the Earth and The Yoke of Life this image or symbol has been clearly projected. In Fruits of the Earth the teacher is Blaine and in The Yoke of Life it is Crawford. It is interesting that in his shaving down of the Western Canadian environment to suit his purposes he has completely removed

⁴F. P. Grove, pencilled note in manuscript of Equal Opportunities, Box 1 (recent acquisitions), the Grove Collection, The University of Manitoba.

⁵Ibid.

⁶F. P. Grove, The Yoke of Life, Macmillan, 1930, p. 316.

the stereotyped young female schoolteacher. In both Settlers of the Marsh and Our Daily Bread there is no clear mention made of a teacher at all, and in the other two prairie novels that teacher is an older man. Both these older men have long beards:

Old man Blaine his sandy grey-streaked
beard reaching to his waist.⁷

The boy confronted the owner of the voice, a
bearded man considerably over middle age.⁸

Both these bearded men seem to be strangely learned and dedicated and somewhat difficult to explain in the midst of the pioneer background of Grove's books. Both men are inspired teachers and both men wish their pupils to aspire to great heights. In the relationship between Blaine and Charlie in Fruits of the Earth we see an almost exact parallel with the Crawford and Len relationship in the Yoke of Life, even to the interest in ornithology.

John Adam Crawford, the teacher in The Yoke of Life, has been named John Adam by Grove because of the dual symbolism involved in those two Biblical names: John the Baptist, the great teacher who went before Christ preparing the way for him, and Adam, the first man of all. The image projected, without reference to the names of the men, is of great learning and wisdom. That learning is symbolized in many ways in both books; perhaps one of the most obvious is the use of the archetypal symbol of light representing learning as opposed to

⁷F. P. Grove, Fruits of the Earth, McClelland and Stewart, 1933, p. 69.

⁸F. P. Grove, The Yoke of Life, Macmillan, 1930, p. 4.

the representation of ignorance by darkness. As Len, near the first of The Yoke of Life is leading his cows home he sees the light in Mr. Crawford's cottage:

Then, suddenly, he saw a point of light ahead. It proceeded from a lamp burning in Mr. Crawford's cottage. It showed the direction.⁹

It is this symbol of learning that Len follows for his whole short life; at the end of the novel he tells Lydia of the three visions he had had in his lifetime:

"I've had three wishes since I was I. One of them was to possess all knowledge. Another, to see the Lake, within a week it will be fulfilled."

.
"The third wish," he added, "was to possess you."¹⁰

Before proceeding with a discussion of the Crawford image I will mention the Lake symbol which, of course, is overpowering in this novel. The Lake and its connection with death cannot but help to create the image of King Arthur's death on the shore of the lake and the three black queens bearing him away in the barge. At one point while Lydia is looking after him in his delirium he spoke of women:

"Go down there," he said, "and ask the two women what they want of me."

.

⁹Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 298.

"Don't You see them? They've been watching me for the last two days. The old women in black shawls. Go down and ask them."¹¹

There are many such examples of archetypal symbols drawn from Grove's knowledge of literature; these two, the symbolism of light and the symbolism of The Lake, are but two obvious ones.

Crawford, early in the book, is shown to have an understanding of the problem, prevalent in a pioneer society:

He knew the conditions in pioneer settlements of the bush where the labour of women and children was not only an asset but an indispensable necessity; for, while the father created future wealth by clearing the land, the rest of the family had to make the living by selling butter and eggs, produced under circumstances which made mere trifles into hard tasks demanding patience and endurance worthy of better rewards.¹²

Thus clearly stated early in the book is perhaps the major social problem with which Grove must deal. This problem is just the type of problem that Ibsen would have chosen for one of his dramas had he been Canadian. Len, a **student** with great potential ability, is time and again forced to undertake physical work to help out his mother and stepfather in their struggle for survival against the repeated attacks of nature. Early in the book Crawford inspires Len with the desire for learning; throughout the novel this desire is thwarted by the unfriendly power of nature.

