

Autobiography in Frederick Philip Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh*

by

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

**Department of English
University of Manitoba
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**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
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I believe I have hidden myself fairly well - *ISM* 383

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that Frederick Philip Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* is constructed around an autobiographical set of facts. The events described in the novel relate to actual events, people and places from his own life so that it becomes possible to document the genesis of *Settlers* which operates as a novel but also as a disguised autobiography. This thesis seeks to demonstrate how the author of *Settlers*, who vacillated between megalomania and despondency, who wished to be hidden yet known, resolved this paradox in his literature. Grove was a translator and was relegated to translating life events into literature - in effect, transforming life into art. In life, he could never divulge his true identity, but, through the medium of fiction and particularly in his favourite novel *Settlers of the Marsh*, he was able to tell his story and achieve the very personal notoriety that he craved.

The first chapter demonstrates how Grove transformed the life experiences of Elsa Endell into his German novels, *Fanny Essler* and *Maurermeister Ilhes Haus*. Material from these novels appeared twenty years later in *Settlers*. The initial chapter also examines *Baroness Elsa*, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven's autobiography expressed as a series of letters she wrote to her friend Djuna Barnes in Paris from Berlin in 1923-6. Elsa's memoirs are pivotal in comprehending Grove's construction of *Settlers*. Chapter Two examines the precursors to *Settlers* - Grove's original manuscripts, particularly *Pioneers I and V* and *The White Range-Line House*. These documents provide valuable insights into when Grove began the novel and what he was trying to achieve. Chapter Three shows that *Settlers of the Marsh* is, in large part, a translation of life into art - a disguised autobiography.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate this thesis to a former uncle of mine, Bert Bryan. It was his indomitable storytelling that intrigued me and encouraged me to take classes in literature so that, I thought, I might better be able to write his story for a breathless posterity. That Tena Grove, his Grade One teacher, and her strange stay-at-home prevaricating husband should be an incidental part of his storytelling partially explains the additional writerly research that this paper signifies. Thank you David Arnason for accepting me during your sabbatical time and for your invaluable assistance throughout this extended project. Thank you Gaby Divay for your constant, insightful and very generous professional and personal support through all these years. Thanks to the Grove family and Shelley Sweeney, University of Manitoba, for providing me with photocopies of Grove's original manuscripts. Thank you Ruth Bagworth for your efficient and generous support. I wish to thank my family who have valiantly withstood the torment of hearing the same stories being retold repeatedly. I wish, especially, to thank my daughter, Kimberly, for her constant encouragement and editing.

PREFACE

This thesis has its beginnings in 1985 when I began taping interviews with a former resident of Ashfield, Manitoba and an uncle of mine, Bert Bryan. My uncle spoke candidly, and with encyclopaedic knowledge, about his early years growing up in Ashfield. Bert related several stories about his Grade One teacher, Mrs. Grove, and her unusual husband, Frederick. Later, I was very surprised and excited to learn that the very same Mr. Grove described to me by my uncle was indeed one of Canada's foremost realist writers in the 1920's - Frederick Philip Grove himself.

Bert was seven years old when the Groves first arrived in Ashfield and he was nine when they left. Bert and his sister Gladys lived with their maternal aunt Jane and her husband William Moore. And while it was Catherine Grove (called "Tena" by Grove) with whom Bert spent most of his time, it was Mr. Grove that Bert most talked about. Grove occasionally tutored Bert's older brothers at the teacherage and there the boys describe how they would "borrow" some of Grove's cigarettes. Gladys explained that her aunt Jane allowed Grove to borrow books from their home library. Although Bert did not live with his older brothers, all the Bryan children attended the Ashfield school. Both Bert and his brother Stanley said that when they had misbehaved in school, Mrs. Grove would send them into the school attic as punishment. Both boys stated that there they found a manuscript that they read with interest; that in the pages were the names of all their neighbours. They observed Grove in the teacherage window always busy writing or typing. They also report seeing Grove taking photographs of little sticks he had placed in a snowbank so that they looked like people. Bert also had a personal relationship with the Grove family in that he babysat their daughter May Grove who was aged from four to six in Grove's Ashfield years.

Grove was well-known in Ashfield for his prevaricating ways. He once said that he froze two toes that had to be amputated and "the man who performed the operation stands before you." Grove was an enigma to the residents of Ashfield. Grove's tall tales led people to question his integrity and the fact of his "unemployment" did not endear him to the community. Some thought that maybe he was a German count.

The interviews with Bert continued regularly from 1985 to 1991.¹ The many hours of discussion across a kitchen table with my uncle were not only an important personal study, but served to launch my own individual search for the story behind the writings and the man known to us all as Frederick Philip Grove.

In this thesis, I have attempted to use the name Greve, for the author of the pre-Manitoba material, and Grove for the name of the author of post-Manitoba material.

¹The transcriptions of these interviews are hand-written and are currently in the possession of the writer.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The quotations from Grove's works and Elsa's autobiography are taken from the following editions:

- ASA* *A Search for America*. Ottawa: Graphic Publishers, 1927.
- BE* *Baroness Elsa*. Ottawa: Oberon, 1992.
- CHW* *Consider Her Ways*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1947.
- FE* *Fanny Essler*. Ottawa: Oberon, 1984.
- FOE* *Fruits of the Earth*. 1933. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965.
- INBS* *It Needs to be Said*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1929.
- ISM* *In Search of Myself*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1946.
- MIH* *Maurermeister Ihles Haus*. Ottawa: Oberon, 1976.
- MM* *The Master of the Mill*. 1944. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1961.
- ODB* *Our Daily Bread*. 1928. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975.
- OPT* *Over Prairie Trails*. 1922. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1957.
- SM* *Settlers of the Marsh*. 1925. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989.
- TG* *Two Generations*. Toronto: Ryerson, 1939.
- TY* *The Turn of the Year*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1923.
- YL* *The Yoke of Life*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1930.
- WRLH* The White Range-Line House MS

INTRODUCTION

Every man's work, whether it be literature or music or pictures or architecture or anything else, is always a portrait of himself, and the more he tries to conceal himself the more clearly will his character appear in spite of him. I may very likely be condemning myself, all the time that I am writing this book, for I know that whether I like it or no I am portraying myself more surely than I am portraying any of the characters whom I set before the reader. I am sorry that it is so but I can not help it.

Samuel Butler from *The Way of All Flesh*

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that Frederick Philip Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* is constructed around an autobiographical set of facts. The events described in the novel relate to actual events, people and places from his own life, so that it becomes possible to document the genesis of *Settlers* which operates as a novel but also as a disguised autobiography. This thesis seeks to demonstrate how an author, who was Canada's greatest literary fraud, vacillated between megalomania and despondency, who wished to be hidden yet known, resolved this paradox in his literature. Grove was a translator and was relegated to translating life events into literature, in effect, transforming life into art. In life, he could never divulge his true identity, but, through the medium of fiction and particularly in his first and favourite Canadian novel, *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), he was able to tell *his* story and achieve the very personal notoriety that he craved. Like Samuel Butler, in *Settlers*, Grove was portraying himself more surely than any of his characters - he could not help it.

The first chapter demonstrates how Grove transformed the life experiences of Elsa Endell into his German novels, *FE* and *MIH*. Material from these novels appeared twenty years later in

Settlers. The initial chapter also examines *BE*, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven's autobiography expressed as a series of letters she wrote to her friend Djuna Barnes from Europe in 1923-5. Elsa's memoirs are pivotal in comprehending Grove's construction of *Settlers*. Chapter Two examines the precursors to *Settlers* - Grove's original manuscripts, *Pioneers I, II and V* and *The White Range-Line House*. These documents provide valuable insights into when Grove began the novel and what he was trying to achieve. Chapter Three shows that *Settlers of the Marsh* is, in large part, a translation of life into art, a disguised autobiography.

It can be argued that Frederick Philip Grove's literary career began in translation, as Felix Paul Greve - his real name - worked as a translator of French and English texts into the German language. It is appropriate that his earliest translation was Dante's *La Vita Nuova* (The New Life) in 1898 (Divay, *Translations* 129). According to E.V. Rieu, in his introduction to *The Divine Comedy: Hell*, although the *Vita Nuova* is autobiographical, it is not an autobiography (28). If Grove had translated *The Divine Comedy: Hell*, he would have had a premonition of what life had in store for him. In Canto XXIV, Dante and Virgil tour Circle VIII in Hell and encounter the shades of thieves in a pit filled with monstrous reptiles. One serpent leaps up and stings a thief on his neck, whereupon the shade immediately catches fire and burns to ash: "But as he lay on the ground dispersedly, / All by itself the dust gathered and stirred / And grew to its former shape immediately" (103-105). For Grove, as we have come to know him, was indeed soon involved in a hellish comedy of his own. Greve spent a year in a German prison for fraud, he faked his own suicide and permanently disappeared from Europe with the proceeds of the advancements he received from two publishers. He fled to North America in self-imposed exile in 1909 and mysteriously reappeared again, like Dante's shade, in Manitoba in 1912 as Frederick Philip Grove.

For the rest of his life, Grove searched for a lost identity. Notwithstanding his authoritative pronouncements of "I am I," or "I must be I," Grove and his readers never really discovered who or what he was. He wrote two purported autobiographies, *A Search for America* (1927) and *In Search of Myself* (1946), but these *Searches* have been discounted as largely fictive.² He must have been ashamed of certain parts of his past, particularly his imprisonment,³ which, if discovered, would have stung his pride and probably would have destroyed any chance of a life as a Canadian writer. But Grove was not content with being a marginal writer - he wanted to be at the centre of things - as *the* writer - as *the* man (Phelps in Spettigue, *Frederick Philip Grove*, 51). The problem was that he had drawn a veil over his original past, had invented a new past that he scrupulously protected. He rarely let his guard down. Luckily for researchers, Grove was also a megalomaniac who desperately wanted to be successful and appreciated, but especially, he also wanted to be known for who he had been, for who he really was. He resolved this apparent conflict of wanting to be hidden yet known through his Canadian writing. Grove obliquely exposed a hidden part of his life through the fiction of *Settlers of the Marsh* and achieved a measure of the personal notoriety that he craved.

Much of what we know today about who Grove really was is due to the spectacular investigations and revelations of Douglas O. Spettigue in his book *FPG: The European Years*. Frederick Philip Grove, Spettigue learned, was really Felix Paul Greve, born in 1879, not 1871 or

² *A Search for Myself* won the Governor-General's medal for non-fiction but perhaps the award should have been for fiction.

³ Apparently, Grove was so secretive about his imprisonment that he did not even tell his wife Catherine. She expressed surprise when Professor Spettigue and her son, Leonard, were checking Greve's prison records.

1873 as Grove claimed.⁴ He was born in the farming district of Radomno, Germany, but moved to Hamburg with his family in 1881 at the age of two. In the city his father was a tram conductor and later a minor civil servant. His parents separated in 1892. Greve had been raised in the city with little or no knowledge of agricultural pursuits, yet, in his Canadian prairie novels, the farm and associated nature was the basic constant backdrop in his settler writing. Perhaps, in those novels, Grove returned to an idyllic pastoral past that, in terms of symbolic realism and neo-romantic underpinnings, allowed him to recover those halcyon days as a child secure in the bosom of his intact family in Radomno. Spettigue states that "there is little, outside the novels, to tell us what life was like at home" (*FPG* 37), that is, in the Greve household.

Bertha and Carl Eduard Greve were, of course, German, but Grove claimed his mother to be Scotch and his father, initially Swedish, in 1946 became "My father, of English-Swedish descent" (*ISM* 18).⁵ Understandably, in order to perpetrate the myth, Grove constructs the protagonist in his first Canadian novel, *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), as a young Swedish immigrant, Niels Lindstedt. Greve attended Realschule in the Lutheran parish of St. Pauli and, later, the Realgymnasium Johanneum. The students in these schools were of a socio-economic level above Greve. He may have tried to compensate for this disparity through exaggeration and excess. Somewhere in his schooling, perhaps at university, or during his work as a translator, he

⁴On his marriage certificate in 1914 Grove listed his age as 41 (he was 35). His wife, Catherine, was 22 at the time and even as late as 1928 she was still unaware of his actual age (Pacey, *Letters* 177).

⁵In a letter dated Feb. 10, 1914 to a fellow teacher studying in Germany, Grove wrote "My father was a Swede, my mother a Scotchwoman" (Pacey, *Letters* 11). On his marriage certificate in the summer of 1914, Grove gave his parents' names as Charles Edward Grove [actually Carl Eduard Greve] and Bertha Rutherford Grove [Bertha Reichentrog Greve]. Grove probably changed his ancestry to the Scotch-Swedish connection on entering Canada in December, 1912, because Canada was still basically British and because of anti-war sentiments prior to World War I. His addendum of English-Swedish in 1946 is probably a response to Sweden's neutrality in World War II. However, even in his name change Grove could not give up his past identity, German notwithstanding; Frederick is a variation of Friedrich, one of his birth names and his initials, FPG, remain unchanged.

may have been told that he was a genius and was destined for great things - a factor that may have contributed to his megalomania. Unfortunately, at the beginning of his first year at the University of Bonn, his mother died. Her death seemed to remove the last vestige of control of nineteen-year-old Felix and he careened into a life of debt-ridden excess. Spettigue reports that, at one point, Greve was spending six times his father's salary (*FPG* 50). Some of his excesses involved running off with a friend's wife, Else Endell, and defrauding his best friend, Herman Kilian, of 10,000 Marks. Kilian pressed charges and Greve was apprehended. Soon after, Greve spent a year in a Bonn prison.

Greve met Else (Elsa) Endell in Germany in 1901. Their turbulent ten-year relationship ended in disaster when Greve left her in Kentucky in 1911 and entered Canada in 1912. In Canada, Grove began his teaching career in January, 1913, in the Mennonite settlement of Haskett, Manitoba. He married a fellow teacher, Catherine Wiens,⁶ in 1914 and their daughter, May, was born in 1915. Over the next few years the Groves taught off and on in various locations in Manitoba. A tremendous break for Grove occurred in January, 1920, when Catherine obtained a teaching position in Ashfield, Manitoba. In Ashfield, with Catherine's steady income, Grove could devote his full attention to writing. The opportunity was short-lived, however, for he returned to teaching in August, 1921, and finally retired from the profession in June, 1924. *Settlers of the Marsh* was published in 1925. The Groves' daughter, Phyllis May died in 1927.⁷ In 1928-9, Grove travelled across Canada giving a series of Canadian Club lectures. The outcome

⁶On his marriage certificate Grove had given his marital status as "widower." This marriage would make him a bigamist since he and Elsa were only separated, not divorced. Grove would not be a "widower" until Elsa's death thirteen years later. He would not outlive his second wife, Catherine.

⁷Grove's wife Elsa committed suicide in 1927 in Paris.

of these lecture tours

was the book *It Needs to be Said*. The Groves moved east in 1929 and their son, Arthur Leonard, was born in Ottawa in 1930. The family settled near Simcoe, Ontario, in 1931. Grove died in Simcoe in 1948 after a prolonged illness.

Although many of Grove's books were published after the family left Ashfield, it is to his days there that we must turn to appreciate one of the most productive periods of his writing life and, especially, to fully comprehend the creation of his best and personally favourite novel, *Settlers of the Marsh*. In 1920, in Ashfield, Manitoba, Grove finally had the time to explore his past through fiction. He felt he was destined for great things. He would bring realism through naturalism into Canadian literature. He began work on the manuscript, *Pioneers*, later to be condensed into *Settlers of the Marsh*. He put his heart and soul into this novel and, I believe, although this book is not an autobiography, it is most certainly, autobiographical. It is a great paradox that the only way we can come to know Frederick Philip Grove is through his fiction.

The possibility that Grove's fiction contains autobiographical underpinnings has been raised by many Grove scholars. In his book, *Frederick Philip Grove* (1969), written before he discovered who Grove really was, Spettigue noted "the presence of Grove *personae* in virtually all his writings" (3) and proposed that "the Grove scholar must begin with Grove himself" (4). He classified Grove as a confessional writer and essayist (157) whose tragic protagonists "Perhaps . . . have too much of their self-conscious author in them" (91). Spettigue recognized that Grove was more an author with something to say and a self to search for than an artist who had a language of his own: "His most compelling achievements apart from the essays came in realizing each of his

protagonists as a variation on that multiple questing self such that all are in some sense that same person and their story is in some sense always the same story" (148).

Stanley McMullin, in his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of *ASA*, similarly recognized that Grove "created imaginative literature out of the fabric of his own past . . . Grove's blending of fact and fancy became to him a real and continuing mythology which sustained his vision of himself as an artist" (ix). McMullin sensed the importance to Grove of biographical information but acknowledged that scholars still had much work to do to determine Grove's origins (x). Margaret Stobie, too, understood that background information on Grove was necessary in order to understand the author and his work (*Frederick Philip Grove* 15). She interviewed former pupils of Grove and community members and found biographical information that was included in Grove's novels: *Our Daily Bread* was based on his wife's Mennonite family; Len, in *The Yoke of Life*, was modelled on a former pupil; and the Swedish family who ran the post office were named Branden, as was the protagonist in Grove's fictional autobiography, *ASA*.

Spettigue discovered who Grove really was in October 1971 and, after much research, published *FPG: The European Years* in 1973.⁸ From his vantage point, Spettigue could consider Grove's entire *oeuvre* as thematically and biographically coming together as a whole; moreover, "we should remember that in a sense all his writings are autobiographical, a working out of an image, and a rationale, of himself" (20). There was also, Spettigue noted, the matter of pseudonyms. Most pseudonyms used by writers bear little resemblance to the actual name of the writer. Spettigue points out that this clearly was not the case for Grove, who, after all, wanted his

⁸Catherine Grove died in January 1973.

identity to be known almost as much as he wished to protect it: "Felix wanted to be known; a pseudonym that could not be traced to its owner was not for him" (143).

Gaby Divay acknowledges Grove's ambivalence regarding pseudonyms, "about wanting to draw attention to hidden achievements, yet fearing to be found out. His clever pointers are designed to reveal only up to a point which stops short of possible identification" (*Names* 127). I maintain that, not only in pseudonyms, but in places, people, plots and events, Grove used a very large part of his life experiences to write what he hoped would be world-class literature, but beyond that, he sowed his works with revealing clues as to who he really was.⁹

Louis Dudek, recognizing that the self stands at the centre of any literary work, wrote that "what we have in Grove is a writer who is trying to find this essential self" (90). Fiction, for Dudek, extended reality to incorporate emotion and desires and that led to his inner self. Dudek finds it remarkable "how much of Grove's writing is autobiography, or para- or pseudo-autobiography, and how this biographical material blends into his actual fiction . . . the opposite question may be asked, whether all his fiction is not inevitably anchored in fact - that is, whether autobiography is not at the very root of all his fiction" (91).

Grove had much to fear from an exposure of his rather shady past. Such information would also reveal the genesis of much of his creative productions. In that regard it is revealing that Wilfred Eggleston once incurred Grove's wrath after making what he considered an innocuous statement:

⁹In his author's note to the fourth edition of *ASA*, Grove ponders the question of whether the story is fact or fiction and states that his answer is "a prevaricating answer," and as to the pseudonym, well, "while a pseudonym ostensibly dissociates the author from his creation, it gives him at the same time an opportunity to be even more personal than, in the conditions of our present-day civilization, it would be either safe or comfortable to be were he speaking in the first person, unmasked." From our modern perspective, with the knowledge provided by Professor Spettigue's revelations, we can appreciate more fully the irony in Grove's statement, and we can apply our knowledge to Grove's productions, and in particular, I am arguing, to his *Settlers of the Marsh*.

I had been saying, in a mild way . . . that the public had a legitimate curiosity about the origins and backgrounds of great literary figures - they wanted to know where they came from and what were the circumstances of their early life. Somehow, I contended, this helped us to understand their works. This provoked Grove to unaccustomed heat. Not at all, he shouted, the only thing that mattered about a writer was his work, the product of his pen.(104)

Grove may have been using a common argument in modernism, some form of whatever currency the argument may then have held, or some version of impersonal writing, but the sheer vehemence of his response may be cause for suspicion.

Apparently, in his lifetime, Grove had so successfully hid his past that many critics had accepted Grove's personal testimony about his former life. Twenty years after Grove had died, Ronald Sutherland was still writing in his introduction to his book, *Frederick Philip Grove* (1969), about Grove's exploits in Siberia, Japan, Java, India, the Suez Canal and about Grove's hearing the droning song of mounted Kirghiz herdsmen on the Russian steppes. However, although Sutherland might miss the headings, "The passing of Mrs. Elliot," "Chaos" and "In Exile" as relating to Grove's personal life, in *ODB*, he noticed an autobiographical connection in Grove's *TG*: "a third son, Phil, whom Grove may have modelled after himself in more than name" (42).

Eric Thompson saw Spettigue's book as a watershed in Grove criticism and felt that Grove's "method of narration is rooted in the self . . . He had to have had an experience first - or, at least, intuited it - before transmuting it into fiction through the medium of his imagination" (16). Rudy Wiebe, in 1978, in the post-Spettigue era, also recognized that "much of Grove's fiction (and we cannot yet tell, and perhaps never will be able to tell exactly, how much), . . . is a personal

history transmuted into story" (193). In the scholarship following Spettigue it became rapidly evident that Grove, in his autobiographies, had played the literary con man and scholars were now facing the daunting task of having to "untangle the threads he tangled [,] as they follow up the false clues he planted, and try to find the buried paths he so successfully camouflaged" (Waddington in Hjartarson, "Design" 75). Some readers of Grove were less gentle in their assessments: Spettigue had called Grove a congenital liar and Northrope Frye labelled him a pathological liar. Grove, the supercilious immigrant writer, became the target of a scholarly backlash.

