

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

by

**Lorne Lulashnyk**

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  
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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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup>The 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.<sup>2</sup> He must have been ashamed of certain parts of his past, particularly his imprisonment,<sup>3</sup> 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

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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).<sup>5</sup> 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

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<sup>4</sup>On 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).

<sup>5</sup>In 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,<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> In 1928-9, Grove travelled across Canada giving a series of Canadian Club lectures. The outcome

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<sup>6</sup>On 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.

<sup>7</sup>Grove'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.<sup>8</sup> 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

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<sup>8</sup>Catherine 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.<sup>9</sup>

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:

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<sup>9</sup>In 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*.<sup>10</sup>

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

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<sup>10</sup>Carl 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.<sup>11</sup> 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, Wells<sup>12</sup> and Wilde.

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<sup>11</sup>Stobie, 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).

<sup>12</sup> 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,<sup>13</sup> 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

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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.

<sup>13</sup>All three writers were homosexuals.