The hostility—or should we say merely the indifference?—of nature towards man is a powerful factor in Len's frustration. The first natural catastrophe is a hail storm, familiar summer menace on the prairies, which destroys all the crops of the

¹¹Ibid., p. 13.

¹²Ibid., p. 6.

district. Instead of spending the winter at school as he had hoped, Len is obliged to work at a lumber camp in order to pay the interest on the farm debt. Later, when he is on the point of resuming his studies his stepfather's horses get mired in the marsh, and die in agony. This time he goes to work in the city to help out his parents.¹³

After Mr. Crawford has become the local teacher he talks one day about Len;

Yes, for a western child he is remarkable. He is a genius in his way. All he needs is an opportunity. He has the fire.¹⁴

The word opportunity would seem to suggest the irony implied in Grove's original title for this book, Equal Opportunities.

Later Crawford speaks directly to Len still using the light and flame symbolism with regard to learning:

"What a man does to make a living, matters little. It matters much what his influence is in life So I became a teacher and worked up in that line. Not because I wanted to make more money; but because I hungered and thirsted after a higher and truer idea of life. That hunger and thirst itself is happiness Len. We shall never still it. We shall never find truth. But we must strive after it without standing still. You have the spark. I wish I could fan it into flame."¹⁵

And this is the way Grove sees the role of the teacher - a learned man who searches for the spark and then fans it into flame. Perhaps

¹³Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove, Ryerson, 1945, p. 59.

¹⁴F. P. Grove, The Yoke of Life, Macmillan, 1930, p. 43.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 45, 46.

this was the way Grove saw himself as he taught in one small western school after another. He was, perhaps, to many western students what Crawford was to Len:

"His vision took the shape of a glorious sunrise, the only kind of glory which he knew. He felt as if he were wrapped in solitude; the words of the man by his side were coming from a great distance. Len was in the presence of revelation; and what was revealed to him was the majesty of his self."¹⁶

But in the way of the vision and the realization of the vision stood the accidents or planned obstacles of fate. One of these was the hailstorm, the description of which creates a magnificent primeval background for the human tragedy which is to take place on the Canadian Prairie:

"Such is the atmosphere before the grand spectacular events of summer on the prairies; tornado, thunderstorm, or hail.

.....
 Every manifestation of the powers above entered the vast, still dome of the sky as words spoken behind the wings enter a darkened stage. Yet this stage was not dark but rather lighted with a weird, incomprehensible radiance which made colours and details of form stand out with marvellous brilliance and distinctness and at an enormous distance.

.....
 Abruptly, then, with a fierce onslaught of wind which bent the young poplars everywhere to the breaking point, there was a drumming noise which rapidly increased in volume. Everywhere hail rebounded from the ground, from everything that offered resistance.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 46.

The world seemed to stand in ruins. Everywhere the green screen of foliage was gone; once more the black, charred stumps stood out in bold relief.¹⁷

After this first taste of tragedy Len goes behind the barn to be alone:

A rebellious impulse made him assert that even now he would not acknowledge defeat: far countries he was going to see with his eyes: strange thoughts he was going to master with his mind: all the beauty there was in the world he was going to grasp with his soul!¹⁸

Thus, from the very first of the novel Len does accept what fate deals him and like Prometheus, rebellious in spirit, he survives to fight on and exult in what he does achieve.

In many ways Len in his innocence and purity is like Niels of Settlers of the Marsh, although the decision between the good and the evil or between the black and the bright is not really his, the decision having been taken by Lydia. However he does have a mystic understanding of this dualism in life. Early in the book after he has been strapped by Mr. Crawford, Lydia comes to comfort him. As this conversation takes place he notices Lydia's bosom and then notices that she has noticed:

He turned and entered the classroom with that strange feeling which may have stood between Adam and Eve when the serpent had whispered his message. "Eritis sicut Deus scientes bonum et malum."¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 58-60.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 40.