Janet Giltrow was sure of one thing: "Grove - or Felix Paul Greve - was no affluent gadabout but a rather seedy translator, poet, and novelist, eventually imprisoned for debt and fraud. It was this sordid indebtedness, not the loss of a magnificent fortune, which led to his immigration" (96). But Enn Raudsepp saw Grove somewhat more glamorously as a dandy, fastidious in dress and manners and affecting detached superiority, who from an early age attempted "to crash into a higher intellectual and social milieu than his petty-bourgeois origins would have permitted" (132). Interestingly, Raudsepp suggests that Grove's persistent lying intimates that "he may never have fully resolved the anxieties that gave rise to his fantasies, and that he may have used his fiction to explore the hidden depths of his own nature" (134). K.P. Stich called Grove "an impressive literary liar" who attempted, in his writings, to recreate himself: "Because of Grove's double identity and autobiographical tendencies his books are deceptively accurate, ironically self-disparaging, skilfully garbled, and artfully [sic] patterned images of

himself" ("Bluff" 111). In his official autobiographies and in his fiction, then, we might suppose that Grove wove illusions and, in a sense, was writing an *apologia pro vita sua*.¹⁰

Joseph Gold understood that biography and autobiography, including certainly Grove's, were both forms of fiction (131). Grove himself was writing such fiction in the clandestine sense that, as a biographer, he was writing about the former Felix Paul Greve and at the same time writing autobiography. Since, for obvious reasons, such writing could not be presented manifestly, Grove discretely chose fiction as his secret titillating venue in exploring, exposing and championing his former and present selves. Gold also noted that "perhaps we normally overlook the autobiographical source of much that is fiction . . . that, however well disguised an invented fiction, the material is rooted in personal experience" (135). Lejeune concluded that, internally, there is "no difference between an autobiography or an autobiographical novel" (qtd. in Stanton 9). I am arguing that Grove used many personal experiences from his own life in writing his autobiographical novel, *Settlers of the Marsh*.

It would seem that what interest there is in Grove today is based less on his literary accomplishment than on his outrageous behaviour as Greve and spurious double life as Grove. That status is evident in the work of Judith Dudar who groups Grove's *ISM* with the autobiographies of two other men, Will James's *Lone Cowboy* and Grey Owl's *Pilgrims of the Wild*, as examples of a genre that received popular acclaim in their time and partly told the story of

¹⁰Carl Jung was well aware of the self-deception involved in autobiography: "I have neither the desire nor the capacity to stand outside myself and observe my fate in a truly objective way. I would commit the familiar autobiographical mistake either of weaving an illusion about how it ought to have been, or of writing an *apologia pro vita sua*. In the end, man is an event which cannot judge itself, but for better or worse, is left to the judgment of others" (qtd. in Stich, Introduction, x). Grove wrote "Apologia Pro Vita et Opere Suo," an apology for his life and work, in *The Canadian Forum* in 1931.

each life as it was lived.¹¹ It is hardly surprising, then, that Grove's books today, in Germany and more so in Canada, are largely unread.

The assessments are apt because Grove was mostly interested in himself - what he had been, what he was, what he could have been, and what he would be. He pursued these visions of his elusive self his entire life, no doubt driven by his obsessive megalomania. Divay, well aware of Grove's self-preoccupation and his inability to see beyond himself, has supposed that the mechanisms employed by Grove as a translator and as a creative artist are essentially limited to the imitative, to re-creating, not creating: "his voluminous Canadian pioneer novels are tiresome in their two-dimensional character representation and in their tedious forced symbolism. A near-complete lack of humour certainly does not help alleviate the task of reading them" ("Translations" 149). I too believe that this limited dimensionality in Grove's productions occurred because he was mainly interested in portraying himself, and a rather uninteresting self at that; others were cast in supporting roles, serving as foils for the protagonist's insular world.

Yet Grove did not come to writing by chance nor for want of verbal intelligence. He was a gifted translator and worked voraciously, translating some of the finest literary texts into German. Some of the authors whose works Greve translated included Balzac, Browning, Cervantes, Dante, DeQuincey, Dickens, Dowson, Dumas, Flaubert, Gide, Meredith, Pater, Swift, Wells¹² and Wilde.

¹¹Stobie, in her book, *Frederick Philip Grove*, recognized Grove's self-centredness. After investigating Grove's tenure in the Mennonite reserve, she noted his "inability to observe or comprehend human nature around him, however keen his eyes might be for the details of flower or bird" (41). Even worse, "he had failed largely because of his lack of interest in other people, in their views or their sensitivities, a lack that amounted to stupidity" (34).

¹² Grove, a German immigrant writing in Canada, was also an admirer of Joseph Conrad, a Polish immigrant writing in England and a neighbour of H.G. Wells in Kent when Greve visited the former in 1904/5. Kurtz, one of the settlers in Grove's manuscript, *Pioneers*, could be a nod to Grove's own *Heart of Darkness*, his maltreatment of Elsa in the wilderness of America. It is more likely, however, that *Settlers* was the product of the treatment he administered to himself to throw off the monster that was Elsa that had stung him and reduced him to

He also translated *Thousand and One Nights*. Further, Greve also published reviews, editorials and novels in Germany. By any standard, he was an active translator, critic and writer. And the life of the intellect captivated him. It is understandable, then, that an ambitious and impressionable young man such as he was at that time would be influenced by an elegant literary world. It may not have been difficult for him to extrapolate his "creativity" in his translations as evidence of his writing ability and a self-fulfilling prophecy of his potential genius and assured success. He had, after all, met some of the authors whose work he had translated, and he had written a few things himself.

Indeed, Greve was deeply influenced by his translations and readings of his translatable authors. Four authors who are of special significance to the study of Greve are Oscar Wilde, Stephan George, Andre Gide, and H. G. Wells. As Spettigue points out, "It can be demonstrated that contemporary English, French and German writers, particularly Wilde, Gide and Stefan George,¹³ contributed from their own lives and the lives of their fictional characters to Felix Greve's image of himself and his life-pattern" (Spettigue, *FPG* 51).

Greve had also translated nearly the whole of Wilde's works, and a good part of Walter Pater's. Pater's invocation to follow passion in art was misinterpreted by many young men at the time as a sensate ticket to indulgence without the inconvenience of morality. Greve, who was already leading a dissipated flamboyant life, was himself given justification for his persona

ashes. In 1920, in the hubris of creation, he perhaps felt that his darkened life of personal infamy, exile and loneliness would change for the better.

¹³All three writers were homosexuals.

through Pater, Wilde and other Decadents.¹⁴ According to Elsa, Greve was the individual, who through his translations, "really started the first Wilde craze in Germany" (BE 69). Greve himself was interested not only in the literary works of Wilde, but the philosophical underpinnings of his flamboyant style as they were summarized in Wilde's statement in L'Envoi to "Rose-leaf and Apple-leaf": "One's real life is so often the life that one does not lead." In following Wilde's lead Greve seems to have believed at the time he could savour sensation without morality, without inhibition; it was *art for art's sake*, art directed life - even lying was an art. Small wonder that Spettigue calls the young Greve in 1902 "a proficient liar" (FPG 80).

Greve also became quite proficient at playing the Wildean dandy - seemingly rich, intelligent, with a superb taste for art, an exuberance of posture and a literary elegance.¹⁵ More than an artist, Greve wished to pose as a patron of the arts - a difficult avocation when one has little money. Spettigue saw Greve as being driven to ever greater extravagances as a way of purchasing affection or esteem (69) and he speculates that the genesis of much of this pose was rooted in the past - in "the attempt [of Greve's parents] to keep up the appearances of a faltering marriage, the pretentious living on a meagre income, the competition at the Johanneum with boys from professional or well-to-do homes" (69). Whatever the economic basis to Greve's ruses, he paid attention to various roles available to him in other countries. Grove states that "when travelling in Sweden or in the countries bordering the Mediterranean I had connived at being taken

¹⁴The Decadents were a group of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers who avowed that nature was inferior to art and who attacked the moral, ethical and social standards of the bourgeoisie in this period.

¹⁵Greve was also materially elegant. Gide notes, after his meeting with Greve in 1904, "the lunch is ended; he offers me a cigarette from the most elegant case I have ever seen" (240).

for an Englishman" (*ASA* 1). This masquerade would later be useful to Greve in his North American life.

Greve's life of extravagance and excess eventually led to his downfall. The downward trajectory began as early as 1902, perhaps, when Elsa and Greve became lovers, just a year after Elsa's marriage to August Endell. Together, the couple moved to Italy in 1903. The couple's year abroad was financed illicitly from several debts, including a large sum of 10000 Marks borrowed from Greve's best friend, Herman Kilian, with whom he had been previously living. Hjartarson and Spettigue, paraphrasing Elsa's observations in their introduction to *BE*, find a remarkable parallel to Greve's own situation when they state that "Felix . . . has no money; he had been supported by Kilian, who now has turned against him" (18). Whether because of jealousy¹⁶ or concern for his money, Kilian arranged, in 1903, for Greve to return by train to Bonn, where Greve was met by detectives and arrested. He was charged with fraud and sentenced to one year in prison.

During his imprisonment, Greve worked incessantly on his translations, using pseudonyms for some since the court had garnisheed his wages. It was here he first translated Wilde, whose emphasis on the heady world of sensations and excess would apply to the type of literature that Grove would first embark upon in Canada.¹⁷

¹⁶Kilian is very likely the "young man" in Grove's "Rebels All" with whom he lived for a number of years "in body as well as in spirit" (75).

¹⁷ Greve could call on Wilde, mirroring Pater, to remark, "What matter what the cost was? One could never pay too high a price for any sensation" (Wilde 83). Grove, in *OPT* and *TOY*, expressed his sensations, albeit subdued, as responses to the Manitoba landscape. Later, in his Canadian writings, as in *Settlers of the Marsh*, Grove might simply say, "What does it matter?" Moreover, he could apply another of Wilde's dictums, that art is "the medium for simultaneous self-revelation and concealment" (qtd. in Gammel, "No Woman Lover" 464).

Greve, in his study of Wilde, recognized the importance of biography in interpreting an author's works. While living with Elsa in Italy in early 1903, Greve wrote, in the Afterword to a critical pamphlet on Wilde, that "Often more had to be asserted than has been proved. *Oscar Wilde belonged with those people only who can be approached through a biography* [italics added]. Some day the author may try to supply it. To do so he must be sure to place the English poet in the great context of Decadent psychology" (qtd. in Spettigue, *FPG* 87). Later, in the same year, but writing from inside the Bonn prison, Greve states that Wilde's "works are nothing, are only a pale glimpse of what he was in life; nevertheless they contain just so much of his essence as a person, this strangely complicated being, that reading him leads unfailingly to studying the man" (113). The irony here is that these same comments might well be applied to Greve and all his productions, including his Canadian work.¹⁸

It was in the spirit of Wilde when Grove wrote that *Settlers of the Marsh* was significant to him, though never admitting that the characters in the novel were copies of real people. Walter Pache states that "in inventing a new identity for himself, Grove turns life into art, casting off all restrictions which his own past, the historical situation, and current literary conventions would have placed on his existence" ("Dilettante" 190). In fact, Pache sees in Grove a dilettantism that appeared particularly in a letter to Watson Kirkconnell March 7, 1927, in which Grove openly admits as much: "I am just a dilettante" (Pacey, *Letters* 58). In the same letter, Grove had argued that there is a charm inherent in a system of ideas irrespective of their inherent truth. This movement, from Decadent philosophy, Pache recognizes, "defines the dilettante as the man who

¹⁸Greve may have adopted Wilde's anti-realist admonition to the artist in "The Decay of Lying": "The only real people are the people who never existed; and if the novelist is base enough to go to life for his personage, he should at least pretend that they are creations, and not boast of them as copies" (Wilde in Pache, "Dilettante," 190).

continually masks himself, who experiments with different moral systems, who 'tries on' various philosophies without subscribing to any. The dilettante sees his supreme achievement as an artist in this playful change of identities" (190).

Though Pater and Wilde's writing had a profound influence on Greve, another writer who had a more personal effect on him was Stefan George. George had a cult following in Germany in Neo-Romantic poetry. The George group believed that art had a spiritual, if not divine, potential and that the creators of this art were, consequently, divine themselves. Greve, already interested in the divine potential of his own persona, tried to insinuate himself into the George group. He attempted to promote himself into this literary scene by self-publishing a collection of poems, "*Wanderungen*, the Wanderings of Felix Paul Greve," written in the George tradition. However, the poems received a poor review. In any case, any conjunction was unlikely because George's was a group that did not adhere to the dilettantism the young Greve was eager to fashion.¹⁹ What perhaps totally did in Greve's aspirations was the fact that the group cut him because of his outrageous on-going affair with Elsa. There was no correspondence between Greve and George after 1902 although George visited Greve in prison.

In addition to Pater, Wilde and George, Andre Gide, a well-known French author, had an influence on Greve. Greve was a significant translator of Gide's work into German and carried on an active correspondence with him. Greve was so taken with Gide, or at least his desire to be associated with Gide, that in *ISM*, for his Canadian audience, Greve made much of a Frenchman "who in my early days had been one of my intimates" (3). The young Frenchman,

¹⁹George hated a lack of restraint, a lack of taste. George expressed his dislike of another German writer (Dehmel) that is very perceptive and applies to Greve in Germany and in Canada: "[He] betrays his complete lack of artistic talent in that . . . he soils his creative work 'with the secret infirmities of his own nature'" (Goldsmith in Spettigue, *FPG* 118).

a year or two older than myself, had been one of the determining influences in overcoming my own immaturities. Stranger than anything else, there had come back to me the memory of the attitude which this young Frenchman had observed towards myself: the attitude of a mentor coaching one of whom great things were expected, things greater than those within his own reach" (3).²⁰

Gide was, in fact, ten years older than Grove and critics believe that the relationship between them was professional rather than intimate. It seems clear, in Greve's rhetoric, that he has a highly developed sense of his own importance, far exceeding, in potential, Gide's himself. However, Grove, confusing translation and creative activities, was convinced that he was destined for literary greatness. Interestingly, in 1904, just a few days after he was released from prison, Greve did meet Gide in Paris. Fortunately for posterity and for a more candid look at their relationship, Gide recorded that meeting in his journal. In a section called "Conversation with a German Several Years Before the War," Gide records Greve as "playing the role of drunken helot in my presence" (235). Greve appears so English, elegant and perfectly dressed that Gide is not surprised when he is told that Greve's mother is English.

In a manner with which Canadians have become familiar, Greve, besides claiming he has an English mother, deviously tells Gide that at sixteen he lost his father, a rich Mecklenburg industrialist; that he had nine sisters but lost them all to *Eklampseien*; and that his mother died when he was eighteen. But he also tells Gide that he begins to lie immediately after his mother's death and that lying binds him to Elsa. Significantly, it is at this time, after the year in prison, that

²⁰It is true that Greve was working on two novels at this time, *FE* and *MIH*, but to say in 1946 that he would literarily outreach Gide is really stretching it - Gide won the Nobel prize for literature in 1947. Great things are not usually expected from a translator and when, elsewhere, Grove says that his own books are sitting on library shelves in major European libraries he would seem to be referring to his translations.

we first glimpse Greve's repudiation of Wildean life. He now proclaims that he intends to "live," that he prefers life, action, even murder, to being an artist. When Gide points out that the booklet published in the spring, 1903, had affirmed the contrary, Greve admits, that in the booklet, he was lying (Gide 241). Greve also states that prison, for him, "suppressed . . . all remorse, all scruples" (240) and when Gide suggests that "It is thrilling to struggle against society, but it will conquer you," Greve responds with the assertion "No, I am terribly strong." It would seem that after leaving prison, if not already before, Greve had made up his mind that life owed him a living, that any scruples he had about using life as art to make a living, about lying, about doing anything to advance himself in a worldly way, should be discarded as impediments in the path toward worldliness.

Five years later, in 1909, Greve faked his suicide and fled Europe with the proceeds of advancements from two publishers. Though at the time of Greve's emigration scruples and veracity had been foreign to him, it may have been here, in Manitoba, that Grove felt he could regain some measure of scruples, if not veracity. In retaining his initials, FPG, and in so moderately altering his surname, only one letter removed from his real name, he would seem to have been tacitly acknowledging his old self and his history in Europe.

Grove's first job in Manitoba was as a teacher in a Mennonite enclave in Haskett. He must have sensed that teaching would provide a sense of stability for him, at least until he established himself more permanently in Canada. Fortunately for Grove, a young teacher, Isaak Warkentin, was going to Germany to do graduate studies. In an exchange of letters with Warkentin, Grove was able to work out the essential details in the construction of a fictitious past. Initially, he is cautiously optimistic towards Germany when he writes, "You American people are funny . . . Has

not good, staid, old Germany gone to the front, slowly, but surely? Who is beating out the English on the South American market? Whose trade in Canada grows double as fast as that of old Eng[an]d?" (Pacey *Letters* 9). The difficulty with idiom that plagued Grove's Canadian work throughout his life is evidenced here in his use of the word "double" instead of "twice." In the same letter, December 6, 1913, Grove writes, "I *have got* to win out," intimating, as Stobie astutely sensed, that he had past failures to hide.²¹

Grove's fondness for Germany and his roots must have received a rude awakening, if not from the pacifist Mennonites, then from the Canadians in the surrounding districts whose family members were fighting the Germans.²² In his next letter to Warkentin, Grove explains, at length, his more appropriate background and responses in what essentially, ultimately, becomes his autobiographical account of himself:

I hate Germany. I hate America, too, but probably a trifle less because I am here I did not want you to like Germany I have very little patience with narrow-mindedness. My father was a Swede, my mother a Scotswoman I have traveled a good deal, *mentally* too I have one longing: to leave the world, to retire to the little corner just west of Etaples, south of Boulogne, on the French

²¹Stobie also documented a story about Grove in a classroom divided among pacifists, passionately Canadian Mennonites (German origin), and a small group of Germans after the outbreak of World War I: "As he often did, Grove gave his support to the minority. Entering the classroom one day when the students were quarrelling over the war, he said, 'Who's for Germany?' One of the German girls put up her hand, presently a boy put up his. Grove said, "Then it is the three of us against the world" (*Frederick Philip Grove* 33).

²²If Grove, in 1914, did not fully comprehend the Canadian reaction to Germany during World War I, he did twelve years later. In 1926, the Groves were living in Rapid City, Manitoba. A group of war veterans, the Returned Soldiers Organization, unsuccessfully petitioned the school board to have Mrs. Grove removed from her teaching position because of her German Mennonite background. Grove himself had engendered some criticism: "And Grove, with his rolling of r's - he sounded like a German. And he said things that made him sound as though he were sympathetic to the German cause" (Stobie, *Frederick Philip Grove* 115). Grove, ironically safe under the guise of his purported Swedish-Scotch ancestry, wrote a public letter thanking their friends in the community for supporting Mrs. Grove.

coast that seems to swing in resonance with the vibrations of my inner tuning fork - to live there in absolute seclusion. . . . *But*, what kind of an aristocracy has America? They *call* it an aristocracy of achievement. It *is* an aristocracy of grocerdom, of mental-hollowness, of dollar wisdom . . . Yes, I am afraid, I *am* an American, always was one, sorry to say so. I could no longer live in Germany . . . I stand apart, aloft, if you want to put it that way. It is a horrible thought to me that I am *acting*, 'doing,' at all. Whenever you touch life you make a mess of it. When you are young you don't notice it so much . . . On the other extreme stands the contemplative life - the life of the spectator who wants to *know*, not to do. That is my only salvation. (As for my marriage, that has gone to smash: something I have been working for the last five years. I don't blame the girl - I merely don't understand her.) Difference of age was considerable: she was my pupil before she went to college. (Pacey *Letters* 11-13)

Grove writes that he "has travelled a good deal, *mentally* too" (11) and has "*imbued* [italics added] himself with the fundamental principles of modern science" (11). Much of what Grove wrote Warkentin in 1914 surfaced again in his work, such as in *Settlers of the Marsh*, which, he has suggested, he began writing in German. Of course, he could not return to Germany but that did not prevent him from incorporating German characters and German phrases into *Settlers*, that likelihood increased surely by Grove's claim that he began writing *Settlers* in German. The five years Grove refers to in the letter is the time he has been in North America, from 1909 to 1914. The ease with which Warkentin accepted this skilfully constructed story must have convinced Grove that he had a future in storytelling, in autobiography and, most titillatingly, in writing

autobiographical fiction. Grove, in such self-construction, was obfuscating, altering, inventing but, most of all, he was translating - relating a life and a system of values that he deeply wanted to be accepted.

Grove, at the time he began *Settlers*, had entered a new phase of his deceptive self-invention and a shift in his aesthetic values occurred. The new *Canadian* Grove began to reject, perhaps out of necessity, Wilde's basic artistic concepts. Grove, instead, turned to realism and naturalism,²³ modes which Wilde abhorred. The techniques of realism and naturalism, however, were eminently suited to Grove's capabilities as a hopeful author looking for an audience. Under this aegis, Grove could proceed as a newly-arrived, erudite recorder on the Canadian scene. He began cautiously, considering his past, by writing relatively innocuous sketches employing translatable naturalistic techniques, along with impressionistic and expressionistic touches and demonstrating the triumph of European ingenuity in the face of elemental inhospitality and native skepticism: *OPT* (1922) and *TY* (1923).

Irene Gammel, in her book, *Sexualizing Power in Naturalism: Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove*, explained the success of turn-of-the-century European naturalism alongside modernism and expressionism in North America in the twentieth century. She argues that the appropriation of nineteenth-century naturalism's preoccupation with sex and power was adapted to the North American context: "By appropriating this nineteenth-century naturalist concern [for sex and power], American and Canadian naturalism established itself as a significant art form in the early twentieth century, *translating* [italics added], recontextualizing, and rewriting the conventions of nineteenth-century European forms" (2). Gammel also finds in Grove's fiction,

²³Realism involves fidelity to life and to nature without idealism or romanticism. Naturalism is similar but emphasizes scientific observation and even greater attention to detail.

a cannibalization or translation of former texts, and a prominence of author-like male protagonists who inevitably return to secure bastions of male power structures: "The (incestuous) doubling of the author in his narrators and characters thus leads him back to a doubling of the naturalist conventions and the same stock figures" (Gammel, 1994, 237).

Axel Knonagel acknowledged the importance of knowing Grove the person as a prerequisite to knowing his persona and creative productions. Grove's characters, Knonagel asserts, in such works as *Settlers of the Marsh*, demonstrate his personal insights and are based on his personal experiences (5). According to Knonagel, Grove's work is also inundated with Nietzschean philosophy: "Grove's *oeuvre* exhibits a strong concern with the values deriving from the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche - particularly the sublimation of the passions, the superman, and the will to power. In his Canadian novels, Grove showed the consequences that arise for characters whose actions and decisions are compatible with Nietzschean ideals" (3).²⁴

The Nietzschean concern for asceticism is also present in the work of Flaubert, one of Grove's last literary models. One of Greve's early pieces was a critical essay, "Flaubert's Theories of Artistic Existence" (1904) in which the twenty-five-year-old Greve says in his first sentence that "We are emerging from an era in which it was believed that the best and only way to understand the works of an artist was to research his life" (3). Greve, himself taken with Flaubert, goes on to explain Flaubert's position as an artist - as a spectator, not a participant, in life. In these terms, an artist renounces life and becomes sterile, thus protecting his sensitive creative powers.