This experience is beautifully integrated with a symbolic experience later on when Len has a mystic vision by the Big Slough; there in the virgin bush for the first time he experiences, "a longing for a sympathy in nature."²⁰

His age, full of enigmatic developments concentrated into a few hours, saturated with what is commonly spread out over years of scarcely perceptible unfolding was pre-eminently that of the mythic poets who project into nature the procreations of that awe in which they stand of themselves, in the forms of fabulous concrescences of incongruous parts which they harmonise into imaginable wholes.²¹

In this frame of mind Len sees a "fabulous creature".²²

the body of a small deer; the head that of small but nobly-shaped horse . . . and from its forehead there sprang a single horn, spirally wound or twisted, but perfectly straight and ending in a fine point three feet above the head.

.
In a moment the vision he had seen was gone; it had resolved itself into what he knew by the name of jumping deer. . . .the horn on its forehead was no more than the branch of one of the boles. . . . Len felt sorry with that sadness which overcomes us when we see or hear a beautiful marvel rationally explained.²³

And after this vision there appears to him again the vision of the "edge of a dress on a slender girlish bosom."²⁴ And again is used the quotation, "Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil!"²⁵

²⁰Ibid., p. 68.

²¹Ibid., p. 68.

²²Ibid., p. 68.

²³Ibid., pp. 68, 69.

²⁴Ibid., p. 70.

²⁵Ibid., p. 71.

And in the midst of a novel with its setting in the pre-meval Canadian west has appeared the archetypal symbol of the unicorn, who can only be trapped by placing a young virgin in his haunts, for when he spies a young virgin he will run and lie down at her feet. Surely Grove intends us to see the symbolism of Len and Lydia in terms of this mythical beast.

I can only presume that it is this sort of passage that Desmond Pacey takes exception to in his criticism of The Yoke of Life when he speaks of it in the following terms:

"but too frequently it seems to me to transgress the law of probability."²⁶

Then by implication throughout his chapter on The Yoke of Life Pacey suggests that this book deviates from Grove's creed of realism. Now Pacey does not mention that passage which I have suggested but if he were to suggest that it is romantic I would have him or other critics reminded that the book is intended to be about adolescence or opportunity and that in writing this book we are presented with a highly gifted boy whose efforts to realize his potential ability is consistently frustrated. Surely a gifted boy in the depths of adolescence would be allowed one imaginative flight in which he would see the mythical unicorn and surely also he would then undergo the universal experience of disillusionment that one experiences

²⁶ Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove, Ryerson, 1945, p. 56.

when the twilight fairy on a mother's dressing table becomes the daylight scent bottle.

Desmond Pacey's most violent criticism is of the ending of The Yoke of Life; I have mentioned before that Pacey seems to be obsessed with endings. He states his criticism in the following terms:

Grove has often decried romanticism as a literary method, and for the most part in his work he has avoided its pitfalls. In the conclusion of this novel, however, he is undoubtedly romantic, in the sense that he has departed, for the sake of emotional effect, from the probable, the ordinary, and the actual.

Moreover, if the specific effects aimed at by the romantic approach are to be achieved, there must be an inner consistency. It is impossible successfully to graft a romantic superstructure upon a realistic base, or vice versa. Yet that is what Grove has attempted to do here. The first two-thirds of The Yoke of Life are predominantly realistic, the accurate record of the processes of everyday life.

Len is suddenly transformed into a wild Shelleyan or Byronic hero; from the real and tangible world of a pioneer district we are whisked to a strange unearthly lake which might have graced the pages of a novel by Mrs. Radcliffe or Monk Lewis. The transition is too complete, too abrupt; the realism and the romance do not mix.²⁷

In the above critical passage Pacey has taken time to give Grove, or us, a pedantic lecture usually reserved for first

²⁷Ibid., pp. 62, 63.

year undergraduates on the impossibility of mixing the realistic and the romantic. It is in a passage like the above that Pacey reveals his real lack of sympathy with Grove's literary philosophy. Fortunately the answer to the above criticism was published and comes from the pen of Carleton Stanley:

I give it as my considered opinion that The Yoke of Life is a great book.

.
 The vastness of prairie geography is part of the atmosphere of the book. But in the main the atmosphere suggests the unrelenting struggle of the pioneer on the prairie frontiers; the struggle with nature, with climate, with luck, with usurers, with one's own cowardice, with fate. Whitman chanting "Pioneers O Pioneers" gave the impression that they were the lords and masters of mankind. Grove depicts them as slaves, not the slaves of human masters but the slaves of the ledges they till. Yet this is not set forth in a bitter way. Slaves though they be Grove's pioneers have all the nobler qualities of Whitman's and the best of them are even nobler and wiser.

.
 The tragedy of the book is that Len cannot clear himself from his fate.

.
 It is the sort of greatness, as Aristotle might say, that makes Len a tragic character.

.
 His discovery of the truth and the tragedy that ensues, are as grim a story of fate as one might expect from any Scandinavian writer.²⁸

Stanley then refutes Pacey's criticism of the ending by

²⁸Carleton Stanley, Dalhousie Review, "Topics of the Day", January 1931.

pointing out the fairly obvious fact that at the end of the novel Len, suffering from tuberculosis is now half-demented by his sufferings. Len, who has lived a life of frustration and defeat has had to meet with the awful truth that he can never achieve any of his three dreams: knowledge, the Lake, or possession of Lydia. If the diseased condition of his body and the frustrations of his life had not driven him past the edge of sanity surely the knowledge that his virgin Lydia had actually become a prostitute would have pushed him across the line. If one accepts the narrative at its face value then there is nothing unrealistic about the end for either Len or Lydia. Len's impulses are prompted by a combination of his delirium and his day dreams of The Lake, and Lydia's acquiescence in these impulses can easily be understood by the combination of her love for Len and her self-disgust at her prostitution. There could be no other ending for the novel. Len could not have entered a normal marriage with the stained Lydia, and Lydia could not have lived on after the death of Len. The wild meanderings of a dying man might to some seem romantic; to most they seem harshly realistic.

Frederick Philip Grove, himself, has answered the criticism concerning the term romantic being applied to his books, not with regard to The Yoke of Life, but to Fruits of the Earth. In Box 3 (recent acquisitions) are several parts of manuscripts which were turned over to the University of Manitoba by W. E. Collin in May 1964. Among these is part of a notebook which Grove has entitled Thoughts and Reflections. The book was obviously intended to be a diary,

but the entries are irregular and the book is far from complete. The first entry was on March 14, 1933. In the entry for the next day Grove writes as follows:

No adverse criticism of that new book of mine (Fruits of the Earth) has hit me quite as hard as a well-wishing English reviewer's bland statement that "this is a thrilling romance of Canadian life." Romance!!!²⁹

On March 22nd he next wrote in the book and carried on with his diatribe against romanticism:

"Romanticism! They talk of the romance of business: all they mean is the apparent marvel of the contrast between humble beginnings and the seeming splendour of ultimate success; and they overlook the far from romantic slow climb that connects the two by an infinite number of sordid and often questionable steps.

They talk of the romantic career of Napoleon, or Caesar, or Alexander and what they mean is . . . the same thing they mean when they talk of the romance of business.

Romance in literature, at least in the English and Latin sense (leaving out the purely teutonic mysticism of nature and the soul) has been essentially the cult of the distant, the medieval, and the marvellous; in other words, the cult of that which we do not understand.

.
Romanticism is essentially the desire of mankind for splendid and almost miraculous events . . . a desire so strong that it is willing to shut its eyes to crime, cruelty . . . providing these lead by ever so devious a way to an ultimate success.

²⁹F. P. Grove, Thoughts and Reflections, unpublished manuscript, Box 3 (recent acquisitions), the Grove Collection, the University of Manitoba.