²⁴Thomas Mann, to whom Grove once wrote a letter, also admitted that his writing was heavily influenced by Nietzsche for the reason that he was "the incomprehensibly greatest and most experienced psychologist of decadence" (quoted in Knonagel, 31).

In short, Greve interpreted Flaubert to mean that a writer, to be true to his art, must be a *chaste* man. Chastity, Grove interpreted as both a literary concept and a real-life necessity.

Grove alluded to this notion of artistic chastity in his letter to Warkentin in 1914:

“Whenever you touch life you make a mess of it . . . On the other extreme stands the contemplative life - the life of the spectator who wants to *know*, not to do” (Pacey *Letters* 13).

Grove was simply recapitulating the literary philosophies of his mentors, Wilde and Flaubert. According to Elsa in her autobiography, Grove, in 1911, in emulation of Flaubert, had even experimented with the notion of reacquired virginity in Kentucky in 1911 with disastrous results for their marriage. Perhaps after this experience, he threw up his hands, came to Manitoba where, in an unavoidable defiance of his master, Flaubert, he lived an unchaste life and included everything he could about himself in his first novel, *Settlers of the Marsh*. Divay recognized the connections between Grove’s own life at the time and the world he portrayed in *Settlers*: “There can be no doubt that his first Canadian novel, *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), was also an attempt to come to terms with the difficult Kentucky year and the end of the couple’s relationship. In his depiction of the depraved Clara Vogel, he set Else an unflattering monument, and in disguise of the virtuous and virginal Niels, he achieved the therapeutic aim of justifying his brutal abandonment of her” (“Passage” 128). Divay also recognized Grove’s connection to Flaubert: “Flaubert is his model now [post-1904], and it remains in place for the rest of his life . . . Not only did Greve translate most of Flaubert’s correspondence, his own two novels about Else [*FE* and *MIH*] imitate *Madame Bovary* and *L’Education sentimentale* in particular” (“Translations” 148).²⁵

²⁵In fact, Flaubert admitted that much of the behaviour of Emma Bovary in *Madame Bovary* mirrored his own inner longings. When asked as to the original of Emma he replied, “*Madame Bovary, c’est moi!*” [italics added] At some level he ceased to be the objective artist observing from the margin. Not that all of Emma’s qualities were his, or vice versa. For one thing, he gave her no saving positive such as he found in writing about her. But the

Grove's Canadian productions are drawn from life, particularly from the life of the author. His narrator and protagonist are one and the same. The supporting casts are characters in a *roman à clef*, just as in *FE* of 1905. The lives lived by the characters are translated into fiction whose template is the life of Grove himself. In nearly all of his works, Grove shows an almost obsessive compulsion to tell the reader who he really is. His cryptic language employs codes, ciphers, anagrams, puzzles, displacements and outright lies; they all require his audience to be as much investigators of his works as readers.

Grove's first books in Canada were ideally suited to his situation. *OPT* and *TY* were sketches of the Canadian countryside that involved impressionistic and expressionistic commentary.²⁶ The narrator, a European of considerable experience and erudition, was the hero of the tales.²⁷ The literary world created by Grove was a simulacrum of reality - he was after all, telling a story in which verisimilitude was not essential. This is disconcerting, if one was to consider Grove a realist, since the appearance of reality is the basis of realism. David Arnason, in examining the accuracy of Grove's descriptions of nature, determined that Grove was more interested in imaginative rather than literal truth, in giving the appearance of accuracy without any basis in fact: "He [Grove] describes horses pulling a sleigh, buried over their backs in snow, and remarks, casually: 'For fully five minutes I never saw anything of the horses except their heads'" (*OPT* 75). At another point, while his horses are rearing through a drift, he comments: 'I shall

romantic malaise, the need to live in dreams, the failure to accept life, the longing for colour, for miraculous loves in distant lands - all that had its place in his own history. Emma is drawn from the inside." (Russell 8)

²⁶Impressionism was a form of realism that involved the writer recording different perspectives of subjective reality so that readers would form their own inductive whole. Expressionism allowed writers to impress their own emotions and thoughts onto their environment.

²⁷Grove, in 1914, had named his occupation on his marriage certificate as "Professor of Science" (Spettigue *FPG* 15).

never forget the weird kind of astonishment when the fact came home to me that what snapped and crackled in the snow under the horses hooves were the tops of trees” (OPT 96). This is not realism but a form of neo-romanticism - a nod to the influence of the George group - whereby the hero shows his mettle, valiantly faces overwhelming odds in the form of powerful and resplendent nature in a primeval setting. The landscape provides an objective correlative, a mirror, for unknown adversity which the hero encounters and overcomes.

Of course, Grove was also mirroring his previous mentors: Pater, Wilde, George, Flaubert, Gide and Nietzsche. Perhaps Grove heeded Pater’s invocation to “burn with a hard gemlike flame,” that is, to enjoy the ecstasy of the sensate moment. If that meant that he, like Dante’s thief, might burn to ash, it was no matter, for the chaste author, almost orgiastically, would be reconstituted again as a new man. Nietzsche had said as much: “Ready must thou be to burn thyself in thine own flame; how couldst thou become new if thou have not first become ashes?” (qtd. in Davey xxv-vi).

Grove could also be heeding Nietzsche’s emphasis on the act of creating. Grove had alluded to this act in an essay titled “Rebels All.” In a hunting community, the man who “*found a way* [italics added] to carve delicate ornamental trceries on the blade of a bone knife . . . had discovered a new justification for himself” (78). In a Nietzschean sense, the artist accepts the world as it is, including the promise of continual renewal. Davey concluded that Nietzsche’s final aesthetic “celebrates above all: not the creator nor the created but the *creating*. The creative moment is the eternal being of all Becoming” (xxvi). Herein lies the apotheosis, the god-like divinity to which Grove had aspired, though he proved to be a writer who had attempted, and even failed in his attempt at, creation. We are invited to see Grove, through Nietzschean eyes, as he sees himself - Reelen as Balder, the northern sun-god or a Castor or Pollux, half-gods who were mirrors of Grove,

their author, who included himself as a creator in his work for the reason that Butler so succinctly stated: "I am sorry that this is not so but I can not help it." Whereas Butler was an inadvertent personality in his own work, apologizing for intruding, Grove was unabashedly including himself in all his work.

Chapter One

The German Novels and *Baroness Elsa*: Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven's Autobiography

To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. . . . Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

Walter Pater from *The Renaissance*

One of the most relevant developments in the study of the work of Frederick Philip Grove has been the publication, *BE* (1992), the autobiography of Else (Elsa) von Freytag-Loringhoven, Elsa Ploetz, Elsa Endell, or simply, Baroness Elsa. These memoirs started out as a series of letters the destitute Baroness, stranded in Berlin from 1923 to 1926, wrote to her friend Djuna Barnes in Paris. Although Else and Greve were married only in 1907 (Gammel, *Baroness*, 2002, 143), Elsa was, for nine years, the partner of Felix Paul Greve from 1902 until he left her in Kentucky in 1911. The importance of Elsa's work is that Elsa provides us with extraordinarily intimate insights as to who Grove really was. Hers is an unabashedly candid look at Greve as a man and as an artist. In addition, Elsa's autobiography provides insight into the genesis of Greve's two German novels, *Fanny Essler* and *Maurermeister Illhes Haus*; considered by scholars today to be a retelling of Elsa's life.

Perhaps Grove felt he could safely incorporate, into his English texts, material he had used in his German productions with no one being the wiser. After all, nobody, during his lifetime, had traced any of his material, or so Grove reassured himself: "I have written books and published a few - under names assumed for the purpose - and I have lived to disown their authorship. Nobody ever has traced, nobody will ever trace them to me" ("Rebels All" 69). Whatever the anonymity of

Elsa's life-story, it served him well - not only in Germany, but also in Canada as he tried to make a living as a writer with his new family.

Irene Gammel (1993) has pointed out that Elsa "uses her autobiography to accuse Greve of having appropriated her life story for his two German novels" (452). Gammel's claim that Elsa's autobiography highlights Grove's appropriation of her life-story, would seem for the most part to be warranted, for Greve and Elsa fed off each other in a literary catharsis:

Just as Elsa incorporated FPG into her work, Grove incorporated Elsa into his Canadian works, a fact that Elsa was probably not aware of. Many of Grove's characters are Elsa-like women: Clara Vogel in *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), the sexually active woman who seduces the naive immigrant farmer Niels Lindstedt. . . . Thus the relationship between Elsa and Felix had an inspirational influence, prompting both to write while moving with their writing in very different directions, each condemning and rejecting the other, continuing their divorce battle by trying to exorcise the other through their art. Greve asked Elsa to join him in America, only to leave her alone in the bush country of Kentucky; he later 'resurrects' her in his Canadian prairie fiction only to exorcise her again as a fictionalized character.

(Gammel, 1993, 463-4)

Hjartarson and Spettigue, in referring to Elsa in their introduction to *BE*, note that "there are besides, of course, those students of Canadian literature who encounter her, by other names, in the life *and fiction* [italics added] of Frederick Philip Grove" (11). They add that "we have found few of Grove's alleged facts - names, dates, places, encounters, activities - that have proved accurate (except in bizarrely indirect ways) when examined. The opposite is true of the Baroness' story:

almost everything we have been able to check has proved factually accurate. Secondly - though this can only be an impression - everything Elsa writes bears on it the stamp of conviction. She presents herself as honest to the point of self-destruction; she cannot dissemble to save her life" (14).

Hjartarson and Spettigue also observe that Elsa's struggle for accuracy is an important scholarly point. They explain that "their love turned to hate, as readers of Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925) will understand. . . . Canadian readers will recognize here the conflict of Niels Lindstedt between Clara and Ellen of *Settlers of the Marsh* (21). . . . The glimpse she [Elsa] gives us of this last, and fascinating, phase of their lives - the phase that we see paralleled in Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* - gives us little information to tell how closely Grove followed, in that novel, their actual lives" (24). There is little room left to doubt her assertion that Grove's two early German novels were dictated to him by her. Elsa states that

they were each *dictated by me* [italics added] as far as *material* was concerned - it was *my life* and persons out of my life - he did the executive part of the business - giving the thing a conventional shape and dress. He esteemed Flaubert highly as stylist . . . And so he tried to be Flaubert . . . Except for the material in it, they must be fearful books - as far as "art" is concerned . . . I did not cherish his abrupt style - that seemed to me dry and artificial - having no carrying power nor convincing quality of its own. (BE 65-6)²⁸

²⁸ These and other details leave little doubt that this is Elsa's biography couched assiduously in the language of a quasi-naturalism by the ambitious Greve. Elsa admitted in her memoirs (BE) that she and Greve had hoped, at least with FE, to achieve the success attained by Thomas Mann and his *The Buddenbrookes*. Elsa was able retrospectively to observe that Greve began thinking of emigrating to the USA. Elsa writes: "After they did *not* make the hit as he expected - at least "*Fanny Essler*" we thought - even I - in my own and his favor - should at least make such impression as "*The Buddenbrookes*" [Thomas Mann 1903] - and with other things - he got disgruntled with spiritual pursuits - the whole life of European mentality gentility and civilization - and wanted to "rough it" now from the bottom up "like many a one" who became a millio-and milliadair in America. (BE 66)

If we can believe Elsa, and the evidence would suggest that we can, then Greve, in the German novels, was once more working as a translator, transmogrifying Elsa's life into something he considered to be more literarily acceptable. Unfortunately, he was not up to the job. For the rest of his life he remained a translator and, in Canada, he was relegated to reworking the old stories - the people, events and perceptions of former times. Elsa, his love of ten years, would figure prominently in many of his productions, especially in *Settlers of the Marsh*.

MIH, published in 1906, proved to be a useful source of material for Grove in *Settlers*. Grove borrowed from *MIH*, which was purloined from Elsa, to write *Settlers*. He reinvented a cast of character names and traits, reworked nationalistic stereotypes and reused tried metaphors to develop character and plot. Both novels are divided by male/female character sequences: Mrs. Ihles/ Mrs. Linstedt and Mr. Ihles/Niels. The female protagonists in *MIH*, Johanna Vögelsang (36) and Clara Staehd (63), reappear in the fictional Clara Vogel in *Settlers*, not only in a reconstituted name, but in persona as well. These female protagonists share similar character traits, particularly in regard to the representation of their characters as they are evinced by their appearances. Face-powder or the lack of it, for instance, is a significant metaphorical device for Greve in both texts. In *MIH*, Hanna Vögelsang and Susie use face-powder. In *Settlers*, the prostitutes of Minor are distinguished by their use of face-powder: "A short distance beyond the hotel they met three ladies who were still more conspicuously powdered and painted than the ordinary young ladies of western towns One of them'll be your wife . . . for an hour or so . . ." (137). For Greve, powder signifies a mask, or masquerade. It is a falseness or an intended disguise of femininity. Of course, a powderless face, in Greve's construct, indicated a trueness or value such as in the make-up-free

heroic Ellen in *Settlers*. The formula was easy - too easy - in Greve's treatment: powder equalled falseness; powderlessness, truth. This conceit was reused throughout Greve's literary career.²⁹

Finally, *MIH* and *Settlers* share a striking similarity in the way in which they represent Jewishness. Fragments of what today is known as inappropriate stereotyping proliferate in both novels. Mr. Ihles in *MIH*, for example, expresses to his family his desire for a particular Christmas present: "I-want-a-little-Jew-boy" (62). In Canada, Grove could revisit his old prejudices in his first novel. The character in *Settlers*, Mrs. Lund, in considering her family's assets, observes: "and the Jew takes it all . . . Whatever we get the Jew puts his hand on" (78).³⁰ Swedes, Germans, Slavs and other nationalities are also discussed on a traditional light/dark arc in what today is recognized as dangerous and incorrect use of ethnic stereotypes. Grove's arc, of course, preferred the light, the natural, the powderless. His darker characters, such as Mrs. Ihles, in *MIH*, with her "alert brown eyes" that "darted everywhere" (223) and Clara, in *Settlers*, with her "black, beady eyes" that "seemed to dance" (38) are marks of the degenerate.

It was in *Fanny Essler*, published in 1905, that Greve first used Elsa's story. Unlike in *MIH*, Greve's second "Elsa" novel, *FE*'s protagonist was an older, more sexually powerful woman. In *FE*, the female protagonist, Fanny, more closely resembles the Clara Vogel that we are to meet on the prairies in *Settlers*. Fanny, like Elsa, has dark blonde hair and grey eyes. Like Elsa, Fanny originates from Pomerania, owns a little dog, takes art lessons, is involved in the theatre, has a tyrant for a father and a mother who dies from cervical cancer, values the sexual experience above

²⁹I find it curious that Grove missed his own inadvertent ironic intervention wherein, as more recent critics have pointed out, Grove during his life, assumed masks for all occasions.

³⁰Dr. Stern is another Jewish stereotype. In *MIH* Greve writes: "The theatre's physician, Dr. Stern, came. He was a small fat Jew with a jolly, friendly face and a bald head" (194).

all, marries and then runs off with a younger man whom she loves but who also disappoints her. Further, Fanny's mother dies of cervical cancer for which Fanny blames Mr. Essler: "And this was certain: her death - Papa had been the cause of it! She did not understand all the details. Her mother had died of cervical cancer, but Aunt Muller had mumbled something about it, and Aunt Adele in Berlin had come right out and said that Fanny's father was to blame" (Vol. I, 25). Elsa had dictated her life story of her own mother's death of cervical cancer and her father's male brutality to Greve. This material was also to appear in *Settlers*. In this version of Elsa's and Fanny's account, Ellen's mother induces abortions through heavy intense work and, though ill, endures intercourse with her sexually aggressive husband. Mrs. Amundsen finally dies in what is a great relief to her and Ellen and, on her deathbed, she extracts a promise from Ellen that she will "never let a man come near you" (130).³¹

Some of the violent scenes involving Clara and Niels in *Settlers* are strikingly similar to the scenes concerning Fanny and her father in *FE*, written twenty years earlier. Fanny's father "was a tyrant, but one who only became so very disagreeable when one had to suffer under his tyrannical rule" (Vol. I, 34). Fanny can no longer stay at home: "I want to live, not to be locked up here" (36). Just before she runs away from home, her father stops her from going out, accuses her of going out to visit a lover, threatens physical violence, and locks her in her room: "Got yourself all dolled up.

³¹According to Gammel in her book, *Sexualizing Power in Naturalism*, although Grove writes within the naturalist narrative "Fanny's female body stubbornly rebels against its "natural" destiny: she wears male clothing, is called a "lad" by one of her lovers, and plays male roles on stage . . . Reelen, the author's persona . . . can only 'construct' his masculinity by coercing Fanny into the role of traditional femininity, so that - like the male naturalist narrator - he appears in the role of the Mephistophelian manipulator of the sexual 'technologies' provided for Fanny's 'self-construction.' Just as traditional naturalism insists on clear-cut boundaries between male and female nature, so Reelen proceeds to 'rewrite' Fanny in the social network, insisting on transforming her from a sexually ambiguous 'lad' into a respectable 'lady'" (133-4). In *Settlers*, Grove exaggerates Elsa's androgeny as Ellen, and at the same time feminizes Elsa as Clara. Again, this is Elsa's life, her story appropriated by Grove perhaps as a way of exerting his own retrospective power over her and emasculating her androgeny. He had already attempted to "feminize" Elsa in *FE* twenty years earlier.

What for? Wantin' t' go visit your sweetheart?' Get t'yer room, and be quick. Be glad I don't give you a lickin'. Your room's gonna be locked, understand?' . . . He pushed her into her room, pulled the key out from the inside and locked the door from the outside. Fanny was a prisoner" (Vol. I, 53). Similarly, Niels prevents Clara from leaving the house for the city. Clara, too, is all "dolled up" but Niels locks the front door and Clara realizes that she is a prisoner in her own home: "Do you mean to say I am a prisoner here?" she asks (182). It is ironic that Elsa herself is a metaphoric prisoner in Grove's texts, trapped in a stereotype by an angry author-lover who projects his revenge by making her a mere literary fragment of a full and interesting individual. Further, Grove needed to work out his conflicting feelings in regard to Elsa which he did with gusto in *Settlers*.

Grove, for instance, was anxious to make literary Elsa's overt sexuality with which he struggled throughout his relationship and marriage. In *FE*, the construction of Fanny portrayed her as a sexual adventurer, but in *Settlers*, the depiction of Elsa was as a prostitute.³² In *FE*, Mrs. Schwachimwalde observes that Fanny cannot survive financially without men (Vol. I, 184). Similarly, Elsa, in her memoirs writes that "I began to know what life meant - every night another man (45) But I could never insist on money - or things that cost money - if it wasn't done for me (86) Sex was the only adventure" (149). In *Settlers*, too, Clara wanted Niels "for a night or an hour" (183). When *FE* was written, the relationship between Grove and Elsa was at its zenith; however, when *Settlers* was constructed, the relationship had come completely undone. It was

³²Mrs. Grunebusch tells Fanny's aunt about "big-city nightlife," creating in Fanny a craving and then a revulsion, "a disgust at the men she submitted to" (Vol. I, 231). Clara too goes to the city to live, not to stagnate, to avoid drudgery, to be entertained by men who appreciate her. Later, in order to exact her revenge on Niels for refusing her her freedom, she determines to have sexual relations with people in the district who disgust her: "people here are coarse and vulgar. They are not to my taste. I'll overlook that for the sake of revenge. You have made your bed. You must lie in it" (188).

Clara, the darker shadow of Fanny, and of course, Elsa, who was to suffer the ultimate consequence - death.

Age and ugliness were also anathemas to Greve, notions he explored in *FE* and *Settlers*. In *FE*, a picture of her youthful dead mother torments Fanny: "And her mother had died so young . . . not even 40! And this vision would not stop: a wrinkled face . . . a skeleton beneath the wilted skin . . . foreign and frightening . . . in the black coffin framing it" (Vol. II, 230). In *Settlers*, the youthful Niels contemplates Clara's older face early one morning while she is still sleeping: "From behind the mask which still half concealed her face, another face looked out at him, like a death's-head: the coarse, aged face of a coarse, aged woman, aged before her time . . . but aged, not from work but from . . . what? . . . the face was the face of decay" (157).³³ Elsa was 30 years old, five years older than Greve, when *FE* was published. When Greve abandoned her in Kentucky, Elsa was forty-one years old.

The fact that Fanny has relationships with many men creates an impediment to her marriage. Ehrhard Stein tells Fanny about the woman he intends to marry: "Her body is still pure! . . . You can't marry a girl who has belonged to so many others. I wouldn't want her to be the mother of my children" (Vol. II, 67). Niels, in Grove's later novel, also thinks about his vision of a wife and children with Clara, but quickly dismisses that notion: "children would be a perpetuation of the sin of a moment . . . He did not want children out of this woman!" (163). Nobody comes to visit Niels, the husband of a depraved woman. Later, the Dahlbeck woman gives Niels his epiphany when she says, "You married the district whore" (214). Just as Clara is ostracized in her community in *Settlers*, in

³³In *FE*, Greve states that 30-year-old Martha's face is ravaged and that Fanny "took pity on her depravity" (192). In *Settlers*, using phrenology and Wilde's idea in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* of a portrait revealing a dissolute life, Grove intimates, with his "from . . . what?" that Clara's/Elsa's face mirrors the depraved lifestyle of the older Martha.

FE, Stein couldn't introduce Fanny to his friends because she was not a lady. In fact, when Stein is exasperated with Fanny he angrily admonishes her, "Don't act like a whore!" (Vol. II 80), and calls a policeman to "Take this hussy to the station" (80).

In addition, as Stein so pragmatically has pointed out, Fanny did not know how to run a household. Clara, for her part, also abhorred housework: "It was slavery; it was a horror. To wash dishes, to sweep a house . . . to do anything on time, regularly, as a routine, day after day: all that is a horror to me" (185). After marriage, Fanny cannot seem to get her household duties organized: "When Eduard came home shortly after one o'clock, just as Fanny was beating the sofa, Fanny froze with shock upon seeing him. 'Is it really that late?' she asked. 'Yes dear, it's almost half past one.' 'Good Lord! And I'm not even dressed yet!' At four o'clock they drove into Berlin to eat" (Vol. II, 128). In *Settlers*, Clara too has other priorities besides preparing a meal:

Niels was in a hurry. Rain threatened . . . the breakfast dishes were still on the table, the stove in the kitchen was dead and cold . . . and the ham was uncut. . . he heard his wife's voice from the staircase. 'Oh,' she called, 'I'm so sorry. Surely it isn't twelve yet!' But she held her watch in her hand and was staring at it in dismay. 'Quarter past,' Niels sang back, his eye on the clock . . . 'But Niels,' she cried, 'I can't come. I have my hair all bundled up.' (155-6)

Niels, accustomed to such behaviour, immediately says, "Quick Bobby, get a move on you. We've got to get dinner ourselves."

When Stein admits that he is to marry his fiancée of seven years, a woman he no longer loves, Fanny becomes hysterical and Stein angrily responds by saying, "All of this is simply theatrics" (Vol. II, 70). Fanny had been in the theatre, and part of her repertoire was participating in

the famous *tableau vivants* in which she portrayed a marble statue for short periods of time. In *BE*, Elsa recalls that in Berlin, at the “Wintergarten,” she “was clad in tights and ‘Henry de Vris,’ boss of ‘living pictures,’ looked me over. . . . I was taken right away for the ‘marble figures’” (45). In *Settlers*, as in *FE*, Grove alludes directly to Elsa and her theatrical background during one of the major confrontations between Clara and Niels; “She [Clara] paused. Once more her pose was theatrical” (183). The character Ehrhard Stein was intended as a parody of Ernst Hardt and Greve appears to have incorporated some of the interactions of Stein and Fanny from *FE* into *Settlers*. When Stein says “Fanny, please forgive me! Sometimes I can’t stand knowing that others have possessed you” (Vol. II, 88) we can extrapolate this concern to Niels’ distress when he wonders why Clara’s face is so ravaged, why she goes to the city or his horror on learning that she has given her body to others in the city and that she is the district whore. Fanny, Clara and Elsa, all sexually-charged female protagonists, suffer for their natures. However, the male protagonist, in these novels, modelled on the imagined Grove himself, suffers not because of his character, which is beyond reproach, but because of his ill-fated, innocent association with imperfect women.

In *FE*, Grove can be seen as a version of Friedrich Karl Reelen. Reelen is described as “a strikingly tall and slim, strikingly blond, strikingly elegant young man of about 30 who definitely appeared not to fit into this circle of semi-bohemians. . . . outward fastidiousness in regard to dress and style . . . almost stupid blue-eyed gaze . . . his large nose ran up to his forehead without a ridge. . . his movements were of the utmost austerity: a sight that impressed Fanny even though she did not know why” (Vol. II, 134).³⁴ Then again, the material for *FE* was dictated by Elsa and, in her

³⁴Grove, was 30 in 1909, conjoined names: his father was Carl, a near-acronym of “Clara” and one of his own given names was Friedrich. Self-promotion and self-aggrandizement through literature were one of Grove’s signatures throughout his career. I have argued that much of Grove’s writing is autobiographical, yet disguised, and that he cleverly insinuates himself into his novels. Greve, in *FE*, is Reelen.

autobiography, her account of a first impression of Greve is very similar in terms of age, appearance, dress, and movement to her description of Reelen. Elsa writes,

Mr. Felix looked indeed - *stunning* - in the literal sense of the word. Dressed inoffensively highly expensive - in English fashion - with immovable stony suave expression on his very fair face, with slightly bulging large misty blue eyes, a severe saucy nose - hair as spun yellow glass, over six feet tall and elegantly narrow - with a whippiness to his movements and at the same time precision and determination - that was charm and force in one and announced splendidly the wellbred gentleman. (*BE* 71)

Fanny, like Elsa with Greve, found Reelen captivating. She exclaims that Reelen's "extraordinary blondness was simply dazzling" (138) and "those pale blue eyes . . . reminded her of the far north (147). . . his movements, the austere, awkward movements that spoke of self-discipline and race . . . That was what distinguished him, his race! He was the north (161). . . He was like Balder, just like a young Nordic god" (194).

To make Reelen, or more appropriately himself, the hero, was Greve's *modus operandi* - to translate life's happenings into literature with the stipulation that, in this literature, *his* life would be paramount. As it happens, Greve already had an over-inflated view of his intellect and literary potential. In his later purported autobiography, *ISM*, Greve states that the venerable professors of the Sorbonne had likened Andre Gide, "the young Frenchman" (3) and Greve himself to demigods: Castor and Pollux. The reader surmises that Greve's sense of himself as a Castor or a Pollux, a demigod, can be found in the character Reelen in *FE* or Niels in *Settlers*. Greve's interest in the exceptional physical attributes of his strong male leads hints at a deeper concern than a mere desire

to aggrandize his own persona. There was a larger intent to categorize individuals and their nationalities, a reliance on racial stereotypes, to advance the plot and develop characters. Critical advancements in this area have exposed much of the racism that Grove and his contemporaries, perhaps unwittingly, perhaps with misguided intent, often incorporated into their literature.

The racial stereotyping that Greve employed in *FE*³⁵ continued virtually unabated in *Settlers*. Originally, in his manuscripts, Grove had organized the characters in *Settlers* on the basis of ethnicity: Scandinavians, English, Germans, Slavs. In *Settlers*, Grove echoes his writing in *FE*. Nelson, a Swede and Grove's alter-ego, is a giant and his German neighbour, Hahn, is "a giant in stature and strength" (68). Grove, through ethnic stereotyping, literally portrays Ellen as white and Clara as black. When Niels first observes Ellen Amundsen, he notes that "Her eyes were light-blue, her features round, and her complexion a pure, Scandinavian white" (15; 254). The description soon works as part of a binary when Grove presents Clara as having darting, coal-black eyes and, later, yellow skin and an old face resembling a death's head. Also, Clara's face looks like "the coarse, aged face of a coarse, aged woman, aged before her time: very like that of Mrs. Philipyuk, the Ruthenian woman at the post office" (157).

There is little doubt that Elsa dictated her life story to Greve. *Baroness Elsa* tells us as much. Her story clearly appeared in *MIH* and *FE*. These stories were later added to the working out of a disintegrated relationship in *Settlers*. One must wonder: who is the writer here? In Elsa's mind it could hardly have been Greve, for she thought that Greve was not a writer. She writes that Greve

³⁵Later, in Portugal, the people on the dock displeased Fanny: "the racial type itself, the dirty, small, slow, slack people without any energy or initiative" (220). Greve's ending in *FE* suggests that he may have been familiar with Mary Wollstonecraft's work. Wollstonecraft describes her boat trip to Lisbon, Portugal, to visit her friend Fanny Blood. In *MIH*, Greve's character Vogelsang [Vogelblood] becomes Vogel in *Settlers*. Fanny Blood died during childbirth in Lisbon whereas Fanny Essler dies there of malaria.

made "the mistake of thinking himself 'an artist!' *How is that possible - I don't know!* He was *just the opposite of it!*" (64). Greve, at one moment seems himself to have corroborated that judgment, for he had already told Gide in 1904 that "just because I intend to live, I say that I am not an artist . . . I prefer life" (Gide 241). In hindsight, one can say that Greve's comments to Gide were falsely put. Grove did continue to write in Canada at a great personal cost to himself and to others around him.

There is little doubt that the template for *Settlers* or, at least the largest and most dramatic parts of the novel, refer to the lives Elsa and Greve led as husband and wife prior to their separation. It is Elsa's forthright, unembellished manner; her truthfulness that impresses. It is therefore interesting to note how closely Grove parallels her story, considering that both of them are paraphrasing something they remember from ten years earlier. If, as Elsa says, "hate is love's backside" (115), then lies are truth's backside. Like two demigods, Janus-faced, Elsa and Greve present opposite faces to their readers. Elsa was truthful to a fault. In her opinion, "Felix hated me for my truthfulness" (115), had even, according to Elsa, actually confessed, "*I am afraid of your truthfulness*" (BE 115). Similarly, Clara is honest: "I'm honest. I'm not a sneak who asks for one thing to get another" (183). What Grove has chosen to do in *Settlers* is to tell his story, his version of the truth of his experiences with Elsa through fiction. Whether for the reason of ego, obsession, or a simple lack of creativity, since we already know he is *no* artist, Grove has told his black and white version of the truth through fiction.

It would seem that Grove could never get Elsa out of his mind and he never seemed to tire of including her clandestinely in much of what he wrote. The obsession would seem to find in what Elsa herself has written. In her autobiography, Elsa sensed that he had had a deep and abiding love for her:

And Felix loved me as deep - *as ever he could have loved a woman* for he loved me more than any man had ever loved me - for he was the deepest and strongest he had ceased to have any intercourse with me - for he had lost interest in it - being in an absorbing primitive struggle for life - in America - and in a *year's time* - he left me - helpless in this strange country - where he had brought me to. (BE 92)

Greve might have left Elsa abruptly but he never tired of writing about her in his Canadian novels. Perhaps he loved her still.

Chapter 2

The Manuscripts

I knew the mass of men conceal'd
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reprov'd;
I knew they lived and moved
Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves - and yet
The same heart beats in every human breast!

Matthew Arnold from "The Buried Life"

In a letter to E. J. Moore, advertising manager at Ryerson Press, dated November 21, 1925, Grove had included a biographical sheet in which he claimed that *Settlers of the Marsh* "was sketched in its first form in 1917, as a novel in 3 vol[umes]. Rewritten several times from 1917 to 1924 when it reached its present form" (Grove in Pacey, *Letters* 28). There is some reason to believe this claim. Yet, it is far more likely that Grove began writing *Settlers* at the beginning of 1920. It has largely gone unnoticed by scholars that Grove was unemployed from January 1920 until August 1921 during which time his wife, Catherine Wiens, held a teaching position in Ashfield, Manitoba. Grove's unemployment may be a consequence of the fact that he was not a Canadian citizen, and thus was unable to work at that time (personal interview). Indeed, Grove did become naturalized in 1921 and immediately reinstated his teaching career. The term of his unemployment in Ashfield, however, would have proven to be invaluable.

While Grove lived at the teacherage with his wife Catherine and their five-year-old daughter, May, he, I argue, devoted himself largely to writing. Outside of his significant translation period in

the Bonn prison, this time in Ashfield was undoubtedly one of Grove's most productive literary periods. I believe that it was in Ashfield that Grove wrote most of his Canadian novels and pieces such as "Rebels All." In fact, I suggest that it was here as well that Grove began writing *Settlers*, or *Pioneers* as he then called it. This is three years earlier than the date suggested by Gammel: "To what extent Greve remained informed about Elsa's whereabouts remains unknown, although it is a curious coincidence that he began to write his confessional novel about his life with Elsa in Kentucky at precisely the time that the Baroness left the United States and returned to Europe in 1923" (2002, 154).

I have conducted interviews with several residents of Ashfield who knew the Grove family personally and I have examined, in detail, several of the manuscripts that are the antecedents to *Settlers*. In these manuscripts, I have discovered names and stories that Grove borrowed from the residents of Ashfield to fill out the background details for his favourite story, *Settlers*. To place Grove in Ashfield, unemployed, but writing for a year-and-a-half, to discern in his writing a pattern including names and details from his lived life, is to show that Grove's *Settlers* is constructed around an autobiographical set of facts. In short, though *Settlers* operates as a novel, it also performs as a disguised autobiography for Grove was exceptionally careful not to overtly reveal his hidden past: his failed literary connections, his deceit, his prison term, and most significantly, his tumultuous relationship with Elsa whom he abandoned in Kentucky. The daily suppression of his inner life would have been strenuous; the story of Elsa would come out, however, into the *Settlers* we read today.

The manuscripts entitled *Pioneers I*, *Pioneers II* and *Pioneers V* are handwritten and material from them has been incorporated into *Settlers*. The manuscript titled "The White Range-Line

House," is typed. The handwritten material would have preceded the typed material, as the ease of typing would almost certainly compelled Grove to obtain a typewriter. It is highly likely that Grove began writing *Pioneers* by hand, beginning in 1920, and then obtained a typewriter. Bert Bryan, a young student in Catherine's class and the Grove's babysitter, reported that he often saw Grove sitting in the teacherage window typing (personal interview). In *Pioneers I*, Grove made a list of characters and their nationalities. Under "Division I, The Settlement," Grove lists four characters in the ethnic group labelled "English": Standish, Kirkness (crossed out), Campbell and McMurchy. Catherine Grove's school Register shows the comparable names - Stannish, Kirkness and McMurchy.³⁶ Also, a Mr. McMurchy, during this time, was the secretary-treasurer of the Ashfield School Board. Grove also had compiled a list for the "Slavs": Philipchuk, Gowriluk, Donoltjuk and Meronette. In Catherine's school Register, she had students listed with the names that included Philipchuk, Gowryluk, Donylchuk and Meronette. Grove almost certainly had access to those records, a possibility strengthened by our knowledge that Grove was familiar with Catherine's classroom and actually used the school to store his manuscripts. Bert and Stanley Bryan, who were young students at the Ashfield school during the time Catherine Grove taught there, relate a fascinating and pertinent tale of discovery. One form of disciplinary action Catherine would use on the Bryan boys would be to send them up into the school attic. Here, they claim to have discovered what I surmise was one of Grove's manuscripts, probably *Pioneers I*, for they report having a delightful time leafing through it to find that it was filled with the names of local people (personal interviews).

In *Pioneers V*, there are large passages given to an auction and a prairie fire which were

³⁶Grove, in *ASA*, devotes several pages to his boss, Mrs. McMurchy, the manager of a small crew of high-priced book salespeople. The use of this name suggests that he was working on *ASA* in Ashfield.

edited out of *Settlers*. At the auction, many of Grove's requisite German settlers appear - Kelm, Altmann, Schultze, Pletz, and Kurtz. The settlers are impatient and shout in German, "'Anfangen!' Begin!" (46). There were several auctions held in the area at the time Grove was in Ashfield and a Gunn at the auction would not be unbelievable for Gunn is a notable historical name in the area. There are other striking resemblances. The auctioneer in *Pioneers V* is called Mr. Nicholson. Grove knew the Nicholsons in the area because he often borrowed books from Jane Moore's [nee Nicholson] library (personal interview). I further speculate, based on Grove's propensity to create characters from the names of people around him, that his unpublished story *Jane Atkinson* may have also been written during his time in Ashfield. These annotations serve to place the genesis of *Settlers* and demonstrate Grove's skill of fictionalizing his everyday life. Contemporary readers of Grove can then find in his fiction aspects of the truth. In fact, Grove's truth was carefully hidden in his fiction - even more so than in his purported autobiographies. Ashfield was a fertile plain for his creation *Settlers*; but, the names and events he recorded there served as mere props and devices to conceal Grove's intended story. Grove had a year-and-a-half to sift through and record (a large part to his benefit) a long and tumultuous love affair with his unforgettable wife Elsa.

The manuscripts are important sources in Grove scholarship. In the manuscripts, Grove wrote far more scenes and characters than actually appeared in *Settlers* and, in these examples, one can trace the biographical details in Grove's life from which he drew. In *Pioneers I*, for instance, the character Hahn - forty - (a German immigrant like Grove) arrives in Canada in the same manner as did Grove. Hahn states that "I embarked in Liverpool. Any boat, I didn't care where it went, so long as it was America. The boat happened to be a White-Star liner; and it took me to Montreal" (Box 10, Fd 3, 189). Divay writes that "Grove's boldly candid statements from the first ten pages of *A Search*

for America measured up to all the essential details in the discovered documents: Greve did sail on a White Star Line steamer; he did cross the Atlantic in “second cabin” from Liverpool to Montreal; and he did sail in late July (10). Only the date was, as expected, off by some years (1909 rather than 1892)” (Divay, “Passage,” 119).

Grove may have originally intended a greater role for Hahn, one which would mirror his early male protagonists such as Reelen and of course himself. The tall, powerfully-built, worldly Hahn is characterized as “the successful worker, enormously strong, Naturalization” (Box 11, Fd 6). The word “enormous” was a popular one within certain groups, such as Stefan Georges’, in Germany at the turn of the century, groups to which Greve had belonged and, notwithstanding his rejection by these groups because of his outrageous behaviour, groups to which he still aspired to belong.

Niels Lindstedt, a flaxen-haired Swedish immigrant, teams up with his doppelganger, Lars Nelson, “the tall giant” (Box 11 Fd 6). Both characters were immigrants from Sweden and serve to reinforce Grove’s deception that his nationality was Swedish/English. It was through these Swedes that Grove continued his interest in nationalistic stereotyping seen in his first two German novels. He had already arranged the settlers in the settlement along ethnic lines at the beginning of *Pioneers I*. Indeed, some of his more unsavoury nationalistic remarks in this regard never made it directly into *Settlers*.³⁷ However, there are direct statements that relate to Grove’s idea of Scandinavian superiority in *Settlers*, particularly when he describes Ellen. Some indirect statements may be more subtle. Although it would appear that Grove blithely and blatantly intended to use many German

³⁷In the manuscript, Niels, a Swede, feels inferior to the “English” but superior to other ethnic groups: “It is true, this was not home; it was a strange country, and he was among strange people, most of whom seemed to look down on the foreigners as if they were something inferior, something not to be taken as fully human. Jim, for instance, the slim and cynical young fellow who got drunk of a Saturday night and then made a nuisance of himself in the bunk car lumped them all in one appellation of “Galishans” which most of them resented. Still, he, too, felt somewhat superior to the swarthy Slavs; it was the superiority of the northern race, the Scandinavian masterfulness, that spoke out of him.

characters in *Settlers*, he became aware of much anti-German feeling in Canadian communities during and after World War I. As late as 1926, in Rapid City, Manitoba, a group of war veterans tried to have Mrs. Grove removed from her teaching position because of her *Canadian* Mennonite background. He knew too that German immigrants changed their names: "He found that such English-sounding names as Baker and Smith might be disguised Beckers and Schmidts" (45). He neglected to add that a name like Grove might be a disguised Greve, Hahn, Nelson, Greiner or Lindstedt. Imagine the consternation in the Canadian community if the villagers in Ashfield had *known* that Grove was a German national.

In *Pioneers II*, Grove makes two additions: he introduces "a little girl of four or five" (10) whose name is May and another female character, Mrs. Usher. Grove's daughter, May, was four or five in 1920 (she would be five in August, 1920), placing the creation of this manuscript probably early in 1920. As for Mrs. Usher, like Elsa and Clara, she "is about thirty years old . . . there was a certain disquieting fascination about her: she somehow reminded him of Mrs. Vogel . . . Niels did not know, of course, that she admired him as you would admire the physique of a splendid beast . . . 'You're a widow? . . . 'No,' she said, 'I am divorced.' And she watched him covertly, half smiling to herself, to see how much he was shocked" (188-9). In *Pioneers II*, Mrs. Usher is placed in the role of the temptress: "Her ears were pierced and bore glittering pendants; her fingers were almost covered with rings" (188) while Niels is the blundering, slow-witted but innocent homesteader. Grove, I am proposing, is setting up his dialectics in preparation for his vindication of his actions with respect to Elsa in Kentucky: on the one hand city, wealth, sloth, ostentation, exoticism, and orientalism, in short evil; and on the other hand, country, poverty, labour, simplicity, austerity and occidentalism, in short, innocence and virtue. It was not a fresh conceit, to say the least, but Grove

often relied on established metaphors to obtain a literary feel to his work. Elsa would no doubt agree that this lack of imagination was perhaps what prevented Grove from being an accomplished artist, and probably limited him in their private relationship as well.

Whereas *Pioneers I* and *Pioneers II* dealt, in the main, with a prairie setting, the immigrant question, nationalism and the destructive relationships between ill-suited lovers, the manuscript *Pioneers V* introduced a deeper complexity into the story. In it Grove brings forward his imprisonment and resulting alienation and isolation. Back in Germany, Greve, charged with fraud, spent a year in a Bonn prison. He never recovered from the debt and alienation and, eventually, he left Europe forever, moving to North America in 1909. On the first page of the manuscript, Grove revisits his past when Niels ponders how he should respond to his new neighbour, Toews, "a worker" who very competently erects buildings without help but,

according to the talk current in the settlement this man was a criminal. He had been in jail. There he had learned a trade; that of a carpenter. In a pioneer settlement, where there are many young people, it confers a certain distinction to have been in conflict with the law. Not so where there is a nucleus of older men who have families. Men like Weissman, Altmann, Kelm frown upon lawlessness and crime. They have too much at stake themselves. They are sobered by the responsibility of having children to look after and to provide for (1 - 2).

The criminal Greve would remain inescapably attached, like Dante's monster, to the new-world Grove. Grove, in his fiction, returned to his German roots perhaps because of the traumatic experience of his stay in prison. His fear of being found out in Canada, now that he had a wife and a young daughter, was probably always on his mind. Of course, Catherine Grove did not know of

Grove's jail term in Germany. But as careful as he was about his past, Grove, egoist that he was, could not resist providing clues about his past life for the careful reader. Evidently for him, exploring truth through fiction came to be as titillating as prevaricating had always been.