Nothing has done more harm than romanticism in literature; for, romanticism in politics has been its direct result--the Holy Roman Empire of the middle ages is romanticism: German and even English imperialism were the outcome of the German . . . and of Scott's romantic fiction respectively. In England Kipling has been the last of the romantics: in him it has become jingoism. It sometimes seems to me that boys of 12 and girls of 16 dictate not only our taste in literature but through it ultimately our politics as well. Clear-headed sober realism has been submerged in a flood of seething emotionalism.³⁰

The Yoke of Life can hardly be labelled romantic writing; on the contrary it reflects all the tenets of Grove's philosophy of realism, as relating to literary procedure and not to choice of subject. Grove, in this novel, adheres to his definition of realism: "the endeavour to reproduce nature or to describe real life just as it appears to the artist."³¹

In his presentation of Len Sterner, Grove has performed the role of the artist in that he has tinged the picture which he has given us, for Len Sterner is without a doubt another of the grand-scale characters which Grove has sculptured to stride across the Canadian Prairie enacting again the tragedy of life. Len Sterner is not just a clever boy who is not given his fair share of opportunities; he is the archetypal symbol of the frustrated and embittered genius who by circumstances is destined to sacrifice the intellectual and spiritual to the physical necessity of providing

³⁰Ibid., entry for March 22nd, 1933.

³¹F. P. Grove, definition of realism, attributed to Annandale Dictionary.

a living for himself and others. In picturing for us his vision of Len Sterner, Grove does exactly what he does to the dramatic backdrop, the Canadian Prairie; he selects, as any artist does, the details he wishes to use in mirroring again the reaction of the human soul to the fundamental conditions of man's life on earth. One of the details he chooses to use in this boldly painted vision is the characteristic of imagination which would naturally be a part of the mental make-up of a Len Sterner. Grove does not present us with a maze of day dreams and fantasy, but he does present to us at least one well developed dream or vision experienced by Len when he sees the unicorn. It is surely obvious that in so doing he is preparing us for the type of hallucination which the consumptive Len will experience at the end of his tragic life when he goes in search of his dream of The Lake. It is part of the plan of this novel, as it would be part of life that in such a state of delirium would blend the three dreams of the hero. He wishes to possess Lydia at the Lake; at least he will achieve, in part, those two dreams, and in achieving them will, perhaps, achieve the dream of wisdom and knowledge as well.

Another test of Grove's philosophy of realism must be whether the reader will feel that he would react as Grove's characters have reacted. Certainly the characters as drawn by Grove are neither devils nor angels. Lydia gives in to carnal desires in her hasty decision to elope to Winnipeg, but her repentance for this act later in the book restores her to a position where the reader may sympathize

with her and understand the turmoil that had driven her to that fatal step.

Len Sterner has three dreams; an intellectual dream of wisdom and knowledge; an imaginative dream of beauty, The Lake; and an emotional dream of possessing Lydia. Those dreams become unattainable through no fault of his own but because of environment. Lydia, unfortunately has a dream of materialistic things which Len shows no promise of being able to satisfy. The claim on Len by his mother and step-father frustrates his dream of learning, and the ugliness of his life removes the possibility of realizing even that dream.

The tragic flaw in the character of Len Sterner which causes his downfall is much like the tragic flaw in the character of Niels in Settlers of the Marsh. Len does not seem to understand the many facets of love, emotional and sexual. Perhaps if he had been more adjusted to the sexual urges of himself and Lydia their relationship would have been consummated earlier.

In true Aristotelian manner the tragedy occurs ironically just as Len seems to be achieving his dreams; he has passed the entrance examinations with the highest grades in the province of Manitoba. This event is carefully placed by Grove between the two meetings of Lydia and Len...the first full of symbolism and the second full of the most violent realism. In the first interview Lydia's parents carefully leave Len and Lydia alone; Len speaks to her in

terms of the symbolism of the "pupa".

While you were at home you were the pupa.
You have burst your shell and become a
butterfly.³¹

He then proceeds to explain that he has learned about life and despite her protests he assumes that she has not learned about life at all. The irony, of course, is that her experience has been much broader than his.