We might find a parallel to Grove's life when we read that Niels hears rumours that Toews "had been living and would again live with a woman not his wife . . . Rumour also had it that the woman followed a despised and despicable trade: that she traded with her body. . . . it was a blot on her character at the worst, not on his" (10). Grove himself had been living with Elsa before and after he was in prison and they were not married until 1907. And so, Grove is portraying Niels, the hero and the author, as a hard-working innocent, a chaste and decent man whose character cannot be besmirched by the whoring behaviour of Clara or Elsa. Grove obliquely paints her black and himself white. Niels concludes that "What rumour said, formed almost a link, almost a bond between Niels and him [Toews]" (11). Indeed, Grove's blatant intercalations of self in his fiction ties him irrevocably to his characters who then serve to mirror their author in his autobiographical novel.³⁸

In *Pioneers V*, Grove explores his relationship to Elsa through at least four other women: Clara Vogel; Mrs. Usher the 30-year-old widow (Elsa was 30 in 1904, the year she had had her affairs while Grove was in prison); Toews' woman; and Dahlbeck's woman. Elements of Elsa appear in the rendering of these women. The Dahlbeck woman clearly resembles Elsa - a sexual animal that behaves provocatively and immorally. She has "a provoking, challenging quality" (17) in her smile. Later in the manuscript Grove writes that the Dahlbeck woman was "In every point the very antipode of Niels' wife in most things, in almost all things physical. But in one point she was exactly [stroked

³⁸In *Pioneers V*, a new character, Pletz (5), is introduced. It is significant to record that Elsa's maiden name was Ploetz. Here, the name "Pletz" is a perfect homophone of Ploetz. Neither Toews nor Pletz appear in the revised *Settlers* but it is through the qualities of the cast of female characters that Grove most clearly explores his relationship to Elsa.

out] very much like her: every feature of face as well as of figure, was indicative of sensuality" (23). Elsa, in her autobiography, states that Greve was extremely jealous of her radiated "sexattraction" (Freytag-Loringhoven, 1992, 116). The Dahlbeck woman in *Settlers* informs Niels that he has married the district whore. Like Dahlbeck, he was ashamed at his inability to control the sexual provocations, as he saw them, of his wife. More than that, his wife was responsible for all his misfortunes: "he knew just how the man felt: and he began to understand him better. This man was a prey to a passion. He would have preferred freedom, but he was a slave. The woman dominated, swayed, attracted and repelled him as she pleased. Whatever this man had done to deserve a prison-sentence, he had been driven to it by the woman. Yet she had gone free" (*Pioneers V*, 18). Undoubtedly, Grove here may well have at the back of his mind the elopement with Elsa, the passion, his prison term, her complicity and escape and affairs, his ultimate fall and her ultimate responsibility. Grove seems obsessed with orchestrating variations on the same theme, using the basic same woman, Elsa, mirrored in a variety of other women. He was fortunate in that he was able to explore and exploit this troublesome relationship in such a straightforward manner in his fiction without anyone, in 1925, suspecting otherwise - a luxury he could ill afford in real life.

Grove brings forth "the Dahlbeck woman" and compares her to Clara as an analogy with his own life that allows him a narcissistic reexamination. The Dahlbeck woman was unmarried but living with Dahlbeck. Similarly, Elsa lived unmarried with Greve until 1907. While Greve was in prison, Elsa had three affairs wherein she pursued her quarry. In *Settlers*, Clara takes three trips to the city and she tells Niels that "I went; and I threw myself away in the city. So far the men had been courting me; now I courted them" (186). The Dahlbeck character seems to have provided a means by which Grove could bring forth another of Elsa's petty crimes - that of flaunting her sexuality.

Dahlbeck's woman determinedly flaunts her sexuality. It is her avocation. What is the difference? Niels will later learn from the Dahlbeck woman and to his ultimate horror that, for Clara, *sex is her vocation*. In the manuscript, Grove used the Dahlbeck woman to depict what he saw in Elsa - constantly on the prowl for attention from other men, presumably, ultimately for sex.³⁹

Grove's, like Niels', hopes and dreams were turned to ashes. One of his great hopes in the Ashfield period was to make his mark as a writer. Unfortunately, for Grove, that meant recapitulating his life, remembering what he wrote in the two German novels that Elsa had dictated, remembering what she said in Germany and in Kentucky, what his feelings were at the time, and what they were now. In other words, reporting what had happened to him in his life or translating a lived life into novel form. In doing so he may have been motivated by his cultural position as well. In Canada, he was an alien in a strange, primitive land with few peers to share his intellectual interests. In the fictional world of his manuscripts, he was able to surround himself with the familiar German characters that he knew from the past - Wagner, Hahn, Altmann, Greiner, Kelm, Schultze, Dahlbeck, Pletz and variations of Elsa as Vogel, Dahlbeck and Usher and, of course variations of his own self in the German community and more obviously as Niels.

In *Pioneers V*, work pulls Niels out of his "slough of despond" but he avoids people in the

³⁹In the MS, Greve writes: "Although she [the Dahlbeck woman] stood perfectly still, her attitude somehow gave the impression as if she danced, displaying her forms, alluring, calling with her body. . . . He, Dahlbeck was the slave of this woman. They were not married. The bond that held them together was his infatuation. She did not care for him. She allowed her eyes to roam for others whom she did care for. Both she and Niels' wife were creatures of the senses. But there was a difference. What did it consist in? (24) . . . Niels himself had become a slave to sex . . . In reality he had enslaved himself to a moment of sin, a moment when he had succumbed to sex. Sex, therefore, had become hateful to him" (25) . . . What did the difference between this woman and his wife consist in? . . . The difference seemed to be this: the Dahlbeck-woman was herself a slave to her sexual instinct. They dominated her. For his wife the sexual powers were a tool of domination . . . where was the similarity? Why was it that the one always reminded him of the other? That, too, Niels thought he had succeeded in explaining. To neither of them was the mystery of sex a holy thing. Both sat at the banquet of life defiled. And both defiled whomever they succeeded in drawing within their circle of influence . . . he fell prey to morbid brooding about life, his [sic] life which was so irrevocably ruined, so utterly useless, so wasted, and thrown away" (26).

settlement and "the people also avoided him" (34). Later in the manuscripts Grove writes about Niels: "He felt like a leper, an outcast of human society" (53). In Ashfield, Grove also lived an isolated life. Naturally, the villagers regarded him as a hermit or recluse, a role about which he writes in "Rebels All,"

I am an utterly lonely man (68). . . . I have become a hermit (76). . . . But then - does anything matter? (77). . . . So long as those who had to be left at home with the women and children when the males went out for the hunt, had nothing to do but share the work of the women and children, they valued themselves as such only, just as others valued them. But when the first among them found a way to carve delicate ornamental tracteries on the blade of a bone knife, he had discovered a new justification for himself: he became an artist (78). . . . I still worked out an interpretation of my life which justified me" (79).

I suggest that Grove most likely wrote this sentiment in his essay "Rebels All" in Ashfield, in 1920-1, when Grove was at home with May while Catherine taught. He felt himself doubly alienated as an unappreciated and misunderstood member of the community - an artist. Some of the Ashfield villagers thought that he was a German count (personal interview) and probably could therefore afford the life of a dilettante, but he must have been stung by others who thought him a useless drone preying off the avails of his hard-working wife.

The last manuscript to be discussed is "The White Range-Line House: Chapter One: Mrs. Lindstedt," (Box 10 Fd 3). Unlike the previous versions, this manuscript is typed. It is reasonable to conclude that it postdates the handwritten manuscripts since it closely resembles the final form of *Settlers*. In this manuscript, a new settler, Bates, is introduced. Bates, a Canadian, talks about

"Nothing but damn foreigners around," (5) thinks that Niels is also a "Canadian-born." Later, it is mentioned by Bates that Niels was "of eight years standing or more in the country" (73). This may be another clue from Grove in that, since he came to Canada in 1912, eight years later would put him in Ashfield writing *Pioneers* in 1920.⁴⁰ Discussions of ethnicity occur much more frequently in all the manuscripts than in *Settlers*, and they prevail in this version. I believe that Grove deemed nationalism of greater significance than it actually seems in *Settlers*. For instance, Grove writes (ironically) about an immigrant: "a Ruthenian . . . his name being Philipyuk though he called himself Philips - an attempt to disguise his origin or to assimilate himself" (6). This typed manuscript is almost identical in many parts to *Settlers*, except for the strong German connections which are downplayed in *Settlers*.

Grove's treatment of his prison experience continues in greater depth in *WRLH*. Here, Niels considers his life with Clara and compares that life to a prison:

Lust meant the defiling of an instinct of nature. It meant sin . . . He wished to flee
the vision of a wife and children! Children! His life was ruined! Sometimes he had
thought - for it was his fate that he should think of all phases of life, vividly, with a
realisation [sic] of what they would mean for him - sometimes he had thought of a life
in prison: how the prisoner would look out through the bars of the window in the
strong outer wall, at the green, living world beyond; and then back at the bare, white-
washed walls of his prison-home: how he would yearn to be free again. And free he
would be again one day . . . Another twelvemonth or a little over, and he would be

⁴⁰Another character found only in this MS is "a short, hump-backed Irishman by the name of Teddy O'Neil" (27) who raises sheep. Grove writes that "Something like a longing came over Niels: he would have liked to be that hump-backed shepherd" (27), a statement reminiscent of his writings of the wanderings and philosophy of Nishivara in a piece titled, "Of Nishivara, the Saint." Grove had run away from problems before. He would run away from one of his problems in Kentucky - Elsa.

thirty years old! Such was his life exactly. (33)

It is obvious that Greve's prison term in Germany is always on Grove's mind since, in this MS, he reintroduces Toews who was invented in the previous manuscript. Grove never could get over the fact that he went to prison for fraud while, Elsa, young, passionate and also culpable, had gone free. The six-year prison term, mentioned in the MS, may refer to the time that he knew Elsa in Germany before his departure (1902-9), or to the time he remained in Germany from the beginning of his sentence in May, 1903. It is not a coincidence that Niels, in *Settlers*, also goes to prison for approximately six-and-a-half years.

The *WRLH* is also a significant text for Grove scholarship because it contains more words in the pivotal break-down scene between Niels and Clara than appeared later in *Settlers*. In the manuscript, when Niels asks Clara what she has been doing in the city she admits that she amused herself in the company of other men who are not dumb brutes "like you. Men who can appreciate my knowledge of life, my reading, my judgment of character, my wit. Men who seek me on account of what I am, for the sake of my mind, my soul, my superiority . . . That they incidentally desired my body also . . . And she shrugged her shoulders" (95-6).

In *WRLH*, Clara is imbued with stronger qualities than she has in *Settlers*. In the earlier version she is definitely an individual with a powerful personality. One of her expressions in the MS, "I want to be I once more, taking life as it comes" (99), is familiar to readers of Elsa's autobiography. Interestingly, Grove's original Clara refers to Kentucky in one statement in the MS: "I'll fight a divorce without payment for the proofs by telling the story of the life I've led here, left to myself, *abandoned by my husband* [italics added] in my husband's house. If you don't want the divorce, then I have that hold on you" (99). It is very likely that this pivotal scene is a facsimile of the final

conversations of Elsa and Grove in a farmhouse in Kentucky. For one thing, Elsa did confess to her sexual affairs when Greve was in prison. She says in the MS and in *Settlers* that she lived as an unmarried woman for half a year, which may refer to the time she spent alone after Greve's departure in 1909. It may also mean that, after Greve declared himself an admirer of virginity, she waited half a year before travelling to the city, arguing "did you think mine was the nature of a fish?" (*WRLH* 99) to abet her sexual appetite. In the last occurrence of verbal intercourse between husband and wife, Clara declares, "I'll get what I need; and I'll get it here" (101). Possibly, Elsa, like Clara, engaged in clandestine sexual activity in the house on the farm and literarily slammed the door on that chapter of their lives.

In the manuscripts, Grove was able to review his life with Elsa in much greater detail than he was able to do in *Settlers*. He was able to examine many more of her negative as well as positive qualities. Perhaps he needed to do this in order to finally expurgate her from his life. In the manuscripts, he presents Elsa to the reader through the medium of several other women. This strategy allows the reader to construct a composite figure that more realistically represents the full-blown Elsa. At times, Grove's portrayal of Elsa as a wanton woman on the prowl for sexual excitement, or for prostitution, seems paranoid, and the manuscripts allowed him a therapeutic respite from his demons. Elsa was Dante's monster that stung the promising young Felix Greve in Europe and in Kentucky and reduced him to ashes. The new man, Grove, would reconstitute himself again and, in his novel, demonstrate her perfidiousness to the world. Ironically, like the thief in the *Inferno*, Grove has no choice but to allow Elsa back into his fictional life, like him reconstituted, so that in his autobiographical account that is *Settlers*, he is stung once again.

Chapter 3

The Novel: *Settlers of the Marsh* in Ashfield, Manitoba 1920

My wife had the offer of a school not far from the city, in the bush-country east of Selkirk, in a Ukrainian district. . . . The name of the district was Ashfield; it lay six miles east of the station of Little Britain on the electric car line from Winnipeg to Selkirk. . . . There followed a few months of amazing fertility. First of all I attacked *A Search for America*. . . . Simultaneously I resketched and largely rewrote, during that spring [1920], four other books: . . . *The Turn of the Year* . . . *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*. In addition, I took abundant notes for . . . the *Ant Book*.

From *In Search of Myself* (347-52)

Despite Grove's claims in *ISM*, it is possible that he *began* writing these books in Ashfield as it has been seen in the case of *Pioneers I*. Grove goes on to write, in *ISM*, how in 1920, "in that marvellously fruitful spring" (371), he had worked out the pattern to *Pioneers*:

how it had worked itself out, slowly, inevitably; for the central figure, Niels Lindstedt, reached far back into the past. . . . I remembered, and smiled at myself, how feverishly I had worked; how I had been impatient at the necessity of eating and sleeping; how I had again wished to be able to project the whole vision as it were by a single flash of lightning struck out of my substance by some divine steel; for landscape, characters, destinies, they were all there, but still hidden by the veil which could be lifted only by slow "creation". (372)

Grove, autobiographically incorporated into his hero, Niels Lindstedt, lifted the veil of time, reached back to revisit and to then basically recreate a past that had already been experienced about ten years ago in the United States. When Grove writes in his work that he smiled at himself he

usually implies a greater knowledge on his part than was available to the locals - in this case, his hidden knowledge about the story of his life. He could now revel in the reconstituted Felix Paul Greve who had previously disappeared after having been stung by worldly monsters.

In *ISM*, he also writes that he wrote the pivotal scene between Niels and Clara on a Lake Winnipeg beach near Matlock, Manitoba, in the summer of 1923. It is more likely that this scene, which in its inception, probably occurred in Kentucky basically as written, was worked on in 1920-1, in Ashfield, when he had a good year-and-a-half in which to complete it. The manuscripts were handwritten and, as I have shown in Chapter Two, as they progressed, became close to *Settlers* as we know it today. In addition, it was known that he used a typewriter in Ashfield and the typed MS called "The White Range-Line House," containing the pivotal scene, was very close to the final version in the novel.

In an enclosure to the letter Grove sent to Moore at Ryerson (November 21, 1925), Grove writes that in *Settlers* he laid stress on "the inner consequences of all happenings" and that the distinguishing feature of his book is "the fact that all things are seen, as it were, from the inside" (qtd. in Pacey, *Letters* 28). And Grove *does* have insider information. He considered *Settlers* to be "some of my best work" (*ISM* 370) that "belonged among the other follies of my youth" (371). Grove basically admits that, in *Pioneers*, he told a real story about real people; he only fell short of identifying these real people as himself and Elsa:

Pioneers . . . like Ibsen's dramas it refused to stay on the stage and came out, beyond the floodlights, into real life. The book was too real, too true . . . *I had described exactly what happened, no more* [italics added] . . . Personally, I thought it a great book; personally, I loved it as a beautiful thing; but . . . To this day I am not quite sure

that it conveys to others what it conveys to me. If it does, nobody has ever said so.
(379).

It would seem, then, that Grove considered *Pioneers* to be a real-life story about actual happenings in which he was the major participant. It is, in essence, a recapitulation of those last months with Elsa in Kentucky and, in that sense, it is autobiographical. In a revealing letter to Grove regarding *Settlers*, Lorne Pierce notes how deeply committed to autobiography Grove had claimed to be: "I remember how tense you were when I suggested that some of the book seemed autobiographical to me. You were very pale and tired, and you were rather vehement in your insistence that you had lived no inconsiderable part of this and other books you had done" (qtd. in Pacey, *Letters* 385).

Of all the fiction that Grove wrote, besides the highly confessional and accurate autobiographical novel, *ASA* (1927), *Settlers of the Marsh* comes closest to autobiography in that it mirrors an important time in his life. He chose a primitive, agricultural settlement in rural Manitoba as a setting that was analogous to his farm in Sparta, Kentucky. But the setting also allowed Grove to examine his reaction to and on the Canadian landscape: "the author aimed at presenting the reaction of the Western Canadian landscape on the settler, and that of the settler on the landscape" (qtd. in Pacey, *Letters* 28). Grove had practiced Flaubert's symbolic realism in *OPT* and *TY* and now, again, in *Settlers*. These responses were an important part of Grove's repertoire because they reflected his sensitivities, his emphases, and served only to strengthen his case in his quest to record his essential story - that of the interrelationships between Niels, the hero, himself, of course, and Clara as Elsa, the district prostitute. If the settlers do not ring true it may be because Grove attempted to graft a European mask onto what, for him, was strange alien environment and culture in Canada. His

attempts at colloquialisms, farm work, general language and his penchant for naturalism tend to disengage the readers from their suspension of disbelief.

Grove's fictional Canadian farm, grafted onto a Manitoba landscape, stood for his idyllic Kentucky home. But Grove had been raised in the city of Hamburg, Germany; he knew little about farming⁴¹ and had little capacity for physical work. He complained about a bad back for a good deal of his life and Elsa was a helpless housewife and helpmate. If these factors did not already mitigate against the success of their farming life in Kentucky, Grove's decision to become chaste finally ended their life together. The settings, then, in *Settlers* and in *Kentucky* are analogous - an auspicious start for an author who must "create" his fiction from life.

In a pastoral Romantic sense, the hero, Niels, in an initial tenuous equilibrium, sets out on an unsettling romantic quest in a primitive settlement, reaches a climax, and returns to an equilibrium with Ellen. That this is a superficial application of Romantic theory by Grove is evident as is his real concern in the relationship between Niels and Clara, or rather, between himself and Elsa. However much Grove might admire pioneers struggling in order to eke out a Spartan existence and write about them as a cover for his real concerns, he would probably not have gone out of his way to speak to one of these pioneers toiling in a field. In letters to his wife during his cross-Canada speaking engagements, he as much says so. From Edmonton, October 17, 1928, he writes, "As for your question about the intelligence of women or men, I don't know. I find both equally stupid here in the west" (qtd. in Pacey, *Letters* 183). Then, from Grande Prairie, Alberta, October 25, 1928, he writes

⁴¹Grove had attempted to become a "potato king" in Kentucky probably in 1910-11. After leaving Elsa in 1911, Grove worked on the Bonanza Farm in North Dakota during the summer and fall of 1912.

"That was #28 [lecture tour]. And thus time drags on. The stupidity of it and the people" (qtd. in Pacey, *Letters* 194).⁴²

Grove depended on the cupidity of his critics and his readers in order for him to buffalo all with the personal testimony of tall tales of exotic travels, wealth, extravagances, titillating escapades and even hobo life. The inevitable hero of his tall tales was himself, the story of the prodigal, riches to rags, boy genius of whom great things were expected. Grove, however, was a supreme egoist - he must be known. He hit upon fiction as the appropriate, elegant vehicle by which he could present his story from his perspective. Of course, he would plant many clues in his fiction so that the titillating intimations would be picked up, if not now, in his time, then later, by the more knowledgeable reader of the future - for Grove felt he was building literary pyramids for the future.

Grove, as Spettigue has demonstrated, was a man who wanted to be known. Grove was writing his story and so used pseudonyms and acronyms as self-indulgent ciphers. The assonance in the vowels in the names Elsa and Clara and Elsa and Ellen is, for instance, immediately evident. In his handwritten manuscript, in his list of Scandinavian pioneers was Niels Lindstedt, the young immigrant simply labelled "the hero" (*Pioneers I*, Box 11 Fd 6). Niels might be a far-fetched echo of Nietzsche, the German philosopher Grove admired greatly, as did all his generation.⁴³ Aligning

⁴²From Grande Prairie, during Grove's Canadian tour, he writes to Mrs. Grove: "Thank the Lord, this is the last day here in this god-forsaken town To stay here longer would be death from tedium, unbearable and never to be outlived, with not even hope of the diversion of hell; for nobody here has even the gumption to tempt me to sin. Since I've waited at wayside stations to catch a ride on the rods or bumpers, I've not felt so bored. Nor have I eaten the sort of food I've had to eat here . . . everybody is so engrossed with sense[less]ly rushing about, in this dirty town If I were better versed in curses than I am, I'd surely curse this place in twenty languages. (195)

⁴³In 1902, when he was twenty-three, Grove wrote a poem, *Wanderungen*, in a failed attempt to insinuate himself into Stefan George's group. The poem acknowledges Nietzsche as one of the masters:

In the East, and nearest the distant ridge
From which each day my sun arose
there thy name, O prophet, Nietzsche, stood
heroic in war, in victory mild.

himself with Nietzsche in the guise of the young, innocent immigrant, Niels, would be entirely reasonable for Grove; after all, he too had had great things expected of him. Nietzsche had suggested that since God was dead, mortals would have to become god-like and find their own meaning in life. Grove had already compared himself to the demigods Castor and Pollux in *ISM* and to Balder, the young Nordic god, in *FE*. In Canada, in 1939, Grove wrote a series of aphorisms in a handwritten work entitled, *Of Nishivara, the Saint*, imitating Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Nishivara, a thinly disguised Grove, would appear again to be an attempt to link himself to Nietzsche. In *Settlers*, mirroring Zarathustra's very similar "What doth it matter?" (308), Grove plays on the pessimistic determinism of naturalism when Niels says "What did it matter? He became aware that this phrase - what did it matter? - occurred more and more frequently in his thought. Did nothing really matter?" (176). An additional reason for the name Niels may be that it is an acronym of Greve's nickname in Germany - "Nixe," (Gammel, 2002, 122). Nixe was also the name of a mermaid which may refer to Greve's flirting, as late as 1902, with Aestheticism, Decadence and homosexuality. One of the prevailing traits he maintained since those early years is the subtilized style of the Decadents in his autobiographical ciphering.

The novel opens with two immigrants, Niels Lindstedt, the hero and Lars Nelson, who, in the manuscripts is "the helper" and who, in *Settlers*, is described as a giant: Niels' "powerful companion knew the road; where he went, Niels would go" (8). Both men may be seen as composites of the author, just as the author may be seen as a composite of Greve and Grove. They are mirrors of the author with reflected, reversed initials, N. L. and L. N. Nelson could also be a composite of Niels and Elsa - "Ni" and "els." Grove, obsessed with his alter ego, with his past, with fate as Dante's monster that stung him and reduced him to a hidden remnant of his former self, is, in his fiction, able to

reassemble the old Greve and regale his readers. He is able, too, narcissistically, to speak to his new autobiographical self with the tales that, like the thief in the *Inferno*, he has stolen from the past.

Settlers begins with Niels and his doppelganger, Lars, as they struggle to reach a destination under the harsh conditions of a Manitoba snowstorm. This introductory section of the novel is a continuation of Grove's *OPT* and *TY* section. It depicts the new European immigrant, heroic and intelligent, battling wild nature, overcoming and civilizing. It was a benign, safe piece of writing in which he could give vent to his impressionistic and expressionistic proclivities. The many German settlers who appeared in the early manuscripts are mostly gone. However, Grove's main purpose in *Settlers* was to expose the analogous wildness in Elsa as Clara, his heroic attempts at civilizing her and his failure. Grove had already written about this in Germany in the character Reelen who tried, unsuccessfully, to civilize an Elsa-figure disguised as Fanny in *FE*. Domesticity in the form of the Ellen-Niels match triumphs over the unrelenting reprehensible behaviour of Clara.

Only a few of the many German settlers of the manuscripts remain in the novel. The major characters are presented as Swedes; among them Niels, a young Swedish immigrant only three months in Canada. Grove had written that his father was Swedish, which gave more credibility to the idea of himself as the hero, Niels. The deceased Mr. Vogel was probably German but we are not sure about Clara - perhaps Grove intended that she be German, just like Elsa. Unfortunately, Grove, though not a Swedish immigrant, was an immigrant nevertheless and, notwithstanding his philological training, English was not his first language. Some of his awkward phrasings were missed in the rewrites, proofing and editing. For example, in *Settlers*, he writes of Mrs. Lund that "her black hair might have been a beauty if it had been kept tidy" (20).

More than an immigrant, he was a self-exiled con-artist who was still on the run. Even after his term in prison for defrauding Kilian, Grove had illegally collected multiple advances from publishers for the one piece of translation he was working on in Germany. He had told Catherine Grove that they might have to pick up and leave anytime. When "daddy" Lund defrauds Sigurdson, Mrs. Lund says: "I suppose daddy must be thinking of skipping the country. But where he'd go if he left us here, I don't know" (89). Also, at Lunds', Niels was a loner as Grove was in life: "To Niels it was a foreign crowd. He had no contact with them. He felt lonesome, forlorn . . . (20) Niels was glad to escape from the crowded house (22) But a few minutes later he found himself once more on the outskirts of the crowd, partly on account of his inability to speak either English or German, partly because it was his nature to be alone, even in a crowd" (27).

Niels and Lars, like Grove, want to own and work their own land and be independent: "They [Niels and Lars] walked on in silence, swinging along in great, vigorous strides. The last few words had filled them with the exhilaration of a confession of faith. High above, far ahead stood an ideal; towards that ideal they walked" (34). Elsa wrote that Grove had a head for business and that he wanted to become a "potato king" in America. This may very well have been the reason Grove tried farming in Kentucky. He had never owned a house before and this may have been his opportunity. In one MS, Clara declares that she is "abandoned by my husband *in my husband's house*" [italics added] (Box 10, Fd 3, 99). In Canada, the Groves never owned their own home until they moved to Simcoe, Ontario in 1931.

Along with the vision of a farm, Niels has another vision, that of a wife and family: "of himself and a woman, sitting of a mid-winter night by the light of a 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*" [italics added] (34). This vision, which reoccurs throughout *Settlers*, may have been the deciding factor in Grove's deserting Elsa. In the manuscripts, Niels had been watching Clara for any sign of pregnancy but none was forthcoming. The situation was hardly surprising for Elsa had had gonorrhoea and syphilis - it is highly unlikely that she could become pregnant: "Syphilis can affect a woman's ability to become pregnant and can lead to infertility, thus providing another possible explanation for the absence of even a single pregnancy in Elsa's energetic sex life" (Gammel, *Baroness* 69). Grove, like Niels, perhaps wanted children a sterile Elsa could not provide, and so he left her in hopes he might fulfil that vision.

Grove, in his fiction, could expose much more of himself in terms of his hopes and dreams than he could in real life. He could, through his fictional characters, examine his own life and, to an extent, probe the psychological foundations of his behaviour. In his efforts he became what must certainly be the greatest fraud in Canadian literary history, though, ironically, he was recognized in his time as a great prevaricator, and in his literary texts he shows a cynical awareness of such dishonesty. In *Settlers*, for instance, Lars informs Niels that Mrs. Lund lies: "She lies, you know. . . . Pride. . . it's part thriftlessness and part ostentation" (35). Here, Grove may be recapitulating his early life in Germany which was notable for excessive spending and his extravagant living style occasioned no doubt, in part, out of a sense of pride to cover his poor, working-class roots. In *Settlers*, Niels too has unpleasant childhood visions that haunt and incite in him a hatred that gives us a clue as to the source of Grove's lying and anger:

His mother The people whom she served . . . had treated her as a being from a lower social, yes, human plane. He remembered how once, when he was about ten years old, he had stood outside of one of the mansions where she worked Yet he

had not dared to touch the shining brass knocker on the well-to-do door which it was not for one like him to lift.⁴⁴ He also remembered how that vision of himself as a child, as a poor child, had haunted him when he grew up till fierce and impotent hatreds devastated his heart, so that at last it had become his dream to emigrate to a country where such things could not be. (37)

Niels' mother was so poor that she gathered firewood in a park owned by Baron Halson, a circumstance that may be reflected in Elsa as Fanny in *Fanny Essler*. Fanny has a one-night stand with Baron von Langen and recognizes that she had been dishonoured: "How strange: she had done something that 'dishonoured' her But then the seducer came back to marry the girl and make everything work out right" (Vol. I, 46-7). Niels, similarly, has a one-night stand with Clara and marries her in order to avoid the dishonour. Grove, in *Settlers*, and its antecedents in various manuscripts, is obsessed with Elsa. In the manuscripts, Toews' wife, the young divorced Mrs. Usher, the Dahlbeck woman and, of course, Clara are all variations and manifestations of Elsa, though Clara and the Dahlbeck woman appear in the novel itself. But Grove's allusions to Elsa are even more subtle. *Fanny Essler* opens in the year 1892 - Elsa would have been eighteen years old. When Niels first meets Ellen she is "a girl of perhaps eighteen or nineteen years" (14). Fanny's (17) and Elsa's (Gammel, *Baroness* 38) hair is dark blond and Ellen's is "straw yellow" (14). We might note that Oscar A. H. Schmitz wrote, in 1898, that Elsa had "straw-colored hair" (qtd. in Gammel, *Baroness* 90). Also, Elsa, Fanny and Ellen regard their father as a sexual predator and hold him responsible for their mother's death of uterine cancer.

⁴⁴Grove was stung all his life by his working class, even peasant roots. Niels acknowledges his lowly origins in a confrontation with Clara who later calls their farm a "manure-pile": "It was his peasant nature going on by inertia" (181).

Elsa, according to Gammel, by 1893, had a profound interest in androgyny (*Baroness* 67) and by 1895, "Indeed, Elsa's gender fluidity was emerging as a trademark. With her slim waist, the virtual absence of breasts, and her short hair, she was the quintessential androgyne, or *arsenomorph*, combining female and male elements. In *FE*, her alter ego is called "lad" (*Junge*) because of her "body's boyishness" (*Baroness* 67). Elsa also wore boots of a masculine cut and she was thin - both marks of androgyny. Ellen, in *Settlers*, has female attributes but these quickly disappear into androgyny: "Niels saw to his surprise the girl [Ellen], clad like a man in sheepskin and big overshoes, crossing the yard to the stable where she began to harness a team of horses (15). Later, at Lunds,' Niels compares Olga Lund and Ellen: "And, whereas Ellen, when she donned her working clothes, had changed from a virgin, cool and distant, into a being that was almost sexless, Olga preserved her whole femininity" (36). Ellen's "utter impersonal" demeanor is relieved by "an absent-minded patting of the old dog that limped through the snow across the yard, wagging his tail whenever she came" (19). Similarly, Fanny stopped at the gate to the farmyard, then "pushed open the gate and strode toward the big Newfoundland, who, as before, wagged his tail, beat the ground with it and glanced up at her. She crouched down and petted him" (*FE*, Vol I, 23). In this passage, as elsewhere, Grove recycles old material told to him by Elsa. Though twenty years separate the publication of *FE* and *Settlers*, Grove recapitulates the story of Elsa, his infatuation with her and desertion of her, from his autobiographical perspective.

Grove, through Niels, considers his position as an immigrant. Children, something Elsa could not give him, were a means to an end - to a rootedness, to acceptance or even perhaps the fulfillment of a vision. These thoughts must have run through his mind as he awaited confirmation of his naturalization as a Canadian citizen in Ashfield. In *Settlers*, he writes: "He himself might be forever

a stranger in this country; so far he saw it against the background of Sweden. But if he had children, they would be rooted here. . . . He might become rooted himself, through them. . . ." (46).

Grove, who, like Niels, had not made many friends, and who was not a "mixer," must have felt very much alone in Canada. Perhaps he felt a greater sense of community by including more German settlers in his manuscripts. Perhaps, too, he felt that he could incorporate characteristics of himself more authentically and comfortably in these characters. He was a stranger in Canadian society, yet he wanted to be accepted. This attitude manifested itself in his emotional highs and lows.⁴⁵

Settlers gave Grove a marvellous opportunity to present his past life to his unwitting readers. Grove has a tendency to explain away his past with the deterministic or fatalistic idea, as he so succinctly states: "What did it matter?" The idea of fate or destiny so rules his thinking that he is tempted to suppose he is not responsible for his actions: "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 " (59).

With the marriage of Nelson and Olga, we bid adieu to Grove's alter ego. So far Grove, as immigrant, has met new people, worked hard, had goals, visions, an appreciation of nature. Now he must turn to that former place in his past and he must do it alone as Greve. In a sense, *Settlers* is a return to self, an exploration of the relationship between Felix and Elsa in the New World. Grove's cry is a cry from the wilderness that "I must be I." There is no one to rely on, no one to trust except

⁴⁵Once, when Niels was taking a load of wood to town he came across twenty-two teams taking shelter in the bluff that he would soon own: "The men were a motley crowd, mostly Germans; and they greeted him with shouts and laughter as he drove into sight" (43). This heroic scene contrasts with how Niels is treated by Ellen who keeps her distance: "It was she, she alone who kept him away: who kept the world away, and with the world him: for he was merely a part of that world: not a hero who came, acclaimed by the multitudes, borne high on the shoulders of his followers" (51).

himself as he reverts to Greve and prepares himself for the oncoming literary struggle of his life - his perspective on his dramatic desertion of his wife, Elsa, in America.

Greve's vision for himself and Elsa in Kentucky must have been what he envisioned in *Settlers*: "There, in front of him, behind that dimly looming bluff, he suddenly saw his house erected: a palace in the wilderness; and behind it stretched the farm, a secluded kingdom" (77). Elsa wrote in her autobiography that Greve intended to become a "potato king" in Kentucky. She too saw the kingdom in the wilderness but in a different way than Greve:

I was a brilliantly kept slave - heralded queen - to lull my watchful pride - and, in truth - I was queen - kept from my true kingdom - *that of mind*. All I got was superficiality - outward gesture - along with the body I lived to please him the way he wanted to be pleased - that was my bliss - meeting with my childish idea about a woman in voluntary adoration kept splendidly by a lover - and what a lover - to my understanding of the time - until this artificial construction of lies and pretensions wielded together with so much blood passion and honest will - began to crumble - very, very slowly - for it is hard to believe that a glorious castle, built as for life - can topple and vanish in disgrace - as it did - chattering into its last shame bespattered, distorted pieces in America! (121)

Niels, in the novel, reviewed his seduction by Clara/Elsa and their physical connection at the beginning of their marriage, their subsequent alienation and her murder. In some ways, Niels resembles the patriarchs of Grove's novels. He is a loner, drifting to the outside of crowds where he is the ever watchful haughty observer, silent and judgmental in his intransigence - much like Grove himself. Grove, as author and con-artist, must have been ever fearful of being discovered for his

German connection. Not only his fraud in Germany, but, in Canada, his German origins would have made it difficult for him after World Wars I and II. He might, at any time, be found out and have to move his family or leave them as he left Elsa in Kentucky. In Ashfield, according to Gladys Bryan, Grove seldom took the ferry across the Red River to the town of Selkirk, six miles away, to obtain supplies. He waited instead on the bank until his helper returned. Even here, in rural Manitoba, he seems to have been fearful of discovery. It is also entirely possible that in that part of the United States where he and Elsa had settled, where there was a large recently-immigrated German population, Grove had even then been recognized and forced to flee. In any case, this fear of being found out must have plagued him all his life in Canada and could well account for his cantankerous attitude to nearly everyone about him. At Lunds', Clara asks, "I wonder . . . whether you could smile, Mr. Lindstedt? (54). Later, at the train station in town, when Niels watches the disembarking passengers typically, "Niels stood silent and alone, frowning" (97) as the train, bearing Clara, pulled up to the station.

Niels is able to withstand Clara's mild attempts at his seduction for, not only is he still chaste, he has set his heart on Ellen as his future mate. Niels, who is thirty years old (*Settlers* 120), says that he has been thinking of her, Ellen, for six years as the wife he wanted and prepared for (121). These very years are very significant to Grove himself. When he was thirty, in 1909, he left Europe forever. Six years earlier, he was twenty-four, in 1903, the year he spent in prison. It is entirely probable that *Settlers* is, in essence, a review of his seduction by Elsa, his excessive spending and fraud, his incarceration in 1903-4, his prodigious output as a translator in prison and Elsa's duplicitous affairs while he was so engaged. His grafting of a Canadian landscape onto such a plot is not difficult to decipher.

Elsa, in the form of Clara, or even Ellen in the novel, not considering the ersatz Elsas of the manuscripts, carries on as she did in life, with his embellishments: he is jailed, she is free, he slaves in prison on his translations to make money to pay back an incredible debt. The effort at recovery appears in *Settlers* as work everywhere, work galore. It also appears in the figure of Elsa, deprived of sexual intercourse, who seeks out men to get her satisfaction. The whole novel, then, may be the story of Greve's incarceration presented under the guise of a Canadian pastoral landscape, simply an elaborate objective correlative for another life. This painful scenario must have been first enacted in Kentucky where, under the constraints of trying to eke out a life on a farm in Kentucky, Grove declared himself to be celibate, a big mistake to practice with any wife, especially one so sexually motivated and independent as Elsa. He gambled on writing the great Canadian novel in the tradition of *Madame Bovary*⁴⁶ but the house he said he so carefully constructed in *Settlers* was built in another country, a house of cards that tumbled in Canada, as it did earlier in Kentucky. In *ISM*, Grove wrote that *Settlers*

became a public scandal. Libraries barred it . . . reviewers called it 'filthy' . . . what sale it had was surreptitious. I resented this; it was the old story of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* over again. A serious work of art was classed as pornography; but with this difference that the error, in Flaubert's case, increased sales; he lived in France. In my case, and in Canada, it killed them. (381)⁴⁷

⁴⁶Fanny Essler, published in 1905, was more openly based on *Madame Bovary*.

⁴⁷Grove brings up *Madame Bovary* in *FE*. At one point, Fanny took her mind off things by reading "Flaubert's *Salambo* [which] fell into her hands" (Vol. I, 231). She began spending more time in bed reading Goethe, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and the Goncourts. She was so late for rehearsal, because she had been reading Dostoevsky's *Idiot* and forgot the time, that she was fired (236). In turn, Clara, in her bedroom, has "a set of sectional bookcases filled with many volumes" (149). She receives several volumes in the mail, gifts from other men. She gives Niels a translated copy of *Madame Bovary* to read, but he cannot comprehend such literature and is morally aghast. Like Fanny, she tries to spin herself into an insulating cocoon with reading (185). Both women eventually

The analogy between *Settlers* and *Madame Bovary* must have been serendipitous for Grove - a simple, chaste hero is cuckolded by a romantically-inclined, bored wife who is readily susceptible to sexual overtures. The plot was strikingly similar as was the plot for *Fanny Essler* twenty years earlier.

In *Settlers*, Ellen cannot marry Niels because she has made a vow to her dying mother and to herself that "no man, whether I liked him or loathed him, was ever to have power over me!" (130) The reason for this compact is that Ellen's father has treated her mother abominably. Even when her mother was very ill and a few months from death, her father forced himself sexually upon her mother. This is, in fact, Elsa's story. She wrote it in her autobiography, recalling her mother's death from uterine cancer and her father's male brutality, calling him a "malebrute" (BE 41). She told her story to Greve, who reproduced this part in *FE*. Now, the same story resurfaces in *Settlers*. There is little doubt that *Settlers* is autobiographical but also, it is, in large part, Elsa's story, and in that sense, is biographical. The reader can now recognize Grove's instruments of creation - they are autobiography and biography garnered from his own and others' lives.

One of Elsa's characteristics that Grove uses in *Settlers* to identify her is the fact of Clara's hair color. In *Baroness*, Elsa writes that the first man with whom she had had an affair, while Felix languished in prison, was a young Hamburgian she knew from Dachau and who also happened to be homosexual. He brought her henna during his travels: "Soon he travelled further on to Tunis - on his return presenting me with a large package of henna - that I had charged him to bring to me. From that time on I have dyed my hair red" (140). The truth of her statement emerges in something that Gide has written. Greve met Gide in Paris after having just been released from prison in 1904. Since

relinquish their reading and succumb to the stimulation of the city and the exhilaration of men (as does Emma Bovary).

Greve had a lot of time to kill before his train, Gide proposed that they look at paintings but Greve suggested a carriage ride instead. At the end of the ride, Greve's request was not for money, as Gide feared, but for something else: "Do you know where I can find some henna?" (Gide 242). Gide dropped Greve off at Philippe the hairdresser's. There is other evidence, too, to inform Elsa's charm. In her declaration given at her port of arrival in New York, 1910, Elsa's hair colour was "copper" (Hjartarson & Spettigue, *Baroness* 24). Even as late as 1918 [Gammel, *Baroness* 240] in New York, when Elsa appeared in *The Little Review* office, Margaret Anderson, the editor, wrote: "Her hair was the colour of a bay horse" (Hjartarson & Spettigue, *Baroness* 10). In turn, in *Settlers*, when Niels inadvertently met Clara at the train station, he noticed, for the first time, that she had red hair: "it was parted in the centre, rolling out in big puffs to both sides, and twisted into curly roll after roll behind. Strange that it should never have struck him before that it was coppery-red . . ." (100). Her henna-dyed hair is Elsa's constant throughout her life; it is her signature which Grove makes out to be Clara's.

Later, after Clara and Niels are married, Grove paints a farm scene that, for Niels, was "irritating in the extreme" (155) because Clara has not got the noon-day meal ready for the very busy Niels and Bobby. The reason she is late is because she is dying her hair with henna leaves. Here, Grove attempts to show, through Clara, that Elsa is a frivolous female who neglects her important wifely duties. He can also emphasize their age difference - Elsa is five years older than Felix and Clara is six years older than Niels (*Settlers* 162). Niels had observed: "Dying her hair! Yes, the lower edge had looked different of late, brown, with a little grey mixed in . . ." (156). Even during their last intercourse, when Niels attempts to prevent Clara from taking a fourth trip to the city, Grove reminds us again in Clara's "chestnut-red hair surrounded her face like a flaming cloud" (180) that this woman

is to be compared to Elsa..Frivolity is one thing, but seduction of the chaste, hard-working young Scandinavian hero by the older, experienced, darker Clara, is what Grove relishes in describing. In *Baroness*, Elsa describes how she seduced Greve, during one of his many visits while she was a married woman, in her home: "I threw myself on him with my arms round his neck - like into an abyss - hopeless but compelled to. . . . I felt his whole frame tremble. He did not embrace or touch me. But I did not mind. I knew now - I had him - that was all I needed. I do not remember if I kissed him I remember I convulsively after a time drew him to my bed - though I did not wish to - since I wanted him to do the drawing" (74).

Similarly, like stoic Greve, passive Niels is seduced by the wanton, active widow Vogel. In *Settlers*, Clara intensely whispers to Niels: "Kiss me!" (141). He does kiss her passionately, but then, strangely for a thirty-year-old, he runs off into the night. Later that evening, when he is about to return to his hotel room, a door opens along the darkened corridor and "The very next moment he felt two warm, bare arms about his neck; and a warm, soft, fragrant body seemed to envelop his. A hand closed his mouth; he was drawn forward; he yielded . . ." (142). Afterwards, Niels promptly marries his seductress and they move out to his farm.

Initially, Clara appears in the field with "her chestnut-red hair flaming in the morning sun" (145). She soon virtually exhausts Niels with her sexual energy, but he "satisfied her strange, ardent, erratic desires" (148). In her memoirs, Elsa states that Greve was her first potent lover with whom she achieved orgasm. He was her "sexsun," her northern god Balder. However, Clara's strangeness

confuses Niels.⁴⁸ In addition to her unorthodox sexual behaviour, Clara furnishes her bedroom as if it were a brothel:

upholstered chairs, rugs, heavy curtains, and a monstrosly wide, luxurious bed with box mattress and satin covers; a mahogany dressing table covered with brushes, combs, flasks, jars, and provided with three large mirrors two of which were hinged to the central one; a chiffonier filled with a multitudinous arrangement of incomprehensible, silky and fluffy garments, so light and thin that you could crush them in the hollow of your hand; a set of sectional bookcases filled with many volumes; a couch upholstered in large-flowered damask; cushions without number; and above all mirrors, mirrors. The whole room was pervaded with sweetish scents.

(149)

Grove paints a picture of Clara as sin, as a sexually-obsessed wife. Elsa herself has admitted that little interested her outside of sex and all was a distraction from "sexexpression": "Sex was the only adventure" (*BE* 148).⁴⁹ She lived to please Greve, that was her joy: "And I had no duties but the

⁴⁸After a hard day's work, Niels sits up with Clara in an unsuccessful attempt to stay awake: "And finally, when he was sinking away into the very depths of sleep, he would suddenly feel her touch on his shoulder: a summons to go to bed." The statement is identical in the novel and in the manuscript. However, in the manuscript, Grove comments more fully on Clara's wantonness: "Niels himself never needed to be wakened, not even after such nights - and they were many - as were disturbed by his wife's coming over and keeping him awake in the small hours of the day" (31). It is very likely that Elsa behaved this way and Grove, telling it as it is, could only be exasperated with unfair editing that helped to produce the "garbled extract" in *Settlers* from his beloved *Pioneers*, which was his true account of his life with Elsa. Excisions like this one that he was forced to make because of the exigencies of length, or so he claimed, must have frustrated Grove to no end. These minor changes Grove may have found irritating in that he was deprived of showing one of Elsa's negative qualities. Such points contradict Makow's assertion that *Settlers* accurately reflects Grove's intentions and that in cutting down the size of his manuscript nothing of importance was lost ("Grove's 'Garbled Extract,'" 38).