Girls do, you say, I don't believe it.
I can't. If they did, they would curse
the beast in man. Somewhere is paradise;
but all about is hell. And those who live
in hell, since they can't enter paradise,
throw at least brands of the fire of their
torment into it. I have looked into that hell.
But to me where you are is Eden.³²

Later on, although "he is dimly aware that she who stood before him was Eve indeed, but after the fall," Len adheres to his idealistic view of life and Lydia and in his ignorance confuses sexual desire with something evil and wrong. In this idealism he fails to see what has happened to Lydia.

Later when she rejects him completely the dramatic turning point of the novel occurs, and throughout the added complications of her prostitution and his illness we are taken inevitably to The Lake and their suicidal deaths on The Lake.

It is in that death, together on the lake, that we see the tragic hero accepting his fate and in a certain tragic exultancy re-

³¹F. P. Grove, The Yoke of Life, Macmillan, 1930, p. 157.

³²Ibid., p. 158.

fusing to submit to the gods. His suicide is, in a way, a triumph over the gods, for in possessing Lydia and seeing The Lake he has accepted his compromise with life.

In the Yoke of Life we have a novel which has been described by the critic William Arthur Deacon as quoted by Pacey:

a tragic masterpiece . . . beyond which Grove can hardly be expected to pass.³³

³³Desmond Pacey, Frederick Philip Grove, Ryerson, 1945, p. 56.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Frederick Philip Grove in his autobiography In Search of Myself, wrote of the singing of the Kirghiz herdsman:

It was a vast melancholy utterance...
as if the landscape... had assumed a
voice : full of an almost inarticulate
realization of man's forlorn position
in the face of a hostile barrenness
of nature; and yet full, also, of a
stubborn if perhaps only inchoate asser-
tion of man's dignity below his gods. ...

But their song was eternal because,
... a nameless individual had arisen to
give them a voice for already I
felt that one day I too was to be a voice; . . .¹

Grove has achieved that goal which he felt Destiny might hold for him; he has been the voice to express the "melancholy utterance . . . as if the landscape . . . had assumed a voice." Grove has expressed on behalf of man "the realization of man's forlorn position in the face of a hostile barrenness of nature . . . assertion of man's dignity below his gods."

Grove has chosen the Canadian prairie as the symbol of the eternal primeval landscape from which that "melancholy utterance" arises. In none of the four prairie novels does Grove

¹F. P. Grove, In Search of Myself, Macmillan, 1946, pp. 153, 154.

see the Canadian West through the eyes of a photographer; on the contrary, he selects and arranges the details to create the atmosphere he needs to set off the eternal nature of the tragedies being "bodied forth." He always sees the Canadian Prairie in the light of his knowledge of literature, history and philosophy; he sees the prairie as symbolizing "the hostile barrenness of nature," a suitable opponent against which man may pit his efforts and assert his dignity. The prairie suggests the challenge that tests Spalding, Elliot, Lindstedt, and Sterner. And to a certain extent each tragic hero succeeds: Abe has his huge crop of 1912, Elliot has his home and family for a time, Lindstedt is reunited with Ellen, and Sterner sees The Lake. Each hero lives to shake his fist in defiance at the gods - represented by the passive eternal face of the prairie which, as soon as man's work is complete, sets in motion the decaying action which will destroy all visible signs of man's accomplishment.

In Spalding District, in Sedgeby, in the Manitoba Marsh, somewhere north of Gladstone, Grove has placed four symbolic primitive men: Abe Spalding, John Elliot, Niels Lindstedt, and Len Sterner - all of whom "body forth" a dramatization of the universal reaction of mankind to the tragic view of life. Each suffers from a tragic flaw which contributes to his downfall; each is involved in a situation which represents a social problem of his time, each accepts with dignity his fate, and each lives to exult "for having carried the banner thus far."

In carving out his Titans and placing them against a primeval landscape, Grove has always adhered to his stated philosophy of realism. He has never taken the stage himself; he has let his heroes speak

for themselves, without being limited by abnormal or current aberrations, or by public opinion. The choice of the prairie as the setting has, of course, greatly assisted in this technique, for choosing the timelessness of the Canadian prairie for these four novels, has freed Grove from creating communities with definite chronological and spatial limits. In addition, Grove has succeeded in presenting all his characters in such a way that the reader can be sympathetic to the feelings and actions of both parties in each set of conflicts. He has created drama which pictures man and not men in the eternal struggle.

Grove lived his life in the shadow of a magnificent vision; he has given us that vision of truth and beauty in the four prairie novels: Fruits of the Earth, Our Daily Bread, Settlers of the Marsh, and The Yoke of Life.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

FOUR ADDITIONAL PRAIRIE WORKS

Before concluding this thesis I wish to refer briefly to four other books which should be included in a view of the prairie writings of Grove. In A Search for America which purports to give an account, at least in part, of the early life of Grove in America, there appears under the name of Phil Branden, a combination of Grove himself and one of his dramatic creations. In name, if in nothing else, he shares something with the heroes of the prairie novels. His name is obviously derived as are theirs from a prototype. Phil Branden's prototype would seem to be the semi-legendary Irish Saint, St. Brandan or St. Brendan who is best known because of the medieval story of his voyage in search of the Earthly Paradise in the mid-Atlantic. This Phil Branden may, of course, be related to the Philip Firmin of Thackeray's The Adventures of Philip in which Philip's father is named Dr. George Branden Firmin. Like the hero of the Thackeray novel, Phil's father loses all his money and he is forced to make his own living. Unlike the hero of Thackeray's novel Phil Branden does not come into a fortune at the end, but after short careers as a restaurant waiter and a book salesman he becomes an itinerant farm worker until he leaves for Winnipeg and the prairies. During the story we can see that Phil Branden, like St. Brandan is searching for an Earthly Paradise. Instead of finding that, he became

the voice of the vast melancholy utterance of the Canadian Prairie.

If we think of Grove's published works as falling into an autobiographical pattern, Over Prairie Trails, his first published book, would naturally follow A Search for America. This book is a set of sketches describing seven trips between Gladstone and Falmouth near the western shore of Lake Manitoba. These trips took place while Grove was teaching for a year at Gladstone and his wife was teaching at Falmouth. In this book, the first of Grove's prairie works, the theme is sounded of "the hostile barrenness of nature." Just before becoming involved in a life-and-death struggle with a storm Grove has stopped to water his horses and looks up at the sun:

He was high in the sky by now . . . and it suddenly came home to me that there was something relentless, inexorable, cruel, yes, something of a sneer in the pitiless way in which he looked down on the infertile waste around. Unaccountably two Greek words formed on my lips: Homer's pontos atrygetos - the barren sea. Half an hour later I was to realize the significance of it.²

However despite considerable emphasis on this aspect of nature the most powerful idea left with the reader is Grove's great love and respect for the land he describes. The trips to and from Falmouth thrill him; he exults in every moment on the prairie trails, observing:

²F. P. Grove, Over Prairie Trails, N.C.L., McClelland and Stewart, 1957, p. 73.

The clear sparkle and glitter of the virgin snow.³

In starlit winter nights the heavenly bodies seem to take on an additional splendour, something next to blazing, overweening boastfulness.⁴

To the east I had, while pondering over the beautiful wilderness, passed a fine bluff of stately poplars that stood like green gold in the evening sun.⁵

In Over Prairie Trails Grove "has left us a memorable portrait of the vanishing prairie."⁶ To Grove, this prairie is the goal for which Phil Branden was searching in A Search for America:

I also know that there were others like myself who think this backwoods bushland God's own earth and second only to Paradise.⁷

He writes of this prairie background which became the backdrop for his greatest novels in the following terms:

I wanted the simpler, the more elemental things, things cosmic in their associations, nearer to the beginning or end of creation.⁸

The snow lay more smoothly again under these "exfoliated" surface sheets which here, too, gave it an inhuman, primeval look.⁹

In addition to foreshadowing the role that the Canadian West would play in his future writings, as a setting for his great novels, Over Prairie Trails also foreshadows some of the themes which emerge in the

³Ibid., p. 70.

⁴Ibid., p. 48.

⁵Ibid., p. 6.