⁴⁹Neither nature nor art interested me without a man's sex presence - and with it - it all became a mere means for indifferent entertainment to help while away the less important time - that is between sexexpression - just as physical necessities like meals or sleep. I had that - and nothing else - for nothing pleased me without a man (146) . . . enlargement of experience - knowledge - personality - was with me reachable only through sex. (*BE* 148)

one that was my bloodcall - *to love him* (116) I lived to please him the way he wanted to be pleased - that was my bliss" (120). Elsa and Clara have much in common.

A picture emerges from *Settlers* intimating that Clara, like Elsa, is a woman who is much taken with passion and sexual activity. Her bedroom is her boudoir where she spends more and more of her time. When photographs of famous paintings, most of them naked human figures appeared in the dining room, Niels objected to them, and they were moved into her bedroom. She has become a concubine in a brothel. She is a harem girl kept in a seraglio. Grove literarily paints a picture of her as an odalisque as provocative as Ingres's portraits, *Le Bain Turk* and *La Grande Odalisque*. Elsa herself is quite clear about this aspect of her life with Greve: "I was kept in a glittering harem - that I loved as the only wife and favourite" (*BE* 116). Grove mentions damask upholstery in Clara's room, intimating Damascus and a foreign oriental flavour in an occidental environment. When Clara is dying her hair in the White Range-Line House, Niels looks up the stairs to see her standing there "in white kimono, her head bandaged in a turban of Turkish towels" (155). As the chapter entitled Mrs. Lindstedt progresses, a dialectic begins to appear - the imaginative world of literature and art, which is Clara's world; and the mechanistic, realistic world of science and nature - Niels' world. Implied also is the less obvious dialectic of her being helpless, foreign, oriental and promiscuous, whereas Niels is stoic, hardworking, Scandinavian, white, chaste and monogamous.

In the pivotal scene in *Settlers*, Clara can say that she thought Niels wanted her: "you really *wanted* me, you really wanted *me!* Not only a woman, any woman. Do you know what you did when you married me? *You prostituted me* [italics added] if you know what that means. That's what you did" (183). Grove had used Elsa literally and literarily. Elsa, in her autobiography, states that she waited for Greve to be released from prison before she told him about her sexual affairs: "I clearly

knew - I should tell him later - when he was free - and then *take his decision*. So I did. He decided in taking me - despite his hurt soul . . . He has never truly forgiven me . . ." (BE 114). Greve may have remembered these affairs six years later in Kentucky when he rediscovered his chastity and Elsa responded so negatively to this "internally unorganic person - a poor nut" (BE 83), possibly going so far as to have more affairs. He would write about her sexual depravity, later, in *Settlers*.

This kind of revenge writing was not new to Grove, he had already written two such novels in Germany - *FE* and *MIH*. *MIH* was a grim portrait of Elsa's dysfunctional family. *FE* reviewed the behaviour of the crippled men in Elsa's life compared to her sun-god, Greve, as Reelen. The scholar, Irene Gammel has recognized that *FE* was a revenge novel: "the novel's unequivocal purpose was the public shaming of the abusive lover. In a moment of sweet revenge, [Ernst] Hardt [as the character Ehrhard Stein] was portrayed as a bad lover who left his partner sexually frustrated and who thus joined the group of 'half-men' who were unable to provide the protagonist with sexual pleasure" (BE 87).

By writing Clara as "the district whore" in *Settlers*, Grove could enjoy a sweet private moment of revenge for something that happened many years ago. More than this, he was, as a translator, moving material from a former life into his art, another form of prostitution. Clara's cry, "You prostituted me if you know what that means" is an echo from the past. Grove, after all, had used Elsa's life stories to produce his two German novels. That Greve had literarily prostituted Elsa in the past had been recognized by others. Especially in regard to *FE*, supporters of Ernst Hardt rallied round their friend: "The novel was all the more humiliating for Hardt as it was read by all the members of the circle. Hardt's friends dismissed the novel and expressed discreet support for the injured party as seen in [Marcus] Behmer's 19 February 1907 letter to Hardt: 'If Else Ti [Endell] has

not yet become a whore despite her whorish nature, she has now found her pimp who is prostituting her more than if he had her mounted at 50 Pfennig per trick” (Gammel, *Baroness* 87). In Manitoba, Grove could again play the literary pimp and prostitute his former wife and lover in *Settlers*.

In *Settlers*, after sexual intercourse between husband and wife stops, Niels becomes suspicious of what Clara is doing in the city. He resolves to prevent her from returning a fourth time to the city. This standoff elicits the pivotal scene in the novel. He attempts to lock her in the house, and Clara realizes that she is in danger of becoming a prisoner. There is a similar scene in Elsa's memoirs and it is entirely likely that Grove, remembering the scenes between them years later in Manitoba, would have, in his signature way, recast that former life into *Settlers of the Marsh* and revisited the same scene enacted between him and Elsa in Kentucky. After Niels locks one door and bars Clara's way to another, Clara realizes that she is a prisoner in the White Range-Line house: “Do you mean to say I am a prisoner here?” (182). Elsa had already noted in her memoirs “that we had to become very lonely people - entirely thrown on each other's company - by choice - pride - passion's uncompromising face - by Felix's narrow jailor attitude of a conventional male in love” (*BE* 120). The word jailer might have unconsciously been Elsa's way of indirectly attacking Grove, for his jail term was the great disgrace of his life. When he complained about her naturally vivacious nature in public, she responded by alluding to his past conviction and jail term: “‘It looks different to the world,’ he replied. ‘Well - and if it does? Things about you look different to the world too - than to me.’ (This was as far as I ever went to refer to his jailterm and events that brought it about - and only pressed hard - in the last emergency - I dared go so far - shaking with fear - to touch the dead spot” (118-9). The “dead spot” is evidence that his year in jail was one of the most traumatic experiences in Grove's life.

The correlations between the two authors and former lovers, culling and paraphrasing from the past, last, conversations between them enacted about ten years earlier, when they were writing about them around 1920, is remarkable, suggesting again the authenticity of that occurrence. Clara states that the only reason Niels wants to keep her on the farm, or "manure-pile," is because if she is of no more use to him, his jealous attitude will not allow her to be of use to anyone else: "and at once the dog-in-the-manger instinct that lurks in every man pops up, and you put me under lock and key! . . . What did you marry me for anyway?" (183).⁵⁰

In *Settlers*, Niels considers tearing Clara's "finery off her body" (181) and "He would have liked to strip all that costly tinsel off her, with one rough touch to wipe paint and powder down" (188). Clara considers "a revolver, a knife" (182) to stop the abuse. Grove's return to his "virginideal" had already engendered her "nausea" and "purest hate - a blood aversion up to murder" (*BE* 111). Elsa's "raging lovehate up to the killingpoint" (*BE* 119) extrapolates to Grove's dramatic murder of Elsa as Clara in *Settlers*.

In his MS, Grove understands that he must leave Elsa. There is nothing else, short of violence or murder that he can do: "Yet he also knew that he could do only one single thing: disappear from the story of her life forever" (Box 13, Fd 5, 51). In *Settlers*, in a reach for more drama, hopeful of selling a novel that will free him from the tyranny of teaching and introduce him as a major world-class Canadian author, he kills Elsa in the form of Clara.

⁵⁰In *Baroness*. Elsa writes, "do the men on the street *not* feel my sexattraction - misjudging any harmless gesture? According to your feelings in society - you ought to lock me up - veil me or disfigure me. Why did you not take an ugly wife - or at least one as properly unattractive or repulsive or virtuespiked as your uninteresting mother?" And so it went - until it came to such strain that he told me - pale as death - if I did not shut up - he would be tempted to hit me - and that was something he could never bear - and live. At this point - we both shaking with raging lovehate - up to the killingpoint - -I was forced to fling myself round his neck in overpowering exultation - for nobody ever could bring him so near to losing his cool selfcontrol - and restraining himself in most haughty aloofness trying to repulse me - he submitted - and we were lovers again (119-20).

It is clear that *Settlers* was, in large part, an exploration of his former relationship with Elsa. He never seemed to be able to get her out of his mind. In a sense he used her to make his mark on the Canadian literary scene. But there is also the sense that he loved Elsa as deeply as any man could love a woman. In Niels' observations of Clara - her femininity, her laughing eyes, lips full and red, her remarkably pretty way of dressing, the tingling sensation she sends along his spine, her chestnut-red hair flaming in the morning sun - Grove gives us a poignant glimpse too of what he has lost in Elsa.

CONCLUSION

For man is the most imitative of all animals.

Frederick Philip Grove from *Consider Her Ways* 253

In the early 1920's, Grove became one of the major voices of realism in Canada. Grove, not yet a naturalized Canadian citizen when he was writing *OPT*, appropriated a Canadian voice when he said "the face of *our* [italics added] country as yet shows the youth of infancy" (10) or "many a snowstorm begins that way with *us*" [italics added] (94). The fact that he was able to say this must have had a poignancy for Grove, who, if his German citizenship had been known, would very likely have been placed in a detention camp during World War I.

Grove was interested in exorcizing his demons and in promoting himself. His *modus operandi* was to turn life into art. He was continuing to translate, turning one kind of empirical knowledge into literature. He also drew freely on other texts. Homer begins a chapter in *Ulysses* with "as soon as Dawn appeared, fresh and rosy-fingered," and Grove, in *OPT* writes "there were no rosy-fingered clouds" (10) and in *TY*, he again writes, "here I can lie on my back in the grass and watch the dawn reach out with rose-fingered hands" (80). For the most part, however, Grove turned to the essentials of his own life in Germany and in the United States. Grove, in order to become a writer, resorted to any means to achieve that end. He renounced the ideals of his mentors, Nietzsche, George, Wilde and Flaubert, and not only preferred to engage life, as he had already admitted to Gide in 1904, but used the events in his life to create his fiction. He had touched life, and, more than that, he had engaged life "more fearlessly and unrestrainedly" ("Of Nishivara, the Saint" 84) he thought,

one might argue, than did many others. Because he had rebelled against the ideals of his revered mentors and because his books did not sell, he also could write "I made up my mind that I was a failure" (*ISM* 435). The fashionable mix, as Spettigue called it, of literature and elegance, was an irresistible beacon for Grove throughout his life.

Grove himself, in his own writings, provided evidence that he was writing from life, that his life created his art. Although *ASA* (1927) is, in large part, fiction, he includes in it many incautious truths. He states that he bought passage on a ship in England to come to Canada: "a White Star liner was to weigh anchor next day, going from Liverpool to Montreal. . . . I bought my passage" (10). This quotation is a variation on what he wrote in a manuscript (Box 10, Fd 3, 189) and depicts how Grove arrived in Canada from England in 1909. He says that "I had connived at being taken for an Englishman"(1). His megalomania is in evidence early here as he affirms that "My aims were lofty enough. To master nothing less than all human knowledge was for my ambition" (*ASA* 3) and ethnological difficulties were "trifles not worthy to occupy such an exalted intelligence as my own" (17). It was to be expected then, that he saw most of the people that he dealt with as "socially his inferiors" (14).

One of Grove's salient signatures is his use of masks. As a young man coming to North America he says, as he had affirmed to Gide in Paris in 1904, that "he had also been trained from his earliest days never to betray an emotion, to keep his mask intact" (14). Although he was awed in first coming to North America, "I did not show it in the impenetrable mask of my face" (*ASA* 17). His criminal record in Germany weighs heavily on his mind and he exonerates himself through writing, which has become a kind of therapeutic and, in odd ways, self-protective writing: "I might, under stress of circumstances, have become a thief, a burglar, almost anything I had begun to think

less harshly of him who sins against society. This fact may be a revelation to some who are dealing with alien criminals in this country" (*ASA* 86). Grove denies any criminal responsibility since "the stress of circumstance" determines his course of action.

Here, in *ASA*, Grove fictionalizes or obscures the truth, whereas in his novels he allows the truth or reality to emerge from the fiction. FPG busied himself writing his life in translation, as a displacement from place to place, rearranging words, but not in a straight line. Grove attempts, in almost all of his works, by hints, by inclusions of facts, by dramatic presentations in his novels, to resuscitate the dying Felix Paul Greve. The European Felix has, in a sense, died but he is kept alive in Grove's compulsive rewritings of his own life story. The self has been lost though "Fred" and "Phil" and "Niels" try valiantly to restore the heart to beat, the lungs to fill. In the end, the patient can only speak with the somnolence of someone in a seance. Grove, in all his works, recapitulates his life and creates literature, literally after his own heart. In *ASA*, he admits that "I seemed to review my life as you may look on at a play when your seat is too far from the stage to understand the words: you miss, therefore, all the vital connections" (324).

In his second book of sketches, *TY*, Grove, comfortable and safe though he is with subjective non-fiction, is only beginning his career in Canadian literature. But even here he reveals that he is interested in the past: "We are still only just emerging. And since things proceed slowly, we are apt to indulge in retrospection" (19). What he lacks in knowledge about nature he will make up through an intense emotional response to his nature experience: "what we lack in the breadth of our nature-experience, we make up for in depth, in intensity" (24). Grove here offers a clue as to how to approach his writing in his other works, such as *Settlers*. The environment, for the most part, can be viewed as an objective correlative to Grove's inner psychological state. He writes in forms of

impressionism and expressionism through which he passively responds to nature or actively impresses his own state of mind upon passive nature. Arnason has already shown that in *OPT*, Grove was not very interested in scientific "truths," though Grove did use quasi-science as a purported naturalism.⁵¹ Grove was interested in showing off what in his own mind was vaunted scientific knowledge, but also his resourcefulness, his devotion to his family, his immense capacity for work and ultimately, his personal triumph over life's obstacles represented by nature set in Manitoba.

TY is also significant in elucidating another aspect, that of homosexuality, that Grove includes in many of his works, *Settlers* among them. In Germany, Greve had addressed his first book of poems to his friend and companion, Herman Kilian. In his essay entitled "Rebels All: Of the Interpretation of Individual Life," Greve admits to meeting a young man "whose orbit approached mine for a while and then ran close and parallel to it. For a number of years no influence in his life was greater than mine, and - though I was the more active one of us two - no influence on my life was greater than his. For a number of years we lived close together, *in body* [italics added] as well as in spirit. Then separation ensued" (75). According to Spettigue, a few days after being released from prison, Greve met Gide in Paris and attempted an unsuccessful homosexual advance (*FPG*, 126). However, Claude Martin, in a more extensive study of Gide's papers, records that when Gide asks Greve, "Etes-vous pederaste?" [are you a homosexual], Greve's response is an emphatic "Absolument pas" (91). Elsa, in her autobiography, obviously did not regard Greve as a homosexual. She believed that Greve was unjustly jailed because "the law - in all justice - helped the homosexual jealous 'Mr. Kilian' to a proper revenge" (*BE* 108).

⁵¹In his book, *INBS* (1929), Grove states that Zola's realism is "pseudo-realism" and that this realism is animated by "an ingenious mechanism constructed in the image of pseudo-science" (58).

Greve had tried, unsuccessfully, to ingratiate himself into the elite neo-romantic group led by the master, Stefan George. Greve had, out of much the same spirit, sought to emulate other masters. For a time, the young Greve became a Wildean dandy. What is especially noteworthy to the immediate point is the fact that George, Gide, Wilde and possibly Kilian (in his early student years), were all homosexuals. It is striking, too, that Grove makes use of this knowledge in much of his work, including *Settlers*. In *TY*, in a quotation that Stobie calls "the depth of the bathetic" (*Frederick Philip Grove* 75), Grove could very well be reliving a homosexual moment in his description of a thunderstorm:

That master above who was coming to set the world to order again steps right over me and standing astride above me, seems to stop for an impalpable second before he empties out the bag of his wrath. And then he does it. A burst, a cataract, a convulsion, a spasm of light breaks loose. I feel the grip of a hand on my arm. I wince, catch a gasping breath, and close my eyes. But it was too late. That searching light looked into the basement, under the staircase, into the closet, into the oven, and into every nook and crack and cranny on earth - and maybe into my innermost thought and heart. (108-9)

Louis Dudek, sensing something of import, found that in the novel, *FOE*, the boy, Charlie "fancies he might 'have a baby,' But most readers would certainly miss these suggestions as they occur in the text;⁵² one is not likely to suspect a child of eleven with his father in a homosexual relation - in a novel by Frederick Philip Grove! But there it is" (98). Dudek finally does not consider

⁵²In *INBS*, Grove writes that if the distended abdomen of an ant is stroked a clear drop of exuded food can be imbibed directly from the anus; then he adds: "Curiously, I have seen a particularly disreputable-looking human lie down under a cow and apply his mouth to a teat of her udder while he stroked it at the same time" (80).

Grove to be homosexual, but he does suppose, somewhat equivocally, that he "had it in his nature" (98). Rather, Dudek argues, Grove has to be read extremely carefully because Grove himself was an extremely careful and subtle writer. However, Dudek also points the way for another, less evident understanding of Grove. It is through Grove's fiction that we are allowed to view the hidden man, "but we know, too, that the book is a fiction, and as a fiction it reveals the author even as it explores the mysterious springs moving the characters. It tells us what Grove feared, what he rejected in himself, and what he carried within him as a hidden grief" (98-9).

Spettigue, in his introduction to *ODB* (1928), observes that "The Elliots, then, are an amalgam of the Wiens and Greve-Reichentrog families, and it was perhaps a too acute sense of the realities that made Grove insist on so much detail about each of them." I maintain that Grove, along with the will to truth, had more egoism than Spettigue allows, so much so that the novels are far more than copies of families. The novels have much to do with their author; Grove's novels contain many autobiographical elements.

That Grove used much in the way of life, *his life*, to create his art, may be inferred from some of his statements in a book of essays, *INBS* (1929). In his essay, "Neglected Function," he argues that the function of literature is to define human emotional response to the environment: "For the eternal function of art and more especially of literature is to define the emotional attitude of man to that which is not he" (19-20). In *Settlers*, Niels, the farm, Clara and Ellen are all emotional correlatives for the inner workings of the author's mind. Writing, for Grove, is an emotional investiture, a personal interpretation of what is presented and in which the author is intimately involved:

Thus the artist necessarily tinges the picture which he gives; if only by the fact that, 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 : . . .
Eliminate the artist? As God is omnipresent in the world, thus the artist is
omnipresent in his work By the very fact that he [the realist writer] cannot
reproduce except what was potentially in him, he is, in the totality of his creation,
present to the spectator or reader. By the very fact that he cannot convincingly
represent a character or a happening which finds no echo in himself, he delimits his
work by his own personality. (*INBS* 60-2)

Also, in his essay, "Realism in Literature," Grove makes a statement that has Nietzschean underpinnings: "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" (77). Grove's writing uses Nietzsche's idea of men having to become god-like and perhaps, during his periods of megalomania, Grove may have felt that a spirit of divinity sometimes took hold of him. In "Rebels All," he writes: "Still I meet from time to time and [sic] man or a woman who looks beyond my mask and who *divines* [italics added] behind the exterior of the rustic a wider outlook, a deeper insight, *a hidden power*" [italics added] (68). . . . I have, in my youth, associated with royalty. . . . the oracle of the elite of its [capitals of Europe] men of letters" (69).

Perhaps he saw himself as a fallen God or, at least, a half-divine man, like the figures in *ISM* where significant acquaintances had called Gide and Greve, Castor and Pollux (3). He may well have been taken by Wilde's statements in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "When that high spirit, that morning-star of evil, fell from heaven, it was as a rebel that he fell" (226). In *YL*, those words echo in Len's speech: "We thinkers are rebels all, offspring of Satan . . ." And so, though in "Rebels All," Grove recognizes that others regard him as a failure, and though in *ISM*, he admits that he is a

failure, even these passages convey a sense of special powers in the hero. In humankind's futile struggle against overwhelming odds, Grove supposes, the valiant, indomitable spirit of mankind shines through as a tragic greatness (87). The man who has strived and failed, as Grove feels he has done, is elevated to a god: "Show me the truly great man who would not say, were he to speak truth, that in the essential aims of his striving he has failed, and I will show you a god instead of a man" (89).⁵³ In a letter to Watson Kirkconnell, December 17, 1926, Grove similarly writes of the poet Masefield: "He is 'Made half divine to me for having failed'" (qtd. in Pacey, *Letters* 49).

One year after *INBS* was published, *YL* (1930) appeared. The protagonist, Len Sterner, is a miniature version of the Nordic god, Reelen, that Fanny met in *FE*. In a theme reminiscent of, but transcending, Hardy's *Jude*, Grove's protagonist mirrors his narcissistic author in discovering "his power to assimilate knowledge One day he was going to master all human knowledge in all its branches" (33). Later, Len discloses that "I should like to learn all there is to be learned and be a great man" (75) Great and glorious, life stretched before him: far away, dimly seen, on its horizon, stood a goal. That goal was greatness" (81). Len's mentor, Mr. Crawford, a prairie Hephaestus, seems to reflect Grove's self-centred *raison d'être* when he says to Len, "What, in all branches of knowledge we really investigate is ourselves" (80); "But in a pioneer district genius is left to exhaust itself in the fight against adversity" (81). In *ASA*, Grove had written that his father had said, "You are well liked everywhere; everywhere great things are expected of you I know you are a genius" (6). In *YL*, Mr. Crawford, the schoolteacher, says of Len: "For a Western child he is remarkable. He is a genius in his way" (43).

⁵³Grove wrote in *It Needs to be Said* that "Hardy's *Jude Failed*" (88). When comparisons were made to *YL* (1930) and Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, Grove denied having read Hardy. *It Needs to be Said* was published in 1929 and Grove may even have already read Hardy before coming to America.