⁶Malcolm Ross, Introduction to Over Prairie Trails, N.C.L., McClelland and Stewart, 1957, p.x.

⁷F. P. Grove, Over Prairie Trails, N.C.L., McClelland and Stewart, 1957, p. 15.

⁸Ibid., p. 51.

⁹Ibid., p. 74.

novels:

Most serious-minded men at my age, I believe, become profoundly impressed with the futility of it all If no such awakening supervenes, since we never live in the present, we are always looking forward to what never comes; and so life slips by, un-lived.¹⁰

This is Frederick Philip Grove speaking about his relationship with his daughter May, but it could just as easily be Abe Spalding speaking in the last of the published prairie novels, Fruits of the Earth.

In Grove's second published book, The Turn of the Year, we leave behind the completely autobiographical nature of Over Prairie Trails and find examples of the men who were later to emerge as the heroes of the prairie novels. In "The Sower" we are introduced to an Icelandic immigrant who came to Canada to give his wife and children a better life. He becomes involved in the conflict that faced Abe Spalding:

But while he worked his vision was of the farm; her vision was a comparison between this slavery and the city.¹¹

While he attempted to realize his vision the most important part of that vision, the family for whom he was working, left him.

In the story "Harvest", we come upon an immigrant of Slavic origin:

¹⁰Ibid., p. 118.

¹¹F. P. Grove, The Turn of the Year, McClelland and Stewart, 1923, p. 60.

He became a symbol to me of harvesting man: of the toiler of the earth, of him who feeds the teeming millions of other worlds into which he does not care to pry. They, the teeming millions may think that he is their servant, but he knows better: not they are his masters; his master is one, his master is God.¹²

This man was to me, on that evening, while we were rattling along the road, the incarnation of all that is fine and noble in bodily labour; of the joy of muscle and sinew He became to me the man who stands squarely on the soil and who, from his toil - his, no matter whether he owns it or not . . . who from his soil reaches out with tentative mind . . . gropes his sure and unmistakable way into the great primeval mysteries which are the same today as at the dawn of history.¹³

This Slavic settler would have been the ideal man in the eyes of John Elliot, who, in Our Daily Bread, lives to see all of his children deserting the life he had planned for them.

The final book which I believe belongs with the prairie writings of Grove is his unpublished Tales from the Margin. This book, if published, would be a valuable addition to the work of Grove. These tales fulfill the characteristics of that part of narrative prose which Grove calls "The Tale" which like the Tales of Poe take their subject matter

from the border-provinces of human life - in contradistinction to its main stress. Poe presents things which happen "on the margin of life".

¹²Ibid., p. 206.

¹³Ibid., pp. 210, 211.

From this follows one important deduction: the tale is not socially significant.

Its incidents may have the interest of anecdotes, the charm of dreams, the novelty of surprise; its characters may be interesting as pathological cases or as physiological accidents.

.....
 But the secret of its appeal and at the same time its limitation lies in the fact that it consists of accidental or incidental things.¹⁴

The stories and sketches in Tales From the Margin have their settings in the Canadian West. The story entitled "water" is an ironic tale of a man who mortgages his farm to the point where he loses it in order to pay for the drilling of a well; the water was salt. Kurtz, who lost his farm is pictured in the following passage:

Often during the years . . . he peered dreamily into the woods or across . . . the north where once upon a time he had been a settler.¹⁵

Another equally ironic tale entitled "The Deadbeat" reveals the character of Fred Farley who can be taken in by any traveller with an instalment plan approach. Farley is unable to resist such an offer even when he knows he is absolutely ruined; that offer is for coloured photographs of his family. Tales From the Margin and a selection of the unpublished essays and addresses by Frederick Philip Grove should be placed first on the priority list of important pieces of Canadian Literature to be published in our Centennial year.

¹⁴F. P. Grove, It Needs to be Said, Macmillan, 1929, pp. 118, 119.

¹⁵F. P. Grove, Tales From the Margin, unpublished collection of tales, Boxes 13, 14, The Grove Collection, The University of Manitoba.

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