No doubt Grove saw himself as a genius whose time would come, if not now, then some time in the future. He felt he was building literary pyramids what for the time being was an unresponsive, unappreciative audience.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, it was important for Grove to live in the prairie world he had come to, and to write out of it. His placement of his protagonists in a pioneer environment, going back to nature as it were, a la Rousseau, was his way of coping with his disreputable urban past and, at least in his own mind, was his way of miraculously regaining his lost chastity and purity while applying his self-proclaimed genius in the Manitoba hinterland. Even in 1946, two years before he died, he wrote in *ISM*, "I wanted to know all, to grasp all that man had ever found out, about his past as well as about his present. In that, I could further myself only by scattering my endeavour over many fields; I was a born 'dilettante'; I toyed with everything and mastered nothing - in the practical field" (159). To his credit, at least in his megalomaniacal moments, Grove really believed that he was performing a service to humanity; he was, in his own estimation, simply a great man, and there was no more to be said. Mr. Crawford explains to Len that a great man is "One who has thought and known more and more deeply than others" and "They [great men] explore the human heart and mind and help other men to understand themselves" (*YL* 8). Also, in *YL*, Grove recycles some of the names in *Settlers*: Lund (4), Philipyuk (12) and Niels Linstedt.(131). Also, as in *Settlers*, in the relationship of Len and Lydia and others, Grove is able to relive his relationship and final estrangement with Elsa.

Grove's next novel, *FOE*, was the last of his prairie novels. Here, he again explores *his* relationship with the world and with Elsa through his *romans a clef*. In his author's note to *FOE*, he

⁵⁴Grove encountered appreciative audiences across Canada during his lecture tour and could enjoy a megalomaniacal moment in a letter he wrote in 1928 to his wife: "'The Greatest Canadian' I was called. Plup, plup! But they all know that the rest of Canadian writers are pygmies by my side; and they say so" (qtd. in Pacey, *Letters* 126).

states that he considers the unpublished *Jane Atkinson* to be “the last story of the prairie series” (xiv) and, moreover, after having finished that novel, “it seemed somehow that there was nothing more in the world to write about” (xiv). Notwithstanding Grove’s claim of his chance sighting of an oversized, but partially-used farm suggesting “a race of giants who had founded it,” and his investigations of many more farms like it in Manitoba which he investigated “in every case,” he simply uses this claim as a pretext to revisit his colonial Eurocentric views upon the primitive, hapless Canadian wilderness and, especially, to reexamine his relationship with Elsa.

Grove, like Abe Spalding, was extraordinarily tall and was disinclined to seek the company of other men. Perhaps this is why Grove persistently wrote about himself - he was constantly exploring himself, trying to find himself. Grove believed that he was destined for greatness; like Abe, “he was not going to allow himself to be judged by what he had done rather than by what he intended to do” (*FOE* 27). He did so at a price for, as M.G. Parks writes in his introduction to *FOE*, “Grove’s rather cold self-centredness severely limited his understanding of other people, real or fictional” (xii).

It must have been especially poignant for Grove to be able to write, in *FOE*, the conversations between his German characters who used many German expressions while commenting on Abe Spalding and who, in the end, give Spalding (Grove) his due: “would you mind, Mr. Stepson, telling me why the great lord [Abe] is always alone and does not mix with the rest of us as other Christian people do?” “Because . . . he thinks greater thoughts and aims higher than all the rest of us do” (88). By the end of the book, Abe has taken on “the hoary appearance of some rustic harvest god” (228) and quite simply, “Abe stood at the centre of it all” (239).

Parks also notes that "generally Grove is unable to give his uneducated characters the colloquial English natural to them" (xii). For the reader, this means that there is a constant metafictional interjection of grammatical and sensical inappropriateness so that the two protagonists are presented as two aliens in paradise, awkward wooden interlopers who, like Felix and Elsa, finally become aliens to each other. Writing was a form of therapy for Grove who never stopped exploring and even exploiting his former relationship with Elsa, especially the reasons for those last days in Kentucky, but it was not always felicitous or stylistically accomplished.

In his prairie novels, Grove was able to re-explore the depths of emotion he had experienced in his turbulent relationship with Elsa. In his next novel, *TG*, he was able to address the other obsession of his - generational, particularly, familial conflict. There is little doubt, since Grove's writing tends to be autobiographical, that much of this angst stemmed from his own early childhood. Again, as in his other writings, Grove infallibly, inexorably, revisits his early life and, in particular, his relationship with his father and his sister. Grove blatantly uses the name, Phil, for his protagonist. While the mother is trustworthy and all-knowing, virtually a saint, the father, a large man, is autocratic and domineering, a tyrant, and the sight of him makes Phil bristle. Grove's father gave up managing a farm and worked as a streetcar conductor in Hamburg. One of the characters in *TG* states that "He's had enough of farming, he says, and wants to go back to the city and be a street-car conductor again" (27). No matter what the setting in the novel, Grove is autobiographically at the centre, either as Phil, the son, or as Ralph Patterson, the father. Like Grove, Phil "had finished middle school with first-class honours" (2). Phil is a rebel (19) but, paradoxically, it is the words of the father which resonate most strongly with Grove's essay, "Rebels All." When the father says, "Every command calls for rebellion unless it's assented to; and assent doesn't depend on our will.

We must because we're we and alive" (260). And there are other familial parallels in *TG*. There is a herd of purebred Jerseys that are sold and there is financial disaster, all of which Grove had experienced in Simcoe, Ontario.

Grove's patriarchs, like Ralph Patterson, wander zombie-like through the books, autocratic, patriarchal, uncommunicative. As a result they are domineering, isolated, lonely, unhappy. They are also abusive, callous, uninformed and unloved yet they are somehow pitied by their understanding, long-suffering wives.⁵⁵ These men, outwardly successful, are a mirror for the self-exiled German expatriot that Grove was. The past, his past, could never be stated for that would be an admission of guilt; it could only be alluded to, in the language of silence, in a place Phil names as "The Heart of Silence" (160). In the language of Conrad, whom Grove had admiringly referred to in his author's note to *FOE*, Grove identifies his own heart of darkness. The Canadian landscape is, for Grove, his correlative for a Conradian heart of darkness. Beyond the white margins of Canada's beaches are the dark, forbidding and unforgiving forest expanses, as treacherous to the unwary as any African jungle. Here, most poignantly, in his times of most painful aloneness, Grove appreciates what he has lost, in Elsa, in reputation, in family and friends, when he is describing the feelings of Phil and his sister Alice⁵⁶ in their Sleepy Hollow, their Heart of Silence.

⁵⁵Margaret Atwood noted that "most of our good early-settler fiction deals with the prairies where a good many will-driven patriarchs appear and one of the best places to look for them is in the novels of Frederick Philip Grove" (qtd. in Jones 54).

⁵⁶Greve had a sister, Henny, who was two years older. In Germany, Henny disappeared from the Greve household sometime after 1890. Spettigue speculates that she either died or ran away. But she could also have married an American from Cincinnati. In *ISM*, he writes, "From New York I went to Pittsburg; and thence to Cincinnati where the last of my sisters lived, a widow of forty, with two children" (175). Henny was born in 1877 and would have been 40 in 1917, when Grove was in Manitoba. Greve met Elsa in 1910, in Pittsburg and they settled on their farm in Sparta, Kentucky, about 80 miles from Cincinnati.

Inevitably, as in other novels such as *Settlers*, Grove returns, in *TG*, to those torrid days with Elsa. Grove achieves his purpose by using George, Ralph Patterson's son, and his wife Nancy as foils, mirrors of himself and Elsa. Much of this had been already explored in depth in Grove's novel, *Settlers*, almost a decade earlier. Elsa had had many lovers before she married August Endell, a German architect, in 1901. Grove could explore, even exploit, Elsa's disagreeable past through the character, George:

With shivers of revulsion he had first divined, then listened to confessions of, the fact that she had not come to him a virgin Yet, if he remained behind and let her proceed to New York his own imagination would never again give him peace. Whenever he thought of her in the future, he would visualize her, not, as he had done in the past, in his own arms, but in the arms of another; and then he would be ready to commit murder. (198-9).

Though Grove had already murdered Elsa in *Settlers*, he apparently never felt successful in the act, for he never seems to tire of revisiting the self-absorbed feelings he must have engendered long ago in Kentucky. We find some explanation, perhaps, for that compulsion in Elsa's record of those days. Among researchers today, Elsa is known for her consistent desire for truth.⁵⁷ This inner drive for truth that was so much a part of Elsa's makeup, that we now know from her relatively recent memoirs, was also acknowledged by Grove in *Settlers*. We now know also that Elsa despised the artists, the aesthetes for their pallid impotency. This almost certainly would have caused considerable friction in the Greve household since Felix considered himself to be an artist. When

⁵⁷Grove acknowledges this disconcerting quality, one that had eluded him, in his character, Nancy: "He cursed her veracity; he told her he wished she had never confessed to him. To which she replied that she could not live a lie; if he did not want her as she was, they had better separate; and even he asked himself whether it would not be better to make an end at once, to take his full share of suffering in one single draught, relying on the healing effect of time which would help him to salvage what could be salvaged out of a ruined life. (199)

Greve proved to be an unsuccessful potato farmer in Kentucky, he must have felt the sting of Elsa's contempt. *TG* gave him ample opportunity to again explore that past life: "The moment he [George] ceased to be a farmer, what was he? A commonplace young man like the rest of those of whom she spoke with such contempt: the artists and writers, uprooted anywhere; but with this difference that he was not even an artist or writer" (199).

In his private conversation with Gide in Paris in 1904, Greve had admitted that he was no artist and moreover, that he preferred life immensely over art. In his last book, *ISM* (1946), Grove as much as admits that he is a failure; his books have not sold and he is always in financial difficulty. Through all the hubris and the difficult years, Catherine Grove steadfastly taught and supported a man who, she believed at least for a while, was destined for literary greatness. One can only hope that Grove, who, in 1904, had already acknowledged that he was no longer interested in art, but in life, did not use his long-suffering wife as a means to indulge himself as a dilettante. Disconcertingly, near the end of *TG*, Grove closes a paragraph with the sentence, "Else [Elsa] what was the use of living on?" (251).

Early in *MM* (1944), the reader again discovers that the protagonist, the senator Samuel Clark, as a young man, had been overawed and held down by his gruff, autocratic father and was "occupied most of the time with dreams and often fuming in revolt against his father" (25). The senator might have "gone to Europe and become a *dilettante* in music, a collector of paintings and articles of *virtu*, a patron, perhaps, of the arts; and he would have been happy. Perhaps his wife would have ceased seeing in him a plodding mediocrity, well-meaning, faithful to a trust, but without imagination or creative force" (52). In 1944, when Grove suffered a stroke, he must have realized that any chance for him to produce great literature had passed, if indeed such an ability ever existed.

He must have agonized over an inability which Elsa no doubt made apparent to him in Kentucky. Grove must have sensed this in Catherine also since he was unable to support his family by writing and she was forced to be the breadwinner.

Grove included Catherine as his unlikely heroine; but, he could not exorcise the splendid demon Elsa from his mind. She arose again and again in his literature. In *MM*, for instance, Grove reincarnates Elsa in the character Sibyl:

Sibyl exaggerated her angularity. It was highly provocative. Provocation was the breath of her life No doubt he had never seen a woman so self-conscious in a physical sense. Every motion of hers was studied and purposeful; she marshalled herself with the genius of a stage *ingenue*. One saw at a glance that she acknowledged no bond, no approach even, between the sexes but the physical one. (119)

Elsa was tall and slender, or angular as Grove puts it; she admitted in her letters to Djuna Barnes that happenings between "sexexpressions" were unimportant incidentals. She had at least three clandestine affairs, usually initiated by herself, while Greve spent a year in prison. She may have had more affairs in Kentucky while Greve was an overworked farmer who had apparently mysteriously turned to the philosophy of a simple "natural" life espoused by his mentors, Rousseau and Thoreau. Greve's constant exaggeration and lying must have exasperated his relationship with Elsa who was a stickler for the truth. His past was a secret that he had to scrupulously keep, especially from his newly-found Canadian family. It must have been with a good deal of relief that Grove could vent some of his tension through his fiction; after all, who would believe that his fiction was fact? He was a lonely, unhappy and eventually sick man whose fatherland, Germany, was being successfully attacked by the allies in the final stages of World War II. He had not been able to cope

with Elsa, who knew his background, and was unable to confide in Catherine who did not know much about his past. It is no wonder that Grove could write so succinctly and so profoundly of his own situation in 1944:

He had had worries: Maud was his wife; she would remain a problem; but that problem could be coped with by being he. . . . The present problem was that he would have to live a life from which the bloom was gone, in which he would constantly have to be on his guard; spontaneity was a thing of the past. The world was changed; and he did not know where to turn for guidance. He had been searching for himself; everything had seemed hostile. But he had never doubted that one day he would live his own life; that his father's death would give him his final freedom. The world consisted of the same constituent parts; but they had rearranged themselves in a new puzzling pattern. (*MM* 100)

Grove begins *ISM* with an observation of an earth emerging from chaos or conversely (and confusingly), a world dying from entropy. In Grove's world, these two dialectical forces were constantly at work - man, as patriarch, operates according to the order of the universe and natural laws, whereas the earth, if left to its own devices, would tend toward greater entropy, increased chaos. In extension of this chaos, emotional women analogously would tend in this direction were it not for the intervention of the stalwart autocrats - the patriarchs. This dialectical process was explored by Grove in the interrelationship between Elsa and Niels which he constructs in *Settlers*.

In *ISM*, Grove revisited a favourite old idea of his, that people of note, particularly, the unacknowledged Andre Gide, act as mentors of the young and promising Felix. Grove goes on to write about the distinction that the Frenchman must have experienced to have the eyes of an

energetic and enthusiastic world focussed upon him in his lifetime whereas, he, Grove, “only slightly his junior [FPG was 10 years younger], in spite of often titanic endeavour, had lived and worked in obscurity, *giving expression, at the best, to a few, a very few mirrorings of life in the raw such as it had been my lot to witness*” [italics added] (4). Here, Grove admits that he has taken his art from life and, I suggest, the biography that he hopes the world will discover, even if it is at a later time, will be found in his writings, with such novels as *Settlers of the Marsh*. Even the maroon cover of *ISM* with its nod to the favourite colour of the Decadents and the logo originally prepared by the cuckolded August Endell, is a testimony to Grove's egotistical desire to become biographically known and eventually take his place in the pantheon of great Canadian, if not great world, writers. He believed that one day his was to be an eternal [literary] voice (154). Of course, any biographer reading Grove's *ISM* today, would find naturalism and ego in an awkward conflation.

Early in his life, he had fitted himself to become the spokesman “of a stratum of society which cross-sectioned all races” (*ISM* 227), a stratum of pioneers who would, presumably in the sense of Old World values and sophistication be the breeding place of the Eurocentric imperative to come. This egocentric philosophy, almost a form of a humanistic divine right, was the template for *Settlers* and his other prairie novels: “These people, the pioneers, reaffirmed me in my conception of what often takes the form of a tragic experience; the age-old conflict between human desire and the stubborn resistance of nature. Order must arise out of chaos; the wilderness must be tamed” (*ISM* 227). Philosophically, Grove again admits that his work is a reflection of the life he has experienced: “I have heard it said that, to men like myself - men, that is, who see their life-work, not in living, but in mirroring and interpreting life, the life of others - poverty is essential” (*ISM* 228). He writes that he is experiencing desires that will provide lasting appeasement of urges - desires for a home, a

family. These are Niels' great desires in *Settlers*. Greve's years with Elsa soured in Kentucky when he must have seen himself in a future matched with an aged, helpless, sexually promiscuous mate who forever would be childless. And yet, he admits that his aim, which he claims is lofty and unattainable, "is to set down, in one comprehensive picture, all that had crystallized out, in my mind, *in reaction to all I had seen, heard, and felt* [italics added]. That picture I must at least aim at fashioning in a form *which would stand forever*" (230). That form, of course, was literary. Grove literally carried through on his objective with his initial productions, *OPT* and *TY*.

Soon, however, he felt confident enough to proceed with his major work, *Settlers*. Here, in his favourite novel, he could explore all his reactions to Elsa and their turbulent life together, especially in Kentucky. In *ISM*, he acknowledges the basis of their conflict. Elsa said that in Kentucky, Grove decided to become like his idol Flaubert, that is, chaste - in a return to nature and austerity. She wondered how this could be. In *ISM*, Grove tells us that, under pioneer conditions, the physical needs are not sublimated into the desires of sexual relations "and this usually leads to a disaster of some kind" (224). When he examines his own relations with women in the pioneer west (read Elsa), and he finds them temperamentally, emotionally and even intellectually fitted for life in towns or cities rather than life on open prairies - in a word - misfits (225). It is ironical of him, a Hamburg native, to say this but of course he is reacting to Elsa and her apparently negative response to his attempted pioneer life in the USA.

He exploits this fully in *Settlers*. Grove claims to be an exile living among people unlike him in America. His counterpart, Niels Linstedt, was living in exile on the Canadian prairies. Ironically, *ISM* purported to be autobiographical and he received a Governor-General's medal for writing a book that is more fiction than fact. Grove could never reveal his true identity in any purported

biography. He could only apply his life philosophy to his fiction. Here, he could examine, as he says, all his reactions to what he had experienced in his life, chiefly Elsa who had been a major part of his life for ten years. Their turbulent relationship in the USA occupied much of his literary work to the end of his life . He did manage to escape her, but it may well be that he did not wish to do so, since she figured to such a great extent in all his literary productions. In Canada, in Ashfield, Manitoba, and with the unwitting help of his working wife, Tena, Grove found in one-and-a-half years the desire and leisure to contemplate, like the dilettante he admitted to being, his recent life with Elsa, from lust to imagined murder. If he had suffered a profound humiliation or insults at the hands of employers or Elsa, he would finally have his revenge in the writing of his Canadian productions, particularly where he could deal freely with Elsa, could with impunity, paint himself white, her black.

Grove believed that his created characters, like Niels Linstedt, needed an infusion of himself to become what they are. Although Grove asserts that "we were never one," the reader strongly suspects that since he was given to, if not relegated to, "trying to resuscitate the past" (258), the analogy of the thief in Dante's *Inferno* coalescing with the serpent monster is valid. Grove, in *Settlers*, tries to write himself out of his circle of hell, to escape from his monster, to divulge his former life in his fictional work as a way of atonement - a practice he was condemned to repeat over and over again:

And wherever I looked, in this whole region of the Canadian West, there were figures moving about which were the creations of my brain, at the same time that *they were the mirrorings of actual conditions* [italics added]. These figures did not all of them command my own sympathies; with some of them I lived in an everlasting conflict;

but they shared my blood and my vital strength. I could not have fashioned them had I not seen their side; and, I believe, I have been just to them (262).

Grove and his family arrived in Ashfield, Manitoba in January, 1920. While his wife taught Grades I to VIII in the Ashfield School until the summer of 1921, Grove was able to embark upon one of the most creative periods of his literarily productive life. He may have done little sustained creative writing until then, except for *OPT*. In addition to *ASA*, he claims to have rewritten four books in Ashfield: *TY*, *YL*, *ODB* 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*" (352). He also took copious notes for his *Ant Book*, an attempt in spirit to emulate Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, that was later published as *CHW*.⁵⁸ The productive output of those one-and-one-half years that Grove spent in Ashfield would not occur again in his lifetime.

Grove considered *Settlers of the Marsh* in its three-volume form to be "some of his best work" (*ISM* 370). While camping on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, about twenty miles north of Ashfield in the summer of 1923, he said that *Settlers of the Marsh*

was once more taking possession of me....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 that book since 1917, during the fall and winter of the long drives over prairie trails; and in 1920, in that marvellously fruitful spring [at Ashfield], I had

⁵⁸Much of Grove's literature has to do with his response to individuals, like Elsa, who had an impact on his life. In *CHW*, Grove gives undisguised vent to his feelings (as an ant) toward an unkind critic named Ayr: "For suddenly I was observed. A human hurrying along . . . saw me and stopped. He stopped and, deliberately lifting his near hind-foot, he brought it down on top of me in order to crush me out of existence! . . . I felt my carapace crack . . . I don't know how I know; but that man's name was Ayr; and I want to hand at least his appellation over to the everlasting condemnation of antkind. Fortunately he was too stupid to understand that his fell purpose was not achieved" (246).

worked it out . . . But even then one scene had defied me - the scene between Clara and Niels . . . 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 that scene. (*ISM* 370)

Probably, Ashfield afforded time and opportunity to give more formal expression to his *Settlers* drafts. He says he is writing in a detached, ironic way - detached because he is writing supposedly creatively but also ironically because he, unlike his readers, knows that this is what happened - it simply, dispassionately, belongs with the other follies of his misspent youth. He also says that summer (1923), working on *Settlers*, "was to be the last but one time in seventeen years that I felt I had done what I was meant to do" (374). Seventeen years earlier, in 1906 Grove considered himself a writer: he had translated the works of many well-known authors and he had just had two novels published in Germany - *FE* and *MIH*. He inasmuch admits that *Settlers of the Marsh*, and in particular, the story of Niels and Clara, is, in fact, his real-life story: "the book was too real, too true . . . I had described exactly what happened, no more. . . . To this day I am not quite sure that it conveys to others what it conveys to me. If it does, nobody has ever said so" (*ISM* 379).

I believe it is time to state what meaning *Settlers* has to Grove's contemporary readers. My thesis maintains that Grove did not work or create by revelation, but by translation - by converting life's happenings into fictive form that was, in fact, autobiographical. When he writes, he says, he enjoys the triumph of creation, of pangs of birth, and it is through others that he can grow inwardly, "as nothing can make a man grow except the vicarious living of scores of other lives" (*ISM* 457). It is possible to view Grove cynically as a dilettante who used his younger wife, Catherine, as a virtual

slave while he, drone-like, wrote books that never were successful. Worse, his books were, in large part and particularly in *Settlers*, little more than a reworking of material and relationships he appropriated from his first wife, Elsa. The unflattering facts are there: Grove married Catherine Wiens in 1914, he was unemployed in Ashfield from January 1920 to August 1921, and never taught after 1924. In his defence it could be said that, at the time, he honestly believed he was a writer capable of producing world-class literature and he worked very hard on his writing.

We could add that his creations would entail the vicarious living of his own previous life, the life he dared not divulge except obliquely through his fiction. Grove, as a writer, saw his task in the recording of his reaction to the things that had happened to him - a form of symbolic realism with which he felt comfortable: "Art has its being, not in the activity of the artist - which is only its occasion - but in the mental and emotional reaction of him to whom it is addressed" (*ISM* 357). Grove utilized this notion fully in his first two sketches published in Canada, *OPT* and *TY*, and the success of this preliminary work gave him the confidence to write *Settlers*. In this novel he could write about something that affected him deeply, something that he cared writing about - his mental and emotional reaction to his life with, and eventual estrangement from Elsa, the love of his life.

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